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C-Dem Advisory Council Meeting February 15, 2023

C-Dem Research Project
Western University

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ADVISORY COUNCIL VIRTUAL MEETING
Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 3:00 – 4:00 pm EST

NOTES

Participants

Allison Harell, C-Dem Co-Director, Professor, Département de science politique, Université du Québec à Montréal

André Blais, Professor, University Research Chair in Electoral Studies, Université de Montréal, Professor; Département de science politique, Université de Montréal

Daniel Rubenson, C-Dem Executive Committee, Professor, Department of Politics, Toronto Metropolitan University

Elisabeth Gidengil, Hiram Mills Professor Emerita, McGill University

Elizabeth Zechmeister, Cornelius Vanderbilt Professor of Political Science, Vanderbilt University

John Aldrich, Pfizer-Pratt University Professor of Political Science, Duke University

Laura Stephenson, C-Dem Co-Director, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Western Ontario

Leonie Huddy, Professor, Department of Political Science, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Patrick Fournier, Professor, Département de science politique, Université de Montréal

Peter Loewen, C-Dem Executive Committee, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Toronto

Richard Johnston, Professor Emeritus, Canada Research Chair in Public Opinion, Elections & Representation (retired 2020), University of British Columbia

Stuart Soroka, Professor, Department of Communication and Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles

Regrets

Keith Archer, Elections Consultant; Former Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia

Shanto Iyengar, Professor of Political Science; Director, Political Communications Laboratory, Stanford University

Supporting Documentation

1. Agenda

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/rygm6xf9pgzbkhssr4qbi/FY-22-23-Advisory-Council-Meeting-Feb-15-Agenda.pdf?rlkey=mt4kc5wncmultq9ni1ymgoq44&dl=0>

PowerPoint Presentation to the Advisory Council

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/2s3vosliuorqyizc5z9om/FY-22-23-AC-presentation-Feb15.pptx?rlkey=otvokq0g5sexafi8ylvtqol5f&dl=0>

2. C-Dem Annual Report

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/0mhgsib5x1hpwi091vuv0/C-Dem-2023-Annual-Report-2-2.pdf?rlkey=x0wdjw7br1tjw8cau5fek6j8a&dl=0>

3. SSHRC Midterm Report

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/hy1w2s4tp154sduoecmu8/C-Dem-Midterm-Report-with-Committee-Comments.pdf?rlkey=brmb0p3may1clwwuly90g57ip&dl=0>

4. Running an Election Survey in Prince Edward Island
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/lj6m65kd8avxeju4m7y8v/FY-22-23-AC-Meeting-Document-Running-an-Election-Survey-in-Prince-Edward-Island.docx?rlkey=2z3bls8mwhh0auztnrzi8hq0s&dl=0>

Agenda Item # 1: Feedback on the C-Dem Network

(a) Stakeholders

Elections Canada is an active C-Dem stakeholder. Because Elections Canada is an office of the Parliament of Canada, the agency cannot be a formal partner.

(b) Composition of the Advisory Council

Members considered two changes to the composition of the Advisory Council (AC): the addition of C-Dem partners and junior scholars/post-graduate fellows. No decisions were made regarding changes in composition. It was suggested to keep the number of members small for ease of deliberation. Members were asked to reach out to the executive committee if they had any further thoughts.

(c) Composition of the C-Dem network

It was suggested that the membership of the C-Dem network be expanded, and consideration be given to adding colleagues from other disciplines.

Agenda Item #2: Feedback on Data Collection

a) Update on completed studies (Detail in Annual Report, pages 3 - 4)

On October 31, 2022, C-Dem released the 2021 Canada Election Study (CES), the 2021 Democracy Checkup (DC), and five provincial election studies (New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia.) All are available from Harvard's Dataverse and through the Canadian Opinion Research Archive at Queen' University. There is a lot of data. Sabrina Spence, C-Dem's Data Manager, has done an excellent job in ensuring the datasets are of high quality.

C-Dem is currently working on:

- Releasing the data from the 2022 DC and two recent provincial election studies, Ontario, and Quebec
- Updating the 2019 CES dataset, in collaboration with Laurier Institute for the Study of Public Opinion and Policy, by coding the occupation data for 2019 and 2021
- Creating a precis for provincial elections, with the help of two students, to be shared with Election Management Bodies

b) Upcoming studies

Members provided advice regarding two upcoming studies: the Prince Edward Island (PEI) election study and the next CES.

PEI Election Study

The feasibility of conducting a study of the PEI election was discussed. A memo was circulated outlining survey and sample provider options, and procedural considerations (link is on page 2). Several members questioned whether the intellectual benefit derived from conducting the study justified the resources required.

It was agreed that the co-directors, Laura and Allison, will reach out to Elections PEI, a C-Dem partner, before a final decision is made.

Next CES

If the next CES includes a module of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), it must be a probability sample. One of C-Dem's researchers is writing a methodology paper on the differences in survey responses by mode.

Members were asked to provide feedback on three options:

- Conduct a telephone survey (probability sample), pre- and post-election
- Complete a post-election study only to decrease the cost of a telephone survey
- Do not participate, resulting in Canada not being a part of the official CSES database

The majority of the members' comments supported the third option, not participating officially. Concern was expressed regarding the cost of conducting a telephone survey and the small sample size (n=1,000). It was noted that the CSES is planning to add a repository of non-probability samples in recognition that this methodology can produce high quality data.

Agenda Item #3: Feedback on C-Dem Activities

An overview of activities in the past year and upcoming events is outlined in the annual report (pages 4 - 7).

The discussion was framed by two questions: What has C-Dem done well? What can we do better?

What C-Dem has done well

- C-Dem's work is providing an ongoing infrastructure to restore Canada's presence in the world stage of political science data collection
- C-Dem has successfully become a recognized hub for discussion of methodology and other key aspects of political science research

Suggestions for future actions

- Ask other researchers in Europe if they are planning to include Canadian data in their research
- Establish C-Dem research fellowships to increase the number of students using C-Dem data
- Highlight how C-Dem's work provides insight for other democratic countries; host a conference focusing on the larger, more general issues that cross different countries
- Publish case studies of the ways in which Canada is an interesting example of electoral democracy; identify some modules that would get attention
- Collaborate with projects in the United States
- Plan a writing retreat and planning meeting in 2025 to talk about next steps, focusing on the future of the CES dataset; perhaps as early as the fall; holding the retreat in 2025 may be too late

Agenda Item #4: Feedback on Research Output

C-Dem's research output is summarized in the SSHRC mid-term report (pages 7 – 9).

C-Dem entered into a contract with Elections Canada in December 2022 to produce up to five research reports that make use of data gathered by Elections Canada (the National Electors Survey) and C-Dem (Detail in the Annual Report, page 5).

C-Dem wants to improve its website presence and is working with the Samara Centre for Democracy to meet this goal.

Members were asked to suggest ways to focus C-Dem's research output: What should C-Dem do more of? Members were also asked for feedback regarding what new things C-Dem should try.

Suggestions included:

- Add descriptive data to the C-Dem dataset; the Swedish Election Study was given as an example
- Provide content to journalists; this has been done in the past by the University of Montreal with Macleans Magazine; journalists receive free content, C-Dem gains free publicity; a low-cost and fruitful model to increase knowledge mobilization
- Create a Political Behaviour course which facilitates graduate students working with journalists to raise awareness of key issues
- Reach out to survey research companies to increase their awareness of the CES

The executive committee will poll the members to get their input regarding next steps, particularly in regards to establishing a permanent infrastructure for the CES and maintaining the C-Dem network.

Budget Update

The current budget was presented. C-Dem has shared costs as much as possible to ensure efficient use of funding.

Adjournment:

Advisory Council members were encouraged to let C-Dem know their thoughts regarding the ideas discussed and other possibilities that will assist C-Dem in successfully meeting the project goals.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 pm EST.