

DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IN CANADA: THE CSDC'S FIRST BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

By Allison Harrell and Patrick Fournier

Democratic citizenship in Canada faces a myriad of challenges and opportunities. Growing social diversity, rapidly changing technologies of information and communication, as well as concerns about government transparency and accountability have been accompanied by falling electoral participation, instability in the party system at various levels of government, and important contestations outside of the electoral arena. What do these changes mean for the health of Canada's democracy? What avenues are available to citizens to be heard by decision-makers? How have both citizens and institutions responded to changing economic, social and political circumstances?

The Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship will be hosting their first biennial conference from September 22-24 in Montreal to address these issues. The theme of the conference is the *State of Democratic Citizenship in Canada* and will welcome a broad range of scholars from across Quebec, Canada and internationally.

One of the highlights of the event will be a roundtable that examines challenges to citizenship in other democracies. How has citizenship evolved in the information age and what are the challenges that it faces in the 21st century? The roundtable will bring together

internationally-recognized scholars working on political communication, political theory, social psychology and party politics. It will include Francis Cheneval from our partner organization, the National Center of Competence in Research in Democracy (NCCR) in Zurich, Rachel Gibson from the University of Manchester's Institute for Social Change, Miles Hewstone, the Director of the Oxford Centre for the Study of Intergroup Conflict, and Elin Naurin, a former visiting scholar to the Centre and Associate Professor at the University of Gothenberg. André Blais, Canada Research Chair in Electoral Studies and long-time Centre member, will also participate.

In addition, the conference also seeks to highlight the innovative and diverse research of Centre members. Members are presenting about twenty different papers over the two and a half day conference, spanning topics from economic voting to the role of social media in running for office. There will also be a special two panel series presented by the Canadian Election Study team focusing on the 2015 federal election.

The conference will also welcome our non-academic partners to a special lunch that focuses on sharing ideas, research and the needs of stakeholders in questions surrounding democratic

citizenship. The lunch follows a panel where research partners will share with us their needs and priorities. The CSDC currently partners with a number of organizations in civil society and government, and the conference will allow these partners to see what we are working on, and also provide an opportunity for discussion about how our research can relate to the work these various actors are doing.

The event will be held at the Coeur de science on the campus of the Université du Québec à Montréal. The organizers, Allison Harell and Patrick Fournier, welcome members of the public to attend the event. For more information, contact csdc.cecd2016@gmail.com or visit the CSDC website (www.csdc-cecd.ca).

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Photo: Ottawa Fireworks, Canada Day 2012 by Joel Bedfordis