



Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

December 18, 2024

A holiday wish for my fellow MPs

Dear Colleagues,

In this season of good will, peace and hope, I extend an open invitation for us to reflect upon how we can collectively and individually address a matter I fear threatens the very foundations of democratic governance.

Partisanship has always been part of Parliament. Parties play a very important role in Canadian politics by developing policy, organizing public opinion and aggregating interests.

Deepening polarization in Canadian politics, however, has, in recent years, led to a toxic hyper-partisanship that has made Canada's House of Commons an increasingly hostile forum where parties play zero-sum games that threaten to undermine the collective strength and workings of Parliament.

Partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive than at any point in recent memory with MPs increasingly segregated along "us vs. them" partisan lines, retreating into the familiarity of their respective echo chambers.

Less and less these days do MPs from opposing parties put down their partisan shields and, in spite of policy differences, get to know and respect each other as individuals - seeing in the other a fellow parent or dedicated solution-seeker.

While hyper-partisanship is increasingly encouraged, fraternization is not. In fact, it was recently reported that some political staffers have been told to write down the names of MPs speaking to colleagues from other parties in the hallways of Parliament and elsewhere.

Democracy relies on a set of unwritten rules and practices that foster cooperation, compromise, and mutual respect among political actors. However, hyper-partisanship often leads to the erosion of such norms.

Lack of civility

Civility, the foundation of democratic discourse, is increasingly in short supply.

Civility requires the humility to imagine that you may be mistaken, that someone with an opposing view may have a point worth considering.

To be an effective Member of Parliament, it's important to build relationships with colleagues from other parties. Isn't that how Parliament works best for Canadians? Or has partisanship simply become stronger than working for the common good?

Perhaps the most serious threat of hyper-partisanship is the potential erosion of public trust in our democratic institutions. When political discourse is dominated by acrimony and division, citizens become disillusioned with the political process.

They perceive their elected representatives as more interested in partisan gain than in the public good. This cynicism can lead to political disengagement, as people feel that their participation will not make a difference.

Furthermore, the constant demonization of political opponents can create an environment where misinformation and distrust flourish, further corroding the social fabric that binds a democratic society.

Where now?

Colleagues, we must ask ourselves where our current course is taking us? Don't we know intuitively that to safeguard democratic governance, it is essential to promote a political culture that values dialogue, compromise, and mutual respect?

It can start in small ways - beginning with our own personal interactions.

As political leaders, let us work to bridge partisan divides, restore faith in democratic institutions and ensure that government truly and effectively serves the public interest.

In the spirit of the season,



Contact us: **Constituency Office 604-775-6333**

Email: **Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca**

Website: **JonathanWilkinson.libparl.ca**