

# What's Trending in Canadian Politics?

**UNDERSTANDING  
TRANSFORMATIONS IN POWER,  
MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE**

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# Introduction

## Identifying and Studying Trends in Canadian Politics

VINCENT RAYNAULD, MIREILLE LALANCETTE,  
AND ERIN CRANDALL

### **THE NEED TO STAY AWARE AND AHEAD OF THE CURVE**

Politics is multifaceted and dynamic. Although the distinct nature of this area of research and practice means that it can be studied through a variety of lenses, one approach to understanding the dynamics of politics is to look at how new media and methods for acquiring and sharing information can affect political norms and practices. Social media serve as an important example. With the rise of mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and wearable technologies, social media have emerged as key features of Canadians' daily lives. User-generated communication channels – including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat – are increasingly used by members of the public to engage in a large number of personal and professional activities. These activities include mass-broadcasting updates about personal life, interacting with friends and colleagues, and sharing opinions on wide-ranging issues and events with peers and members of the public. These communication platforms can also change how people understand and participate in politics. For example, activities such as documenting police misconduct in real time, participating in social-acceptability consultations and open-government projects, or simply accessing political information can be done more easily with these tools. Scholars and practitioners in the fields of political science, journalism, sociology, and political communication have made significant efforts in recent years to identify trending phenomena and to understand better how new digital media channels and approaches to information and

participation have transformed modes of communication and redefined, to some degree, political behaviour.

Such trends have manifested in the Canadian political and social spheres over the past few years, from the election of Justin Trudeau in October 2015, to the Indigenous-led Idle No More protest movement, to the Quebec student strike in 2012 – all of which saw their key players using new media technologies to further their goals. They have also manifested on a global level through galvanizing political moments, including Barack Obama’s election in 2008 and re-election in 2012, Donald Trump’s electoral success in 2016, the transnational Occupy movement, and the Arab Spring uprisings. These events brought emerging practices and modified expectations about political campaigning, protesting, policy making, political engagement, and political expression to public consciousness.

The adoption and shaping of trends in the worlds of political communication and behaviour have been fuelled by both established and emerging political players with varying interests and objectives. The emergence, rapid adoption, and constant evolution of internet-based media tools with varying structural and functional properties have also played important roles in this dynamic. This introductory chapter examines what is fuelling and shaping these changes – phenomena that we refer to here as “trends” – in the Canadian context. Our objective is first to examine the concept of trends and then to make the case for the value of identifying and analyzing their impacts on the Canadian political landscape. As we argue here, trends are expected to have lasting transformative effects on different facets of research and practice related to political communication and behaviour in Canada and will ultimately pave the way to further changes.

Over the past few decades, political communication both in Canada and abroad has undergone a series of developments. At the same time, there has been a re-evaluation of patterns of political behaviour, namely how individuals and organizations conceive and take part in different forms of political and civic action, whether through formal or informal channels of engagement. These transformations, which have manifested at municipal, provincial, and federal levels, can be partly attributed to a host of social, political, cultural, economic, and technological trends that have affected and will continue to affect all dimensions of the political landscape. These trends include the use and effect of mass media on the acquisition,

cultivation, distribution, exercise, and manifestation of political power; on acquiring, archiving, and dispersing information; and on detecting patterns of mobilization, persuasion, and organization. From a broader perspective, these changes are contributing to the reconfiguration of the structure and composition of the public sphere.

These trends have affected how two categories of actors contribute to formal and informal political processes. On the one hand, they have led established political elites – or political insiders – to rethink and, in many cases, retool their politicking strategies and practices in the context of intensifying nonstop, or permanent, campaigning in and out of elections (Marland 2016; Marland, Giasson, and Esselment 2017). For example, these trends have affected how political parties and candidates engage in voter identification, outreach, and mobilization when building and cultivating support ahead of and during elections. They have also led elected officials, public servants, and government agencies to alter how they circulate information and, to a lesser extent, connect and interact with citizens as well as their approaches to decision making. On the other hand, they have redefined how members of civil society – more likely to be on the periphery of the formal political arena (e.g., citizen organizations, interest groups, grassroots movements, individual citizens) – interact with media, policy, and established political elites. Once viewed as political outsiders, these actors share information, attract public attention to their causes, raise money, mobilize support, and generate political action in ways that are challenging traditional understandings of their influence on politicking. From a broader perspective, these trends have been leading to the reconfiguration of democratic life in Canada.

### **IDENTIFYING, CHARACTERIZING, AND UNDERSTANDING TRENDS**

This volume takes a deep dive into these issues through chapters that identify and explore how these trends are affecting political communication and behaviour in Canada. Contributors take a look at the ripple effects of these trends on political and civic life. They leverage interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as more applied perspectives, to examine trending phenomena through case studies. This book is especially relevant for students who want to explore questions related to the evolution of contemporary political communication and behaviour

both in Canada and in comparable national contexts. Practitioners seeking insights into emerging dynamics of politicking in and out of peak moments of political communication and mobilization, such as elections and intense policy debates, should also find this book helpful.

The concept of trends – the anchoring theme of this volume – has become a staple feature of the social media environment. Social media services, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, often provide users with one or multiple lists of topics for discussion or digital material deemed to be “trending.” These trending news items have fast-growing traction among internet users over a short period of time, a phenomenon referred to by some authors as “virality” (Klinger and Svensson 2014; Nahon et al. 2011).<sup>1</sup> Trending lists can be customized independently by users or tailored based on algorithms taking into account users’ personal profiles, including their ideological dispositions, interests, and current geographical locations. Additionally, the hashtag #trending is frequently embedded in posts by users to highlight digital material (e.g., text, video, and picture) expected to gain in importance or popularity. According to Poell and van Dijck (2015, 534), virality is one of the core components of “social media’s DNA” alongside “personalization” and “real-timeness.” In the world of marketing, trends refer to directions in which consumers’ general attitudes, values, and preferences evolve and, by extension, affect how consumers perceive, evaluate, and consume brands, goods, and services. These trends matter because they can alter cognitive and social processes through which one decides on making purchases.

In the context of this volume, the concept of trends is used to pinpoint emerging areas of both scholarly research and practice – at the intersection of political science, communication, sociology, political management, and journalism – likely to gain prominence and, to some degree, influence different spheres within Canadian politics over the next decades. More importantly, some of these trends could have reshaping effects on the conceptualization, categorization, and understanding of these contemporary academic disciplines. They have the potential to alter how research is thought out, planned, and executed, ultimately fostering more research outside well-established traditional scholarly silos or disciplines. Such work on interdisciplinary areas or objects of study can yield increased levels of academic innovation and, to some degree, lead to further scholarly

research. From a broader perspective, trends can be viewed as themes of varying specificity that can foster new, or affect existing, conversations on political communication and behaviour among diverse publics, including students, politicians, scholars, and practitioners.

The theoretical, methodological, and more applied dimensions of trends in the field of political communication and behaviour have received some academic attention internationally over the past decade. Although the ensuing work has been the source of valuable insights, research tackling trends has been mostly dispersed, fragmented, and highly eclectic. Of interest are works by Anika Gauja (2015), who examines patterns of individualization of party politics in Australia and the United Kingdom; James Sloam (2014), who looks at youth political engagement in Europe; Loni Hagen and colleagues (2015), who explore the adoption of e-participation around the world; and Peter Van Aelst and colleagues (2017, 4), who explore how specific trends affect the structure and composition of contemporary political information environments and reshape the functioning of democracy. In Canada, scholars have looked at trends in political communication, mobilization, and organization. The notion of trends has implicitly been introduced and studied in edited volumes focusing on political marketing (Marland, Giasson, and Lees-Marshment 2012) and political communication (Marland, Giasson, and Small 2014) published in the *Communication, Strategy, and Politics* series by UBC Press in recent years. The edited volume, *Canadian Democracy from the Ground Up: Perceptions and Performance*, a comprehensive look at the dynamics of political and civic engagement that can affect democratic participation in Canada, also offers some perspectives on trends in political communication and behaviour (Gidengil and Bastedo 2014). However, trends in Canadian politics – especially those with a strong social media component – have never been the object of a stand-alone volume. The chapters presented here attempt to fill this gap by addressing these issues. This volume is a one-stop shop for a cohesive, interdisciplinary analysis of phenomena anticipated to have transformational effects on dynamics of political and civic life in the Canadian context as well as the international context.

To explore these trends, this volume takes a decisively – and unapologetically – multifaceted approach. Some chapters identify and investigate causal factors that have led to the emergence and evolution of

trends as well as their effects on the Canadian political environment. From a more technologically deterministic – or “technocentric” (Monterde and Postill 2014, 430) – perspective, the development and growing adoption of communication technologies (internet or Bluetooth-enabled mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, and wearable gadgets) coupled with the rise of digital media channels (social networking services and micro-communication sites) have helped to foster change in the realm of political communication and behaviour (Forum Research 2015). On the one hand, their distinct capabilities and low costs have led to the decentralization, fragmentation, acceleration, and in some cases renationalization of flows of information and social interactions of a political nature. To some degree, they have rendered political processes more inclusive, diverse, and competitive. By enabling individuals and organizations that previously stood on the sidelines of formal politics to have their voices heard and potentially to have impacts on the political process, these technologies have transformative implications. On the other hand, their flexible technical and structural properties, sometimes significantly different from those of offline-based media channels, have enabled individuals and organizations to contribute to political processes on their own terms. In other words, they have contributed to the hybridization of existing repertoires of political action and the emergence of new ways of being involved in and influencing politics. The role played by mobile communication devices as tools for political and civic participation has been largely overlooked or occasionally ignored in studies of digital electioneering and e-activism. As noted by Arnau Monterde and John Postill (2014, 429), significant academic attention has been given to the “purported role of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, but the mobile aspects of this usage have remained largely implicit.” More research on this dynamic is needed.

From a more socially deterministic perspective, new generations of citizens with different social, political, and ideological inclinations and objectives are contributing to the advent and the strengthening of trends affecting political communication and behaviour in Canada. Some commentators and academics have adhered to a more “pessimistic disaffected citizen” perspective (Cammaerts et al. 2013) and claimed that younger adults are increasingly apathetic toward politics in its more traditional

sense (Farthing 2010; Henn, Weinstein, and Forrest 2005; Henn, Weinstein, and Hodgkinson 2007). However, others have argued that youth are increasingly active politically through more unconventional – or informal – paths of engagement not necessarily recognized by established political elites (e.g., Loader, Vromen, and Xenos 2014; Quaranta 2016; Vromen, Xenos, and Loader 2015). In other words, their distinct sociopolitical profile is fostering the emergence of trends likely to affect political and civic action from a bottom-up perspective. This situation is also likely to lead scholars to review and, if warranted, rethink and adapt existing definitions of more conventional norms and practices of political communication and engagement. As noted by M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi (2014), there has been both a microlevel and a macrolevel generational transition when it comes to perception of, and participation in, politics. This transition has been fuelled by an array of factors, including declining levels of confidence in political authorities, institutions, and individual politicians; reshaping of the contemporary mass media environment with the rise of Web 1.0 and social media; and growth of political empowerment and influence among social, political, economic, and cultural minorities (Jennings and Niemi 2014). A number of the chapters in this volume address this question.

### **TRENDING IN THE CANADIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT**

Although the repercussions of these changes are many and complex, this volume isolates and explores transformations in key areas of communication and political behaviour in the Canadian context. These complementary areas include

- the rise of social media as dominant tools of communication, mobilization, and organization
- the growing traction of a new breed of grassroots-driven political protest phenomena
- technological advances and other interconnected sociopolitical factors affecting day-to-day politics
- the recalibration of relationships among members of civil society and political institutions

- the emergence of tools (e.g., surveys, advanced audience research, big data analytics, social science evidence) for predicting the public's behaviour as well as for deliberation and governance.

Interestingly, these areas of interest overlap with the three main challenges facing political communication researchers, according to Bruce Bimber (2015, 215), a leading US scholar in the fields of digital media, political organization, and collective action:

- 1 the conceptualizing of digital media, especially the extent to which research focus[es] on technology itself as opposed to the content of communication
- 2 the challenges and opportunities associated with “Big Data”
- 3 the need to revisit old problems of causation and linearity.

First, social media have become vital components of the Canadian political mediascape. The 2006 federal election saw a growing number of individuals and organizations use blogs for electioneering purposes (Small 2008). Web 2.0 media channels (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram) have since grown in popularity among all segments of the public and, as of 2019, affect nearly all dimensions of political communication, mobilization, persuasion, and organization in Canada. For example, political parties, elected officials, candidates during elections, and other formal political players at all levels of government are sharing mixed-media information with mass audiences to mobilize and cultivate support; reach out to potential supporters; launch, promote, and coordinate mobilization initiatives; raise funds; and, to a much lesser extent, interact with members of the public. Conversely, social media are providing an outlet for members of civil society to express themselves in largely unfiltered fashions and to be politically active in often decentralized and highly specific ways outside the realms of political and media establishments. Several social scientists – several of whom are contributors to this volume – have taken an under-the-hood look at these dynamics in the Canadian context over the past decade (see Elmer, Langlois, and McKelvey 2012; Lalancette and Raynauld 2017; Raynauld and Greenberg 2014; Small 2011, 2012, 2016; and Small et al. 2014).

Building on the findings and conclusions of existing research, contributors to this volume tackle trending dimensions in uses of social media by formal and informal political actors for outreach and engagement. In Chapter 7, Yannick Dufresne, Thierry Giasson, and Mickael Temporão discuss how six provincial political parties and their leaders turned to Facebook for voter outreach during the 2012 election in Quebec. They do so through an analysis of the format, tone, and interactive nature of Facebook posts during the campaign. In Chapter 8, J.P. Lewis, Mireille Lalancette, and Vincent Raynauld compare the tweeting practices of Carolyn Bennett – MP for the riding of Toronto–St. Paul’s – as an opposition backbencher and as the minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government in order to consider how parliamentary conventions, such as cabinet solidarity, hold up in an age of social media. In Chapter 4, Shelley Boulianne examines social media’s effects on youths’ levels of engagement in civic and political life. She takes a deep dive into the uses of Web 2.0 platforms to understand better interactions with and connections to political issues.

Second, recent years have seen the development and popularization of new grassroots-driven political protest phenomena that have shaped politics in Canada and abroad. In some cases, such activities have challenged the *modus operandi* of established political elites, not necessarily equipped to deal with the political, economic, and social repercussions of their actions. To some degree, this situation has shown the presence of a clear – and potentially deepening – disconnect between two political forces (grassroots and political elites) that often have vastly different visions and understandings of politics and operate in very different ways. Whereas some protest initiatives have emerged in a more conventional manner, all have distinguished themselves from more traditional political mobilization phenomena in the following ways: they have appealed to and mobilized younger segments of the public who tend to be largely disenfranchised with and disengaged from formal political life; they have energized individuals and organizations with frequently narrow political interests, preferences, and objectives; their supporters’ actions have often been outside established paths of political and civic engagement; and their supporters have used social media and other digital media channels extensively for political engagement (Raynauld, Lalancette, and Tourigny-Koné 2016;

Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Scherman 2012). The growing traction of these political mobilization initiatives in recent years can be attributed to different elements, including, among the public, rising levels of cynicism about and estrangement from governments, institutionalized political processes, and legacy media, especially with the 2008 worldwide economic downturn, the austerity measures implemented by governments to mitigate its effects, as well as the perceived degradation of democratic institutions by some segments of the public (Della Porta 2015).

Although some researchers have explored contemporary political protest in Canada (e.g., Dufour and Savoie 2014; Poell 2014; Raynauld et al. 2016), much work remains. Chapters in this book explore aspects of these trends and complement existing academic literature. In Chapter 2, Vincent Raynauld, Mireille Lalancette, and Sofia Tourigny-Koné examine the factors that shaped the Quebec student strike in 2012 in the Twitterverse. In Chapter 6, Thomas Poell looks at social media-based activist communication in the context of the G20 summit in Toronto in 2010. He does so through an analysis of the hyperlink network that allowed flows of protest communication between various actors and localities as well as the contents of their exchanges. He also develops a typology of connections and vistas enacted through the various social media channels.

Third, technological advances and other interconnected sociopolitical innovations have played prominent roles in rearticulating, expanding, and occasionally enhancing offline modes of day-to-day political and civic engagement, especially when it comes to younger adults who tend to be more digitally savvy. As noted already, they have affected how political elites, as well as individuals and organizations on the periphery of the traditional political arena, interact with each other, and by extension they have redefined the dividends coming out of these interactions (Jensen and Anduiza 2012; Yamamoto, Kushin, and Dalisay 2015). From a broader perspective, these changes have played a key role in redefining repertoires of political action. These repertoires can be defined as the actions taken by members of civil society to influence institutionalized decision-making processes, whether through traditional or more unconventional – or in some cases illegal – channels of political and civic action (Dalton 2008). Several scholars (Bennett and Segerberg 2016; Theocharis et al. 2015) have

noted that this process has been marked by subprocesses, including the personalization, individualization, and privatization of political participation. This area of research has received some attention in the Canadian context; however, important questions remain.

Contributors to this volume take on this field of research through a number of case studies. Chapter 3, by Patrick McCurdy and Jacob Groshek, provides an account of digital campaigning tactics developed and deployed by corporate stakeholders to address issues related to TransCanada's proposed 4,600-kilometre Energy East Pipeline, which generated significant public protest. They do so through a two-step process, including a critical case study of TransCanada's proposed digital-advocacy tactics and an analysis of the structure of social media networks and discourses pertaining to Energy East online. Ghada Touir, Florence Millerand, and Guillaume Latzko-Toth explore environmental activists' political engagement in Chapter 1. To do so, they offer an empirical assessment of Quebec's online engagement through the consideration of environmental issues and pay close attention to its gendered dimension. In Chapter 5, Mireille Lalancette, Tamara Small, and Maxime Pronovost look at political memes and, by extension, the redefinition of the grammar of digital activism. They examine how some internet users employed memes extensively to express their opposition to the actions and decisions of then Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

Fourth, these transformations in political communication and behaviour in Canada have recalibrated the relationship between members of civil society and long-established political and media institutions. For example, institutionalized political players (e.g., elected officials, government branches, agencies, and political parties) have been adapting specific organizational processes (e.g., leadership and decision making), as well as communication, mobilization, and organizing practices, in order to meet the evolving expectations of a public that increasingly seeks personalization, institutional adaptability and responsiveness, flexibility, openness, and transparency (Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2012; Ellison and Hardey 2014). In Canada, scholars have studied these dynamics. However, more work is required because these areas of political activity are in a state of perpetual evolution.

In Chapter 12, Stéphanie Yates and Myriam Arbour define the concept of social acceptability, and how it affects governance in Canada, by establishing that citizen consultations on major public infrastructure projects are now expected to be part of the process of social responsibility. They argue that its achievement is a prerequisite for a project to move forward, comparable to environmental certifications or financial warranties. In Chapter 11, Erin Crandall, Kate Puddister, and Mark Daku set their sights on a different branch of government, the courts, and consider the increasing importance of social science evidence in the Supreme Court's decision making. As that chapter highlights, the prominence of social science evidence has important implications for citizens and groups who seek to use the courts to change laws and public policies through constitutional litigation. By taking an in-depth look at legacy news media organizations' coverage of the court's decisions on physician-assisted death, the authors shed light on its framing effects and how they can affect the public's understanding of both the nature and the implications of Supreme Court decisions.

Fifth, there has been growing interest among academics in the uses of survey designs and functionalities, advanced audience research, algorithmic politics, big data analytics, and software-based campaign management for understanding and, in some cases, forecasting the behaviour of the public during elections and day-to-day governing. Although these areas of research have received some attention in the United States and globally (Dalton 2016; Kreiss 2016; Woolley 2016), they remain largely underexplored in Canada (McKelvey 2014; Redden 2015). André Turcotte, as well as Fenwick McKelvey and Jill Piebiak, fill part of this gap in the Canadian scholarly literature. In Chapter 10, Turcotte makes the case that new developments in data analytics and digital research are affecting political polling. He argues that data management platforms, digital tagging, audience insights, and segmentation are converging with increased modelling capacities to allow political actors not only to know but also to track citizen behaviour at a high level of granularity. In Chapter 9, McKelvey and Piebiak look at the state of data-driven political campaigning in Canada. Building on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, they examine how both technologies and the interests and objectives of practitioners are shaping

data-driven politicking and the ways in which these elements are affecting the dynamics of permanent campaigning.

### **WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS MEAN FOR CANADIAN DEMOCRACY?**

On top of investigating transformations related to trends in five key areas of political communication and behaviour, the contributors to this volume address indirectly the broader implications of this dynamic for the structures and inner workings of Canadian democracy. Although several conceptions of democracy (e.g., representation, expertise, and participation) have been identified and analyzed in both the recent scholarly literature (e.g., Almond and Verba 2015; Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Skocpol and Fiorina 2004) and older studies (e.g., Dahl 1989, 1994), scholars generally consider political and civic communication, as well as engagement in patterns of formal and informal politicking, to be cornerstones of the functioning and, by extension, the relevance of democracy (Norris 2002; Oser and Hooghe 2016). From a more traditional perspective, Dahl (1994, 25) defines democracy through the consideration of three “great transformations” that have led to the emergence and evolution of institutionalized norms and practices of varying depth and scope guiding how people and organizations function. To use the terminology of this volume, one can say that Dahl (1994) identified early trending phenomena that shaped the evolution of democracy. This volume builds on Dahl’s work and further unpacks the effects of trending phenomena on democracy.

The growing traction of trends in different realms of politicking in Canada has contributed to the remodelling of ways that individuals and organizations envision and, more importantly, take part in and contribute to democratic mechanisms (Bengtsson and Christensen 2016; Oser and Hooghe 2016). As Oser and Hooghe (2016) observe, citizens’ attitudes toward democracy are tied to the ways in which and the extent to which they are active both politically and civically. Several researchers and organizations have focused on the state of Canadian democracy in recent years but have done so through a generally holistic – or macro – analytical perspective (e.g., Howe, Blais, and Johnston 2005; Hilderman, Anderson, and Loat 2015). This volume makes a unique contribution because it approaches this question in an interdisciplinary and compartmentalized – or micro – way.

By examining how social, technological, political, cultural, and economic trends are reshaping specific dimensions of Canadian politics, including electioneering, sociopolitical protest, and constituent communication, the contributors to this volume collectively make the case that these transformations have a multitude of ramifications for Canadian democracy, whether from the top down or from the bottom up. However, questions remain regarding their effects on several dimensions of the Canadian democratic model, including social and political cohesion, inclusivity, and accessibility. For example, significant work is required to assess in a more granular fashion whether trends are strengthening or weakening democratic processes and values within Canadian society.

Several chapters in this volume explore, both qualitatively and quantitatively, how trends are affecting political insiders' communication, mobilization, and organization in and out of elections. Other chapters provide insights into how grassroots stakeholders try to influence public political discourses as well as decision-making processes otherwise under the control of political insiders. Although this volume sheds some light on these questions, it stops short of determining whether trends are intensifying, enhancing, or to some extent bettering relations between formal and informal political actors or whether they are contributing to further fragmentation of Canadian society. In other words, a key question remains. Has there been a progressive hyperfragmentation of the political environment, which could lead to the rise and strengthening of a disconnect between different segments of the Canadian public? If so, then this disconnect could be fostering a sociopolitical environment detrimental to a shared consciousness among Canadians and, by extension, could be weakening Canadian democracy. Although not answering this question explicitly, the chapters in this volume make an important contribution as they break theoretical and methodological grounds for future research.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS**

This volume fills significant gaps in the academic literature by examining dynamics of political communication, mobilization, and organization that we anticipate will have transformational impacts on Canadian political

and civic landscapes. It features work by scholars from different fields who draw from various theoretical backgrounds and methodological perspectives to explore trending patterns of political communication, mobilization, and engagement through case studies. By exploring trends in five key areas of communication and political behaviour in the Canadian context, they provide answers to three lines of questioning:

- 1 What is the nature of recent changes in media practices and political behaviour and communication?
- 2 How are these changes transforming political engagement and political action repertoires? To what extent do these trends transform the relationships between political actors and institutions and democracy in general?
- 3 What are the consequences for the practice and study of Canadian politics?

Readers of this volume will have a more in-depth, interdisciplinary understanding of key trends affecting the tools used and of the impacts of citizens, media institutions, political elites, and grassroots organizations on the Canadian political environment. From a broader perspective, they will gain a better appreciation of the implications of these trends for the Canadian political system as a whole. Finally, they will be more in tune with emerging fields of study and practice at the intersection of communication, political science, sociology, polling, political management, and journalism. The emerging use of social media for politicking can be seen as the tip of the iceberg when it comes to new elite-led and grassroots-driven conceptions and practices of political communication and behaviour in the Canadian context. This volume provides readers with much-needed context for these transformations and their effects on the evolution of the Canadian political landscape.

#### NOTE

- 1 This concept is defined as “the process which gives any information item the maximum exposure, relative to the potential audience, over a short duration, distributed by many nodes” (Nahon et al. 2011, 1).

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