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# Legislatures (Canadian Democratic Audit S)



## Synopsis

Legislatures, and the men and women who serve in them, form the very heart of Canadian democracy. After all, with the very rare exception of nationwide referendums, Canadians speak collectively only when voting for the people who will be representing their interests in Ottawa. The same is true provincially. But how "democratic" are legislative assemblies in Canada? After we elect our representatives, are we comfortable that we are being properly, and democratically, represented? Apparently not -- respect for legislatures and legislators in Canada has steadily declined, and this perception is only aggravated by the current political climate. *Legislatures* provides a democratic audit of Canada's provincial and national representative assemblies. It argues that the problem existing in these bodies is not a lack of talent so much as a lack of institutional freedom. Specifically, the problem is largely one of resources and rules. The move to a more multi-party system nationally and the increasing tendency to downsize provincial assemblies has placed additional hurdles in the path to good governance. Docherty uses the series' criteria of responsiveness, inclusiveness, and participation to evaluate critically the performance of legislatures in Canada, and makes recommendations for legislative reform in Canada. A crucial and timely overview of legislatures, this book will appeal to students and scholars of Canadian politics, as well as politicians and policymakers and anyone interested in the current state of Canadian democracy.

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There is a lot of useful and worthy information written in its pages, and most of the recommendations, particularly those involving party discipline and updating institutional rules in legislatures, will go a long way in improving the democratic aspects of Canada's governing institutions. Ultimately, what must be said about David Docherty's audit in Legislatures is that we finally have a modern, comprehensive update on Canadian legislatures that has been missing since C.E.S. Franks' 1987 contribution in this area. For nearly 20 years, students of Canadian legislatures have only had that source to utilise, and Docherty's update will certainly be a must read for anybody remotely interested in Canada's legislative institutions from this point forward. (Rob Leone, PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, McMaster University Canadian Parliamentary Review, Winter 2005-6)

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