The Numbers we Need to Know
Before we Decide

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Summary (Abstract)
Political scientists have developed several theories to explain voter decision-making strategies. In this workshop, we will assume that voters (in this particular case study: workshop participants), use a classic rational choice strategy - i.e., we are rational. Ideally, in order to maximize outcomes, we want electorates to have the information and cognitive capacity to make informed decisions. In this way, people could rationally elect representatives who would do their best to carry out desired collective decisions and make legislatures able to hold governments to account.

In this workshop, we will examine the political platforms of all major political parties during the 2015 federal election. We will review party commitments on policy issues (e.g. balancing the budget over the medium term), examine information and cognitive demands on electorates, and assess performance objectives using SMART criteria (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time based).

The purpose of this 2015 retrospective will be to better position us (as rational voters) for the upcoming 2019 electoral platforms. As a former Parliamentary Budget Officer, Mr. Page will draw on his own experience in this workshop to assess electoral commitments-including budgetary balances, reduction in income disparities or greenhouse gas emissions, and the elimination of socioeconomic gaps for Indigenous peoples, to name a few. This workshop will also examine non-numerical party objectives such as electoral reform.

Outline
The day will be begin with an overview of decision making strategies, party platform commitments, performance assessment tools (e.g. SMART), government mandate tracker and the role of the legislature to hold the government to account. The class will openly debate and assess 2015 party commitments in key policy areas (economic, fiscal, social, environment, etc). The outcome of these discussions will be used to inform the type of commitments required in the 2019 federal election.
Required Readings
Consult the following, to compare Canadian Political Parties:

Familiarize yourself with the following texts:


Familiarize yourself with the following websites:


Additional Resources