Based on social science research, here are some tips on how to help turn the tide and make Canadian political discourse more civil, both online and in-person:

Lead by example: When your constituents see civility, they show civility.

Police your own side: As a respected leader, it can help diffuse tensions when you call out bad behaviour. This is especially true when you ask for civility from your own side—whether it’s your supporter or caucus mate.

Get into the weeds: Use social media and other opportunities to get past the canned talking points, give Canadians detailed explanations of the policy choices you support, and invite others to do the same.

Reframe your language: Listen carefully to the universal values expressed by people who criticize or disagree with you, and try to base your arguments in those same values.

Remind us what we share: Encourage supporters and opponents to think about the identities that unite us (like being Canadian), rather than divide us (like party affiliation).

The Samara Centre’s Field Guide to Online Political Conversations

Advice for Political Leaders

As a political leader, you may be concerned that online political discussions are often uncivil, and therefore unproductive. You may have witnessed political discussion becoming increasingly polarizing and divisive.

Canadians agree.

For more information on having civil and constructive political conversations online, visit samaracanada.com/field-guide

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A recent survey shows that many Canadians think our political conversations are becoming less civil and less respectful. It's an even bigger problem online.

48% of Canadians think political conversations on social media are more angry than offline conversations.

50% of Canadians think political conversations on social media are less civil than offline conversations.

In your time in politics, you may have noticed that incivility:

- Makes people give up on politics
- Targets groups that are already underrepresented (like women)

- Makes us more polarized (we like each other less)
- Makes us vulnerable to bad actors who want to exploit our divisions

47% of Canadian social media users stay out of online political conversations because they're worried they'll get criticized.