

Research Article

## How Representations of Inuit Issues in Parliamentary Committees Reveal a Specific Policy Dynamic

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**Abstract:** This article explores how Inuit issues were addressed and portrayed in parliamentary committees. More specifically, we investigated if parliamentary committees allowed Inuit to present their perspectives and priorities, given that they play an important role in all stages of the public policy cycle, including policy development, implementation, and evaluation (Winfield 2010). The focus of this article is on the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament (June 2, 2011–August 2, 2015, the last Conservative Party government led by Stephen Harper) and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament (December 3, 2015–September 11, 2019, the first Liberal Party government led by Justin Trudeau). Quantitative textual analysis techniques were conducted after retrieving textual elements via the *R* software. As a whole, the theme of economic development was central to Inuit and non-Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament but was not as prominent during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. For Inuit participants, education issues were much more important during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, while health and wellness issues received most of the attention during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. Non-Inuit participants expressed concern for the health and well-being of northern communities during both parliaments. This study provides evidence that the Trudeau Liberal Government's rhetoric around inclusiveness translated into actions regarding Inuit political participation, as Inuit leaders were granted more time to present their perspectives during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament.

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## Introduction

Inuit face formidable structural pressures and a regional governance infrastructure that is still in development. For many years, colonial practices have also silenced Inuit voices and rendered them invisible in key Canadian political institutions. Their priorities and aspirations have been voiced by others—non-Inuit individuals or institutions.

While Canada has made the commitment to embark on the road to truth and reconciliation, greater Inuit participation is required to fulfill a nation-to-nation partnership. For the purposes of this article, we consider parliamentary committees as venues where civil society can engage politically with decision-makers, albeit in an imperfect way. This article then investigates who was invited to speak on Inuit issues in parliamentary committees at the federal level, and how these different participants portrayed Inuit issues. In other words, did parliamentary committees allow Inuit to present their perspectives and priorities, or were these issues presented and framed by others? It is important to note that we are not evaluating if the policy issues mentioned were improved or if concerns on certain policy areas were tackled adequately by the federal government. This policy assessment would be valuable, but our focus lies more in political representation: were Inuit leaders invited to share their priorities and perspectives; in other words, did they have a seat at the table?

Specifically, we seek to answer the following two research questions: 1. What differences can be observed in the representation of Inuit issues between Inuit and non-Inuit representatives during the 41st and 42nd Parliaments? 2. Does changing the government have an impact on the way Inuit issues are considered in Parliament?

These two questions are important because they should allow us to understand whether there is indeed a difference in the way indigenous communities represent the issues that affect them, and the way non-Indigenous communities represent the same issues. A difference in this regard is often taken for granted, but we want to see if it can be observed empirically. Also, it is often said that the Conservative Party Government (41st Parliament) and the Liberal Party Government (42nd Parliament) adopted a different discourse with respect to Inuit issues. Our second question is to test empirically whether this impression is verifiable or whether, on the contrary, there is little difference in the treatment of Inuit issues between these two governments.

These two questions are based on two important theoretical anchors in public policy analysis. First, cognitive models reveal that political actors seek to dominate the representation of public issues, because by imposing their way of

understanding and conceiving these issues, actors manage to control the political agenda and translate their interests into public policy (Sabatier 2007; Muller 2008). In this regard, Knoepfel et al. (2015) argue that actors seek to create a causal narrative—that is, to gain social acceptance of a discourse that determines the causes of a problem and the solutions to it. It is based on this causal narrative that a government will design and implement policies. Second, functional theories explain that a change in government actors changes the policy context and redefines the priority issues. According to Howlett et al. (2020), a change in actors in a political subsystem leads to new values and ideas that will make the government more responsive to some issues than others. For Kingdon (2003), a change in government alters the flows that define the political agenda and opens new windows of opportunity for issues that were previously ignored.

This theoretical framework leads us to propose the following hypotheses in response to our research questions. First, Inuit and non-Inuit actors have different interests in public policy and therefore propose different representations of Indigenous issues in the North. Secondly, the change from a Conservative to a Liberal Government brought about a change in values and ideas that led to a change in the discourse of actors regarding Indigenous issues in the North.

Governmental policies on Inuit issues are intrinsically linked to the nature of Canada's Arctic policy. The Government of Canada has devoted attention to Inuit issues mainly through the prism of its Arctic and northern policies. Successive governments have prioritized different dimensions, reflected in their political messaging and investments in Inuit communities. For the purposes of this article, we will only focus on the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament (June 2, 2011–August 2, 2015, the last Conservative Party government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper) and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament (December 3, 2015–September 11, 2019, the first Liberal Party government led by Justin Trudeau) in order to understand how Arctic and Inuit policies have recently evolved. In turn, we will assess if parliamentary committees allowed alternative voices to come forward.

This article will first review the functions and roles of parliamentary committees, before analyzing core principles and investments constituting the Harper and Trudeau governments' Arctic and Inuit policies. Then, data analysis will focus on themes and questions addressed in parliamentary committees. Convergence existed between Inuit and non-Inuit participants, but significant differences were present, highlighting the special contributions that Inuit participants have brought forward to enrich the policy debate.

## Parliamentary Committees

According to Atkinson and Thomas (1993), parliaments are characterized by two modes of operation. The first is based on periods of debate and questions, while the second gives precedence to parliamentary committee meetings. Past studies also identified two types of parliaments: assemblies that are directly involved in the drafting of bills, and bodies that exert much more influence on the process of drafting and adopting legal and regulatory texts (Ahmed 2000). In all cases, parliamentary committees are one of the fundamental elements of modern legislatures. Although parliamentary committees do not possess the same composition and functioning rules across countries (or even within the same country), they increasingly serve as the main lever through which parliaments can scrutinize government activities.

The configuration of parliamentary committees depends on several factors, including the electoral context (Fleming 2019). Indeed, parliamentarians pay more attention to committees in systems where the search for votes is more difficult and where voters develop a strong partisan attachment. In a study of five parliaments (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom), Fleming (2019) draws two conclusions. First, the size of parliamentary committees is greater in systems where voters have low partisan attachment. On the other hand, in systems where partisanship is greater, parliamentarians will tend to retain strategic positions on committees in order to ensure their re-election. Thus, for Fleming, there is an obvious association between political participation and the organization of parliamentary committees.

These committees' effectiveness in carrying out their roles depends, among other factors, on the leadership of their chairs (Thomas 1978). The leadership exercised by Charles Caccia between 1994 and 2004, notably as chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in the Canadian Parliament, is often cited as an example. His leadership is presented as one of the factors that strengthened the contribution of this committee in policy development, formulation, decision making, evaluation, and accountability (Winfield 2010). Moreover, the stability of membership on parliamentary committees plays a key role. This stability can facilitate members acquiring expertise in their specific policy areas, and reduce partisan or party influences. The stability of the committee's mandate also allows for the development of members' responsibilities in parliamentary committees (Winfield 2010).

Parliamentary committees are presented as playing an important role in all stages of the public policy cycle, including policy development, implementation, and evaluation (Winfield 2010). According to Bergman and Macfarlane (2018), they can also play complementary roles: they can be consulted to answer questions

from parliamentarians or public office holders on rules set out in a law; they can conduct inquiries; they can play an informational role through the publication of annual reports; and they hold an educational function by providing the general public with a better understanding of how parliament and government work. Beyond these roles, Thomas (1978) points out that the involvement of parliamentary committees in society depends on a combination of factors such as the general political situation, the nature of the legislation, and the type of change sought.

Although the Canadian House of Commons has used parliamentary committees since 1867, it was not until the late 1950s that they became significantly involved in the parliamentary process (Thomas 1978). The formal adoption of operation procedures for committees in the Canadian Parliament was not achieved until 1968. A significant modernization of the functioning of parliamentary committees was also implemented. For example, provision was made for the referral of department's annual budget estimates to committees for review, according to their jurisdiction. Committees were also granted the possibility to initiate investigations. Further changes were adopted in 1982 to reduce the size of committees, to ensure stability in their membership, and to allow them to demand government responses to reports under review within a time limit set by law.

In the early days of their operation, standing committees held two functions: they were responsible for the review of legislation and they monitored the activities of government departments (Ahmed 2000). Canada subsequently followed British practice by assigning the review of legislation to legislative committees, and the oversight of departmental activities to standing committees. In 1993, legislative committees were abolished and both functions were returned to the standing committees.

Parliamentary committees are presented as having the capacity to act in a more neutral manner than the House of Commons (Winfield 2010). They can summon ministers, public servants, expert witnesses, and hire researchers, which allows them to consider different interests and points of view in the reports that they prepare. Committees can also explore topics that governments may have overlooked or avoided, and thus provide detailed reports in order to evaluate public policies. Hence, they can bring about significant changes in practices and force governments to initiate actions that take into account the needs of their citizens (Winfield 2010).

Parliamentary committees are set up to address different questions or problems. However, they can only partially remedy the lack of access by civil society groups to the legislative process. As a comparison, the Canadian legislative system is presented as being opaquer and less transparent than the American legislative system. This feature can bring non-governmental organizations to

seek other venues to express their grievances. For example, Sarah Pralle (2003) concluded that the opacity of the Canadian Parliament was one of the key factors explaining why environmental groups brought their concerns about logging in British Columbia to international forums (May et al. 2005).

## **Arctic and Inuit Policy**

### *Harper's Arctic and Inuit Policy*

Conservative Party Leader Stephen Harper prioritized the Arctic after the Conservatives won the federal election in January 2006. He promised during the election campaign to build three new armed icebreakers, a deep-sea port in Iqaluit, and a military base accommodating 5,000 troops in Iqaluit. The promise was well received by Inuit leaders, particularly in relation to the deep-sea port as the infrastructure could also play a key role in future economic development (Kusugak 2006).

Although the promise never materialized, Harper's commitment to northern Canada was illustrated both in words and deeds. Prime Minister Harper inaugurated annual summer tours in the North, starting in August 2006<sup>1</sup>. During these tours, Harper pushed forth the "use it or lose it" logic, arguing that Canada would lose its Arctic if it was not more present and active at controlling and occupying its Arctic territories. Although not accurate in international law (Bartenstein 2010), the idea was expressed on numerous occasions by Harper, spreading an alarmist assessment of Canada's Arctic claims. This slogan did not sit well with Inuit people. Mary Simon, who was leading the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK)<sup>2</sup> at the time, asked: "What does Harper mean? Have Inuit not been using the region for millennia?" (Simon 2007). Simon similarly questioned the Conservative Government's decision not to honour the Kelowna Accord, signed by Harper's Liberal Party predecessor, Paul Martin. The Accord promised substantial federal investments in Inuit socio-economic needs such as housing, health care, and education.

In subsequent speeches, Prime Minister Harper did not acknowledge Inuit particularities and referred to northerners rather than mentioning Inuit people specifically (Dodds 2011). John Amagoalik, who played a central role in Nunavut's creation, made the same observation:

He [Harper] never mentioned the Inuit in his speeches. We were curious as to why that was happening. Then he came out with this line of "use it or lose it." That to us was very painful. It was a hurtful thing. It was insulting. We do use and occupy the Arctic every day, and we have been doing that for thousands of years. (Amagoliak 2009)

The Arctic fit the Conservative Party agenda of reinvesting in the Canadian military. After the first few years in power, the Conservative Government partially redirected its Arctic focus. Announcements during the annual prime minister tours were geared toward more environmental, scientific, and economic initiatives and investments (Landriault 2020). Likewise, the 2009 policy document, “Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future” presented a balance between socio-economic, environmental protection, and sovereignty imperatives. Socio-economic priorities were also raised in the 2010 “Statement on Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy.” The reorientation towards these objectives partially took into consideration Inuit grievances, although the proposed initiatives still fit a Conservative agenda. The creation of the Arctic Economic Council, spearheaded by Canada, and investments to support natural resource development specifically, and the private sector generally, constitute examples of such initiatives.

However, the federal government was also eager to protest against the European Union ban on the sale of seal products, appeasing domestic Inuit organizations that were outraged by the measure. The dispute between Canada and the European Union prevented the latter from receiving the accreditation of “Observer” at the Arctic Council (Lackenbauer and Lalonde 2017: 162–166). The Government of Canada also offered an official apology on August 18, 2010, for the forced relocation of Inuit families from Inukjuak and Pond Inlet to the High Arctic (Grise Fiord and Resolute Bay) in the 1950s (Canada. Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada 2010). The nomination of an outspoken Inuk (Leona Aglukag) to ministerial responsibility for the North was another measure that received support from Inuit organizations and communities.

Overall, Harper’s Arctic policy yielded a mixed reaction from Inuit people. Specific measures received support from Inuit organizations while others were criticized as excluding Inuit groups from the decision-making process and forgetting the contributions of these Canadians to Canada’s Arctic sovereignty claims. Since their election in 2015, the Liberal Party Government led by Justin Trudeau has steered away from a sovereignty logic to push for a renewed partnership with Inuit people and their priorities.

#### *Trudeau’s Arctic and Inuit Policy*

Key investment capabilities (icebreaker, offshore patrol vessels) had already been announced by the Harper government when Justin Trudeau became prime minister in Fall 2015. The Trudeau government did not cancel these investments and the 2017 statement “Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy” reflected a threat perception similar to Harper’s Arctic defence policy. New aircrafts, improved communication systems, and satellite capabilities were promised, with a focus on

strengthening control and surveillance over the region (Lajeunesse 2017), two goals often cited by the Harper government.

The most fundamental innovations of Trudeau's Arctic policy can be found on other fronts. For example, the support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the appointment of Inuit leader Mary Simon as special representative for the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, and the meaningful engagement of Prime Minister Trudeau with the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, all result from a renewed relationship with Inuit people (Lackenbauer, 2017; 309–314). The prime minister also flew to Iqaluit in March 2019 to deliver an apology on behalf of the federal government for the mistreatment of Inuit patients with tuberculosis in the mid-twentieth century.

The Government of Canada financially supported the implementation of the National Inuit Suicide Prevention Strategy, announced new investments for affordable housing in Nunavut, and developed an Inuit-specific Child First Initiative to ensure that Inuit children have access to public services (health and education for example). Investments to tackle Inuit challenges have been significant as the ITK recognized in a 2019 report: "Budget plans 2018 and 2019 include the largest number of references to Inuit and size of proposed Inuit-specific investment announcements, in the widest range of investment areas, in the time period examined (2010–2019)" (ITK 2019: 2).

Investments only tell part of the story; a new governance approach was also inherent in Trudeau's Arctic policy. The decision to co-develop a new federal Arctic policy framework with northerners integrated Inuit in the decision-making and policy elaboration processes. The co-development approach was adopted even though it rendered the timeline for completion somewhat uncertain and exposed the government to criticisms regarding its level of efficiency. In the 2019 Canada's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, the Government of Canada pledged to facilitate the participation of Inuit people in international and regional forums. As stated, the Government wants to

enhance the representation and participation of Arctic and Northern Canadians, especially Indigenous peoples, in relevant international forums and negotiations. In the Arctic Council, Canada has seen firsthand the valuable contributions Indigenous peoples and Northerners make by bringing their unique concerns and perspectives to the table and how this leads to better decision making. ... Canada will, therefore, seek to enhance the capacity of the Canada-based Indigenous Permanent Participants and champion the enhanced representation of Arctic and Northern Indigenous peoples in relevant international forums, key multi-stakeholder events, and treaty negotiations (Canada 2019).



The establishment of the Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area (Lancaster Sound), in August 2017, and the Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area (North of Ellesmere Island) in August 2019, after significant engagement with Inuit organizations, constitutes another illustration of the government's close collaboration and cooperation with Inuit communities. The Inuit Impact and Benefit Agreement for the Lancaster Sound area, signed by the Government of Canada and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, linked environmental protection with socio-economic goals.

Additionally, while the Arctic oil and gas exploration moratorium announced by Prime Minister Trudeau in December 2016 was denounced by many northern leaders (Van Dusen 2016), Inuit organizations such as the Makivik Corporation, and different associations of Inuit harvesters supported the ban. Others, such as the Nunavut Impact Review Board and the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, abstained from taking a position.

Moreover, Inuit leaders have taken great care to highlight the necessity of adapting to the detrimental effects of climate change and to document its impacts on Inuit communities (Watt-Cloutier 2018; Obed 2019). A similar emphasis on adaptation and impact of climate change on Inuit communities can be found in Mary Simon's report *A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model* (Canada. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada 2017).

All in all, the Trudeau government adopted a different approach with Inuit people and organizations. The focus on and investments in socio-economic needs represented a cornerstone of this policy, as did the necessity of fostering greater participation by Inuit leaders in decision making and a deep engagement to not only consult with them but to co-develop policies that prove relevant to their communities. The participation of these organizations in international forums was not only allowed but encouraged with financial and political incentives.

## Methodology

Our analysis is based on quantitative textual analysis techniques, often referred to as Natural Language Processing (NLP). We first extracted the proceedings of parliamentary committees dealing with Inuit issues during the 41st Parliament (June 2, 2011–August 2, 2015, last term of Stephen Harper's Conservative Government) and the 42nd Parliament (December 3, 2015–September 11, 2019, first term of Justin Trudeau's Liberal Government). These two parliaments were selected to assess if there were significant differences in Inuit engagement and political representation when the ruling party changed. Proceedings were extracted using the online archives of the House of Commons and searching with the keyword "Inuit." The online archives of the House of Commons contain

all interventions made by members of parliament in the House of Commons and parliamentary committees, among other resources. For the purposes of this research, we focused on parliamentary committees since diverse external participants are called upon to share their experience or expertise. Then, we only selected the interventions that were grouped under the discussed topic “Inuit” in order to narrow the search. This method allowed us to pinpoint discussions in which Inuit issues were a central concern rather than of peripheral interest or part of broader issues (Indigenous issues as a whole, for example). As defined by the online archive, an intervention is an uninterrupted speech made by a member of parliament or an outside participant. The archive includes all interventions from members of parliament and outside participants asked to testify in front of the committee. We excluded all interventions from members of parliament to retain only those made by outside participants. These participants were civil society leaders, bureaucrats, or experts sharing their perspectives on policy matters.

We then retrieved these textual elements from an *R* data file to conduct our analyses. *R* is an open-licensed data analysis language that allows access to a wide range of packages providing specific functions for certain types of analysis. For our purposes, we used two packages specifically designed for text analysis and text mining: *tm* (Feinerer and Hornik 2019) and *tidytext* (Silge and Robinson 2016).<sup>3</sup> The *tidytext* package was used to measure the frequency of words in the corpus and determine the correlation between words using a pairwise correlation algorithm.

Once the data was loaded into the *R* software, we created two corpora to conduct comparative analyses: one corpus containing all the discussions held during the 41st Parliament and another containing all the discussions held during the 42nd Parliament. These corpora were then cleaned and processed in preparation for subsequent analyses.

We first conducted sentiment analyses to estimate the extent to which the statements made in the committee sessions were positive or negative. This analysis was produced using the *tidytext* package, which has a function that works by retaining the significant words in a text and comparing each of them to words in a specialized dictionary that associates either a positive or negative feeling (BING dictionary) or an emotion score ranging from 5 (very positive) to -5 (very negative) (AFFIN dictionary) with each word. Then the package simply determines the mode of the identified emotion (BING dictionary) or sums up the scores associated with each word (AFFIN). For the purposes of our analysis, we used these two methods.

We then conducted descriptive analyses that allowed us to determine the number of days the committees sat, and the number of interventions per day, per caucus, and per participants. These analyses were done using usual descriptive statistics techniques (e.g., frequency, max, min, mean) and we did not require

any specific packages. We were also able to determine the length of interventions according to participants. The descriptive analysis generated observations as to the identity of participants in the committee sessions and the intensity of their participation. Our descriptive analyses also focused on the words contained in the transcripts. We first looked at the frequency of different words to uncover themes and ideas that were central to the discussions.

Further, using the *tm* package we carried out analyses of association to explore in more detail the themes present in the participants' interventions. The package does not seek to understand which words are juxtaposed to one another (for example: "development" and "sustainable"), but rather to constitute what is known as a term-document matrix. This matrix makes it possible to see which words are present in which documents. In our case, it was a matter of identifying which words were present in which interventions. On that basis, a statistical correlation analysis allowed us to determine which words were associated across the various interventions. For example, if we observed a correlation of 0.9 between "service" and "children," this means that in 90% of the interventions, we found the words "service" and "children," indicating that the theme of children's services was an important one. Association analysis therefore allows us to confirm and refine the observations from the descriptive analysis.

Finally, this association analysis led us to a word-network analysis on which we based our cluster analysis. The graph network, which was drawn using *igraph* (Csardi and Nepusz 2006), explicitly shows how words are connected to one another and how they are forming specific clusters.<sup>4</sup> We used "betweenness" scores (which represent how much a word is associated with other words) assuming that the more a word is associated with others, the more predominant it is in defining a theme.<sup>5</sup> Using the *igraph* package's functions, we were able to determine specific clusters of words. We then used each member of a cluster betweenness score and summed them up to reveal which topics were predominant in the participants' interventions. These three types of analyses (descriptive, association, and cluster) provided a solid analysis of the themes and facilitated data interpretation.

All the techniques we used allow us to better understand the themes that emerge from the texts we analyzed. We used more than one technique to measure the links between words, in order to ensure the validity of our conclusions. The results of the different techniques are never identical, but they are complementary and allow us to bring out the major themes and to better understand the text. Together, these techniques allowed us to test our two hypotheses and to answer our two research questions. As for sentiment analysis, it provides additional insight into the other techniques and allows us to confirm our second hypothesis, thus answering our second research question.

It is important to note that our text is essentially based on a quantitative textual analysis. We did not use a qualitative method in conjunction with our quantitative analysis. However, the results, as explained in the next section on the limitations of our methodology, have been interpreted in light of the social, political, and economic context in which they are situated. This is a context with which we are very familiar, and one that is common in quantitative methodology.

The use of NLP, like any other methodology, has certain limitations that are important to consider. First, current techniques, although they have evolved a lot in the last few years, can still not really discern the tone of a text. The algorithms still have a lot of difficulty distinguishing the differences whether the text is sarcastic or ironic or sincere. Furthermore, as Kwartler points out, NLP “does not reveal an absolute truth contained within text. Just as an average reduces information for consumption of large set of numbers, text mining will reduce information” (Kwartler 2017: 7). Also, the statistical techniques used in NLP all contain margins of error that at some point can mislead the analyst and the reader about the meaning of the text. It is therefore essential to analyze the text using more than one statistical analysis technique, in order to verify if the conclusions drawn with one technique are confirmed by the other. In addition, NLP analysis relies heavily on the use of graphs. These graphs can sometimes be misleading, which is why Kwartler suggests “they should be used in conjunction with other methods to confirm the correctness of a conclusion” (Kwartler 2017: 9). Finally, another limitation of NLP analysis is that it is context specific (Sarkar 2016). Therefore, the analyst must know and understand the context to properly interpret the results he or she obtains.

Taking these limitations into account, we carried out an analysis to understand the content of a discourse through its observable trends. This indicated the main themes emerging from the text. We did not attempt to determine the tone of a text, except in terms of whether the discourse was generally positive or negative. We return to this below. Also, keeping in mind the limitations of statistical techniques and the misleading effect of some graphs, we made a point of using more than one technique to confirm the findings of other techniques, just as we also used more than one form of graph to confirm our findings. Finally, our interpretation of the data was based on our knowledge of the field and according to the context in which the analyzed speeches were situated.

A final limitation that we must mention concerns the sentiment analysis. We wanted to know whether the comments made during the debates were positive or negative. However, what is negative or positive is most certainly culturally defined and is most certainly rooted in the values of a society. For example, what Conservatives consider to be negative, may be considered positive by Liberals. We are aware of this limitation and for this reason we recognize that our sentiment

analysis must be contextualized. Recall that to conduct this analysis we rely on two types of dictionaries that have been developed by American and European research teams and that associate (after extensive research) a positive, negative, or neutral value to each word. The sum of each of these values allows us to determine whether a text is more positive or negative. We do not claim that this analysis reveals absolutely whether the tone of the debates we analyze is positive or negative. Instead, we have contextualized the results of the sentiment analyses and demonstrated how these results can be misleading at first glance, and how in fact they are more indicative of the themes addressed in the analyzed speeches than of the actual tone of the speeches delivered.

## **Analysis**

Before delving deeper into our analysis, it is necessary to consider the context in which Inuit issues and ideas have been addressed in parliamentary committees during the 41st and 42nd Parliaments.

### *Number of Sitting Days per Parliament*

Parliamentary committees dealing with Inuit issues worked between June 2011 and August 2015 for the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament and between December 2015 and September 2019 for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. As a result, parliamentary committees during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament were in session for a shorter period of time than during the previous parliament. In fact, while the parliamentary committees during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament were able to work for more than 1,300 days, these committees only worked for about 1,200 days during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. On the other hand, the number of participants increased during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. Indeed, during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament fifty-eight participants were invited to parliamentary committees compared to seventy-four participants during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. It should be pointed out that only seven participants from the 41<sup>st</sup> legislature were invited again during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, which shows that a diversity of voices was heard on parliamentary committees.

### *Number of Interventions per Day per Parliament*

Apart from the differences previously noted in the number of committees' working days during the two parliaments, the number of interventions per day differs from one parliament to another. During the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, interventions were more numerous at the beginning, between 2012 and 2013, totalling almost 150 interventions per day (see figure 1). Thereafter, interventions declined considerably and stagnated to an average of around ten interventions per day. As for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, the number of interventions was particularly high at both the beginning and end of the parliament. In contrast to the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament,

the number of interventions throughout the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament was stable overall, although there was some decline between 2017 and 2018.

#### *Number of Interventions per Day, Caucuses and Participants*

When we compare the interventions on Inuit issues made by caucus members and participants in parliamentary committees in both the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments, participants appeared to be much more involved, as shown in figures 2 and 3. This trend persists from one parliament to another, although at times, and more specifically in 2017 and 2019 for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, there is a certain similarity in the number of interventions by caucus members and participants.

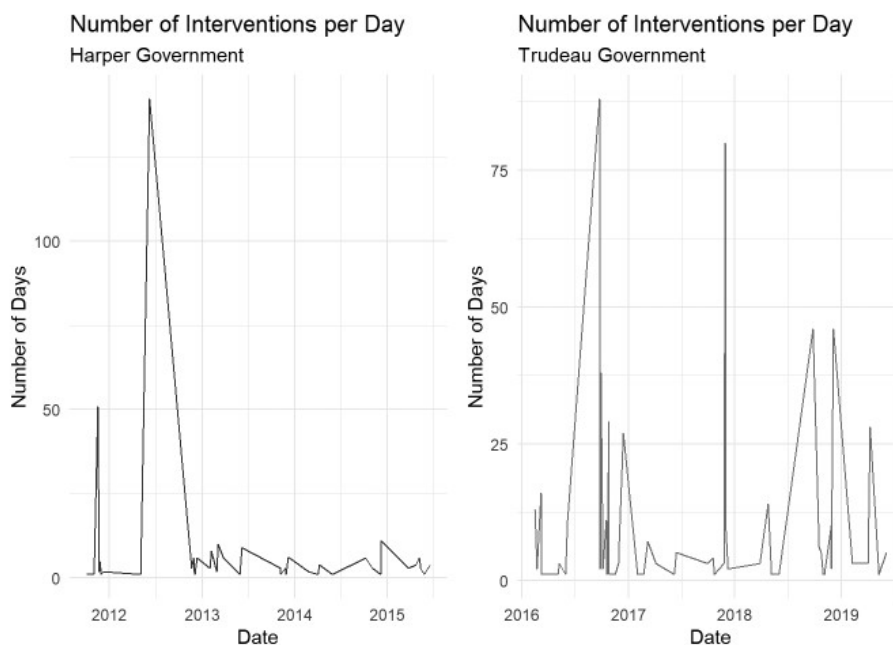


Figure 1. Number of interventions per day per parliament. By authors.

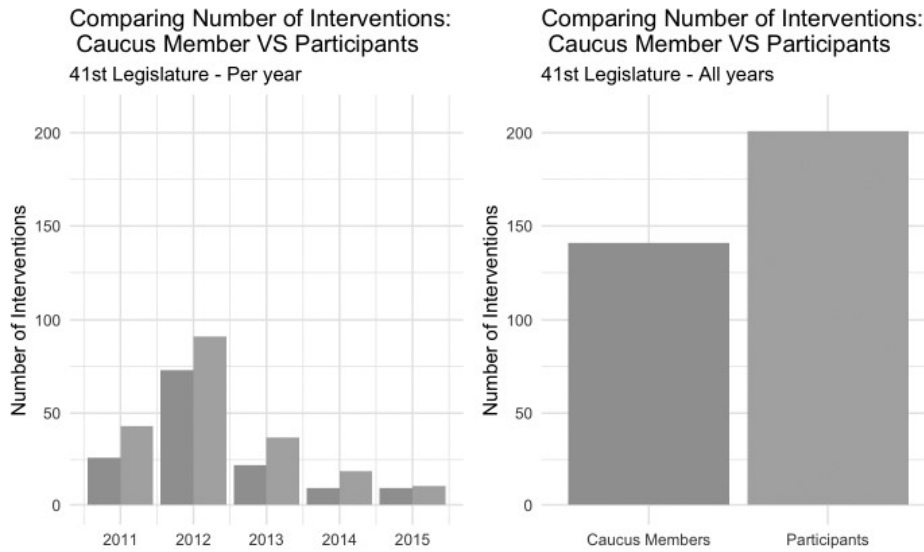


Figure 2. Comparison of interventions by caucus members and participants (41st Parliament). By authors.

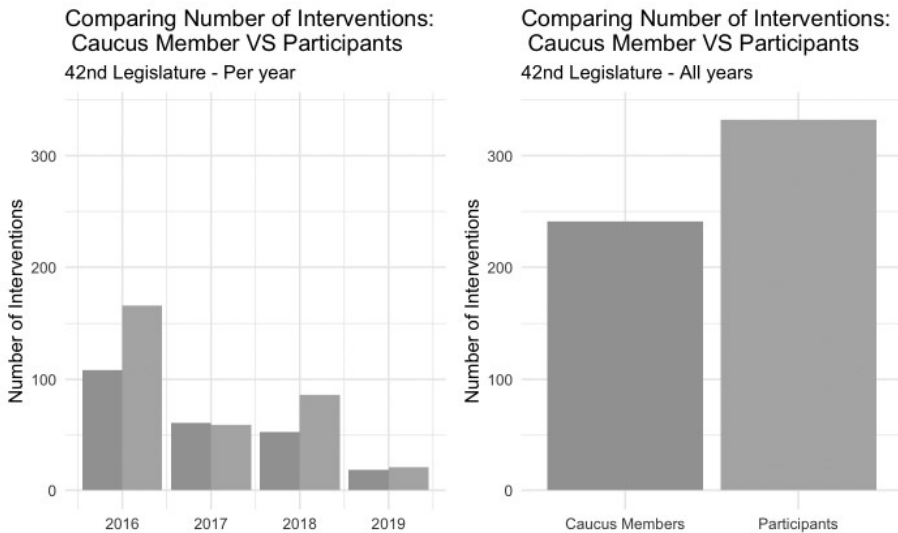


Figure 3. Comparison of interventions by caucus members and participants (42nd Parliament). By Authors.

### *Length of Interventions in Parliamentary Committees*

Upon further analysis of the interventions, particularly regarding their length, our results reveal that the interventions of the parliamentary committees for the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament vary between 38 and 17,547 words with an average of 1,435 words per intervention. In the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament the number of words per intervention was generally around 500 to 1,250 words. Thus, although interventions tended to be more extensive in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, on average the number of words used per intervention is similar in the two parliaments. Figure 4 shows that there was a greater dispersion in the number of interventions in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, where many speakers spoke little, and some monopolized the floor to some extent.

### *Inuit and Non-Inuit Voices in Parliamentary Committees*

Committees during the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments relied on numerous external experts to provide members with evidence and information about questions debated. These experts were typically public servants, corporate leaders, civil society representatives, or citizens. For our purposes, we retained only the interventions of those experts discussing or providing evidence on issues directly affecting Inuit people across different parliamentary committees.

The 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments display significant differences in the identity of experts called to testify, as can be observed in table 1. It is worth noting that, although the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament was in session for fewer days than the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, committees called upon a greater number of participants. As well, Inuit voices were allocated more time and space to share their perspective during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. In the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, Inuit issues were mostly described and presented by non-Inuit stakeholders, with most of them coming from the federal public service and the corporate sector. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament listened to traditional Inuit organizations, such as representatives from Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. who were also called upon during the previous parliament. However, the scope of participants was expanded to include more Inuit voices, such as Iqaluit mayor Madeleine Redfern, Inuit artists Lucy Tulugarjuk and Laakkuluk Williamson Bathory, and the president of the National Inuit Youth Council, Maatalii Okalik.

All these participants were also women; committees addressing Inuit issues reached a gender balance in witnesses. This greater female representation is particularly observed in the number of female Inuit participants. Hence, the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament placed a particular emphasis on hearing from more diverse voices and directly from constituent groups (here, Inuit people).



It is important to look at the time allocated to participants to assess if Inuit participants were invited to give the impression of increased diversity and inclusiveness or if they were assigned a significant role and given sufficient time to present their perspectives. Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament were allocated less time to speak compared to non-Inuit participants (259 words on average for Inuit, 389 words on average for non-Inuit). This gap was addressed during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament when Inuit witnesses on average spoke 311 words to 334 words for non-Inuit actors.

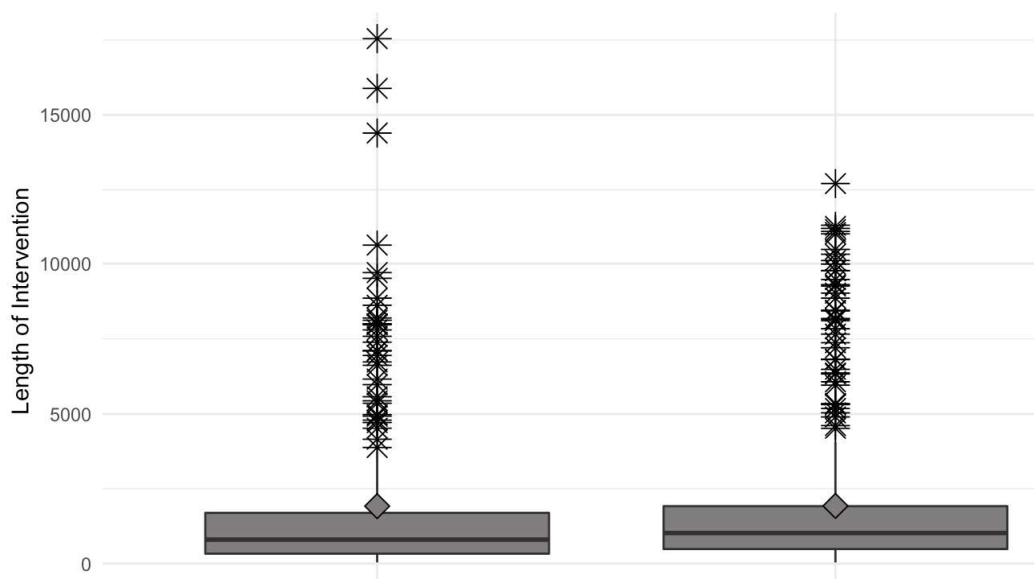


Figure 4. Length of interventions per participant. By authors.

Table I. Number and type of participants on parliamentary committees addressing Inuit issues. By authors.

	41 <sup>st</sup> Parliament	42 <sup>nd</sup> Parliament
Number of different participants	58	73
% of participants who are Inuit or from Inuit organizations	36%	60%
% of participants who are non-Inuit public servants	34%	14%
% of participants who are non-Inuit corporate representatives	16%	1%
% of participants who are non-Inuit civil society representatives	10%	19%
% of participants who are women	31%	49%
% of participants who are Inuit women	16%	34%

Knowing that Inuit voices were better represented in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament does not provide information as to the nature of the messages or whether they provided radically different perspectives than non-Inuit witnesses. Hence, we must analyze the nature of their interventions to better describe issues and perspectives presented by Inuit and non-Inuit participants.

## **Comparing Inuit and Non-Inuit Voices**

### *Looking at Participants' Tones*

To compare what has been said in committees, we first ran a sentiment analysis to contrast the tone of the discussion from Inuit and non-Inuit participants. As mentioned in the methodology section, we used two measures to account for that tone: one based on the BING dictionary and the other one on the AFINN dictionary. Table 2 shows the results of our analysis.

Both sets of measures in table 2 indicate that the tone of the interventions in committees was generally positive, although non-Inuit participants seem to generally adopt a more positive tone than Inuit participants. It is also surprising to see that discussions seemed noticeably less positive (and a bit more negative) during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, with an AFINN score as low as 0.4467 for Inuit participants.

These first observations lead us to believe that the Inuit participants' interventions are more negative than those of non-Inuit participants, even more so during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. However, when we contextualize our analysis, we see that the slightly more negative tone of Inuit participants is not so much linked to a negative attitude towards the federal government or the parliament, nor is it a reflection of tensed relations between the federal government and Inuit communities. What our next analyses reveal is that the negativity aspect of the interventions reflects the issues addressed by the participants. Indeed, Inuit participants addressed more social issues (e.g., suicide, isolation), while non-Inuit participants focused more on economic development issues that usually bear a more positive tone. Further, non-Inuit participants were, for the most part, corporate spokespersons and senior public servants. These participants were presenting their accomplishments, achievements, and deliverables, casting these in a positive light.

Table 2. Sentiment analysis results. By Authors.

		BING		AFINN
41 <sup>st</sup> Parliament	Inuit	Positive	69%	0.7153
		Negative	31%	
	Non-Inuit	Positive	72%	0.8372
		Negative	28%	
42 <sup>nd</sup> Parliament	Inuit	Positive	61%	0.4467
		Negative	39%	
	Non-Inuit	Positive	68%	0.8219
		Negative	32%	

## Issues Addressed by the Participants

### *Inuit Participants During the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament*

Figure 5 shows the results of our frequency and association analyses of Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament. The frequency analysis reveals that the development of the Nunavut and the Arctic region was of a great concern for Inuit participants. This development was seen through the lens of “resources,” “education,” and “health.” The association analysis allows us to refine this first observation.

Table 3 shows the words that were most associated with other words, indicating which ideas were predominant during these interventions. It is interesting to note that, although these words are central in terms of association analysis, they were not as predominant with regards to their frequency. This does not negate the results of the frequency analysis; on the contrary, it refines this analysis, clarifying in which context the development of Nunavut and the Arctic took place in terms of main topics.

The importance of word betweenness makes sense when contextualized with the clusters to which they belong. Table 3 accounts for these clusters as revealed in our analysis. For each cluster, we indicated the sum of each member’s betweenness score (which represents how much a word is associated with other words). This revealed which topic was predominant in the Inuit participants’ interventions.

At first glance, figure 5 shows three main clusters of associated words: one related to the rights of Inuit in the Circumpolar North region (C6), another related to mining operations in Lake Baker (C1), and a larger one, requiring deeper analysis. Table 4 shows that this larger cluster can be split into four clusters. These clusters represent distinct topics that yet remain linked to one another. Therefore, as we can see, the term “agreement” along with training and education for mining resource operations constituted the most predominant theme here (C5). Given

that the term training is also linked to “economic,” we understand that Inuit participants were concerned with having the necessary training and education to take part in mining operations to help further their own economic development.

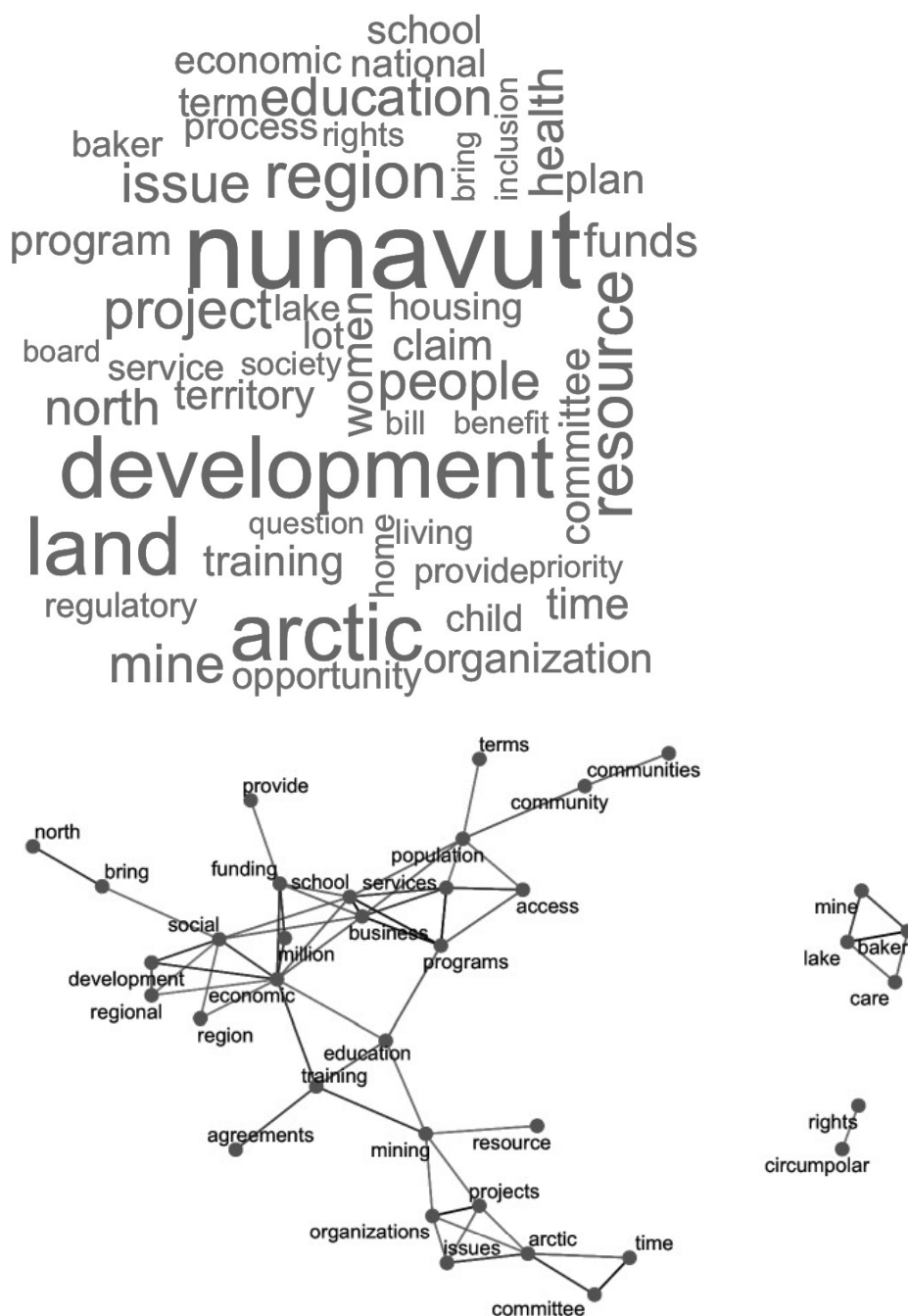


Figure 5. Frequency and association measure of Inuit participants, 41st Parliament. By authors.

Table 3. 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament Inuit participants' interventions word betweenness. By Authors.

Words	Betweenness
economic	350
mining	320
education	210
population	168
training	163
social	136
school	110
business	110
arctic	108
programs	99.9

Table 4. 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament Inuit participants' word clusters and betweenness scores. By Authors.

Clusters	Words	Score
C1	lake, baker, mine, care	2
C2	projects, organizations, committee, time, Arctic, issues	300
C3	school, business, services, programs, access, population, community, communities, terms	574
C4	development, economic, social, north, bring, million, funding, regional provide, region	607
C5	training, mining, agreement, education, resource	693
C6	circumpolar, rights	0

It comes as no surprise that the second most predominant theme (C4) is related to the development of the North both in terms of social and economic development. Here, participants insisted on the necessity of sufficient funding to provide the region with the funds needed to sustain that development. It is worth noting that this topic is linked to both the necessity of training and education (C5) and to the third cluster (C3), which is concerned with business education programs. Inuit participants discussed access to programs and services for their communities and their population. The training and education cluster (C5) is also linked to the second cluster (C2), which relates to committees and organizations that developed projects to tackle issues affecting the Arctic region.

All in all, what our analysis reveals is that the most pressing topic is C5, which focuses on training and education related to resources and mining. However, the more central theme is C4, which confirms the frequency analysis. We conclude that the main concerns of Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> parliament revolved around the necessity of education and training programs to improve the economic development in the Arctic region. This was obviously not their sole concern, as we already established, but it constituted a main focus of the overall Inuit participants' interventions.

#### *Non-Inuit Participants During the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament*

Figure 6 shows that the words most frequently used by non-Inuit participants in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament were “project,” “Nunavut,” “drug,” “health,” and “economic,” a list to which can be added the less frequently used words “resources,” “environment,” and “services.” This suggests that two main themes emerged from their interventions. The first related to economic projects in the North and Nunavut, and the second related to drug use and health issues. As for the other lighter-coloured words—and therefore less frequent in usage—the association analysis will give us a better indication of the themes in which they are contextualized.

As in the previous section, the words with the highest betweenness scores do not stand out as the most frequent. However, this does not necessarily indicate that there is a contradiction between the two analyses, as was also noted in the previous section, since the words with the highest betweenness scores align well with the two general themes of economic development and drug use and health issues (see table 5). The association analysis allows us to see how these words are contextualized in relation to one another and confirms our preliminary observations.

**Table 5. 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament non-Inuit participants' interventions word betweenness. By Authors.**

Words	Betweenness
strategy	1483
Yukon	1218
risk	1100
mental	1072
services	972
potential	928
support	599
students	464
opportunity	458
nations	392

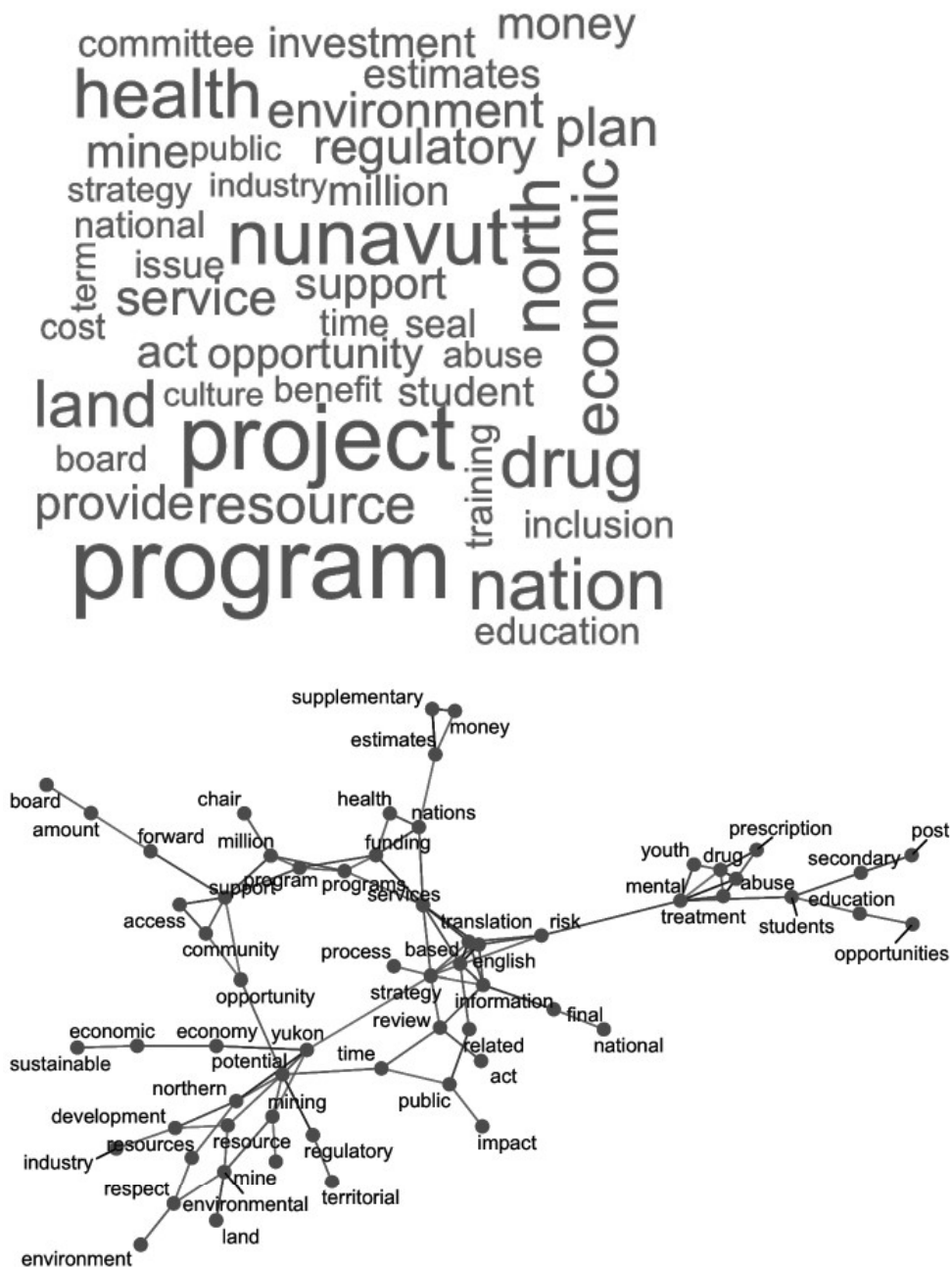


Figure 6. Frequency and association measure of non-Inuit participants, 41st Parliament. By authors.

Table 6 reveals that eight clusters of words can be identified, each forming distinct themes. However, as illustrated by the word association graph in figure 6, unlike the Inuit participants' interventions, there is a very high degree of centrality among the themes here. In other words, although the observed word connections can be statistically divided into different themes, the apparent centrality of the graph indicates that these themes all remain conceptually related to each other.

Thus, as Table 6 indicates, the first cluster of words (C1) refers to the need to develop a strategy to obtain translation services between English and Inuktitut so that information can be shared and received effectively with Inuit. Here, we are talking about language issues related to the legislative process and the recognition of the use of languages in legislation.

The second cluster (C2) relates to the need for additional funding for health programs in the North. It is interesting to note the proximity of C1 and C2 in the graph, indicating the importance of having access to translation services from and into English in the delivery of health programs. In this regard, one can also note the proximity of cluster C1 to cluster C3, which deals with treatment, mental health, and prescription drug abuse issues, which still are salient issues in northern communities. It is therefore important to understand that the non-Inuit participants stressed the importance of having the necessary funding to be able to communicate efficiently with Inuit communities with regard to health services. This idea is reinforced by the direct link between cluster C1 and cluster C7, which highlights the importance of time and the impact of services on the public. It is therefore understandable that the need to be able to communicate well with the community (C1) plays a role in the nature of the relationship with the public (C7).

**Table 6. 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament non-Inuit participants' word clusters and betweenness scores.**  
By Authors.

Clusters	Words	Score
C1	English, translation, based, services, final, information, risk, review, act, strategy, national, process	4791
C2	supplementary, estimates, funding, money, million, nations, program, health, programs, chair	1594
C3	abuse, treatment, mental, drug, prescription, youth	1192
C4	Yukon, northern, potential, regulatory, land, environmental, development, mining, territorial, respect, environment, resources, resource, industry, mine	3739
C5	economy, economic, sustainable	356
C6	support, access, forward, community, opportunity, board, amount	1941
C7	public, related, time, impact	527
C8	students, secondary, post, opportunities, education	704



Clusters C4 and C5 are also closely related. The first (C4) deals with economic development in the Yukon<sup>6</sup> and the northern territories and the necessity to have regulations that allow the development of the territory (mining and other resource industries) in an environmentally friendly manner. The second cluster (C5) emphasizes the idea of a sustainable economy. Thus, there exists a statistical proximity in the graph, reflecting a conceptual proximity between developing the territory's resources in an environmentally friendly manner and creating a sustainable economy. Finally, the sixth cluster (C6) translates into a theme relating to the need for support so that the community has access to many opportunities to move forward. This cluster holds the most meaning: the graph of associations between the words in figure 6 shows how close C6 is to C5, C2, and C4. It is therefore natural to infer that the opportunities hoped for in C6 were related to the sustainable economy and resource exploitation of the northern territories (particularly in the Yukon). The proximity to C2 illustrates the need expressed for more funding to develop programs that would provide these opportunities.

Finally, the betweenness scores found in table 6 show the relative importance of the themes in relation to one another. As can be seen in the figure, theme C1 is the most central, followed by C4, C6, and C2. These observations confirm our observations of word frequency: two major themes emerged in the interventions of non-Inuit participants during the 41st Parliament, namely economic project development and health and drug abuse issues. However, the association analysis allows us to refine these conclusions by showing the importance of being able to communicate in English with northern communities.

#### *Inuit Participants During the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament*

The word cloud in figure 7 indicates that the most frequent words used by Inuit participants during the 42nd Parliament were “community,” “people,” “Nunavut,” and, less frequently, “child,” “women,” “culture,” “living,” “land,” “society,” and “health.” From this analysis of word frequencies, a great concern for the well-being of northern communities, especially for women and children, emerges. The issue of culture and life on the land also appeared to be a concern for Inuit participants.

When we look at the betweenness scores of the words of the Inuit participants' interventions during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament (table 7), we can discern some overlap between these words and the most frequent ones. However, as can be seen from the word cloud figure, the words with the highest betweenness scores are far from being the most frequent. As explained in the previous sections, this does not mean that the two analyses are contradictory. Indeed, the most central words (betweenness score) all related to issues of community well-being and health. We see, for example, that the issue of suicides and mental health was salient, which is consistent with the conclusions found in the literature (Savard 2017).



Table 7. 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament Inuit participants' interventions word betweenness. By Authors.

Words	Betweenness
abuse	1255
education	1214
health	1128
care	858
youth	818
lives	767
women	674
individual	358
suicide	334
mental	296

Once again, we will focus on the clusters of words revealed by our association analysis (table 8). Here we find ten different clusters, five of which are isolated from the others. Cluster C4 relates to the arts and spaces of art production. Cluster C10 deals with the recommendations of a report that are addressed. Cluster C8 forms a theme in which the participants requested and proposed a plan for a research infrastructure. Cluster C9 focuses on the challenges of the role of board members, and, finally, cluster C7 addresses understanding between humans and between nations. The presence of these small themes shows that during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, the interventions of the Inuit participants were thematically fragmented.

The other five clusters were considered separately, but the word association graph in figure 7 shows that they are still statistically related. For example, Cluster C1 focuses on family violence issues in northern homes. This cluster is primarily related to C5, which identifies issues of community crisis, abuse, mental health, housing, and the need to heal, with investments to support programs and strategies to do so. It is not surprising, in this sense, that C5 is directly related to C3, the interventions of which addressed the lack of services and care in the communities while emphasizing the need for resources for this care, but also for education and other programs specific to the lives of young people in the communities. Cluster C3 is itself directly related to cluster C6, which focuses on the prevention of suicide and trauma caused by residential schools, while emphasizing the importance of language and Elders in suicide prevention. Finally, cluster C2 focuses on the place of women by emphasizing their social and cultural role in Inuit communities. This cluster, of which women are the central element, also addresses the issue of employment priorities for women and the need to ensure a safe environment for them.

Table 8. 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament Inuit participants' word clusters and betweenness scores.  
By authors.

Clusters	Words	Score
C1	Violence, rates, rate, homes, provide, families	546
C2	Pauktuutit, women, culturally, southern, access, employment, safe, priorities, social, north	1259
C3	care, education, family, resources, lack, services, lives, youth, hard, communities, specific	4119
C4	arts, performing, space, artists	8
C5	crisis, healing, individuals, investment, abuse, housing, mental, health, action, talk, continue, society, programs, strategy, develop	3462
C6	prevention, trauma, suicide, school, residential, individual, person, language, elders	1408
C7	understanding, human, nations	3
C8	research, infrastructure, plan	2
C9	difficult, board, role	2
C10	recommendations, report, relationship, address, created	20

Table 8 shows that, according to the betweenness scores, cluster C3 is the most central, followed by C5, followed by C6 to C3 and C2 to C5 and C1. More concretely, what we learn from our analysis is that, together, clusters C6, C3, and C5 show the salience of the theme of community well-being, and this theme is reinforced by the link between C1 and C5. Cluster C2 also touches on these aspects (the role of women in communities), but also shows that employability issues were relatively important. However, it is difficult to see how the small, fragmented themes can be linked to this overall picture. In fact, what must be concluded here is that during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, the interventions of the Inuit participants largely focused on issues of community health and well-being, although a few other more secondary themes were also addressed.

#### *Non-Inuit Participants During the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament*

The word cloud in figure 8 shows that the most frequent words in the interventions of non-Inuit participants during the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament were “community,” “program,” “service,” “people,” and “nation” and, to a lesser extent, “development,” “department,” “suicide,” “provide,” “Nunavut,” and “north.” These words suggest that non-Inuit participants were concerned about issues relating to the well-being of northern communities and Nunavut, particularly with respect to suicides, and the services that may be provided to the population by the government.



Table 9. 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament non-Inuit participants' interventions word betweenness. By Authors.

Words	Betweenness
funding	767
outcomes	567
drug	519
activities	505
social	439
Indian	416
prevention	303
based	289
strategy	253
youth	218

Table 10 shows that our association analysis identified six clusters of words, only one of which is isolated from the others. Cluster C1 deals with the theme of the protection and conservation of marine species. Not only is this theme statistically unrelated to the others, but it is also conceptually entirely distinct from the others. The most central cluster is C3, whose constituent words form a theme related to wellness and the suicide prevention and mental health program for youth in schools. There are also funding requests for training to provide support and resources to suicidal people. This also includes requests for funding for youth education. Cluster C3 is directly related to cluster C6, which makes recommendations for implementing actions that address the challenges of suicide prevention (hence the link between C6 and C3). C3 is also directly linked to C5, whose theme suggests the implementation of key programs offering activities and information to set up mental health training, but also for youth who are dealing with mental health problems or suicidal thoughts. This last element constitutes the link between C3 and C5.

Cluster C2 reflects a theme related to administrative requirements—it includes the need for budgets for translation from or into Inuktitut, the need for data on rates of substance use, and the relevance of a national strategy for Indigenous communities as well as for northern non-Indigenous communities. Not surprisingly, C2 is closely linked to C5, which also focuses on administrative elements. Finally, C4 relates to a two-dimensional theme, namely the oral health needs of children, the need for dental plans and administrative elements related to these needs and services (hence the words “audit,” “report,” “territorial”). Cluster C4 is also directly related to both C5 and C2 but primarily comprises words that reflect the administrative dimensions of community well-being.

Table 10. 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament non-Inuit participants' word clusters and betweenness scores.  
By Authors.

Clusters	Words	Score
C1	conservation, protected, marine	0
C2	translation, English, Indian, strategy, medical, data, drug, rate, national, million, public, nations	1452
C3	wellness, funding, mental, school, prevention, social, youth, suicide, health, based, education, life, support, talk, resources, training	2403
C4	outcomes, dental, oral, plans, territorial, audit, department, report, children, territories, service	1102
C5	activities, provided, program, programs, information, benefits, key, services	803
C6	recommendations, action, challenges	190

The betweenness scores in table 10 clearly indicate that C3 is the most central theme, followed by C2 and C4, confirming that the interventions of non-Inuit participants cluster around two main themes, namely community well-being and administrative elements related to this well-being. As for C5 and C6, which are less central, the word association graph in figure 8 clearly shows that they are linked to C3, first, and then in the case of C5, it is also linked to C4 and C2, thus reinforcing the two major themes observed. This leaves only C1, which is completely isolated and is simply a secondary and less important theme compared to the two major themes identified.

## Conclusion

This research proposed answering two empirical research questions: 1. What differences can be observed in the representation of Inuit issues between Inuit and non-Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments? 2. Does changing the government have an impact on the way Inuit issues are considered in parliament? To answer these questions, we formulated two hypotheses: 1. Inuit and non-Inuit actors have different interests in public policy and therefore propose different representations of Indigenous issues in the North. 2. The change from a Conservative to a Liberal government brought about a change in values and ideas that led to a change in the discourse of actors regarding Indigenous issues in the North.

With respect to the first research question, we note that in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, Inuit participants were mainly concerned with education and economic development issues, while non-Inuit participants were mostly concerned with the

development of economic projects, but also with health and drug abuse issues. Some other smaller themes emerged from the Inuit participants' interventions, as we have observed, but they are not central. There is therefore a certain convergence between the representation of Inuit and non-Inuit participants on issues affecting northern communities, but this convergence is focused on economic development. In the social sphere, Inuit participants remained more concerned with education issues and non-Inuit participants remained more concerned with health and drug abuse issues.

Furthermore, when comparing the participants' interventions in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, a similar convergence emerged: Inuit participants emphasized their concerns for the health and well-being of their communities, concerns that were also expressed by non-Inuit participants. However, we have seen that the Inuit participants' interventions also addressed a set of other themes that were not echoed by non-Inuit participants. In addition, non-Inuit participants placed a great deal of emphasis on administrative considerations related to programs aimed at the well-being of the communities, concerns that did not really emerge from the Inuit participants' interventions.

It is also interesting to note the differences between the two parliaments. The theme of economic development was central for Inuit and non-Inuit participants in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament but was not as prominent in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. For Inuit participants, education issues were much more important in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament, while health and wellness issues received most of the attention in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament. Non-Inuit participants expressed concerns about the health and well-being of northern communities in the two parliaments, but the issue of economic development was more important in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament. Finally, it should be noted that the issue of the challenges of communicating in English came up in the interventions of non-Inuit participants in both parliaments, but these concerns did not seem to resonate with Inuit participants.

By putting into perspective all the themes that emerged from the interventions of Inuit and non-Inuit participants during the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliaments, we can confirm the preliminary conclusions of our sentiment analysis. The more negative scores of Inuit participants are not related to a negative attitude on their part towards Parliament or the federal government, but they are related to statements that address the social problems experienced by Inuit communities. On the other hand, since Inuit participants in the 41<sup>st</sup> Parliament addressed economic development issues (which are generally more positive in nature) and focused much more on themes related to social problems in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament, we can confirm that the negative sentiment score among Inuit participants in the 42<sup>nd</sup>



Parliament can be explained by the themes they addressed in their interventions. All of the conclusions drawn from our analysis confirm our first hypothesis.

With respect to the second research question, this study confirms the Trudeau Government's more inclusive approach towards Inuit people were not mere statements, but that Inuit leaders were actually granted more time to present their perspectives. Of course, having a seat at the table and influencing decision makers are two substantially different outcomes to measure. While this article solely tackled the former, the objective was to provide a solid foundation to assess the latter: were issues raised during these committee interventions addressed? Did they influence decision makers and affect their priority list or strategy? While these questions were outside the purview of this article, we hope fellow scholars consider investigating these interrogations.

All in all, Inuit issues were defined differently in the two parliaments. As was presented previously, this reality had more to do with the northern agenda of the governing parties than the inclusion of Inuit participants. Inuit and non-Inuit participants tackled similar themes during these respective parliaments, which suggests that the control of the agenda by the governing party greatly influenced Inuit and non-Inuit participants alike. This influence is manifest when considering the themes of mining and resource development under the Harper government. Participants adapted to address both of the government's priorities on northern resources and local concerns (training and education, for example). This suggests an adaptive strategy by Inuit leaders to link their concerns to the governing party's agenda, rather than implement a strategy of opposition or resistance.

The slightly more negative tone adopted by Inuit participants is also indicative of a government more open to listening to stakeholders but also to recognizing its own (current or historical) wrongdoings. The inclusion of new and diverse voices, especially Inuit ones, means that the governing party exposes itself to greater criticism. We argue that this does not in itself constitute a negative phenomenon. On the contrary, this openness allowed the governing party to have a more representative sample of the aspirations and priorities of the communities directly impacted by public policies. This information can in turn more accurately inform decision making and ensure an evidence-based policy-making process. Hence, humility is in order for the governing party to accept criticisms and build better solutions.

Again, all our conclusions with respect to our second research question confirm our second hypotheses. Hence, we claim that our analysis shows that Inuit and non-Inuit actors' participation in parliamentary committees is used as an opportunity to dominate the narrative regarding Inuit issues and, consequently, set the policy agenda of the North. In addition, our analysis clearly shows that

a change of government brings with it a set of new ideas and values that pave the way for the imposition of new issues on the political agenda. The shift from a discourse based primarily on economic issues to one based primarily on social issues is the most obvious evidence of this.

## Notes

1. The first tour (2006) illustrates the intensity of the commitment. At the same time, an international conference on HIV/AIDS was held in Toronto and invited the prime minister to deliver an address. Stephen Harper decided against attending the AIDS conference and toured all three northern territories instead.
2. The ITK is the main national organization representing Inuit living in Canada, most of whom live in Nunavut, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (Northwest Territories), Nunavik (Quebec), and Nunatsiavut (Labrador).
3. To produce the results we needed, we used the *tm* package to tokenize the corpus on a word-basis and to create a term-document matrix that was then used with other functions from other packages.
4. The iGraph package offers several ways to draw graphs. In our case, we use a series of tables containing the results of the pairwise correlation analysis performed earlier. From these tables, iGraph extracted vertices and edges for a graph network and drew the graph using the Reingold-Tilford graph layout algorithm. We chose that specific algorithm because it was the more optimal to see our word clusters.
5. The igraph package estimates the betweenness from the number of shortest paths going through a vertex or an edge (Csardi and Nepusz 2006: 156).
6. Economic development in the Yukon can affect Inuit communities in different ways, so this why this topic appears in the discussion.

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