

Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's  
Legislative Assemblies

**REPORT 2**

**Survey of Speakers about  
'Misinformation' Rulings in  
Canada's Legislative Assemblies**

**Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M.**

Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa

President, Information Research Board

<http://wellar.ca/informationresearch/>

Ottawa, Canada  
February 14, 2021

## **A. Introduction to Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies**

Report 1, [Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#) was posted January 25, 2021.

Report 2 presents the materials sent to Speakers. It was decided to limit this report to the communications to Speakers because it is anticipated that it could take some weeks before receiving the responses from or on behalf of Speakers. This way report 2 is available for interested readers in Canada and abroad at the earliest moment.

## **B. Speakers of Canada's Legislative Assemblies**

The Speakers of Canada's 15 legislative assemblies are identified in Table 1.

Survey communications are initially directed to Speakers, who in turn may delegate responsibility for the responses.

Since this is my first research venture into the domain of the Speakers of Canada's legislative assemblies, I have no personal experience to call on when it comes to expressing the statement of problem, presenting background material, phrasing issues, or posing questions which are sensitive to the role of Speakers in guiding and sometimes directing the conduct and discourse of members of legislative assemblies.

Further, I do not know of anyone who has undertaken research similar to that of this pilot study, nor did I locate any related research in the learned literature, the popular literature, or the corporate/institutional-public literature, which are potential sources of research productions involving Speakers. (Endnote1)

The approach taken under the circumstances was to seek advice from several current and former elected officials, as well as several current and former senior civil servants. Suggestions and advisories include three common themes.

First, there are major differences among legislative assemblies when it comes to the behaviours of members, and the language used to express and oppose positions.

Therefore, in order to better appreciate responses, and in particular nuances particular to a jurisdiction, it would be wise of me to review a selection of original text and video productions reporting on the activities of politicians in legislative assemblies, and the functions and duties of Speakers in Canada's assemblies.

In addition, it would be helpful to review a sampling of Hansard publications with an emphasis on searching out interventions that could be pertinent to the research design

of the current pilot study. Again, there are nuances in presentations and comments by legislative assembly members, and they are uncovered only by examining Hansard.

Their common view is that the role of Speakers in managing the affairs of legislative assemblies involves far greater challenges and levels of attention and rigor than is often depicted in the clips and bites common to many news stories.

**Table 1. Speakers of Canada's Legislative Assemblies**

**Federal Assemblies**

House of Commons: Hon. Anthony Rota

Senate: Hon. George Furey

**Provincial/Territorial Assemblies**

Alberta Legislative Assembly: Hon. Nathan Cooper

British Columbia Legislative Assembly: Hon. Raj Chouhan

Manitoba Legislative Assembly: Hon. Myrna Driedger

New Brunswick Legislative Assembly: Hon. Bill Oliver

Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly: Hon. Scott Reid

Northwest Territory Legislative Assembly: Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.

Nova Scotia House of Assembly: Hon. Kevin Murphy

Nunavut Legislative Assembly: Hon. Paul Quassa

Ontario Legislative Assembly: Hon. Ted Arnott

Prince Edward Island Legislative Assembly: Hon. Colin LaVie

Assemblée nationale du Québec: L'Hon. François Paradis

Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly: Hon. Randy Weekes

Yukon Legislative Assembly: Hon. Nils Clarke

Second, Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Chief Clerks, and other officials associated with the operations of legislative assemblies, including the production of Hansard, are highly professional and extremely knowledgeable.

Consequently, I was advised to make every effort to ensure that my request for participation is deemed worthy of attention. In short, the statement of problem must be, and be seen to be, a matter of substantive public interest.

Then, if that goal is achieved, it is wise to anticipate that whatever questions I ask as a relative lay person may well be graced by responses which are more substantive than the first round of questions themselves. And, that being the case, I should also seize any opportunity to pose more definitive questions as the pilot study proceeds.

Third, since this line of inquiry involving Speakers of legislative assemblies appears to be breaking new ground, it is advisable to have an adaptable research design which allows for changes in questions asked and/or productions sought, and which also has flexibility in terms of how responses are recorded.

As has been noted, this research is very different from what might be termed traditional research in the information field in general, and in the geographic information systems field in particular which underpins a massive proportion of the data contained in the records of all levels of government.

Consequently, in the absence of documentation on precedent research, there is no way of knowing with any degree of certainty how questions will be interpreted, much less how they might be answered.

Moreover, unlike the situation where a prudent lawyer asks questions for which he knows the answers, this pilot study is in uncharted waters. Hence, there is need for flexibility and adaptability as the research design unfolds, and perhaps even need for a major mid-course correction if respondents have issues with the survey instrument.

### **C. Communications to Speakers**

The main body of the communications sent to all Speakers is the same for various reasons, including that of comparability of responses.

However, the communications sent to the Ontario Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker, House of Commons, include references to their contributions in making the decision to proceed with the pilot study.

Those communications follow, and then the report proceeds to the English text used for communications to twelve Speakers, and the French text used for le président, l'Assemblée nationale du Québec. (Endnote 2)

## 1. Email to The Honourable Ted Arnott, Speaker, Ontario Legislative Assembly

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 2:55 PM

**To:** ted.arnott@pc.ola.org

**Cc:** PHatfield-QP@ndp.on.ca

**Subject:** Misinformation Project, Report 1 Speaker Arnott

The Honourable Ted Arnott, MPP, Speaker  
Ontario Legislative Assembly

Dear Speaker Arnott,

I wrote to you previously about the term 'misinformation', and I now write to seek your assistance regarding the project, Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies.

It is my impression that The Speaker of a legislative assembly is a powerful force for improved communications throughout Canada, hence this request.

My research on the topic of 'misinformation' is reaching out to The Speaker of Canada's provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, as well as to The Speaker of the federal House of Commons and Senate.

I am asking Speakers to contribute their expertise and experience to what may be the first study of its kind in Canada, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

By way of brief background, several months ago I published the report, [The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information](#). The Information Research Board (IRB) document is available via this link.

That production is consistent with the research that have I done over the past 50+ years, and for which I was named Member, Order of Canada, in 2018. Although I am "near-retired", I still enjoy doing research, serving the public interest, and engaging in social and broadcast discourse on matters of the day.

Based on my research and that of research colleagues, I am very uneasy about the frequency with which the term 'misinformation' appears in both social media and broadcast media (about 58 million 'results' in a recent Google search), and all the more so because research findings reveal that at best 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' are concocted nonsense terms which are falsely portrayed as having a connection to information.

In truth, upon deconstruction of statements the finding is that they are not derived from empirical or archival data.

Rather, the statements and motivations are accurately described by terms such as con, deceit, deceive, deception, dissemble, distort, fabricate, fakery, falsehood, fantasy, fiction, fraud, hoax, lie, misrepresentation, propaganda, rant, rave, scam, and sham, none of which involve information derived from data through methodologically designed analysis or synthesis.

As noted, this is my first venture into the domain of legislative assemblies in Canada and, in particular, into making inquiries of Speakers who rule on matters involving the acceptability of language used in each assembly.

The reasons for undertaking this pilot study and the details of its design are presented in the document, [REPORT 1: Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#).

In the email to Deputy Speaker Hatfield, copied to you, full credit for prompting this inquiry is given in the report to a meeting of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, during which I first witnessed a Speaker ruling on the term 'misinformation'. Mr. Hatfield was serving as Speaker at the time, and made the ruling which precipitated this pilot study.

It is my perception that if a Speaker rules that 'misinformation' is not a term to be used in the Assembly, then there is a reason to believe that there could be less usage of the term by politicians outside the legislature. And, should that occur then there could be fewer such mentions in social and broadcast media and, perhaps, a transition to an increase in straightforward communications in society.

Speaker Arnott, this communication was preceded by searches of your legislature's Hansard record, but I was unable to locate any references to 'misinformation' or 'disinformation'.

I would be most grateful, therefore, if you could kindly direct me to any rulings in Hansard beyond your ruling of December 1, 2020 regarding the term 'misinformation', or the term 'disinformation'.

A citation of any provided material will be included in the report.

And, if you are not aware of any related ruling(s), I would be most grateful if you could direct me to the person responsible for your Assembly's Hansard keyword searches, as he or she no doubt knows better than I how to conduct digital searches of your Hansard records.

I note in closing that by copy I am informing Deputy Speaker Percy Hatfield, MPP, that 'all bases have been touched.'

Speaker Arnott, thank you kindly for your consideration of my inquiry.

Sincerely,

*Barry Wellar*

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M., GISP  
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa  
President, Information Research Board Inc.  
133 Ridgfield Crescent  
Nepean, ON K2H 6T4  
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## **2. Email to Mr. Percy Hatfield, Deputy Speaker, Ontario Legislative Assembly**

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 2:42 PM

**To:** PHatfield-QP@ndp.on.ca

**Cc:** ted.arnott@pc.ola.org

**Subject:** Misinformation Project, Report 1 Speaker Hatfield

Mr. Percy Hatfield, MPP, Deputy Speaker  
Ontario Legislative Assembly

Dear Deputy Speaker Hatfield,

I wrote to you previously about the term 'misinformation', and I now write to seek your assistance regarding the project, Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies.

It is my impression that The Speaker of a legislative assembly is a powerful force for improved communications throughout Canada, hence this request.

My research on the topic of 'misinformation' is reaching out to The Speaker of Canada's provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, as well as to The Speaker of the federal House of Commons and Senate.

I am asking Speakers to contribute their expertise and experience to what may be the first study of its kind in Canada, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

By way of brief background, several months ago I published the report, [The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information](#). The Information Research Board (IRB) document is available via this link.

That production is consistent with the research that have I done over the past 50+ years, and for which I was named Member, Order of Canada, in 2018. Although I am “near-retired”, I still enjoy doing research, serving the public interest, and engaging in social and broadcast discourse on matters of the day.

Based on my research and that of research colleagues, I am very uneasy about the frequency with which the term ‘misinformation’ appears in both social media and broadcast media (about 58 million ‘results’ in a recent Google search), and all the more so because research findings reveal that at best ‘misinformation’ and ‘disinformation’ are concocted nonsense terms which are falsely portrayed as having a connection to information.

In truth, upon deconstruction of statements the finding is that they are not derived from empirical or archival data.

Rather, the statements and motivations are accurately described by terms such as con, deceit, deceive, deception, dissemble, distort, fabricate, fakery, falsehood, fantasy, fiction, fraud, hoax, lie, misrepresentation, propaganda, rant, rave, scam, and sham, none of which involve information derived from data through methodologically designed analysis or synthesis.

As noted, this is my first venture into the domain of legislative assemblies in Canada and, in particular, into making inquiries of Speakers who rule on matters involving the acceptability of language used in each assembly.

The reasons for undertaking this pilot study and the details of its design are presented in the document, [REPORT 1: Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#).

I hasten to add that full credit for prompting this inquiry is given in the report to a meeting of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, during which I first witnessed a Speaker ruling on the term ‘misinformation’. Mr. Hatfield, you are The Speaker to whom I refer.

It is my perception that if a Speaker rules that ‘misinformation’ is not a term to be used in the Assembly, then there is a reason to believe that there could be less usage of the term by politicians outside the legislature. And, should that occur then there could be fewer such mentions in social and broadcast media and, perhaps, a transition to an increase in straightforward communications in society.

Deputy Speaker Hatfield, this communication was preceded by inquiries of your legislature’s Hansard record, but I was unable to locate any references to ‘misinformation’ or ‘disinformation’.



I would be most grateful, therefore, if you could kindly direct me to any rulings in Hansard beyond your ruling of December 1, 2020 regarding the term 'misinformation', or the term 'disinformation'.

A citation of any provided material will be included in the report.

And, if you are not aware of any related ruling(s), I would be most grateful if you could direct me to the person responsible for your Assembly's Hansard keyword searches, as he or she no doubt knows better than I how to conduct digital searches of your Hansard records.

I note in closing that I will also be contacting Speaker Ted Arnott, MPP, to ensure that 'all bases have been touched.'

Deputy Speaker Hatfield, thank you kindly for your consideration of my inquiry.

Sincerely,

*Barry Wellar*

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M., GISP  
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa  
President, Information Research Board Inc.  
133 Ridgefield Crescent  
Nepean, ON K2H 6T4  
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### **3. Email to The Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker, House of Commons**

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 2:24 PM

**To:** Speaker.President@parl.gc.ca

**Subject:** Misinformation Project, Report 1 Speaker Rota

The Honourable Anthony Rota, Speaker  
House of Commons  
Parliament of Canada

Dear Speaker Rota,

I wrote to you previously about the term 'misinformation', and I now write to seek your assistance regarding the project, Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies.

It is my impression that The Speaker of a legislative assembly is a powerful forces for improved communications throughout Canada, hence this request.

My research on the topic of 'misinformation' is reaching out to The Speaker of Canada's federal House of Commons and Senate, as well as to The Speaker of provincial and territorial legislative assemblies. I am asking each of them to contribute their expertise and experience to what may be the first study of its kind in Canada, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

By way of brief background, several months ago I published the report, [The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information](#). The Information Research Board (IRB) document is available via this link.

That production is consistent with the research that have I done over the past 50+ years, and for which I was named Member, Order of Canada, in 2018. Although I am "near-retired", I enjoy doing research, serving the public interest, and engaging in social and broadcast media discourse about matters of the day.

Based on my research and that of research colleagues, I am very uneasy about the frequency with which the term 'misinformation' appears in both social media and broadcast media (about 58 million 'results' in a recent Google search), and all the more so because research findings reveal that at best 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' are concocted nonsense terms which are falsely portrayed as having a connection to information.

In truth, upon deconstruction of statements, they are not derived from empirical or archival data.

Rather, the statements and motivations are accurately described by terms such as con, deceit, deceive, deception, dissemble, distort, fabricate, fake, falsehood, fantasy, fiction, fraud, hoax, lie, misrepresentation, propaganda, rant, rave, scam, and sham, none of which involve information derived from data through methodologically designed analysis or synthesis.

As noted, this is my first venture into the domain of legislative assemblies in Canada and, in particular, into making inquiries of Speakers who rule on matters involving the acceptability of language used in each assembly.

The reasons for undertaking this pilot study and the details of its design are presented in the just-posted document, [REPORT 1: Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#).

I hasten to add that full credit for your contribution to this pilot study is given by reference to your earlier communication which arose from asking about your position on the term 'misinformation'.

It is my perception that if a Speaker rules that 'misinformation' is not a term to be used in the Assembly, then there is reason to believe that there could be less usage of the term by politicians outside the legislature. And, should that occur then there could be fewer such mentions in social and broadcast media and, perhaps, a transition to an increase in straightforward communications in society.

Speaker Rota, this communication was preceded by inquiries of the House of Commons Hansard record, but I was unable to locate any references to 'misinformation' or 'disinformation'.

I would be most grateful, therefore, if you could kindly direct me to any rulings in Hansard beyond your comments of December 16, 2020 regarding the term 'misinformation', or the term 'disinformation'.

A citation of any provided material will be included in the report.

And, if you are not aware of any related ruling(s), I would be most grateful if you could direct me to the person responsible for your Assembly's Hansard keyword searches, as he or she no doubt knows better than I how to conduct digital searches of your Hansard records.

Speaker Rota, thank you for your consideration of this inquiry.

Sincerely,

*Barry Wellar*

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M., GISP  
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa  
President, Information Research Board Inc.  
133 Ridgfield Crescent  
Nepean, ON K2H 6T4  
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#### **4. Email to The Honourable Raj Chouhan, Speaker, British Columbia Legislative Assembly**

The text of this email was sent to The Speaker, Legislative Assembly or House of Assembly, for the provincial or territorial governments of Alberta, British Columbia,

Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territory, Nova Scotia, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and Yukon. The communication to the Honourable Raj Chouhan, Speaker, Legislative Assembly of British Columbia is presented for illustrative purposes.

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, February 1, 2021 4:57 PM

**To:** Speaker@leg.bc.ca

**Subject:** Misinformation Project, Report 1 Speaker Chouhan

Honourable Raj Chouhan, MLA, Speaker  
British Columbia Legislative Assembly

Dear Speaker Chouhan,

I write to seek your assistance regarding the project, Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies.

It is my impression that The Speaker of a legislative assembly is a powerful force for improved communications throughout Canada, hence this request.

My research on the topic of 'misinformation' is reaching out to The Speaker of Canada's provincial and territorial legislative assemblies, as well as to The Speaker of the federal House of Commons and the Senate.

I am asking Speakers to contribute their expertise and experience to what may be the first study of its kind in Canada, and perhaps anywhere in the world.

By way of brief background, several months ago I published the report, [The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information](#). The Information Research Board (IRB) document is available via this link.

That production is consistent with the research that have I done over the past 50+ years, and for which I was named Member, Order of Canada, in 2018. Although I am "near-retired", I still enjoy doing research, serving the public interest, and engaging in social and broadcast discourse on matters of the day.

Based on my research and that of research colleagues, I am very uneasy about the frequency with which the term 'misinformation' appears in both social media and broadcast media (about 58 million 'results' in a recent Google search), and all the more so because research findings reveal that at best 'misinformation' and 'disinformation' are concocted nonsense terms which are falsely portrayed as having a connection to information.

In truth, upon deconstruction of statements the finding is that they are not derived from empirical or archival data.

Rather, the statements and motivations are accurately described by terms such as con, deceit, deceive, deception, dissemble, distort, fabricate, fakery, falsehood, fantasy, fiction, fraud, hoax, lie, misrepresentation, propaganda, rant, rave, scam, and sham, none of which involve information derived from data through methodologically designed analysis or synthesis.

As noted, this is my first venture into the domain of legislative assemblies in Canada and, in particular, into making inquiries of Speakers who rule on matters involving the acceptability of language used in each Assembly.

The reasons for undertaking this pilot study and the details of its design are presented in the document, [REPORT 1: Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#).

I hasten to add that full credit for prompting this inquiry is given to a meeting of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, during which I first witnessed a Speaker ruling on the term 'misinformation'.

It is my perception that if a Speaker rules that 'misinformation' is not a term to be used in the Assembly, then there is a reason to believe that there could be less usage of the term by politicians outside the legislature. And, should that occur then there could be fewer such mentions in social and broadcast media and, perhaps, a transition to an increase in straightforward communications in society.

Speaker, this communication was preceded by inquiries of your legislature's Hansard record, but I was unable to locate any references to 'misinformation' or 'disinformation'.

I would be most grateful, therefore, if you could kindly direct me to any rulings in Hansard regarding the term 'misinformation', or the term 'disinformation'.

A citation of any provided material will be included in the report.

And, if you are not aware of any related ruling(s), I would be most grateful if you could direct me to the person responsible for your Assembly's Hansard keyword searches, as he or she no doubt knows better than I how to conduct digital searches of your Hansard records.

Speaker Chouhan, thank you kindly for your consideration of my inquiry.

Sincerely,

*Barry Wellar*

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M., GISP  
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Nepean, ON K2H 6T4  
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## 5. Le courriel au président, l'Assemblée nationale du Québec

**From:** Barry Wellar [mailto:wellar.barry@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 9, 2021 10:53 AM  
**To:** courrier.president@assnat.qc.ca  
**Subject:** Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies

L'honorable François Paradis,  
Président de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec  
Monsieur le Président,

Je vous écris parce que j'ai l'impression que les présidents des assemblées législatives canadiennes ont un rôle important à jouer dans l'amélioration des communications à l'échelle du pays.

J'ai besoin d'un coup de main pour mon projet Investigating the Rulings on 'Misinformation' in Canada's Legislative Assemblies. (Il faut éviter de confondre mésinformation et désinformation. La mésinformation est une information innocemment fautive, causée par l'ignorance ou la distraction, tandis que la désinformation est intentionnelle.)

Pour avancer mes recherches sur l'utilisation du terme « mésinformation » j'écris aux présidents des assemblées législatives provinciales et territoriales, tout comme les présidents de la Chambre des communes et le Sénat.

Je demande aux présidents de se servir de leur expertise et de leurs expériences pour collaborer à un projet de recherche novateur qui pourrait être le premier du genre au Canada et ailleurs.

Pour expliquer brièvement, il y a quelques mois j'ai publié le rapport

[The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information.](#)

Ce rapport approfondit les recherches que j'ai menées depuis plus de 50 ans qui m'ont mérité l'honneur d'être nommé membre de l'ordre du Canada en 2018.

Je suis à la semi-retraite mais je continue à m'amuser à faire des recherches d'intérêt public pour participer aux grands débats du jour.

Les conclusions de mes recherches, et de celles de mes collègues, m'inquiètent sur la fréquence de l'usage du terme « mésinformation » dans les médias sociaux et sur les réseaux informatiques (plus de 58 millions résultats sur Google). C'est d'autant plus inquiétant que « mésinformation » et « désinformation » sont au mieux des mots fabriqués de toute pièce. Ces termes n'ont rien à voir avec l'usage correct du mot « information ».

J'ai conclu que l'usage de ces mots n'est nullement basé sur des données empiriques ou d'archives.

En examinant les énoncés et les motivations de ceux qui utilisent les termes « mésinformation » et « désinformation » les mots suivants me viennent à l'esprit : con, deceit, deceive, deception, dissemble, distort, fabricate, fakery, falsehood, fantasy, fiction, fraud, hoax, lie, misrepresentation, propaganda, rant, rave, scam, et sham.

Comme je vous ai dit, Monsieur le Président, c'est ma première sortie dans le domaine des assemblées législatives canadiennes. Je demande aux présidents quels mots ne sont pas tolérés dans leurs assemblées.

La raison d'être et la structure de mon étude pilote sont disponibles au

[REPORT 1: Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies.](#)

Ce qui a piqué mon intérêt, c'était une séance de l'assemblée législative de l'Ontario où le président a porté jugement sur l'emploi du terme « mésinformation ».

Je suis convaincu que si les présidents jugent que le mot « mésinformation » n'est pas toléré dans l'assemblée on pourrait espérer que les politiciens l'emploieraient moins souvent en dehors des assemblées législatives.

Et du même coup on le verrait moins souvent dans les médias et sur les réseaux sociaux, ce qui favoriserait la communication véridique dans nos sociétés.

Monsieur le Président, j'ai consulté le compte rendu des délibérations de l'Assemblée nationale du Québec et je n'ai trouvé aucune référence aux termes « mésinformation » et « désinformation ».

Je serais alors très reconnaissant pour de l'aide à trouver une référence à ces termes dans le compte rendu des délibérations.

Une citation sera comprise dans le rapport.

Si vous ne connaissez pas vous-même des jugements qui ont rapport avec l'usage de ces termes, je serai très reconnaissant si vous réferez ma demande à la personne responsable des recherches par mot-clé de l'Assemblée nationale, quelqu'un qui doit sûrement savoir mieux que moi comment procéder.

Monsieur le Président, je vous remercie d'avance pour votre aide. Je vous prie d'accepter mes sincères salutations.

*Barry Wellar*

Dr. Barry Wellar, C.M., GISP  
Professor Emeritus, University of Ottawa  
President, Information Research Board Inc.  
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#### **D. Has Any Reason Arisen to Curtail the Pilot Study?**

For pilot studies with which I am familiar, it is sound research design to include an oversight function which provides instructions on whether to curtail the activity. Due to the nature of this pilot study involving Speakers of legislative assemblies, it is appropriate to make explicit the elements of the oversight function used here, and the results of the review.

First, if there is any sign of a significant drop in the use of the terms *misinformation* or *disinformation* in the broadcast or social media, or by politicians, political agents, business people, medical people, academics, etc., and it appears that a solid trend towards reduced use has taken hold, then the pilot study could be curtailed.

However, as of this writing no sign of reduced use of the term *misinformation* has been identified, so the rationale behind the pilot study has not been discounted.

Second, if there are organizations or forces with credibility, visibility, and influence which are taking steps to reduce the use of the term *misinformation*, which my research has identified as concocted nonsense, then there is no need to continue the pilot study.



However, no sign of such a development have been located, so the rationale behind the pilot study has not been discounted.

Third, if there are other organizations conducting research which surpasses, contributes to, supports, or perhaps confirms aspects of the pilot study, then those efforts may be taken as a reason to continue or to curtail the pilot study.

A recent report by advertising agency IPG Mediabrands represents one such activity which points to continuing the pilot study. And, reciprocally, several comments could be useful to IPG Mediabrands should it entertain feedback on its Media Responsibility Index.

By way of brief background, in an earlier report in this series, [The Inescapable Truth about Disinformation and Misinformation? They have NOTHING at all to do with Information](#), I attributed much of the responsibility for the spread of the terms *misinformation* and *disinformation* to tech giants such as Google, Facebook, Alphabet, YouTube, and Twitter.

My focus was and is on information involving the built and natural environments and, hence, on geographic information and geographic information systems. Those platforms came to mind as ones to mention in the earlier report.

Therefore, when I saw the report title, "IPG Mediabrands' Latest Media Responsibility Index Proves Top Platforms Have Responded Favorably to Network's Media Responsibility Push", I thought that I might have detected light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak. (<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20210208005547/en/IPG-Mediabrands%E2%80%99-Latest-Media-Responsibility-Index-Proves-Top-Platforms-Have-Responded-Favorably-to-Network%E2%80%99s-Media-Responsibility-Push>)

Not so, it turns out or, at least, not so fast.

There are four parts to my difficulty in deciding what to make of the IPG report.

First, the focus by IPG Mediabrands is on the advertising of brands via internet platforms, so for me there is a seemingly tenuous connection between information used to market goods and services, and information which is derived from empirical data using methods and techniques of analysis and synthesis to describe situations, events, activities, etc., in and of the built and natural environments.

Second, it is indeed encouraging to see concern about how disseminating anything associated with *misinformation* and *disinformation*, whatever they might be, could have a negative effect on an industry which is engaged in advertising goods and services. (Endnote 3)

However, the authors of the IPG Mediabrands report do not seem to grasp that rather than get into muddy water about the meaning of information, *misinformation*, and *disinformation*, it would be far simpler and more credible to speak plainly and simply by using the words 'false' as in 'false advertising', or 'honest' in 'honest advertising' to make the point about the importance of truth-telling in marketing.

Third, the IPG report with its focus on product brands is primarily oriented to the business community. Business is an important constituency in the internet platform world, but it is only one of many constituencies. A pertinent question is whether the business community could be a leading player in reducing the volume of use of the terms *misinformation* and *disinformation*, and thereby contribute to reducing the amount of concocted nonsense that is circulating across societies, including across the field of advertising.

And fourth, as a related concern, the language used to describe findings is what might be termed soft. That is, the limited use of numerics in describing the outcomes of applying an index, which is a numeric construct, is disconcerting to say the least.

Consequently, I do not take comfort in the statement, "... it is encouraging that the latest Index indicates improvements by Reddit, Snap, TikTok, Twitch and YouTube against the Promote Respect principle, as well as movement by Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter on the principle of No Mis/Disinformation."

The IPG Mediabrands' approach could well have merit as a significant contributor to cutting down the use of the terms *misinformation* and *disinformation*, but for the moment I do not take that work as sufficient reason to curtail this pilot study.

The bottom line, therefore, is that no compelling alternative is found to discount the pilot study, so we now proceed to designing report 3 which compiles responses from Speakers and/or their delegated authorities.

## E. Conclusion

The frequent mentions of *misinformation* and *disinformation* which confirm the 'concocted nonsense' label are encountered in broadcast and social media on a regular, high-frequency basis, in various internet platform offerings, and in various bodies of literature. Given that the identified problem persists, that replies from or on behalf Speakers are already being received, and that no good reason has been identified to curtail the pilot study, we proceed to report 3.

## F. Next Steps

The next component of the pilot study deals with the replies from Speakers or replies sent on behalf of Speakers, as well as any communications about the survey between the author and Speakers, Deputy Speakers, Chief Clerks, or their agents.

## G. Endnotes

**Endnote 1.** Learned literature, popular literature, and corporate/institutional-public literature appear to be the bodies of literature most likely to carry research productions about the functions, roles, actions, etc., of Speakers. There are six other bodies of literature which are discussed in pilot study report 1, [Terms of Reference for a Survey of Speakers about 'Misinformation' Rulings in Canada's Legislative Assemblies](#).

**Endnote 2.** Translation assistance provided by Craig MacAulay is gratefully acknowledged.

**Endnote 3.** The statement "...anything associated with *misinformation* and *disinformation*, whatever they might be..." is chosen advisedly because I have not encountered any users of those words who define them in structural and functional terms, which is a methodological criterion for substantive, non-trivial research. Rather, the tendency is to just 'throw them out there', much along the lines of 'clear as mud but covers the ground'. That level of sloppiness does not meet the tests of science, such as the data ➡ information ➡ knowledge transform test, and it should not meet such tests as clarity, pertinence and honesty in advertising.