

Direct Representation, Remote Attendance, and Public Cost Accountability Act

A Federal and Provincial Policy Proposal

July- 2026

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Civic Sketches is a series of draft policy proposals by Lawrence Nault — an independent researcher and policy writer based in Alberta's Badlands. These proposals are working drafts, not party platforms or final answers. They are intended to invite discussion, challenge, and refinement across all levels of government and the broader public.

This policy proposal is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence (CC BY 4.0). You are free to copy, share, adapt, translate, and build upon this work for any purpose, including use by governments, organizations, advocates, researchers, and members of the public, provided appropriate credit is given to Lawrence Nault and any changes are clearly identified. Full licence: creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

I have created different versions of this policy idea over the years.

At times, I have treated the issue of drop-in or parachute candidates as its own separate proposal. At other times, I have focused more narrowly on travel costs, housing allowances, official residences, or the growing disconnect between elected officials and the communities they are supposed to represent. But the more I return to it, the more I think these are not separate problems. They are connected symptoms of the same outdated political structure.

We live in a world where international organizations, multinational corporations, major institutions, courts, boards, and government agencies routinely use secure online meeting systems to save time, reduce travel, lower costs, and keep operations moving. These systems are not experimental anymore. They are part of how modern organizations function.

Yet elected officials are still often expected to spend large amounts of time away from their ridings, near the capital, inside a political ecosystem that can become more connected to party strategy, media access, and institutional routine than to the people who actually elected them.

That absence matters.

When representatives are physically removed from their ridings for long stretches of time, a disconnect forms. Constituents become scheduled appointments instead of daily surroundings. Local concerns become briefing notes instead of lived realities. The capital becomes the centre of political gravity, while the riding becomes a place to visit, campaign in, and occasionally report back to.

This policy concept asks a simple question: if modern technology is good enough for corporations, courts, public agencies, and international institutions, why is it not good enough to keep elected officials closer to the people they represent?

The goal is not to weaken Parliament, legislatures, committees, or councils. The goal is to make them harder to avoid, easier to audit, less expensive to operate, and more directly connected to the communities they serve.

Remote attendance should not become an excuse for absentee politicians. It should do the opposite. It should require elected officials to remain rooted in their ridings, attend official proceedings through secure verified systems, and be more available to their constituents, not less.

The same logic applies to publicly funded travel, second residences, and official housing. Public money should follow required public duty, not political tradition, personal convenience, media access, or party preference.

And if a person wants to represent a riding, they should have a real connection to that riding. Not a campaign address. Not a temporary rental. Not a party placement. A meaningful residential or community connection to the people they are asking to represent.

This proposal brings those pieces together: remote attendance, attendance accountability, public cost reduction, riding-based representation, limits on capital housing, and anti-parachute candidate rules.

At its core, the principle is simple:

Elected office should be structured around the people being represented, not around the convenience of the capital.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to modernize elected representation by using secure digital attendance systems to increase direct citizen access to elected officials, improve attendance accountability, reduce publicly funded housing and travel costs, and ensure representatives remain rooted in the communities they were elected to serve.

Governments increasingly promote internet expansion, digital service delivery, remote work, online access, and modern communications across the public and private sectors. Elected institutions should

be required to apply those same standards to themselves where doing so strengthens democratic access, reduces unnecessary public expense, and improves accountability.

This policy recognizes that elected officials should not be treated as temporary visitors to their ridings. Their first democratic duty is to the people and communities that elected them. Remote participation in Parliament, legislatures, committees, councils, and other public bodies should allow representatives to remain physically present in or near their communities more often while still fulfilling their formal duties.

The central principle is simple: Public money should follow required public duty, not political tradition, party convenience, media access, or personal preference.

2. Core Objectives

This policy is intended to:

- Increase direct citizen access to elected representatives.
- Require elected officials to remain more present in the communities they represent.
- Reduce unnecessary publicly funded housing, travel, and accommodation costs.
- Improve attendance and participation in Parliament, legislatures, committees, councils, and other elected bodies.
- Prevent avoidable absences from being excused by distance, travel burden, or capital-based scheduling.
- Ensure official participation is recorded, verifiable, auditable, and accountable.
- Require candidates to have a meaningful residential connection to the riding or district they seek to represent.
- Reduce the use of “drop-in,” “paper,” or parachute candidates with little connection to the communities they claim to represent.
- Distinguish official public duties from party work, fundraising, campaign activity, and political convenience.
- Strengthen democratic continuity during pandemics, disasters, security threats, travel disruptions, and other emergencies.
- Ensure rural, northern, Indigenous, remote, and underserved communities are not disadvantaged by digital participation rules.
- Modernize elected office in line with secure systems already used by governments, courts, corporations, international organizations, and public institutions.

3. Presumption of Local Service

The default expectation of elected office shall be that representatives remain primarily based in the communities they were elected to serve.

Travel to the capital, capital-region housing, extended physical absence from the riding, and public reimbursement for capital-based living arrangements must be justified by required public duties, not tradition, party preference, media strategy, convenience, or personal choice.

Remote attendance should not weaken Parliament, legislatures, councils, or committees. It should make attendance harder to avoid, easier to audit, and more directly connected to the citizens elected officials are supposed to serve.

4. Constitutional and Legislative Authority

This policy shall be implemented in a manner consistent with constitutional requirements, parliamentary privilege, legislative independence, local government authority, and the standing orders or procedural rules of each elected body.

Where necessary, Parliament, provincial legislatures, territorial legislatures, municipal councils, school boards, public boards, or other elected bodies shall amend their rules to permit secure remote attendance, remote voting, verified digital participation, and public attendance reporting.

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted as unlawfully limiting the authority of a legislative body to control its own proceedings, protect privilege, maintain order, or require in-person attendance where constitutionally or procedurally necessary.

5. Application

This policy may be adapted for:

- The House of Commons.
- The Senate, where applicable.
- Provincial and territorial legislatures.
- Legislative committees.
- Municipal councils.
- Regional districts.
- School boards.
- Public boards.
- Crown corporation boards with elected representation.
- Other elected public bodies.

Each jurisdiction may adapt the policy to its own constitutional framework, procedural rules, geography, security needs, and public office structures.

6. Indigenous Governance and Treaty Respect

Nothing in this policy shall limit the authority of Indigenous governments, treaty bodies, self-governing First Nations, Inuit governments, Métis governments, or Indigenous-led institutions to determine their own governance procedures.

This policy shall not be imposed on Indigenous governments without consent, consultation, or legal authority consistent with treaty rights, constitutional rights, self-government agreements, and the principle of Indigenous self-determination.

Where Indigenous communities choose to adopt similar remote attendance, residency, or public accountability rules, governments shall support that choice through funding, infrastructure, and technical assistance.

7. Remote Legislative and Committee Attendance

Elected representatives may attend eligible parliamentary, legislative, committee, council, board, caucus-related public, and public governance meetings through an approved secure online attendance system.

Remote attendance shall be treated as formal attendance where the member:

- Logs in through the approved government platform.
- Verifies identity through multi-factor authentication.
- Participates from an approved physical location.
- Remains visible and audible when required.
- Is actively present, responsive, and available to the presiding officer.
- Is subject to the same rules of order, decorum, voting, conflict-of-interest rules, privilege standards, and ethics requirements as in-person attendees.
- Has attendance, statements, votes, interruptions, conduct, and participation recorded as part of the official record.

Remote attendance shall not reduce the authority of the Speaker, Chair, Clerk, Ethics Commissioner, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, or other responsible officer to discipline, mute, remove, suspend, report, or censure a member for misconduct.

8. Presumption in Favour of Remote Attendance

Remote attendance shall be presumed valid for eligible proceedings unless there is a clear legal, constitutional, security, procedural, confidentiality, or operational reason requiring physical presence.

Where physical attendance is required, the reason must be recorded and, where possible, publicly disclosed.

This policy does not require that every proceeding be remote-capable in every circumstance. It requires that government justify why physical presence is necessary when secure remote participation is available.

9. Approved Remote Attendance Locations

An elected official may only attend remotely from:

- Their own riding, electoral district, ward, or represented region.
- A directly adjacent riding, district, ward, or region where housing, geography, weather, disability, caregiving, safety, or connectivity makes this necessary.
- A federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, or Indigenous government building.
- A designated constituency office.
- A public library, courthouse, public service centre, community office, band office, municipal office, school, or other approved public institution.
- Another secure public location approved by the relevant Speaker, Chair, Clerk, or designated officer.

Remote attendance from private vacation properties, political party offices outside the riding, corporate offices, donor-owned premises, foreign jurisdictions, hotels not linked to official travel, or unverified private locations shall not qualify unless specifically approved under an exemption.

The purpose of this rule is to ensure remote attendance strengthens local representation rather than becoming a tool for absentee representation.

10. Rural, Northern, Remote, and Connectivity Fairness

No elected official shall be penalized for living in a rural, northern, Indigenous, remote, or underserved region where broadband, cellular service, power reliability, or secure digital infrastructure is inadequate.

If government requires or permits digital legislative attendance, government must ensure reliable access points exist.

Each riding, district, ward, or represented region shall have access to at least one approved secure participation site, which may include:

- A constituency office.
- Municipal office.
- Public library.
- Courthouse.
- Provincial or federal service centre.

- Band office or Indigenous government facility, where consent is given.
- Community hall.
- School or public institution.
- Other secure public facility.

Where geography requires it, multiple approved access points shall be established.

The cost of creating secure access points shall be treated as democratic infrastructure, not as a personal expense of the elected official.

11. Accessibility and Accommodation

The remote attendance system must be fully accessible.

It shall include, where required:

- Closed captioning.
- Sign-language interpretation.
- Screen-reader compatibility.
- Accessible voting tools.
- Keyboard navigation.
- Audio-only backup options where video is temporarily inaccessible.
- Plain-language platform instructions.
- Assistive technology compatibility.
- Medical exemptions.
- Disability accommodations.
- Caregiver accommodations.
- Safety accommodations for elected officials facing threats, stalking, harassment, domestic violence, or targeted intimidation.

Remote attendance shall not be used to exclude, disadvantage, or penalize elected officials with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, safety concerns, or health limitations.

12. Active Attendance Requirement

A member shall not be counted as present solely by logging into the system.

Attendance requires active, responsive, and verifiable participation unless the member has been formally excused by the Speaker, Chair, Clerk, or presiding officer.

A member may be marked as non-participating if they:

- Log in but do not respond when called upon.
- Leave the camera or microphone unattended without permission.
- Are not visibly present when visibility is required.
- Fail to vote during a vote without being excused.
- Are unreachable during proceedings.
- Appear to have left the proceeding while still logged in.
- Use the system to create a false impression of attendance.

Logged-in presence is not the same as democratic participation.

13. Attendance Accountability

All eligible meetings shall maintain a public attendance record showing whether each elected official attended:

- In person.
- Remotely from within their riding, district, ward, or represented region.
- Remotely from an approved government or public location.
- Remotely by exemption.
- Absent with notice.
- Absent without acceptable reason.
- Logged in but marked non-participating.
- Disconnected due to verified technical failure.

Attendance records shall be published in a searchable public format.

Repeated absence from Parliament, a legislature, council, board, or assigned committee shall trigger escalating public reporting and possible penalties, including:

- Public notice of attendance failure.
- Loss of committee compensation, where applicable.
- Reduction or suspension of travel, housing, or discretionary allowances.
- Referral to an ethics or accountability officer.
- Referral to a legislative management body.
- Formal censure by the elected body in severe or repeated cases.

Where secure remote attendance is available, distance from the capital shall not be treated as a routine justification for absence.

14. Voting and Participation

Remote participation shall include the ability to:

- Speak in debate.
- Ask questions.
- Present petitions or constituency concerns.
- Vote.
- Participate in committee hearings.
- Question witnesses.
- Move or second motions where permitted.
- Attend emergency sessions.
- Participate in recorded division votes.
- Raise points of order or privilege where permitted.
- Table documents electronically where permitted.

Remote votes must be authenticated, time-stamped, location-verified, and recorded in the same manner as in-person votes.

A remote vote shall not be valid unless the member's identity, location, and active participation are verified.

15. Security Classification Levels

Not all proceedings require the same level of digital security.

Remote attendance rules shall classify proceedings into tiers, including:

Tier 1: Public Proceedings

Examples include ordinary public sittings, public committee meetings, public council meetings, and public board meetings.

Requirements may include standard identity verification, public recording, secure login, and location verification.

Tier 2: Closed Proceedings

Examples include in-camera committee sessions, caucus-adjacent official meetings, personnel discussions, or confidential administrative matters.

Requirements may include enhanced identity verification, approved devices, secure rooms, restricted recording, and confirmation that unauthorized persons are not present.

Tier 3: Confidential or Legally Sensitive Proceedings

Examples include ethics matters, legal advice, procurement confidentiality, child-protection issues, private personnel matters, or commercially sensitive public business.

Requirements may include government-issued devices, secure networks, private approved rooms, no unauthorized recording, and audit trails.

Tier 4: Classified, Security, or Emergency Proceedings

Examples include national security briefings, emergency management, cabinet-level security matters, intelligence briefings, or serious public safety events.

Requirements may include physical attendance, secure government facilities, classified communication systems, or other restrictions determined by law, security officials, the Speaker, Chair, Clerk, or executive authority.

Remote attendance shall not be permitted for proceedings where the security risks cannot be reasonably managed.

16. Public Record and Conduct

All official remote attendance shall form part of the public record where the meeting itself is public.

The approved attendance platform shall record:

- Login time.
- Logout time.
- Location category.
- Voting actions.
- Speaking time.
- Official interventions.
- Points of order.
- Interruptions.
- Misconduct.
- Technical failures.
- Chair, Speaker, or presiding officer warnings.
- Any removal, muting, suspension, or loss of participation rights.

Private, confidential, national security, cabinet, personnel, child-protection, or legally privileged proceedings may be subject to separate security rules, but attendance must still be internally recorded and auditable.

17. Lobbying, Coaching, and Third-Party Influence Protections

Remote participation shall not be used to conceal lobbying, coaching, intimidation, party control, donor influence, or third-party direction during official proceedings.

During votes, confidential proceedings, committee questioning, witness examination, and other official decision-making moments, a member may be required to confirm that they are not receiving undisclosed assistance, coaching, instruction, or pressure from:

- Lobbyists.
- Donors.
- Party officials.
- Campaign staff.
- Corporate representatives.
- Union representatives.
- Advocacy groups.
- Foreign actors.
- Constituency staff not formally authorized for that proceeding.
- Any other unauthorized third party.

This does not prevent elected officials from receiving legitimate staff support, legal advice, accessibility assistance, translation assistance, or technical support where permitted.

However, any assistance that could affect the independence, confidentiality, or integrity of the proceeding must be disclosed according to the rules of the elected body.

18. Technical Failure Rules

A member shall not be penalized for a verified technical failure outside their control.

Technical failure rules must distinguish between:

- Verified platform failure.
- Regional internet outage.
- Power outage.
- Emergency service disruption.
- Member equipment failure.
- Failure to appear.
- Failure to remain present.
- Failure to use an approved location.
- Misuse of technical failure claims to avoid accountability.

Repeated technical failures from an unapproved, inadequate, or unreliable location may result in the member being required to attend from an approved government building, constituency office, public institution, or other secure site.

The elected body shall maintain backup procedures for urgent votes, emergency sessions, and critical proceedings.

19. False Attendance, False Location, and System Misuse

It shall be a serious breach of public trust for an elected official or candidate to knowingly misrepresent attendance, location, identity, participation, technical failure, or residency status.

Penalties may apply where a person:

- Logs in from an unapproved location.
- Spoofs or conceals location.
- Allows another person to access the system on their behalf.
- Claims attendance while absent.
- Claims active participation while not participating.
- Makes a false technical failure claim.
- Misrepresents their identity.
- Falsifies voting participation.
- Conceals unauthorized coaching or third-party influence.
- Makes a false residency declaration.
- Uses a temporary or artificial address to evade residency rules.

Penalties may include public reporting, loss of allowances, loss of committee compensation, ethics referral, administrative fines, censure, removal from committee roles, referral to election authorities, or other sanctions authorized by law.

20. Exceptions Requiring In-Person Attendance

Certain proceedings may still require physical attendance, including:

- Swearing-in ceremonies.
- Confidence votes, where required by law or legislative rule.
- Budget votes, where required.
- Constitutional votes.
- Emergency national security sessions.
- Classified briefings.
- Ceremonial duties.
- Proceedings involving sensitive legal privilege.

- Proceedings involving secure documents that cannot be accessed remotely.
- Situations where the Speaker, Chair, Clerk, or presiding officer determines physical attendance is essential to the integrity of the proceeding.

These exceptions must be limited, justified, recorded, and, where possible, publicly disclosed.

The presumption should remain that remote attendance is valid unless a clear reason exists to require physical presence.

21. Housing and Capital Residence Costs

Public funds should not automatically pay for elected officials to maintain a second residence near the capital where secure remote participation allows them to fulfill their duties from within their own riding.

An elected official who chooses to maintain a residence in the capital region for personal, political, party, media, or convenience reasons shall not be entitled to full public reimbursement unless the position requires regular physical presence.

Publicly funded capital housing or accommodation may be available only where:

The official holds a position requiring frequent in-person attendance, such as Prime Minister, Premier, Cabinet Minister, Speaker, House Leader, Whip, Opposition Leader where justified, or other designated office.

The role includes security, emergency, national interest, executive, ceremonial, or constitutional obligations requiring physical proximity.

The legislature or Parliament is in a period requiring extended in-person attendance.

A verified disability, health, safety, family, or accessibility need makes the arrangement necessary.

Remote attendance is temporarily unavailable due to technical, legal, constitutional, emergency, or security reasons.

Where an elected official does not qualify for public housing support but chooses to live near the capital, those costs should be paid personally or through riding-generated political funds, subject to strict transparency rules, donation limits, conflict-of-interest rules, and public disclosure.

Public housing support shall not be justified by party strategy, media convenience, fundraising, campaign operations, or personal preference.

22. Opposition Leader Residence

This policy shall eliminate any automatic entitlement of the Leader of the Opposition to a government-funded official residence in the capital region.

The Leader of the Opposition may receive publicly funded accommodation only when physical presence in the capital is required for parliamentary, security, ceremonial, emergency, constitutional, or other official public duties.

Routine political work, party strategy, media availability, caucus management, fundraising, campaign planning, and ordinary parliamentary participation shall not, by themselves, justify a permanent taxpayer-funded residence where secure remote attendance and communication systems are available.

Where the Leader of the Opposition chooses to maintain a residence in the capital for convenience, party operations, media access, or political strategy, those costs shall not be borne by general public funds.

Any public support must be limited, disclosed, justified, and tied to required official duties rather than political preference or tradition.

The same principle shall apply provincially and territorially to opposition leaders where government-funded capital housing, official residences, or equivalent housing allowances exist.

23. Party Work Versus Public Work

Public reimbursement shall distinguish between official public duties and party-political work.

Public funds may support:

- Parliamentary or legislative duties.
- Committee duties.
- Constituency duties.
- Cabinet or executive duties.
- Required official travel.
- Required public hearings.
- Emergency governance responsibilities.
- Official public representation.

Public funds shall not be used to subsidize:

- Party fundraising.

- Campaign planning.
- Candidate recruitment.
- Party strategy.
- Internal party media preparation.
- Donor meetings.
- Election operations.
- Partisan events unrelated to official duties.
- Travel or housing primarily for party convenience.

Where an expense has mixed public and party purposes, the public portion must be clearly identified, justified, and disclosed.

24. Travel Cost Reduction

Travel reimbursement shall prioritize necessary travel, not routine political convenience.

Public reimbursement may be provided for:

- Required in-person sittings.
- Emergency sessions.
- Security briefings.
- Cabinet or executive duties.
- Constituency service travel within the riding.
- Committee work requiring physical inspection, witness attendance, or site visits.
- Accessibility or family-care needs where justified.
- Official intergovernmental meetings.
- Required travel to Indigenous, rural, remote, or northern communities.
- Official disaster, emergency, or public safety duties.

Public reimbursement should not be used for repeated travel to the capital where the member could reasonably attend remotely from an approved location.

Annual travel and accommodation costs for each elected official shall be publicly disclosed in a searchable format, separated by:

- Constituency travel.
- Capital travel.
- Committee travel.
- International travel.
- Party-related travel.

- Accommodation.
- Meals.
- Incidentals.
- Security-related travel.
- Accessibility-related travel.
- Family-care or medical accommodation where disclosure can be made without violating privacy.

25. Public-Facing Constituency Availability Standard

Each elected official shall be required to maintain regular, published public availability within their riding, district, ward, or represented region.

This shall include:

- Published constituency office hours.
- Public contact information.
- A minimum number of public constituency days.
- A minimum number of open town halls or public meetings each year.
- Virtual town halls where geography requires them.
- Appointment availability.
- Community office days.
- Regular meetings with local organizations, municipalities, Indigenous governments, public institutions, or community groups.
- Public reporting on issues raised by constituents.
- An annual riding accessibility report.

The purpose is to ensure remote attendance in Parliament or a legislature increases local availability rather than reducing official duties.

An elected official should not be permitted to remain in the riding physically while still being inaccessible to the public.

26. Candidate Residency Requirement

A person seeking election in a riding, district, ward, or represented region must have a primary residence in that riding or, where geography or housing availability makes that unreasonable, in a directly adjacent riding or district.

The residency requirement must be satisfied for a minimum period before nomination or election, unless an exemption applies.

Possible exemption categories may include:

- Newly created or redistributed ridings.
- Northern, rural, remote, or Indigenous communities with limited housing availability.
- Safety concerns.
- Military service.
- Diplomatic service.
- Caregiving obligations.
- Medical treatment.
- Education.
- Temporary public-service obligations.
- Candidates displaced by disaster, fire, flood, domestic violence, or other verified emergency.
- Temporary absence where the person has a long-standing and demonstrable connection to the riding.

A candidate shall not be permitted to rely only on party appointment, temporary rental arrangements, mailing addresses, campaign offices, short-term occupancy, or symbolic addresses to satisfy the residency requirement.

27. Definition of Primary Residence

For the purposes of this policy, “primary residence” means the place where the candidate or elected official ordinarily lives and maintains a genuine personal, civic, and community connection.

Factors may include:

- Where the person sleeps most nights.
- Where immediate family resides, where applicable.
- Where the person receives personal mail.
- Where the person is registered for tax, health, school, vehicle, or other civic purposes.
- Where the person maintains long-term housing.
- Where the person participates in ordinary community life.
- Whether the residence is more than a nominal or campaign-related address.
- Whether the person has a long-standing connection to the community.
- Whether the person has recently moved only for electoral eligibility.

No single factor should be determinative, but the standard must prevent artificial, temporary, or misleading residency claims.

28. Anti-Parachute Candidate Rule

Political parties shall not nominate candidates who lack a meaningful residential or community connection to the riding unless a public exemption is granted.

Where a party seeks an exemption, it must disclose:

- Why a local candidate was not selected.
- The candidate's connection to the riding.
- Whether the candidate intends to relocate.
- Whether the candidate has previously lived, worked, studied, served, or held community responsibilities in the riding.
- Why the exemption is in the public interest.
- Whether the candidate's residence is permanent, temporary, campaign-related, or symbolic.
- Whether the candidate has been placed in the riding by the party.

This disclosure must be made before the candidate is confirmed on the ballot.

Voters have the right to know whether a candidate actually lives in the community they seek to represent.

29. Election-Period Residency Rules

Candidate residency status shall be disclosed publicly at the time of nomination.

Election authorities shall be empowered to review candidate residency claims and require supporting documentation where necessary.

False residency claims may result in:

- Public correction.
- Administrative penalties.
- Party fines where the party knowingly supported a false claim.
- Referral to the relevant election authority.
- Disqualification where permitted by law.
- Post-election review where the false claim may have affected voter trust.

Residency rules shall not be used to exclude legitimate candidates with real community ties who are temporarily absent for health, safety, family, employment, education, military, diplomatic, disaster, or public-service reasons.

The purpose is not to punish mobility. The purpose is to prevent artificial representation.

30. Security, Privacy, and Integrity Requirements

The remote attendance system must meet strict standards for:

- Identity verification.
- Location verification.
- Cybersecurity.
- Encryption.
- Public record preservation.
- Accessibility.
- Interpretation and translation services.
- Protection of confidential proceedings.
- Protection against impersonation.
- Protection against location spoofing.
- Protection against undisclosed third-party coaching.
- Protection against unauthorized recording.
- Protection against cyberattack.
- Technical redundancy.
- Secure voting.
- Audit logs.
- Independent review.

The system must be publicly audited at regular intervals by an independent officer, agency, or auditor.

Audit reports shall be public unless disclosure would compromise security.

31. Democratic Continuity and Emergency Governance

This policy shall also serve as a democratic continuity framework.

Remote attendance systems shall be maintained so elected bodies can continue to function during:

- Pandemics.
- Wildfires.
- Floods.
- Severe weather.
- Public health emergencies.
- Terrorist threats.
- Security lockdowns.
- Travel shutdowns.

- Infrastructure failures.
- Occupation or blockade of public buildings.
- Attacks on democratic institutions.
- Regional disasters.
- Other emergencies that prevent safe or practical physical attendance.

A democracy should not become non-functional because representatives cannot travel to one building.

32. Independent Oversight and Enforcement

Oversight responsibilities shall be assigned to existing independent officers wherever possible.

These may include:

- The Speaker or presiding officer for attendance and order.
- The Clerk for procedural compliance and official records.
- The Ethics Commissioner or Conflict of Interest Commissioner for conduct and misuse.
- The Chief Electoral Officer for candidate residency rules.
- The Auditor General for cost reporting and public savings.
- The Parliamentary Budget Officer or equivalent for financial analysis.
- Privacy commissioners for data protection.
- Cybersecurity authorities for system integrity.
- Legislative management committees for internal rules.

A new agency is not required unless existing institutions cannot provide effective oversight.

The policy must clearly assign responsibility so enforcement does not disappear between offices.

33. Cost Comparison and Public Savings Reporting

Each elected body shall publish annual cost reporting showing:

- Previous housing, travel, and accommodation costs.
- Current housing, travel, and accommodation costs.
- Cost of operating the secure digital attendance system.
- Cost of secure public access points.
- Estimated savings.
- Expenses avoided.
- Net public benefit.
- Per-member travel and accommodation costs.

- Capital-residence reimbursement.
- Exemptions granted.
- Public explanation for major cost increases.

The purpose is to ensure the policy actually reduces unnecessary public spending rather than simply shifting costs into new categories.

34. Annual Public Reporting

Each Parliament, legislature, council, board, or elected body subject to this policy shall publish an annual report showing:

- In-person attendance.
- Remote attendance.
- Absences.
- Non-participating logins.
- Committee participation.
- Voting participation.
- Travel costs.
- Housing and accommodation costs.
- Publicly funded capital residence use.
- Exemptions granted.
- Technical failures.
- Constituency office accessibility.
- Public availability within the riding.
- Town halls or public meetings held.
- Residency exemptions granted to candidates.
- Complaints related to absence or lack of local availability.
- Penalties or corrective actions imposed.
- Net public savings or costs.

The report shall be available in a searchable public database.

35. Transition and Implementation

This policy shall be implemented through a staged transition.

Year 1: Preparation and Baseline

Amend standing orders or procedural rules where required.

Build or procure secure digital attendance systems.

Identify approved remote attendance locations.

Establish cybersecurity and accessibility standards.

Publish baseline travel, housing, and accommodation costs.

Pilot remote attendance in selected committees or public proceedings.

Year 2: Legislative and Committee Implementation

Expand remote attendance to eligible proceedings.

Begin public attendance reporting.

Require active attendance verification.

Introduce cost reporting.

Establish technical failure rules.

Create secure access points in underserved regions.

Year 3: Housing and Travel Reform

Reform capital housing reimbursement.

Restrict public funding for second residences.

Apply party-work versus public-work expense rules.

Publish first full cost comparison report.

Apply penalties for false location, false attendance, and misuse.

Next Election Cycle: Candidate Residency Reform

Apply candidate residency disclosure requirements.

Enforce anti-parachute candidate rules.

Require public exemption applications.

Allow election authorities to review false or artificial residency claims.

This transition period allows governments to modernize without disrupting democratic operations.

36. Review Clause

This policy shall be reviewed after the first full election cycle following implementation, and every five years afterward.

The review shall assess:

- Attendance rates.
- Public access to elected officials.
- Cost savings.
- Impact on rural and remote representation.
- Impact on disabled elected officials and constituents.
- Security performance.
- Public trust.
- Abuse or misuse of remote attendance.
- Whether exemptions are being overused.
- Whether candidate residency rules are effective.
- Whether capital housing and travel expenses have actually declined.

The review shall include public consultation.

37. Plain-Language Summary

This policy would allow elected officials to attend Parliament, legislatures, committees, councils, and other public meetings through a secure online system, but only from within their riding or from approved government or public buildings.

It would reduce unnecessary taxpayer-funded housing and travel costs, make attendance easier to track, and remove distance from the capital as a routine excuse for missing meetings.

It would also require candidates to actually live in, or very near, the riding they want to represent, with limited exemptions for special circumstances.

The policy would eliminate automatic taxpayer-funded capital housing where the position does not truly require it, including any automatic official residence entitlement for an opposition leader.

The goal is simple: elected officials should be more available to the people who elected them, more accountable for showing up, and less dependent on public money to live near the capital when secure technology already allows them to do much of the work from home.

38. Core Principle

Elected office should not be structured around the convenience of the capital.

It should be structured around the people, communities, and ridings that elected officials are supposed to represent.

If governments expect citizens, workers, courts, schools, businesses, and public services to adapt to modern digital systems, elected officials should not be exempt from the same modernization when it improves accountability, reduces costs, and brings representatives closer to the people they serve.

About the Author

Lawrence Nault is a Canadian author, filmmaker, and independent researcher based in Alberta's Badlands and Rockies. He writes speculative fiction and YA fantasy, directs documentary film, hosts the podcast *Stone & Signal*, and publishes academic research and policy proposals on digital infrastructure, occupational health, and environmental governance. His work asks hard questions about ecology, technology, and what it means to be human.

Contact

lawrencenault.me/contact/

Website

lawrencenault.me

Policy proposals

lawrencenault.me/policy/

Research

lawrencenault.me/research-policy/

Social

Threads: [@mountainhermitauthor](https://www.threads.net/@mountainhermitauthor)

Bluesky: [@mountainhermit.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/mountainhermit.bsky.social)