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*This document was developed by Meagan Perry in collaboration with [rabble.ca](http://rabble.ca) staff.*

## **Development of *rabble.ca*'s journalistic policy**

The *rabble.ca* journalistic policy is adapted from the CBC journalistic Standards and Practices, which was used to identify particular journalistic issues and clear language to describe them. It was supplemented and adapted through discussions and contributions from *rabble.ca* staff, who have specialized knowledge about the specifics of progressive independent journalism on the web. Their knowledge provided the basis for identifying relevant editorial issues and best practices for the *rabble.ca* website.

## ***rabble.ca* history and mission**

*rabble.ca* was launched on April 18, 2001 by a group of inspired media, community and open source progressives who recognized a need for more spaces for alternative news and views.

*rabble.ca*'s original vision remains true today: "*rabble.ca* will draw on the real energy and power of the Internet -- passionate, engaged human beings. Blurring the line between readers and contributors, it will provide a needed space for issues to be discussed, a place to explore political passions and an opportunity to expand ideas."

## ***rabble.ca* mandate**

*rabble.ca* delivers intentionally progressive journalism. The *rabble.ca* site aims to present a range of opinion from people who are engaged in struggles for social justice, peace, and inclusive society. *rabble.ca* is committed reflecting current events accurately from a progressive point of view. *rabble.ca*'s role is to report on stories and viewpoints underreported, not reported, or misreported in mainstream media.

*rabble.ca* was built on the efforts of progressive journalists, writers, artists and progressives across the country. We launched *rabble* on April 18, 2001, just before the protests against the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and leapt onto the Net with the kind of coverage you could only get from the point of view of the *rabble*. We have covered events and issues in ways you'd be hard pressed to find anywhere else ever since.

*rabble.ca* is a registered not-for-profit organization. We rely on the support of individual and organization donors and our sustaining partners. If you would like to support independent journalism you can here [[www.rabble.ca/donate](http://www.rabble.ca/donate)].

We now get 250,000 visitors monthly, and we are growing. *rabble.ca* features some of the best new and emerging progressive voices in Canada. *rabble.ca* is 100 per cent free to read, watch, listen, post and discuss the news of the day -- the "news for the rest of us."

## **Why a journalistic policy?**

The *rabble.ca* journalistic policy is a guide for editorial decision-making at *rabble.ca*. Common issues in journalism are identified here. The goal of this policy is to draw together *rabble.ca*'s commitment to reporting from the perspective of progressives working for progressive change, and the central tenets of journalism: fairness, accuracy, integrity, and balance. While the ideas that inform traditional journalism may seem antithetical to the philosophy that *rabble.ca* embraces, we believe that the reporting conducted by *rabble.ca* contributors is equally, if not more valid than the ostensibly neutral perspective of more traditional journalistic organizations. This policy aims to detail the ways in which *rabble.ca*'s content and reporting practices can be evaluated by editorial staff, in order to achieve consistency on the site without silencing voices that go underrepresented in mainstream media.

*rabble.ca* asks its contributors to write from their positions of expertise, commitment, and enthusiasm for progressive and social justice causes while incorporating the basic tenets of journalistic integrity. For some, the position *rabble.ca* takes on this matter disqualifies our site as a journalistic endeavour. However, we believe that the greater danger for journalism is unstated bias, which is often used to promote right wing or anti-progressive agendas as "truth."

The *rabble.ca* environment invites innovation, and the intent of this policy is to be flexible enough to encourage new techniques for reporting, but also to create a consistent voice for the site and to offer guidance to contributors. The policy should expand *rabble.ca*'s ability to use the full creative potential of the new and old presentation methods available a web environment and support online journalism that comes from a progressive standpoint. It will make a clear distinction between acceptable and unacceptable content for *rabble.ca*. The editorial staff at *rabble.ca* will make final decisions about publication of material.

### ***rabble.ca* guiding principles:**

1. *rabble.ca* does not support the broadcast of racist, sexist, or homophobic ideas unless that discussion is being analyzed or challenged in the context of promoting human rights and social justice.
2. *rabble.ca* maintains editorial control and responsibility for the content of all material included on the site, and its related social media elements.
3. *rabble.ca*'s not-for-profit organization takes no responsibility for the editorial content of the *rabble.ca* website.
4. *rabble.ca* should provide space and support for site users to produce their own material whenever possible.
5. *rabble.ca* will provide a space within the *rabble.ca* site where discussion and information can be shared among site users.
6. *rabble.ca* is not under the control of a group or individual because of a social position that that individual or those groups may hold, for instance, political office.

### **What *rabble.ca* strives for in its content:**

1. Privilege the non-corporate point of view and champion social justice causes.

2. Focus predominantly on Canadian progressive movements, the labour movement, Canadian public policy and Canada's worldwide role, including the way international events affect people living in Canada.
3. Provide content that represents multiple perspectives from progressive communities.
4. Provide in-depth coverage of the growth of social movements and opportunities to participate in progressive activism in Canada and abroad.
5. Provide accurate coverage of action by the labour movement
6. Nurture new writers and remain at the forefront of reporting on progressive causes.

### **Journalistic principles:**

*rabble.ca* contributors follow journalistic standards of accuracy, integrity, fairness, and balance.

1. **Accuracy:** The information reported does not distort reality.
2. **Integrity:** The information is truthful, not simply justifying a conclusion.
3. **Fairness:** The information reports or reflects the relevant facts, dealing fairly with people, institutions, and ideological perspectives.
4. **Balance:** Multiple perspectives are included in reporting in order to provide context and information for site users.

### **\*\*A note on balance:**

*rabble.ca* acknowledges that seeking opposing points of view on all matters can contribute to a mistaken perception that all points of view are held as equally credible. *rabble.ca* exists to present an alternative to the views that are commonly presented in the mainstream media, and views itself as one part of a wide group of media organizations.

*rabble.ca* stories often set themselves in opposition to material presented by other media outlets.

When reporting, instead of immediately seeking perspectives that are in opposition to the dominant narrative of a particular story, *rabble.ca* will strive to represent the diversity of views within progressive activism. In cases where opposing viewpoints are sought, *rabble.ca* contributors may interview a spokesperson for that viewpoint, offer hyperlinks to information, or paraphrase. However *rabble.ca* recognizes that it is part of a much larger media environment and that the online medium allows site visitors to quickly access viewpoints in the mainstream media. In this context, it is unnecessary for *rabble.ca* contributors to always seek opposing viewpoints, which reduce space *rabble.ca* can use to convey the diverse ideas of progressive progressives. *rabble.ca* does however, encourage contributors to offer context for multiple viewpoints on progressive issues in order to provide site users with tools to access and assess multiple viewpoints.

Any item, series of items, or ongoing element of the website may be based on the personal experience or view of an individual, if the information is accurate and truthful.

**Language:**

*rabble.ca* does not support the use of racist, sexist, anti-labour, or homophobic language unless that language is being analyzed or challenged in the context of content promoting human rights and social justice.

*rabble.ca* will not use techniques that diminish people due to their ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or level of education. However, *rabble.ca* is free to discuss and present information relating to discrimination of any kind.

**Funders and their relationship with *rabble.ca*:****Definition of a funder:**

A funder is any organization or person, other than *rabble.ca*, who provides funds, goods or services to *rabble.ca*. *rabble.ca* is committed to openness about its funding agreements, and lists its funders prominently on its website. Clarity about its funding relationships is intended to create a greater understanding of *rabble.ca*, and to aid in maintaining *rabble.ca*'s credibility.

**Editorial control and funders:**

Funders do not exercise editorial control, and funders may not request editorial changes.

**Editorial bias and funders:**

Funders must not be led to believe that funding *rabble.ca* will allow them to define *rabble.ca*, or guarantee positive coverage on the site.

**Special funder areas (In Cahoots):**

In its In Cahoots section, *rabble.ca* provides an opportunity for funders to promote themselves and their efforts. *rabble.ca* will evaluate potential In Cahoots members according to its goals and policies and accept them if they meet *rabble.ca* standards. Final decision on the acceptance of In Cahoots partners rests with *rabble.ca*.

## ***rabble.ca*'s role in the media landscape:**

*rabble.ca* recognizes that it is part of a media environment dominated by corporate interests, and what is in the media is often reflected in public policy. *rabble.ca* does its utmost to present information from a progressive perspective focusing on human rights, the labour movement, peace, and social justice. Because of this approach, its reports and other content are at risk of being reported as being biased because of its transparent approach. To reduce this risk and maintain its credibility, *rabble.ca* and its contributors must confront the challenge of presenting stories in a journalistic format (fair, accurate, thorough and balanced) without compromising *rabble.ca*'s commitment to social justice issues.

*rabble.ca* has a responsibility to present information clearly, including material that provides site users with information about the political perspectives of *rabble.ca*'s content creators. *rabble.ca* will do this by including information about contributor credentials and in cases where contributors are active in particular progressive movement or have specialized knowledge about particular issues, that information will be included in each of their *rabble.ca* contributions. It will also be available in biographical information within the *rabble.ca* site.

## **Standards for contributor work at *rabble.ca*:**

### **Contributors:**

*rabble.ca* does not strive for impartiality; it provides information from the context of social involvement in the struggle for social justice. As such, contributions are welcomed from contributors who have knowledge arising from their own involvement or connection to the events about which they write.

Copyright on original or reprinted pieces published at *rabble.ca* remains with the contributor.

### **Anonymous contributors:**

*rabble.ca* will not publish anonymous pieces unless it is determined by the editorial team that the writer will face danger or personal repercussions because their name is attached to a particular contribution. Final decision on whether to accept anonymous content rests with the editor of *rabble.ca* and the publisher of *rabble.ca*.

### **Blogs and editorial approval:**

Blog posts are distinct from feature items on the *rabble.ca* website. Blogs are not subject to editorial approval and represent the viewpoint of the contributor only. Editorial staff may make changes to blog headlines to increase searchability or for clarity. Blog posts that do not meet *rabble.ca* policy standards may be removed. Final decision on the removal of blog posts rests with the blogs editor and editor of *rabble.ca*.

### **Contributors representing *rabble.ca* at public events:**

Contributors may publicly acknowledge, promote, and describe their work with *rabble.ca*, but they must not act as spokespersons for *rabble.ca* without the consent of *rabble.ca* editorial staff.

### **Contributors providing information for public engagement in *rabble.ca* content:**

*rabble.ca* contributors may promote public tools for civic engagement, including contact information for members of parliament, institutions, online petitions, protest locations, or commercial enterprises. *rabble.ca* encourages its visitors and contributors to take an active role in influencing public policy toward equitable treatment for all people living in Canada.

**Research:**

Research in areas where the contributor does not have specialized knowledge should use resources outside *rabble.ca*. Responsibility for the editorial focus and the context of each piece rests with *rabble.ca*.

**Privacy:**

*rabble.ca* expects contributors to abide by provincial and territorial privacy regulations. Invasion of individuals' private lives is only warranted when an individual's private life impinges on the responsibilities of public life performed by that individual, or is relevant to discussion of a public issue.

**Identity of an individual:**

Protecting the identity of an individual includes not using their name, image, or any detail that would identify them. If a criminal suspect has not been charged with a crime, their name cannot be reported. If *rabble.ca* is reporting on a trial, *rabble.ca* should follow developments in the case, particularly if the person charged is cleared of all charges or suspicions in the investigation.

**Using sources:**

*rabble.ca* contributors will respect the confidentiality of sources. Confidential information can be used if the source is known and considered credible by the contributor. Information obtained through a confidential source should be verified by other relevant sources. The identity of a confidential source must be revealed to *rabble.ca* editorial staff before the material is included on the *rabble.ca* site. *rabble.ca* staff, like the *rabble.ca* contributor, is bound to respect the confidentiality of the source.

**Anonymous sources:**

A *rabble.ca* contribution where interviewees are anonymous makes it impossible for site users to evaluate the quality of the information presented at *rabble.ca*. Anonymity may be allowed in cases where revealing the identity of a source might threaten their personal safety. Contributors must contact *rabble.ca* editorial staff if they wish to include unattributed information in their contribution. The final decision on this matter rests with the editorial team at *rabble.ca*.

**Contributor affiliation to the subject of a *rabble.ca* contribution:**

The position, qualifications, and affiliations of *rabble.ca* contributors and commentators will be clearly indicated in *rabble.ca* stories to ensure that *rabble.ca* site users can evaluate the information provided in *rabble.ca* articles.

**Investigative reporting:**

*rabble.ca*'s focus is not investigative reporting. No investigative reporting should be undertaken without the consent and approval of *rabble.ca* editorial staff.

**Hidden cameras and microphones:**

Reporting should happen in the open and avoid hidden microphones and cameras whenever possible. Secret recording should only be used if it is in the public interest. If members of the general public are allowed in an area, *rabble.ca* contributors can conduct research there. No contributor should obtain information by lying about their identity or *rabble.ca* except in rare cases where it is in the public interest.

**Covering protests and demonstrations:**

*rabble.ca* was formed prior to the 2001 Quebec demonstrations against the WTO. *rabble.ca* contributors are often part of demonstrations, and *rabble.ca* covers movements for

progressive change extensively. Coverage of demonstrations should include a clear account of the reason for the demonstration, opinions from protest organizers, and, where possible, comments from the object of the protest.

When plans are being made for coverage of events where violence may be expected, *rabble.ca* contributors must make every effort to ensure their own safety. *rabble.ca* will not request that any contributor enter a situation in which they do not feel safe. *rabble.ca* contributors should not use the information that they are working with *rabble.ca* to encourage civil disobedience.

### **Interviewer/interviewee best practices:**

Specialized knowledge of media practices gives *rabble.ca* contributors an advantage over interviewees who have no experience producing media. *rabble.ca* contributors should be aware of this and treat their interviewees with respect by answering any questions interviewees may have about the process, and explaining best practices if the interviewee seems confused. This does not prevent *rabble.ca* contributors from conducting on-the-spot interviews with public figures who may want to avoid interviews with *rabble.ca* contributors.

Here are best practices for interviews at *rabble.ca*:

#### **Potential interviewees have the right to refuse interviews:**

If a person refuses to participate in a discussion or interview, there is no need for them to give *rabble.ca* a reason for refusing. In cases where a public figure or organizational representative refuses an interview that information will be presented clearly and simply by *rabble.ca*.

#### **Interviewees must be told where and how their interview will be used:**

Before an interview, the *rabble.ca* contributor must inform the interviewee about the primary use of the interview: how and where interview will be used. The interviewee does not need to be contacted about further uses of the material, for instance in retrospective pieces, although that would be very good manners and *rabble.ca* encourages it.

#### **Interviewees must be notified when an interview is beginning:**

The *rabble.ca* contributor must clearly indicate to the interviewee the start of the interview proper. Material collected from that interviewee before the interviewer indicates the start of the interview cannot be used without further consent by the interviewee.

#### **In cases where two interviewees are being interviewed to obtain opposing viewpoints they must be given the same pre-interview information:**

No interviewee should be shown the comments of the other in advance. Doing so provides an unfair advantage.

#### **Questions must not be provided in advance:**

Interviewees should not receive interview questions in advance as that limits the interviewer's ability to follow up on new information that may be revealed over the course of an interview. However, contributors can hold a pre-interview conversation with their interviewee, which gives a general overview of the topics to be covered.

In cases where interviews are conducted by email, sending a question by email will not be considered to be providing a questions in advance, as responses to those questions are received in the context of an email exchange.

**Payment to interviewees:**

*rabble.ca* does not pay interviewees and sources.

**Off the record information and how it can be used:**

Material provided "off the record" cannot be transmitted publicly in any way by *rabble.ca* contributors, or revealed to anyone but *rabble.ca* editorial staff. The content cannot be used in any items published at *rabble.ca* or elsewhere. However, it can be used to provide direction for further investigation of a story, and verified with other sources. All *rabble.ca* editorial staff are also bound by the "off the record" agreement between a contributor and interviewee who may reveal the information in the editorial process

**Not for attribution information and how it can be used:**

"Not for attribution" information can be used in an item published at *rabble.ca* with the consent of the interviewee who requested that the information be unattributed, but only if the source remains anonymous.

**When interviewees or program participants ask material be withheld:**

Once material is recorded by *rabble.ca* and as long as *rabble.ca* abides by agreements made with the interviewee at the time of recording, requests to withhold the material in *rabble.ca* content will not be granted except in exceptional cases. Final decisions on production and publication rest with *rabble.ca*'s editorial staff. Participants in programs may not veto any portion of an item in which they participated, nor will demands for inclusion in a piece be met without a valid editorial reason for including a particular point of view.

**rabbletv and rabble podcast network:****Interviewer/interviewee:**

Just as text content contains information to give site users information about the writer's expertise and involvement, hosts on other platforms within the *rabble.ca* site should indicate their involvement with a cause where it is relevant to their interviews. Hosts should reveal their involvement with any causes, or activism relevant to a story they are covering so that the audience can accurately evaluate the material presented by *rabble.ca*.

While it may not be possible to include that information in the body of an audio or video piece, the information should be included in show notes or biographical information for the contributor on the site. Wherever possible, the information should be included in the audio or video production. All guests should be treated fairly, regardless of their political point of view.

**Editing best practices:**

The goal of editing is to create an accurate portrait of events and the end product must provide an impression of events and facts as they happened. What follows are a list of best practices in editing for *rabble.ca* video and audio producers:

**Keep questions and answers in context:**

It must be clear which question is being answered when an answer is included in an interview, and in that context the question cannot be misrepresented.

**Rerecording questions/filming cutaways:**

Questions must not be rerecorded or edited to change their original meaning. Cutaways or reactions that are filmed or recorded later must not change the original meaning of the questions or the answers.

**Editing answers to questions:**

Answers given in one context cannot be edited into another context

**Accurately represent interviews:**

Editing must not create the impression of a conversation which did not occur.

**Give context for archival material:**

When archival material is used the context of the original use must be clear.

**Special effects should not change the meaning of what was recorded:**

Documentary productions should not use effects and music to create an emotional response in the listener or viewer. Commentaries may use effects to heighten their impact, but the effects should not manipulate the viewer's mood or ability to evaluate the information presented in the documentary.

**Photography, video, and recording:**

Recording technology often objectifies the people who are recorded, filmed, or photographed. Personal privacy of video and photographic subjects must be respected. Decision-making about whether to publish images rests with *rabble.ca* editorial staff. Suffering should not be depicted unless the image is essential to understanding a story.

**In Cahoots:**

*rabble.ca*'s In Cahoots program members are able to promote activities and causes on the *rabble.ca* site in specified areas. All In Cahoots partner material will be clearly marked throughout the site. Contributors will do their best to exclude unintentional advertising of products in photographic, written, and recorded material, except where that content is related to the story they are covering in some way.

**Conflict of interest:**

*rabble.ca* contributors are encouraged to write from their own experience, commitment and knowledge of social justice causes. However, contributors have an obligation to reveal their involvement in the progressive causes which they cover, and must not accept any material, personal or financial benefit from claims made in their contributions to *rabble.ca*, or their position with *rabble.ca*. Information gathered through work with *rabble.ca* cannot be used for personal gain. When gifts, benefits, or other special considerations are offered in return for positive coverage at *rabble.ca*, they must be refused.

**Corrections:**

*rabble.ca* will admit and correct errors when fact-checking establishes that an error has been made. When informed of substantial inaccuracies, *rabble.ca* will examine the item before making any public statement.

If it is found that an archived item includes an error that is serious in nature, *rabble.ca* will add a correction to the original piece to ensure that the reader can see both the original reporting, and be made aware of the correction. (NOTE: *rabble.ca* is in the process of developing a process for this. It will be part of the site upgrade)

### **Polls:**

*rabble.ca* polls must are not scientific. Do we need to say more about this?

### **Babble:**

Babble provides an opportunity for our visitors to discuss and debate the issues of the day. This opportunity creates new responsibilities for editorial staff. Care must be taken to maintain the principles of fostering community along with fairness and integrity in babble forums while also maintaining our policies with regard to social justice. Babble moderators carry the bulk of this responsibility, and have editorial control over the maintenance of babble threads. All conversations at babble are governed by a babble policy clearly posted on the *rabble.ca* site. These rules cover a wide range of issues including legal requirements, appropriate language, civility and anti-oppression. All participants at babble must register and clearly identify themselves.

### **Content permanence:**

*rabble.ca* 's site acts as an archive of the work done by *rabble.ca*. It is an open history of content that has been posted to the website. As with any print publication, content, once published, will not be removed from the site. Removal of content damages the reputation of the site in the eyes of search engines and diminishes its accountability as a valid media website.

### **Links:**

*rabble.ca* may sometimes provide a link to websites which do not share its editorial view but provides useful insights. *rabble.ca* is not responsible for the content on these sites.

### **Content sharing with other online publications:**

*rabble.ca* content can be linked to by outside organizations, or reprinted with the consent of *rabble.ca*'s editorial staff, full attribution to *rabble.ca*, and a link back to *rabble.ca*. Rights to the reprinted pieces remain with the author.

### **Reprints by *rabble.ca*:**

Material reprinted at *rabble.ca* from other publications will be credited and clearly identified.

### **Collaboration with other media organizations:**

*rabble.ca* may collaborate with other online organizations for special projects. This could, for example, involve a collaboration between *rabble.ca* and another alternative news publications such as *The Tyee* or web service such as *livestream*. In these cases, *rabble.ca* will maintain editorial control over material appearing under the *rabble.ca* logo, and *rabble.ca* should be credited wherever *rabble.ca* material appears in the partnering website or publication. Authors will be fully identified.

## **Credibility:**

Credibility is essential to the success of *rabble.ca*, and *rabble.ca*'s guiding philosophy of progressive participation presents a central challenge when it comes to creating credibility in the journalistic environment. Its contributors are often involved in the movements about which they write which leads to a perception of bias.

However, *rabble.ca* was founded on the idea of creating space where voices for social change can be heard. The site actively acknowledges the expertise, point of view, and commitment of its contributors in order to give site users the tools they need to evaluate the information they are consuming.

At mainstream media outlets, maintaining credibility often takes the form of discouraging reporters and writers from engaging with social justice issues. This is not desirable or workable for *rabble.ca*. It is integral to the nature of its work that *rabble.ca* maintain close ties to progressive movements. The site does this by inviting contributors who are involved in struggles for social change and social justice to create content that reflects their involvement. However, *rabble.ca* must also work to ensure that it functions journalistically by ensuring that reported material is presented clearly, truthfully, and accurately. By following these principles *rabble.ca* can maintain its credibility within progressive circles while gaining credibility in non-progressive circles.

To maintain and create credibility in the online media environment, *rabble.ca* will continue its policy of identifying the progressive work of our contributors, as well as continuing to seek out new points of view that support social justice movements. When creating journalistic material, writers will strive to present balanced information without denying their connection and commitment to social justice issues.

## **Plagiarism<sup>1</sup>:**

Plagiarism includes all failures to credit and attribute the work of others. Any and all use of someone else's words or ideas without attribution or credit can be considered plagiarism.

## **Fact-checking and accuracy<sup>2</sup>:**

In keeping with the standard of accuracy outlined in our Journalistic Principles, we strive to present information that does not distort reality. In both reporting and editing, our goal is to ensure that facts are correct and sources attributed.

A 'fact' describes things or events and is capable of being verified. An 'opinion' is a viewpoint based on a value judgment that cannot be proved or disproved. Considerations of accuracy can apply to factual content used to support an opinion. The description of facts must provide the nuances necessary to ensure that the account is clear and easy to understand. Checks for accuracy also require ensuring that facts are presented in context.

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<sup>1</sup> Sources: Globe and Mail, University of Toronto

<sup>2</sup> Sources: CBC Journalistic Standards and Practices, the Canadian Reporter, The Guardian Editorial Code, Australian Broadcasting Corporation Editorial Policies

## **Legal considerations for *rabble.ca* contributors**

There are no special rights for contributors to *rabble.ca*. *rabble.ca* will not advise contributors to knowingly break the law, nor will *rabble.ca* advise contributors to avoid activities designed to create change in Canadian law.