

Annual Report



rabble.ca

2016

What can you find at rabble.ca?

- Original progressive news features and analysis
- Diverse and exclusive OPINIONS and Blogs
- In-depth series on critical issues facing Canadians
- in cahoots: featured links to social movement and labour stories
- 11 years of Canada's best in progressive podcasts (plus rabble radio)
- Streaming video of live lectures and events
- The Book Lounge: a multi-featured book section with original reviews, events and more
- Canada-wide event calendar
- Daily and weekly e-newsletters tailored to your unique interests
- babble, our famous moderated online discussion forum

THANK YOU

SUSTAINING PARTNERS!

rabble.ca's Sustaining and Supporting Partners are organizations that support our mission and vision financially, receiving acknowledgement in advertising and site promotion.

2016 Sustaining Partners:

The Canadian Labour Congress
The Council of Canadians
Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
British Columbia Government Employees Union (NUPGE)
Hospital Employees Union
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
National Union of Public and General Employees
Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
Unifor
United Steelworkers

The importance of the community of unions and civil society organizations that support rabble is hard to overstate. These are crucial partnerships with organizations that value independent media and who see the issues they support on *rabble.ca*.

Sustaining and Supporting Partners are thanked in a special section of our site's front page and also receive free advertising on *rabble.ca*. In addition, all Sustaining Partners are in cahoots members, meaning stories from their websites are featured on our front page in a special section. If your organization would like more information about becoming a Sustaining Partner, please contact business@rabble.ca.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

rabble.ca's donors are what make independent media possible. Whether you contribute \$5 or \$5,000 — each decision to invest in rabble is greatly appreciated, and as you will see in the pages to follow, goes a long way!

If you appreciate the work of independent media, please make a contribution today at: rabble.ca/donate

Or by mail:

rabble.ca, 215 Spadina Avenue, Suite 400, Toronto, ON M5T 2C7



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Welcome

from Publisher Kim Elliott

2016 was a tough year for progressive politics – a year that showed us Canada needs independent media more than ever.

Extreme right-wing populism is on the rise. Canadian politicians like Kellie Leitch and Chris Alexander, emboldened by the election of Donald Trump and some aspects of the successful Brexit campaign, tried their hand at racist, divisive and dangerous politics. Fake news infiltrated our social media feeds. And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau showed once again why the Liberal Party is such an effective ally of the rich and powerful, masking his pro-pipeline, pro-big business policies with superficial feminism and fancy socks.

But, like it has done for over 15 years, *rabble.ca* held firm. Our Parliamentary Correspondent Karl Nerenberg repeatedly held Trudeau's government to account and our excellent Labour Beat reporter Teuila Fuatai reminded Canadians that the labour movement remains the first line of defence against austerity and neoliberalism.

Teuila's comprehensive work on EI and raising the minimum wage in 2016 massively contributed to the national discussion that has since led to major reforms in Ontario, Alberta and B.C. Karl punished the mounting pile of broken promises coming out of Ottawa – from electoral reform to its environmental commitments to a new, improved relationship with Indigenous peoples.

And, like our founding days in the Quebec City protests against globalization and North American free trade in 2001, we didn't limit our involvement to media. Our Vancouver-based anti-Islamophobia conference took direct aim at the rising tide of prejudice that found confidence not only in Trump's hateful campaign, but also in its corollaries in a conservative leadership race featuring Kellie Leitch, Chris Alexander and Kevin O'Leary.

We took part in Vancouver's Media Democracy Day in Vancouver, organizing an essential panel on Indigenous journalism and storytelling. We spoke to colleges and partnered with the Canadian Federation of Students in a funded campaign to build Canada's next generation of progressive journalists. We continue to be proud of the powerful, talented journalists who cut their teeth on our site and now make their living in Canada's mainstream media.

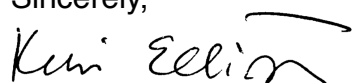
As always, there were some staff changes: we saw the talented Miriam Katawazi and Samaah Jaffer join the editorial team. As well Steven Staples joined late 2016 to fill in for my sabbatical. We also said goodbyes: our news and books editor, Kaitlin McNabb, left our organization after more than six years. Kaitlin started as an intern with *rabble* and sparkled in every role she was given until she practically ran the place. We also parted ways with David Molenhuis, who shared his writing and design ideas with *rabble* for over a year, and with Meghan Murphy - who began at *rabble* as a podcast intern, and left as evening blog editor. We wish them well.

Also in 2016, our long time board president, Duncan Cameron, retired from the board — but not from rabble or the fight for a better media! Duncan has played a pivotal role in rabble since 2004 - both as a tireless fundraiser and also as a mentor and constant supporter of rabble's workers. Duncan has taken on the active role of President Emeritus and continues to write a column for rabble.

rabble continues to grow and push the boundaries of online media. We have over 20,000 fans on Facebook and nearly 40,000 followers on Twitter. Major media outlets and pundits have come to look to rabble first when they need to take the pulse of Canadian progressives — and we're happy to oblige.

We are a proud independent, community media site. If you like what you see in these pages and what you see, hear, watch and discuss on rabble.ca, please give us a hand at rabble.ca/donate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Elliott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Kim Elliott
Publisher



In 2016, **rabble turned 15 years old**. That's older than Facebook, older than Twitter and just three years younger than Google. rabble is strong, stable and reliable—and we won't stop fighting for the things that matter.

As legacy media sheds jobs and closes newsrooms to enrich U.S. vulture capitalist firms, **rabble is still fiercely independent, proudly progressive and radically influential**.

We couldn't have done it without our sustaining partners, our sponsors and **our membership made up of people like you**. The smallest monthly donation makes feminist, progressive, independent journalism even stronger.

And as you'll read in these pages, what rabble is able to do on a budget likely less than Margaret Wente's salary is frankly incredible. News, opinions, interviews, podcasts, activist tips, hard-hitting series, a moderated discussion board and massive social media influence—**we've been building our reputation for 15 years and we're not going anywhere**.

We've been inextricable from the fabric of activism and protest since our founding in 2001 at the Quebec globalization protests. In 2016, we find ourselves in the middle of an even bigger fight: **against xenophobia, pipelines, and injustice**. But we're ready to take it on.

Here's to another 15 years. Solidarity!



15 years of
truth to power
A fierce Anniversary

In 2015, **Justin Trudeau swept to power on a wave of progressive promises**: a new relationship with Indigenous people; tough, concrete environmental policies that take climate change seriously; and, of course, real democratic reform.

None of that happened. But it takes a strong, vibrant and critical independent press to look past the selfies and hold the Federal Liberals to account.

That's why we have **Karl Nerenberg in Ottawa**, asking tough questions and

measuring Trudeau's actions against his promises and posturing.

Our columnists and pundits took aim at the Liberals' arms deals with Saudi Arabia, the slew of approved pipelines, the continued failure of Canada's treatment of First Nations and an electoral reform promise that lay in tatters.

The mainstream media's love-in with the prime minister won't change any of this. **Canada needs rabble to offer a true tonic to Trudeaumania.**



The Tonic to Trudeaumania

Karl Nerenberg and rabble.ca's parliamentary bureau



The Labour Beat Is Back

A Gold Standard in Labour Journalism

Wayne MacPhail

Across Canada, newsrooms are cutting to the bone and the labour beat reporter is the first thing to go. **Not at rabble.**

Our paid Labour Beat Internship is one of our prize jewels. Hard-hitting, plain language journalism that looks at the economy **from a labour point of view—not one bought by the Big Banks.**

Teuila Fuatai joined the esteemed ranks of rabble's former labour reporters when she joined rabble in 2016. Her work on E.I., the Canada Post lockout and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's labour record was exemplary.

Generously supported by Unifor, with support from CALM, this rare paid internship not only forms the backbone of our labour coverage, **it cultivates a new generation of pro-labour journalists across Canada** (Former labour intern H.G. Watson is now the managing editor at J-Source).

Of course, all our reporting and opinion seeks to change the conversation about labour and the democracy. With the so-called "sharing economy" and anti-union rhetoric on the rise, Canada needs a strong reminder that **collective action and organizing begins and ends in the labour movement.** Fortunately, rabble is here to do just that.



Decolonizing the Media

Indigenous Rights, Indigenous Writing

Lenée Son

Indigenous people have been showing Canadians how to fight for a better, more just society for generations. The fight against climate change, poverty and prejudice has been led every time by First Nations.

That's why rabble turns first to Indigenous people on stories of social justice.

We've published prominent Indigenous leaders and thinkers like Pam Palmater, Russell Diabo and Jesse Went. We interviewed Indigenous artists like Alanis

Obomsawin and covered critical acts of First Nations resistance like the struggle at Muskrat Falls.

We also organized the closing plenary for Vancouver's **Media Democracy Days 2016**, titled "**Decolonizing the Mind**," which featured APTN Video Journalist Tina House (Métis) and facilitator and advocate Annita McPhee (Tahltan).

We've been putting Indigenous voices first for over 15 years—and we're not about to stop now.

2016 saw rabble's impressive social media reach grow even further. Over 20,000 Facebook Fans. Nearly 40,000 Twitter followers.

rabble has the potential to regularly reach hundreds of thousands of Canadians with our content— we have a reach far beyond rabble's budget and resources - thanks to the dedicated workers who run rabble, and thanks to our readers and contributors who passionately share content.

rabble continues to be the first place journalists, MPs and Canada's most influential political minds—**conservative and progressive alike**—turn for what left-wing, labour-conscious Canadians are thinking.

In an increasingly crowded news market, real clout in the social media sphere is absolutely essential. And rabble is in the pole position.

GOING VIRAL

RABBLE ON SOCIAL MEDIA





Lenée Son

In the Streets

Journalism in Practice

Since 2001 in the streets of Quebec City, rabble has been putting its money where its mouth is. We pay special attention to grassroots protests and movements in our journalism—often because we’re already there.

Outreach coordinator Tania Ehret is an indispensable part of rabble’s team: organizing critical workshops and panels, taking part in on-the-ground organizing and making sure Canada’s best radical artists and storytellers find audiences for their work.

Opinions Editor Michael Stewart spoke to a class of journalism students in Vancouver’s Langara College on the future of progressive

media. **Our partnership with the Canadian Federation of Students** delivered paid, hard-hitting stories on the crucial issues facing post-secondary education today.

Our crack team of reporters—News intern Sophia Reuss, podcast intern Braden Alexander and RPN Executive Producer Victoria Fenner at the helm—brought the **2016 World Social Forum** to Canadians. If Canadians wanted on-the-ground coverage of the future of progressive thought and organizing, they had only one place to turn: rabble.

With alt-right bravado on the rise across North America, it looks like rabble will be spending a

Nowhere is our commitment to grassroots activism clearer than the **Lynn Williams Activist Toolkit**. Launched in 2013 and currently coordinated by Maya Bhullar, the Toolkit was conceived as a radical wiki-style space for organizers to share, discuss and create tools for organizing from the ground up.

Lynn Williams is a labour organizer, activist and the first Canadian to become International President of the United Steelworkers.

The Toolkit reflects William's dedicated work as a life-long activist, providing organizers and communities with access to guides, workshop outlines, open source software, copy-left images, activist histories and more.

In 2016, Maya launched **Constructing Change**, a series speaking to people working to change their communities for the better. Interviews and profiles reveal how to support and amplify the changemakers' work as well as share how we can organize a similar project in our own communities.

Tearing down the Master's House

the activist toolkit



For 11 years the **Rabble Podcast Network** has been pushing the envelope in progressive radio. Executive Producer Victoria Fenner continues the RPN's proud tradition.

rabble's trip to the 2016 World Social Forum was easily the highlight of our podcast year. We were able to join thousands of activists from around the world who converged on Montreal, to do a daily program.

We talked about **media democracy**, explained **what the World Social Forum**

was about, talked about **releasing the corporate stranglehold**, **new types of storytelling** and why **The LEAP Manifesto** is important enough to deserve its own program.

The Strange Wax Cylinders of Thaddeus Barnes is a six-part steampunk adventure involving retro scientific gadgetry, inventor Nicola Tesla and a mystery to be solved. Produced by Wayne MacPhail for *Harrowsmith Now* in partnership with the rabble podcast network, this was one of our first forays into audio drama.



Ear in Review

11 years of the RPN

At rabble, we know there's more than one way to read the news.

Not only do we ensure our social media feeds are always topped up in the best in progressive journalism, we also deliver **general daily and weekly newsletters** as well as our content-specific weekly digests on **politics, labour, arts & culture, environment, and Indigenous issues**. Right to your inbox.

And, of course, our **(in)famous moderated discussion board babble** remains one of the best places in the media landscape to

discuss progressive news and views in a safe space.

rabbleTV keeps viewers up-to-date with the latest in left-wing video (and the latest **Not Rex Murphy** video column by Humberto Da Silva) while our sponsor-curated **In Cahoots** section lets you know what our friends across the progressive sector are working on.

All of this (and more!) on a shoestring budget. We're proud of the incredible volume and breadth of work rabble produces and we hope you are too.



Multiple Voices,
Multiple Platforms
Speaking to members

supporting donors

community-supported media



Like community radio and TV, community Internet news sites depend on members to help meet their budget.

At *rabble.ca*, we hold an annual monthly donor drive to recruit members (starting at \$5/month).

In the winter of 2016 we had one of our most successful in-house campaigns to date - lead by Kim Elliott and David Molenhuis — with over 800 monthly members contributing between \$5 and \$100 a month.

Monthly supporters get a variety of perks—ranging from thank you gifts upon sign up to special event invitations and a monthly newsletter just for monthly supporters.

We kick off each fundraising drive with an old school mailing (we get a good return!)

Our mailing depends on volunteers to help us stuff envelopes. We send a special thank and a great deal of love to CUPE 416 for their support this year. And as always : Thanks to our volunteers!

You can sign up to become a monthly supporter at <http://rabble.ca/donate>



rabble.ca is an Member of the U.S. [progressive network The Media Consortium](#). The Media Consortium is a network of leading progressive independent journalism organizations who work to “amplify our voices; increase our collective clout; leverage our current audience and reach out to new ones; transform our sector’s position in a rapidly changing media and political environment; and redefine ourselves and progressivism for a new century.”

rabble.ca is an active member of the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) in Toronto, 25OneCommunity in Ottawa and continues to flourish in Vancouver’s historic Dominion Building moving from spaced shared with the CCPA-BC in 2016, down a few floors to the Media Junction.



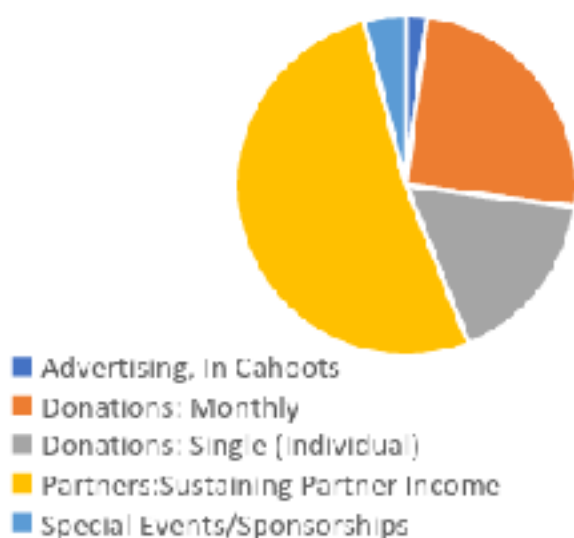
Social change communities
[community-supported media](#)

financial reflections

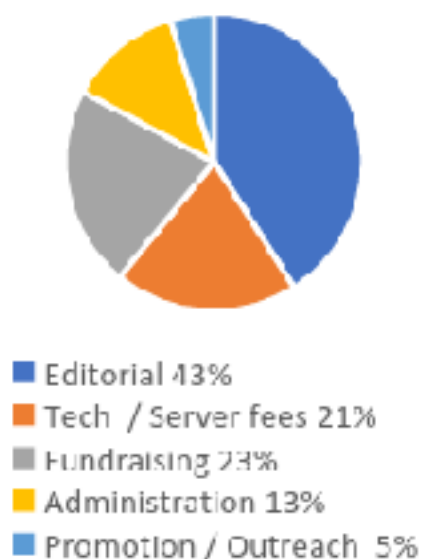
The total operating budget for *rabble.ca* in 2016 was \$409,003 with an income of \$371,822.

While 2016 ended in the red due to fluctuating partner support, poor fundraising results in the final months of the year. Nevertheless, rabble has a solid reputation of being an efficient and lean operation, that punches far above its budget in terms of reach and in original content. In 2016 rabble's monthly expenses averaged \$32,000, of which approximately \$14,000 were covered by monthly recurring donations. The balance of the budget is derived from larger sustaining partner contributions and by ongoing monthly publisher-led fundraising and revenue generating activities.

Revenue 2016



Expenses 2016



Many media organizations receive labour support and civil society support - but at rabble we believe in being transparent about where our funds come from. We appreciate our Sustaining and Supporting Partners in 2016 included:

- United Steelworkers
- Unifor
- Canadian Labour Congress
- Public Service Alliance of Canada
- Canadian Union of Public Employees:
- Canadian Union of Postal Workers
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
- Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario
- National Union of Public and Government Employees
- Health Services Association – Alberta: \$5000
- BCGEU
- The Canadian Federation of Nurse
- Health Employees Union BC
- Unifor 79M
- CUPE416

Fundraising & Revenue generation

As always, 2016 began with our annual winter fundraiser, This was one of rabble's most successful in-house campaigns, which was run by two part time staff. **Goal: \$25,000** – later raised to \$50,000 **Total raised: \$66,458**

Our **spring campaign** to fund a new direction: BC election reporting, with a modest goal of \$10K was not as successful - raising \$7K.

The **summer 2016** in house campaign met its goal of \$25K, and came in just shy of 100 new members (99).



In Fall 2016 rabble hired an outside firm to run the annual Parliamentary Reporter campaign, with a goal of \$20K, and for the first time the organization lost money on the campaign.

While the emphasis for the first three quarters of 2016 was on internal fundraising, a new grants position saw us submit application for two grants. Ad sales continued at a slower pace post-2015 election, while internal resources focused on gaining new members and fundraising.

Statistics

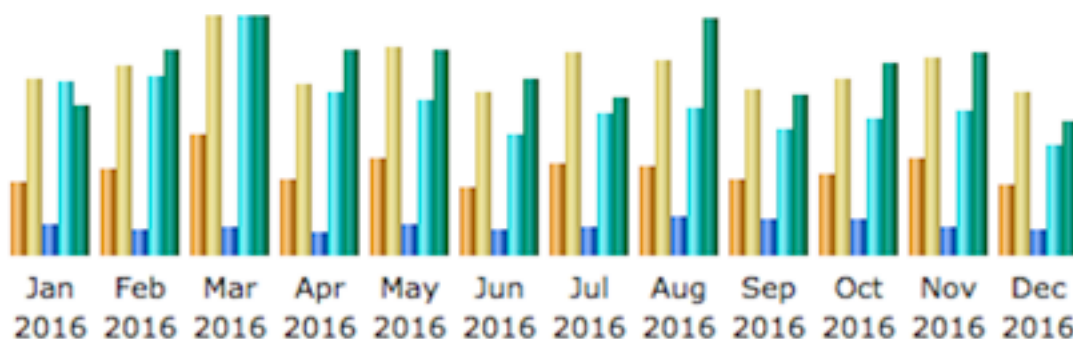
Measuring Traffic

While rabble's social media presence grew in 2016, traffic to the website saw diminishing numbers - for not unexpected reasons. 2015 was a banner year for traffic due to the federal election - a drop to closer to previous numbers was anticipated. However our biggest setback remained the lack of mobile responsiveness of the site - moving the site to a mobile responsive upgrade is the major priority for development.

Nevertheless, rabble continued to have significant traffic: averaging 290,000 unique visits per month in 2016 (compared to over 400,000 in 2015, a federal election year). We also experienced a 39% decrease in page views to just over 600,000 per month—compared to over one million page views per month the previous year.

In a world where more people read news on mobile devices than on desktops or laptops, rabble's readership in 2015 was 55% read on desktop, and only 35% from mobile devices—and only 10% on tablets.

The major challenges facing our organization is marshalling the resources—provided from members like you—to make our content 100% mobile responsive. Our 2017 site update has taken steps towards this, but in the coming years rabble needs to return to the flexible, portable and innovative spirit that has helped rabble flourish these 15 years.



The above graphic, drawn from AWStats, is an indication of the traffic trends over 2016.



people at rabble.ca

rabble.ca operates with a dedicated crew of part-time and volunteer workers. Our work is supported by interns, volunteers and a volunteer board of directors.

You can read more about rabble, and our history, here:

www.rabble.ca/about

There is no central office to rabble—we are a virtual organization with staff located around the country. In 2016, we had editorial staff in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New York. We have columnists, bloggers, podcasters and video makers coast to coast and beyond the Canadian borders. In 2016 the staff had a rare opportunity to get together in person for a retreat in Toronto to reflect and plan.

rabble.ca is a proud member of the **Centre for Social Innovation** in Toronto, where we have access to work and meeting space and can connect with other progressive organizations and businesses. In Vancouver, we rent space in Vancouver's historic Dominion Building. In Ottawa you can find us at 25OneCommunity on Bank Street. Our Parliamentary Bureau in 2016 was located at 280 Albert Street in Ottawa.

Members' Council

Founder: Judy Rebick

President Emeritus: Duncan Cameron

Executive Members

Duncan Cameron (President until April 2016)
Larry Brown (Interim President April-Sept 2016)
Holly Solomon (President - October 2016-)
Sue Birge (Secretary - October 2016 -)
David MacDonald (Treasurer),
Wayne MacPhail (board member - Dec 2016)
Stephen Kimber (board member - Dec 2016)
Morna Ballantyne (board member)

workers

Kim Elliott, Publisher

Michelle Gregus, Managing Editor

Kaitlin McNabb, News Editor

Maya Bhullar, Activist Toolkit Coordinator

Meg Borthwick, babble moderator

Sarah Beuhler, BC Fundraising

Tania Ehret, Outreach Coordinator

Victoria Fenner, RPN Executive Producer

Samaah Jaffer, Evening Editor

Miriam Katawazi, Morning Editor

Nora Loreto - on secondment from the Canadian Association of Labour Media - as Labour Editor

Shirley Marquez, Administration and Membership Coordinator

Dave Molenhuis, Associate Publisher

Meghan Murphy, Evening/West Coast Editor

Michael Stewart, Opinions Editor and Promotions

Christina Turner, Weekend editor

Brian Sharpe, Tech Support

Allan Graham, Tech Support

Justin Saunders, Tech Support

Star Company, bookkeeping

Andrea Poole, Auditor

Marianela Ramos Capelo, Graphic Design

Karl Nerenberg, Parliamentary Reporter

Tequila Fuatai, Labour Beat Reporter

Krystalline Kraus, Activist Communique

Humberto DaSilva, Not Rex Murphy

Michael Ensley, Facebook Group moderation

interns

Emily Blake

Lenée Son

Sophia Reuss

Alyse Kotyk

Braden Alexander

Members Council members 2016

Robert Lamoureux (CUPE)

Bob Gallagher (USW)

Denise Hammond (Unifor)

Toby Whitfield (Canadian Federation of Students)

Fred Wilson

Shannon Devine

Kathleen Monk

Jerry Toews

our gratitude:

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How can you keep rabble.ca going and growing?

- Become an individual rabble member for \$5/month by visiting www.rabble.ca/membership. rabble depends on memberships to survive and thrive. We offer great thank you gifts for all members. Of course, we also accept donations. See <https://secure.rabble.ca/supportrabble>
- Sign up for our FREE news summary: www.rabble.ca/alerts
- Have your organization join in cahoots -- our sponsored portal of news from civil society groups in Canada. See: <http://www.rabble.ca/incahoots> Contact business@rabble.ca
- Have your organization become a Sustaining Partner. Sustaining Partners provide financial support to rabble and receive a fantastic advertising package and promotion from rabble. Contact business@rabble.ca
- Advertise on *rabble.ca*. rabble is Canada's largest independent online news site. Contact advertise@rabble.ca
- Tell us your news, share a story! If you have news or a story let us know! Contact editor@rabble.ca



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"I rely on *rabble.ca* to bring me the real debates that are shaping our country."

— **Naomi Klein**

"It is no exaggeration to say that the hopes of a decent world rest substantially on the success of the kind of work that *rabble.ca* has been carrying out with such distinction."

— **Noam Chomsky**

"*rabble.ca* is a crucial resource for achieving media democracy in Canada, in this era of increasing corporate media concentration."

— **Maude Barlow**

"The world needs to hear a lot less from the mainstream media and a lot more from *rabble.ca*"

— **Linda McQuaig**

"Our cherished, venerable, fierce and principled source of truly independent media in Canada."

— **Avi Lewis**