I do not believe that the solution to our problem is simply to elect the right people. The important thing is to establish a political climate of opinion which will make it politically profitable for the wrong people to do the right thing.

- Milton Friedman
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MESSAGE FROM
THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

The MEI, in its current form, launched its activities nearly twenty years ago. From the start, we made the strategic decision to release all of our publications in both official languages, even though the majority of the topics we addressed at the time mainly concerned the province of Quebec. First of all, we wanted to make sure to reach anglophone Quebeckers. But we also wanted people in the rest of the country interested in solutions based on competition and freedom of choice to be able to take inspiration from our debates, on health care and education for example, which are often similar to those that take place in other provinces.

Soon enough, however, starting in the mid-2000s, the MEI began to look at pan-Canadian issues like interprovincial trade barriers, supply management in agriculture, the drug approval process, and the federal government’s finances. This pan-Canadian expertise has only grown since then, but always while preserving our “Quebec perspective.”

For all sorts of reasons, including cultural and linguistic barriers, Quebeckers are unfortunately too often one step removed from pan-Canadian public policy debates. There was therefore a niche to fill, and that is just what we have endeavoured to do. The MEI was, at the start, a voice presenting a free-market perspective in Quebec. Over the years, we have also become a voice from Quebec presenting market-based solutions across Canada, on matters of interest to all Canadians.

In recent years, our researchers have for example become experts, frequently cited across the country, on policies related to the oil and gas industry, the forestry industry, and the regulation of telecommunications and the aviation sector, to name just a few of the most important topics addressed over the past twelve months. Moreover, in 2017, we returned to the same issues that are still in the news—interprovincial barriers, access to medication, supply management, and federal taxation—with an even larger media impact (in both languages and on all Canadian media platforms) than we had a dozen years ago.
This appetite for our expertise and our unique Quebec perspective continues to grow as our media coverage explodes in every region of the country and the MEI becomes a household name everywhere, as you will see in the Message from the President and CEO. This is a major trend for the institute, and we have every intention of devoting the necessary resources to respond to this demand in the coming years.

Quebec’s public policies will obviously always remain a priority for us, and there is no question of reducing our focus on them. But the MEI will continue its pan-Canadian expansion by improving its ground game, among other things through collaborations with similar organizations in other provinces, and by building more contacts with politicians and bureaucrats in Ottawa and in other provincial capitals who show an interest in our work.

Of course, this ongoing expansion would never have been possible without the generous contributions of all our supporters across the country, be they private foundations from Alberta, companies based in Toronto, or individual donors from Vancouver or Montreal. Indeed, as a non-profit organization that neither solicits nor accepts any government funding, we depend on all of you in order to be able to fund our research, to pay the salaries of our dynamic team, and to pursue our mission of economic education with uncompromised editorial independence. Your support allowed us once again to grow our budget, which reached $2.8 million in 2017.

The MEI’s Board of Directors added a new member this past year, Marc Meunier, a Montreal businessman who for the past 25 years has been the President and CEO of a firm specializing in customized on-the-job training. Mr. Meunier was in fact involved in an earlier incarnation of the MEI, as of 1987. For his part, successful entrepreneur Eric Boyko, who served as a member of our Board of Directors for many years, joined the ranks of our Board of Governors in 2017.

On the eve of its twentieth anniversary, the MEI has become an indispensable source for anyone interested in how our society is (and how it should be) governed. We’ve made a name for ourselves in the Canadian market of ideas thanks to the relevance and rigour of our contributions. I invite you to renew your support if you believe, as I do, that things will just keep improving in Quebec and across Canada if the MEI’s presence continues to grow.

Hélène Desmarais
The MEI has been presenting market-based solutions to public policies in Quebec for nineteen years now. The work we do requires sustained efforts over the long term in order to get results. Modest at first, our impact on the public debate is being felt more and more, as you will see in this Annual Report. It is also undeniable that the positions taken by our researchers often correspond to those of a large proportion of our fellow citizens, as shown by the polls on specific issues that we commission each year. Our media interventions give a voice to this silent majority. The media and decision-makers know it. For all of these reasons, the MEI has become an indispensable reference and our voice today carries a lot further.

These results are remarkable, and very encouraging. But the best is yet to come. After having looked back at the achievements of the past year, I want to share with you a new stage in our development, the first steps of which we have already taken, which we will be putting in place in the months and years ahead, and which will make the MEI an even more effective and influential organization.
It has become almost a tradition in this Annual Report. Aside from a few atypical years, our media coverage continues to set new records year after year. In 2017, our work was mentioned **9,664 times** in the media throughout Canada and even beyond our borders. This represents an average of 26 mentions per day, and a **20% increase** compared to the year before. Once again this past year, our researchers were particularly active in the publication of blog posts and opinion pieces on various platforms, and especially in the country’s top newspapers, with a total of 248.

It is not just the number of media mentions that counts, but also the influence of the media outlets that mention us and publish our articles. Thus, *The Globe and Mail* published eight of our opinion pieces, or twice as many as in 2016. It also mentioned us eleven times in news articles and commentaries, even devoting an editorial to one of our studies. This shows our capacity to disseminate our messages to every kind of audience. It is among other things the excellent work of our Department of Current Affairs, established just two years ago, that has allowed us to achieve this kind of outreach.
THE MEI IN FIGURES

27 Publications
8 Economic Notes
3 Research Papers
16 Viewpoints
248 Blog posts and op-eds

9,664 Media mentions
26 mentions per day

↑20%
MORE THAN 2016
525 INTERNATIONAL MEDIA MENTIONS
To Foster Entrepreneurship, Ottawa Should Look To Vienna

Austrian economics provides a rich analysis that can help to better understand which Canadian policies are detrimental to entrepreneurship. If we do not address these policies, we are, metaphorically, leaving money on the table by not doing everything we can to push Canadians toward productive entrepreneurship.

Small biz will bear brunt of Liberals’ blindside

It’s important to see past the lens of government rhetoric in this reform. Class warfare is a distraction. If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it’s most likely a duck; if it increases taxes on small businesses, it is most likely a tax increase on small businesses.

Échanger la gestion de l’offre contre le bois d’œuvre

Les barrières commerciales n’ont jamais enrichi qu’un petit nombre au détriment de la vaste majorité. Éliminer celles qui subsistent dans les secteurs agricoles sous gestion de l’offre et celle du bois d’œuvre serait profitable tant pour les consommateurs que pour les producteurs.

How to make NAFTA great again

Trade barriers have never made more than a small minority of people richer, at the expense of the vast majority. Eliminating those that persist in the agricultural sectors under supply management and in the softwood lumber sector, and making sure not to erect new ones, would be good both for consumers and for producers.
The CRTC doesn’t need to meddle in Canada’s broadband market

January 9, 2017

Canada’s broadband market is already very healthy and competitive, and does not require additional interventions on the part of the CRTC. Its decision to create a new funding mechanism for the development of broadband in rural and remote areas is yet another example of its central-planning mindset.

Licence to kill

July 3, 2017

Governments would be better off ensuring the proper functioning and the credibility of existing institutions rather than adding a notion as subjective and arbitrary as social licence to our democratic processes.

Quebec can learn from Swedish hospital on wait times

October 17, 2017

Only one per cent of patients at Saint Göran spend more than eight hours in emergency; in Quebec, 1.6 per cent wait 48 hours or more.

Le puissant Fonds vert ou le « puits sans fond » vert ?

October 19, 2017

Le Fonds vert est un immense gaspillage de ressources. Il est temps de le faire disparaître et de retourner son encaisse à ceux qui l’ont financé, sous la forme d’impôts plus faibles.
IN QUEBEC, OUR EFFORTS BEAR FRUIT...

Cases in which our contribution has had a concrete influence on the way debates have played out are more and more numerous, especially in Quebec. In recent years, a series of government decisions have been announced that were clearly inspired by solutions we proposed. Among others, there is the activity-based funding of hospitals, the end of new Hydro-Québec contracts for costly wind energy production, the expansion of responsibilities for nurse practitioners, the use of cadets to direct traffic in Montreal in order to reduce the cost of police services, and the transition plan for the taxi industry in Quebec following the arrival of Uber.

The MEI has also without any doubt contributed to the improvement of Quebec’s public finances by ensuring, for almost two decades now, that the themes of budgetary balance and fiscal responsibility are considered priorities by the population and by decision-makers. We have been one of the only organizations in Quebec to present this perspective systematically.

And once again over the past year, we have been one of the rare voices explaining why it was important for the government to keep its promise to reduce taxes in the event of a budget surplus, which it ended up doing this past November.

“The MEI has also proposed, several times over the past dozen years, the opening up of the market for alcohol sales in Quebec. A 2005 Research Paper raised the issue, launching an intense debate that lasted several weeks, and that has been pursued over the years. With the government now finally studying various scenarios for ending the provincial liquor monopoly, a Leger poll commissioned by the MEI provided some support to this desire for reform by showing that a strong majority of Quebecers support the liberalization of Quebec’s alcohol market.

We hit two home runs with in-depth publications on electric vehicles. These two publications generated over 1,300 media mentions and numerous interviews in the months that followed, not only in Quebec but across Canada and even elsewhere in the world. They were clearly among our most impactful publications of 2017.
The first showed that the subsidies handed out by the Quebec and Ontario governments for the purchase of such vehicles are a waste of public funds, and that they are the least efficient and most expensive way of reducing greenhouse gases. We stepped up to the plate again a few weeks later by explaining why the electric vehicle sales quotas imposed on manufacturers are going to end up increasing the cost of conventional vehicles, which is equivalent to a new tax for consumers.

Our researchers also used the occasion, in interviews and blog posts, to criticize the subsidies granted by the City of Montreal to the Formula E race, another ineffective and costly government intervention aiming to promote electric cars. One of the first actions of Montreal’s new municipal government, in the days following its election, was to cancel the event.

Education and health care, which are the two main areas of provincial government spending, continue to be central concerns for Quebecers, and for the MEI. We caused quite a stir with an Economic Note that illustrated, backed up by facts and figures, that education spending grew over the past ten years while the number of students was falling and academic results were barely improving. The MEI showed that it is high time to rethink the way we do things.

Fourteen years after our first publication on the example of Sweden’s health reforms, we revisited the topic with two publications. The first described how the Swedish health care system, where private and public clinics and hospitals exist side by side and compete in a decentralized universal system, provides better access to care than the Canadian system, which is founded on a public monopoly and centralized administration. The second publication looked at the example of Saint Göran, a hospital in Stockholm funded by the government but managed by a private company. Emergency wait times at this hospital are remarkably short, while all attempts to reduce them significantly have failed for years in Quebec. These two publications showed once again that it is possible to provide effective care that integrates the contribution of the private sector within a system that remains accessible to all.

Finally, we commissioned a poll in May on Quebecers’ perceptions of oil, showing that more and more of them favour importing Western Canadian oil. More than half think Quebec’s oil resources should be developed, and pipelines are still considered the safest method of transport. Yet the opinions of these Quebecers are rarely reflected in the media. The MEI helps ensure that politicians take this silent majority’s points of view into account when it comes time to set public policy.

“It is now 65% of Quebecers—2 out of 3—who prefer that the oil imported by Quebec come from Western Canada.”  
  Leger Poll, May 17, 2017

The exceptional impact of these electric vehicle outputs shows just how much of an appetite there is for analysis that focuses on the concrete results of public policies rather than on good intentions and intellectual fashions.
SOCIAL MEDIA

... The MEI’s growing presence

We intensified our presence on Facebook and Twitter in order to spread our messages and increase our number of followers and our impact. We are increasingly relying on more adapted posts like short videos and caricatures. This year, four of our campaigns, disseminated in both languages, worked particularly well.

Campaign: “Do you know how big the Quebec debt is?”
(April 2017)

Facebook views 33,300
Facebook interactions 425

Campaign: “Baby versus the debt”
(March 2017)

Facebook views 40,000
Facebook interactions 400

We updated our Quebec debt clock. It’s turning a little slower this year, but the public sector debt remains very high. For further details, visit our website: http://www.iedm.org/27-quebec-debt-clock

Let’s hope Minister Leitão has kept future generations in mind in the upcoming provincial budget. We can’t keep maxing out the “credit card” that our children will have to reimburse. For more information, visit www.babiesagainstpublicdebr.ca
Caricature: “Student strike, 5 years later - The MEI remembers” (March 2017)

- 22,000 people reached
- 400 interactions

Campaign: “Energy in the service of prosperity” (December 2017)

- 92,500 views
- 5,816 interactions
IN CANADA, THE CHALLENGES ARE MANY ...

While the public policy situation in Quebec is improving in some respects, this is not the case all across Canada. For example, the return of federal budget deficits and the multiplication of policies that hamper wealth creation in certain provinces show that numerous challenges remain.

In 2017, we published a voluminous Research Paper on the Canadian oil and gas sector. While they are shrinking in the United States, the excessive regulatory and fiscal burdens applied to this sector continue to grow in Canada, which places the Canadian industry at a competitive disadvantage. This Paper generated over a hundred media mentions across the country. Moreover, the office of Natural Resource Minister Jim Carr communicated with us to learn the details of this report.

One of the MEI’s priorities is to explain how to create a business climate that is conducive to wealth creation. In this context, we published an Economic Note showing that the capital gains tax is particularly harmful to private investment, and consequently, to economic growth in general. While there remains some uncertainty in Ottawa regarding a potential increase in this tax, our researchers argued that a change of policy should instead go in the opposite direction, as certain countries have done, by reducing or even abolishing it. Three senators wrote to us after having received the publication to tell us that they would certainly give some thought to this proposal.

In order to improve the country’s provincial health care systems, we showed that Ottawa should withdraw from the financing of health care, instead transferring equivalent tax points to the provinces, and let provincial governments decide how best to provide services to their residents. This increased autonomy would encourage innovation and the emulation of best practices in a sector that sorely needs it.

As it has been for several years, the MEI was at the heart of the debate over supply management in the dairy, poultry, and egg sectors, proposing a concrete way to end this model. In a publication that made a lot of noise, we suggested compensating affected farmers in exchange for dismantling this unjust system that is so costly for consumers. During the negotiations...
surrounding NAFTA, with the United States calling for the abolition of supply management, we published a press release inviting Ottawa to seize this opportunity and ask for full access to the American automotive and softwood lumber markets in return. According to our contacts, our contributions on this file found their way onto the desks of top Canadian government officials.

Indeed, we reacted several times during the NAFTA negotiations with press releases, opinion pieces, and blog posts. The MEI also organized a roundtable dinner in Washington, D.C. in March 2017, bringing together influential actors and decision-makers from both countries to discuss Canada-U.S. relations and the never-ending softwood lumber dispute in the context of the renegotiation of NAFTA. Still in Washington, we facilitated discussion, through an American think tank, between Canadian experts and American government officials interested in the Canadian experience regarding private sector provision of airport security services.

In the context of the dispute between Boeing and Bombardier, we also published an analysis showing that Canada has a strong interest in proposing a new international agreement in the aeronautics sector in order to avoid a ruinous subsidy race.

Among other topics of pan-Canadian interest, the MEI also launched, in May, its 2017 edition of The State of Competition in Canada’s Telecommunications Industry, a Research Paper published for each of the past four years that has become a reference document for anyone interested in this industry. The two co-authors once again explained why it is essential to adopt policies that encourage investment in this field, since billions of dollars will be required for Canada to retain the cutting edge with the arrival of 5G technology and the Internet of Things.
For the first time in its history, the MEI intervened before the Supreme Court in the context of the Comeau case on interprovincial trade barriers. Mr. Comeau is the New Brunswick resident who was fined for having “imported” too much alcohol purchased in Quebec. In collaboration with two other organizations, the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS) and the Canadian Constitution Foundation (CCF), we presented our arguments before the highest court in the land, which will decide if Canadians have the right to transport from one province to another all legally purchased goods. For one thing, if the decision is positive, several provincial government monopolies, like those over alcohol, could be exposed to competition.

In order to kick-start this initiative, we made public on November 28 a poll carried out by Ipsos showing that an overwhelming majority of Canadians think they should be allowed to bring any legally purchased product from one province to another. One week later, we reinforced our message with a publication explaining the harmful effects of provincial protectionism on Canadian prosperity.

Our Comeau case outputs generated no less than 600 media mentions. To continue our economic education work on this file, we also launched an information and promotion campaign on social media, including notably a website and a Facebook page entitled “One Country, One Market.” This campaign, also carried out in collaboration with AIMS and CCF, will continue throughout 2018.

These examples, and many others, show that we can make a difference in Canada. Of course, we have our work cut out for us, and it often takes years of persistent effort to achieve results on a particular file. Our researchers will pursue their educational efforts to promote Canadian public policies guided by the principles of free enterprise, low taxes, and flexible regulation. In sum, the MEI will continue to make things happen, to the benefit of all Canadians, and to aim for concrete results, as it has been doing for Quebecers for nearly two decades.

“Canadians are unequivocal: 89% think they should be allowed to bring any legally purchased product from one province to another.”
ENTREPRENEURSHIP INITIATIVE

In the context of an MEI initiative to promote entrepreneurship, our researchers produced a voluminous Research Paper on this theme that the MEI holds dear, as do many of you. This publication provides, among other things, an overview of the empirical literature on the policies and institutions that influence entrepreneurship. The authors also explain how the analyses of Austrian school economists (Hayek, Mises, Kirzner, etc.) provide us with a better understanding of the nature of entrepreneurship than do those of other schools of thought. Finally, even though Canada does relatively well compared to other countries around the world, the Paper looked at Canadian public policies that need to be reformed in order to stop holding entrepreneurship back.

Two events, one at McGill University and the other at the University of Calgary, were organized with the co-authors of the Paper in order to promote public policies that encourage entrepreneurship. Our researcher Mathieu Bédard thus shared the stage with Peter Boettke, renowned professor at George Mason University in Virginia. The goal was to reach out to students and get them interested in this question, and we succeeded in doing so.


Mathieu Bédard, Economist at the MEI who holds a PhD in economics from Aix-Marseille University, toured Canadian universities in 2017 in order to present his Entrepreneurship and Economic Freedom study to the entrepreneurs and decision-makers of tomorrow.

Lunch Talk on Entrepreneurship - March 22, 2017

Magatte Wade, famous Senegalese businesswoman, named one of the “20 Youngest Power Women in Africa” by Forbes in 2011, and Mathieu Bédard were both invited by the University of Calgary’s Haskayne School of Business to speak to MBA students about entrepreneurship.
Historically, we have always been content providers to the media. This has always been our strength, and we’re stronger than ever in this regard. But the MEI wants to go further. The ultimate goal of our work is not to see our name as often as possible in the media, but rather to encourage the adoption of better public policies. And to get there, we also need to improve our ground game. This is the new stage in our development that I mentioned in my introduction.

Concretely, this groundwork consists in first of all developing relationships with people from organizations likely to be allies on certain files, whether to ensure free trade between provinces, as we did very successfully in 2017 with the Comeau case, or to promote entrepreneurship in the fields of health care and education, or to better manage public finances. This will allow us to multiply our intellectual, organizational, and media firepower, and to reach many more Canadians.

We also want to develop more direct personal discussions with decision-makers. It is altogether possible, while maintaining our independence and our non-partisan character, to have an enriching conversation with politicians, political advisors, and civil servants who want to meet with us, in order to explain to them the conclusions of our studies on a given file.

Economic education will of course remain an essential mission, to which this ground game will be added. Indeed, it is by changing the climate of opinion in the long term, by educating voters, and by giving them a voice that we can make sure that governments will take notice.

We have already begun to develop these relationships, but these efforts, while useful, have been made up until now on an ad hoc basis, since the vast majority of our resources are still devoted to research and communications. I invite our donors to embrace this expansion project and to support us in executing this mission regularly and systematically. In the months to come, we will be looking for funding to further develop this ground game.
As a non-profit organization that neither solicits nor receives any public funding, the MEI depends entirely on its generous donors. Thanks to them, the MEI remains in good financial health and its revenues continue to grow. These reached another record-setting level last year. In 2017, the MEI’s total revenues amounted to $2,808,607, which represents a 2% increase compared to 2016. Expenses totalled $2,579,881, a 13% increase. The resulting surplus amounts to $228,726. This surplus will serve to increase our financial reserve such that it will approach an amount equivalent to twelve months of operations, as recommended by the best practices applicable to the management of think tanks. Our current reserve is equivalent to almost eleven months of operations.

All signs point to the MEI experiencing good revenue growth again in 2018. However, we already know that one large Canadian foundation specializing in the funding of research and educational organizations like the MEI will be ceasing operations as of 2019. This foundation is one of our organization’s main donors (representing around 8% of our annual budget). In short, we will have to remain vigilant and we will need the renewed support of our current donors. Thanks to you, the MEI will be able to continue to reach new plateaus of influence by producing and disseminating its intellectual capital, the main conclusions of which confirm the importance of entrepreneurship and the sound management of public finances.

PRESIDENT AND CEO
Conservative Party of Canada Leadership Race Debate | January 17, 2017
Pascale Déry, Vice President, Communications and Development, acted as moderator for the French CPC leadership candidates’ debate in Montreal.

The Impact of Quebec’s Debt | February 24, 2017
Participation of Youri Chassin, then Economist and Research Director, in a panel discussion as part of the 2017 Manning Conference in Ottawa.

System Financing: Perspectives of Economic Research Institutes | March 8, 2017
Participation of Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher, in a roundtable discussion as part of the Construire l’enseignement supérieur de demain conference, organized by Laval University’s Confédération des associations d’étudiants et étudiantes.

Engagement Session for the Modernization of the NEB | March 28, 2017
Presentation by Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher, during the national consultation held by the federal government in Montreal as part of its initiative to reform and modernize the National Energy Board.

The New American Administration and the Concerns It Raises | April 5, 2017
Conference by Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher, presented as part of the Semaine des sciences humaines at the CEGEP de Saint-Hyacinthe.

Clean Technology in Canada’s Natural Resources Sectors | April 13, 2017
Appearance by Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher, before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Social Responsibility and Social Licence for Large Maritime Transport Projects | April 20, 2017
Presentation by Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher at the MEI, before the Société de développement économique du Saint-Laurent on the issue of social licence and the importance of having clear and predictable approval procedures.
The First 100 Days of the Trump Presidency | May 11, 2017
For the first edition of the Ian Soutar Lecture Series, presented by Pembroke Management, the MEI welcomed John Fund, national-affairs columnist for National Review.

Free Markets, Entrepreneurship, and Freedom of Media | May 27, 2017
Presentation by Michel Kelly-Gagnon, President and CEO, on the issue of press freedom and economic freedom during a discussion forum bringing together regional actors in the media and professional world in the Balkans and Turkey, organized by the Greek Liberties Monitor.

New Era of Public Safety and Security: Innovating the Service Delivery Model | June 1st, 2017
Presentation by Mathieu Bédard, Economist, on the growing contribution of private security firms, as part of a conference organized by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

Freedom and Its Enemies | September 14, 2017
For the 2017 edition of its George Lengvari Sr. Lecture Series, the MEI welcomed John Stossel, winner of 19 Emmy Awards. His talk addressed the benefits of economic freedom and the rule of law.

The Competitiveness of the Canadian Oil and Gas Industry | October 30, 2017
Germain Belzile, Senior Associate Researcher, was invited to present his Research Paper entitled Canada’s Oil and Gas Sector at Risk? How Excessive Taxes and Regulations Undermine Our Competitiveness before members of the Quebec Oil and Gas Association (QOGA) during their annual conference.

Philanthropic Tensions: Getters and Givers | November 7, 2017
Michel Kelly-Gagnon, President and CEO, was invited to deliver the main address at a plenary session during the 2017 Atlas Network Liberty Forum in New York.