

# Report on issue - desserud

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## Summary

In Desserud's article "The Governor General, the Prime Minister and the Request to Prorogue," the author looks at the events that led to the eventual prorogation of parliament in Canada in 2009, stemming from Steven Harper (Canada's PM) and his decision to prorogue. The Governor General's choice to accept the prorogation is also examined. In essence, Desserud argues that the Governor General accepted the request by the prime minister because it was the only option that she could take; it was a controversial decision, but one that was absolutely necessary and constitutional. This is meant to deal with the controversy about the acceptability of the Governor General's actions; despite calls for her to use emergency powers to take alternative action, Desserud argues that the events were not enough of an emergency to warrant such dramatic action. This argument is made through a detailed examination of the events that led to it, including the 2008 general election, the building of the subsequent coalition, and the eventual request by Harper to prorogue. Critique While the article is overall fairly strong and persuasive, and comprehensive in its sense of detail, there is a decided lack of objectivity that seems to be present. There are many instances in which Desserud writes in the first person, as if to give their opinion on the matters at hand from a perspective of hindsight. Though many scholarly texts and political journals are references regarding Canadian law, it is all summarized in a conclusion wherein Desserud filters this information through his own perspective, thus making it essentially an opinion piece. To the article's credit, this also makes it somewhat more informal in tone, and easier to read; however, it mostly just goes over accounts of political figures and

journalists at the time, instead of taking a definitive look at it through the history of Canadian politics. Then again, this subjective look works best for a subject that is primarily the opinion of one scholar about the acceptability of an event in hindsight. Action In terms of applying these findings to actual political practice, it can be said that government officials and political scientists can use this article as an example of an acceptable prorogation of a parliament. The big question when this happened, which Desserud attempts to answer, is " Should the Governor General have opposed the prorogation through extreme means?" His answer, that the acceptance of the request was the only reasonable thing to do, opens up the possibility of peaceful prorogation of parliament in the future, given precedent and academic acceptance of the event. This helps political practice by offering a detailed examination of the circumstances surrounding peaceful prorogation, as well as outlining circumstances in which emergency powers could be more acceptable.

## **References**

Desserud, D. A. (2009). The governor general, the prime minister and the request to prorogue. *Canadian Political Science Review* 3(3): 40-55. Print.