



## RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

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PETITION No.: **421-01073**

BY: **MR. SWEET (FLAMBOROUGH-GLANBROOK)**

DATE: **DECEMBER 14, 2016**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **THE HONOURABLE KARINA GOULD**

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Response by the Minister of Democratic Institutions

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

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SUBJECT

**Electoral system**

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**ORIGINAL TEXT**

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**REPLY**

The Government thanks the petitioners for their views on this important matter.

The petitioners are contributing to a public discourse that is vitally important to shaping the historic change being brought to our democratic institutions. To maintain public confidence, the Government understands that Canadians expect greater inclusion, transparency, meaningful engagement and modernization from their public institutions. The Government is committed to ensuring that Canadians see real change to the way politics and government work. Canadians can breathe new life into the democratic process by drawing strength from our diversity, by advancing evidence-based policy, by fostering civility in politics, and by placing value on listening and dialogue.

The Government remains committed to modernizing our electoral system. To get there, the process leading to reform must also embody these values. Above all, the Government is focused on listening to Canadians across our diverse society.

The Government listened to Canadians and worked cooperatively with opposition parties to establish the Special Committee on Electoral Reform with a mandate to identify and conduct a study of viable alternate voting systems to replace the first-past-the-post system. The Special Committee was made up of 12 members, including five government members, three members from the Conservative Party, two members from the New Democratic Party and one member

each from the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party. In the spirit of cooperation and inclusivity, the Government did not hold the majority on the Special Committee and the Bloc Québécois and the Leader of the Green Party enjoyed full membership rights, including voting rights, even though they are not officially recognized parties in the House of Commons.

The Special Committee's national public engagement tour included hearing from expert witnesses, consultations with Canadians from coast to coast to coast and a period for accepting public submissions.

In conducting its study, the Special Committee was asked to assess the extent to which different options for electoral reform could:

- increase confidence among Canadians that their democratic will, as expressed by their votes, will be fairly translated and that the proposed measure reduces distortion and strengthens the link between voter intention and the election of representatives;
- encourage voting and participation in the democratic process, foster civility and collaboration in politics, enhance social cohesion and offer opportunities for the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the political process;
- avoid undue complexity in the voting process and support access by all eligible voters regardless of physical or social condition;
- safeguard public trust in the election process and preserve vote secrecy for individual Canadians; and
- ensure accountability and recognize the value that Canadians attach to community, to Members of Parliament understanding local conditions and advancing local needs at the national level.

The Special Committee submitted its report on December 1, 2016. The Government wishes to thank the members of the Committee for their hard work and dedication. The Committee's recommendations will help inform the way forward for electoral reform, in addition to the reports from town halls hosted by Members of Parliament, and the results of the Ministerial Electoral Reform Dialogue Tour conducted by the Minister of Democratic Institutions. The Government has also launched MyDemocracy.ca, an online civic engagement application, and has invited all Canadians to join the national electoral reform conversation in order to be heard on this important matter.

The Government encourages the petitioners, like all Canadians, to join the conversation and help shape their future electoral system.