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Blake Richards, M.P.
Banff-Airdrie

October 13, 2016

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia
Member of Parliament, Lac-Saint-Louis Chair,
Special Committee on Electoral Reform
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Scarpaleggia,

Re: Input for the Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Conservative Members of Parliament have been clear from the start; to have true legitimacy, any proposed changes to the way Canadians vote must be taken to them through a direct vote in a referendum. Democracy, the very way we vote, belongs to Canadians, not politicians. When consulting with Canadians on electoral reform changes, and their method of democracy, each and every Canadian deserves a say.

It is unfortunate that both the Liberal Government and the Minister of Democratic Institutions have tried to limit this outreach to only holding townhalls, where we have seen very low turnout, and cases where members of the public were turned away by a Liberal Member of Parliament, or even charged entry by Liberals. It is imperative that rather than the Liberal Government limiting this important decision, each and every Canadian should be consulted through a referendum.

With this said, as the Member of Parliament for Banff-Airdrie and the Official Opposition Deputy Critic for Democratic Institutions I have had the opportunity through outreach to hear from many constituents and Canadians across the country on electoral reform.

This outreach included conversations while doorknocking in my riding and across the country, numerous emails, letters, phone calls, an online survey, and petitions calling on the Government to hold a referendum. Additionally, I sent a Householder on electoral reform that was distributed across the entire riding of Banff-Airdrie. This Householder included a returnable survey that could be sent in by mail or that was available to fill out online through my parliamentary website.

Through this outreach, it became clear that the only true consensus constituents in Banff-Airdrie and across Canada alike have on electoral reform, is that prior to any changes made to their system of voting, they would like a direct say through a referendum. In my riding, results of show that 9 out of 10 constituents surveyed through the householder as well as an online survey demand a referendum on such a key issue as changing their method of democracy. These



sentiments are also shared in the correspondence that I have received as a Member of Parliament, and through my role as Deputy Critic for Democratic Institutions.

As well, constituents showed a clear support for providing voter identification in order to vote, with over 9 out of 10 of those responding that they believe identification should be required to vote.

Further, as outlined below, a clear majority of over 7 out of 10 constituents prefer our current system of voting (First Past the Post).

As well, a majority of constituents were opposed to instituting online voting and mandatory voting (6 out of 10 surveyed).

An overview of outreach findings are further outlined below:

Electoral Reform Householder/Online Householder Survey Responses:

Question 1: Before changing how you elect your federal Member of Parliament, should the government hold a national referendum to hear directly from all Canadians?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	839	89.9%
No	94	10.1%
Total	933	100.00%

Question 2: Do you think we need to replace our current system of voting in Federal elections?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	221	25.1%
No	661	74.9%
Total	882	100.00%

Question 3: Which type of voting system would be best for Canada?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Preferential Ballot	95	10.6%
Proportional Representation	131	14.6%
Our current system	645	72.1%
Other	24	2.7%
Total	895	100.0%

Question 4: Are you in favour of online voting?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	328	35.6%
No	594	64.4%
Total	922	100.00%

Question 5: Are you in favour of mandatory voting?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	338	37.1%
No	573	62.9%
Total	911	100.00%

Question 6: Do you believe ID should be required in order to vote?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	989	97.5%
No	25	2.5%
Total	1014	100.00%

Petition Signatures

358 total petition signatures collected. Petition prayer as follows:

We, the undersigned **Citizens of Canada** draw the attention of the House to the following:

WHEREAS, the Liberal Government has signaled that they will change the Canadian electoral system, and the method by which Canadians participate in the democratic process.

WHEREAS, the Liberal Government has not committed to calling a referendum on any changes to the Canadian electoral system.

WHEREAS, there is historical precedent in Canada to call a referendum on any proposal to alter electoral systems: Prince Edward Island in 2005, Ontario in 2007, and British Columbia in 2009.

WHEREAS, the only way to ensure Canadians have their say on any changes to our method of voting is through holding a national referendum.

THEREFORE, your petitioners call upon Parliament to hold a referendum on any proposed changes to the Canadian electoral system.

Online Electronic Survey on Holding a Referendum

Question 1: Do you think that the federal government should hold a referendum to consult Canadians on any changes to Canada's federal electoral system?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Total Respondents
Yes	282	94.3%
No	17	5.7%
Total	299	100.00%

Comments/suggestions from constituents of Banff-Airdrie on Electoral Reform:

“Making a non-constitutional change to our voting rights is not going to fix the problem. I am saying, to be clear, that I am completely against any changes to our voting rights unless it is done by the will of Canadians through a referendum. I am writing you today to exercise my rights. I am writing you today to let you know, as my MP, how I feel. I am writing you today to bring my message forward. Please be my voice and let Mr. Trudeau and our Liberal government know how I feel. I am willing to do whatever I can within my rights as a Canadian and within the bounds of the laws of Canada to protect our precious rights.”

“This is not a decision for only political parties to make.”

“It is unconscionable that a government in power would try to rig an election system to stay in power. This is what dictators do.”

“Although I’m open to seeing more research re: voting systems, no change should be made without a referendum.”

“Not the ‘right’ of any political party to change the constitution without a national referendum. Canada belongs to its citizens not any political party!!!!”

“Voters must have the referendum!”

“It’s not broken. The government needs to ask Canadians via a referendum before fiddling with the system.”

“I don’t believe *any* party should form a majority government without a majority of the vote. But any changes should be made by the people through a referendum.”

“The Liberal government needs to be held accountable for these underhanded tactics, and a referendum is absolutely needed.”

“Voting is the right of the people not any political party. The people decide who governs. Changing the way we vote is not any political party’s mandate regardless of whether they have a majority/minority.”

“A referendum must be done before changes are made to the federal government. Canadians must have a say.”

“Leave the federal voting system as is. Stop the Liberal government’s spending. Why do they think we can afford it?”

“The current system is not broken. Systems that are being proposed have flaws. i.e.: more party line, less listening to constituents.”

“Keep it as simple and democratic as possible.”

“Any system other than FPTP will result in endless minority governments. Given the parliamentary system we would then look forward to countless elections. See Italy’s experience since WWII.”

“Why do they even want to change the system in the first place?? What’s wrong with the present system??”

“The current system has served us well as a nation. It’s proven and time tested. So why change it?”

“Our current election system worked fine for 149 years electing both PC and Liberal PM’s. Don’t fix what isn’t broken – no change needed.”

“The Liberals want to waste more money to change a system that is not broken & has worked well for many years.”

“Keep voting system simple and have elected MPs directly accountable to the voters in one area.”

Conclusion and Summary of Key Recommendations and Comments:

It is clear from the feedback that I have received from constituents from Banff-Airdrie and Canadians across the country that the only consensus on electoral reform changes is that each and every Canadian wants a say directly in a referendum.

If this process is truly about listening to Canadians, and ensuring the voices of all Canadians are heard, it is quite clear that any changes to Canada’s system of voting simply cannot proceed without a referendum that puts this question directly to each and every Canadian.

A referendum on the Government’s electoral reform plan is the only way to ensure any change has the clear support of Canadians, and that the government’s plan is fair, transparent and legitimate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Blake R.", is centered below the closing. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Blake Richards, M.P.
Banff-Airdrie
Official Opposition Deputy Critic for Democratic Institutions

c.c.: M.P. Scott Reid, Vice-Chair, Special Committee on Electoral Reform
M.P. Nathan Cullen, Vice-Chair, Special Committee on Electoral Reform
Hon. Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P., Minister of Democratic Institutions