

Minister of
Democratic Institutions



Ministre des
Institutions démocratiques

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A6

JUN 19 2017

Mr. Larry Bagnell
Chair, Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Bagnell:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to respond to the Twenty-third Report of the House of Commons' Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding its study of the recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer following the 42nd General Election, which includes the Committee's views on 32 of the 132 recommendations. I would like to thank the Committee members for their thorough review and analysis of the recommendations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the former Chief Electoral Officer for his thoughtful recommendations. I commend the staff of Elections Canada for their ongoing dedication to conducting fair elections and thank those who supported the work of the Committee in the course of its study.

The Government of Canada is committed to improving, strengthening, and protecting our democratic institutions. The Government has already taken concrete steps by introducing Bill C-33 (*An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act*), which focuses on seven specific measures to reduce barriers to participation and enhance the integrity of the electoral process. This legislation already addresses five of the 132 recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Further, my mandate letter includes commitments aiming to strengthen the openness and fairness of Canada's public institutions. This includes enhancing transparency of political fundraising, protecting our electoral processes from cyber threats, and reviewing political financing rules for political parties and third parties in federal electoral processes.

Broadly speaking, the Government is supportive of the recommendations brought forward by the Chief Electoral Officer and those so far endorsed by the Committee, and is considering introducing further amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* in response to the recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Officials will complete an in-depth review of all of the recommendations to fully analyze policy implications and practical considerations over the next few months. However, we would like to highlight a few of the important themes emerging from the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations and on which the Government agrees in principle:

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- **Increasing efficiency at the polls** – Elections Canada has worked diligently to design new processes to make them more intuitive for electors and reduce wait times so that Canadians do not have to wait in lines to vote and can vote quickly and efficiently. Excessive wait times may result in Canadians deciding not to exercise their franchise and efforts can be made to ensure that this does not happen.
- **Making advance polls more efficient** – Canadians have increasingly been taking advantage of the possibility offered by advance polls and this trend is expected to continue. The Government supports measures to give Canadians easier access to voting, or more opportunities to vote, as a way of increasing voter participation. The recommendations are aimed at making advance polls more efficient, which could ultimately contribute to increasing voter turnout.
- **Reducing barriers, including for persons with disabilities** – The Government is committed to reducing barriers to participation in electoral processes, notably for persons with disabilities. The Chief Electoral Officer made several recommendations for concrete measures that could contribute to these efforts.
- **Streamlining reporting and monitoring of political expenses** – Some of the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations related to streamlining the processes and requirements for political entities to report on their financial transactions. Implementing these recommendations could contribute to strengthening the integrity of the electoral process and maintaining a level playing field.

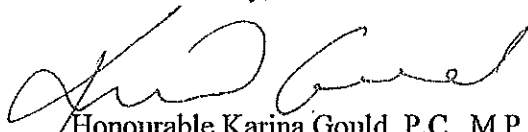
In addition, of the 132 recommendations made by the Chief Electoral Officer following the 42nd General Election, many offer minor corrections to the *Canada Elections Act* to address anachronistic provisions and small inconsistencies. This includes a recommendation to repeal the provision prohibiting federal inmates from voting, which was declared of no force and effect by the Supreme Court of Canada in 2002.

Implementing such amendments to the *Canada Elections Act* represents an ambitious agenda and the Government is thoroughly studying the recommendations and considering what future legislative amendments could be introduced.

Thank you again for your ongoing efforts to review the Chief Electoral Officer's recommendations.

I look forward to receiving the Committee's further views and recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



Honourable Karina Gould, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Democratic Institutions