



Canada's New Democrats
Nouveau Parti démocratique du Canada

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January 23, 2014

The Honourable Pierre Poilievre, P.C., M.P.
Minister of State (Democratic Reform)
Rm 680, La Promenade Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister:

Thank you for inviting us to share our ideas on improving the Canada Elections Act.

As you know, Craig Scott our critic for democratic and parliamentary reform has put forward a Private Member's Bill on electoral reform.

An Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act (preventing and prosecuting fraudulent voice messages during election periods) would amend the Canada Elections Act to make it an offence, subject to severe fines, to knowingly transmit false information through voice messages during an election period, including by impersonating an elections official. General Criminal Code principles of responsibility would apply, such that it would also be an offence to assist such fraudulent election calls. These offences would also be placed on the list of the Elections Act offences of corrupt or illegal practices, which are subject to special enforcement measures.

The bill also creates obligations for those who are involved in transmitting voice messages to provide key information directly to the Chief Electoral Officer or the Commissioner of Canada Elections. Specified data archiving and reporting duties – and an associated offence for failing to fulfill those obligations – would apply extraterritorially to companies, entities or other persons operating from outside Canada.

I invite you to consult the link of the text of the Bill:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Mode=1&DocId=5760455&File=4&Col=1>

In addition, we would like to suggest that a great deal of attention should be placed on the recommendations of the Chief Elections Officer and Commissioner for Elections Canada that have been made in reports from 2010 through 2013 -- notably the recommendations related to increasing the investigative and enforcement powers of Elections Canada and the recommendations for allowing a smoother functioning of election day operations (such as allowing Elections Canada to recruit e-day poll workers well in advance of the writ).

Further, we believe that it should be recognized in the Act that local campaigns are volunteer run operations. The Act has created many onerous processes that could be streamlined to help to improve participation in local election activities. The addition of many more reporting requirements has turned volunteers away from playing important roles in our democracy and we believe that there are simple changes that might improve participation without lessening reporting.

Finally, we believe that the Chief Electoral Officer's testimony and Opposition questioning at the Procedures and House Affairs Committee showed the shortcomings and drawbacks of the Political Loans Bill's structure. We hope this consultation will provide a springboard to address the identified deficiencies.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Blaikie', written in a cursive style.

Rebecca Blaikie
President

C.c Craig Scott M.P