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DÉPUTÉ, MP, OUTREMONT

November 13, 2014

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street, Langevin Block
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Justin Trudeau
Leader of the Liberal Party
Room 533-S, Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Colleagues:

Recent events, both here in Parliament and elsewhere, have brought significant public attention to the problem of harassment in Canadian workplaces. The reality of a hostile work environment is one that is far too common for many Canadians, especially Canadian women. I know that we are all keenly aware of the responsibility we share in ensuring harassment free workplaces, both in our workplace here in Ottawa and in the wide variety of places of work across this country, and in showing leadership for addressing this issue in a respectful, effective and lasting manner.

The first thing we must do is get our own House in order. We believe that, working together across all party lines, we can unite behind the development and implementation of procedures and policies that can provide parliamentary staff and Members of Parliament with a respectful work environment that will conform to the particular conditions of the legislature. I think we can also agree that addressing harassment in Parliament is not only a priority, we also have an obligation to show to Canadians that we can do better.

To those ends, we believe a new approach must include the following considerations:

- a clear definition of harassment – to be communicated to all Members and employees – making it clear that there shall be no harassment, sexual or otherwise, tolerated in Parliament.
- a new, formal Code of Conduct around harassment, which could amend the Standing Orders or other rules that govern Parliament.

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- the nomination of an independent non-partisan third party officer of Parliament responsible for: reviewing incidents in a timely manner, advising complainants on the processes and services available to them – including those provided by the Criminal Code and by human rights legislation – undertaking investigations where appropriate, and proposing remedies.
- a confidential and fair process to be followed when a complaint arises, which provides protection and support to those making a complaint.
- the unencumbered right of victims to maintain control over their complaint and the process, including the right to have their privacy respected.
- a system of training and education for members and employees, including ensuring all staff and members are aware of complaints procedures.
- the bringing into force of appropriate parts of the Parliamentary Staff Relations Act, Part II, particularly Article 86, to provide for greater protections for employees.

Our hope is to find the most appropriate procedures and policies for the unique environment that is Parliament, which can at the same time work as a model for other workplaces. Any less would be unacceptable.

There are many existing codes from which we can draw inspiration. For example, the Treasury Board Policy on Harassment Prevention and Resolution, which came into force on October 1, 2012, emphasizes discretion and confidentiality and sets guidelines for expected behaviours. New Democrats are also informed by our own rules and procedures – which are written into the collective agreement with our staff.

We propose that a meeting be convened at the earliest convenience, preferably within the next week, with representatives of each party and the Speaker's office, to begin the process of developing a framework for dealing with these issues both now and going forward – demonstrating to Canadians that all Members of Parliament are committed to creating a safe and respectful working environment free of harassment.

Yours sincerely,



Thomas Mulcair, M.P. (Outremont)
Leader of the Official Opposition
New Democratic Party of Canada



Nicole Turmel
Chief Opposition Whip
New Democratic Party of Canada

cc John Duncan, Chief Government Whip
Peter van Loan, Government House Leader
Dominic Leblanc, Liberal Party House Leader
Judy Foote, Liberal Party Whip
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party
Louis Plamondon, Bloc Québécois
Jean-François Fortin, Forces et Démocratie