

September 28, 2020

The Honorable Dominic LeBlanc
President of the Queen's Privy Council
Government of Canada
By email: iga.minister-ministre.aig@pco-bcp.gc.ca

Re: Elections Canada Consultation on Election Communications

Dear Minister LeBlanc:

As part of a consultation on the Canada Elections Act, Elections Canada recently circulated three excellent briefs Identifying the policy challenges regarding the regulation of election communications, social media, and protection of personal information before and during federal elections. They asked for feedback on Canadians' experiences with the new legislation and regulations in the 2019 Federal Election.

ONN is the independent nonprofit network for the 58,000 nonprofits in Ontario, focused on policy, advocacy and services to strengthen Ontario's nonprofit sector as a key pillar of our society and economy. Please find attached our response to the consultation papers.

It is clear to us that Elections Canada is actively seeking to improve the quality of democratic participation and discourse before and during elections. They will be making recommendations to the Parliament of Canada regarding legislative and regulatory changes needed to ensure our electoral system remains grounded in the values of transparency, fairness, and the sustenance of a healthy, inclusive, pluralistic democracy.

We are writing to urge you to provide the bold leadership that will be required to ensure the Parliament of Canada takes action to protect our democratic systems. Your leadership and support of Elections Canada reform efforts are vital and urgent. There are significant forces at play that threaten our democratic institutions and in particular our electoral process.

The thousands of charities, nonprofit organizations and cooperatives that make up Canada's public benefit sector know only too well how easy it is for community voices to be drowned out by interests with deep pockets and aggressive social media campaigns. The changes made before the 2019 election were a good start to regulate political action committees (PAC) and other wealthy third-party groups. Unfortunately, the new measures had the unintended consequence of making it prohibitively difficult for nonpartisan nonprofit organizations to participate. Additionally,

the changes did not address the growing disrespect and misinformation occurring on social media.

It is for these reasons we are writing to ask you to give this issue priority attention and to ask you to involve Minister LeBoutillier, whose mandate includes the regulation of nonprofits and charities under the Income Tax Act, so the role Canada's public benefit sector plays in public policy discourse can be recognized and supported in the regulation of election communications.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your government taking action on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Cathy" being more prominent than the last name "Taylor".

Cathy Taylor
Executive Director
Ontario Nonprofit Network

Copy to: The Honourable Diane LeBouthillier, Minister of National Revenue

Elections Canada
By email: consultations@elections.ca