

CHP Tribute to the Honourable James Michael “Jim” Flaherty

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Canadians are privileged to live in a country considered by many to be a ‘democracy’. But do we really?

Bill C-23 has been introduced in the House of Commons (HOC), tabled by Pierre Poilievre, who was handpicked by Prime Minister Harper to spearhead long awaited election law reforms.

Normally, Bills introduced in the HOC have a strict timeline of first reading, debate, study by committee, second reading, more study, more debate, and third reading followed by a lengthy process in the Senate (for sober, second thought) after which, if approved, it receives Royal Assent and becomes law.

However, this Bill was hastily introduced and ‘fast-tracked’ to bypass regular channels. Why the hurry? Is it because the Conservative Government is trying to hide something?

Government initiatives regarding Elections Act amendments should ideally encourage voter turnout, and level the playing field among the various political parties. In the case of this Bill, voters may become discouraged and some may be denied their right to vote. If this Bill becomes law, hundreds of thousands of Canadians could be prevented from voting, including students, seniors, new citizens, and many natives. Members of these groups are often more transient than others and some would be unable to provide government-approved forms of identification. ‘Vouching’ is a system, which allows an elector without approved identification to be ‘vouched for’ by another elector who has proper identification. Vouching will be eliminated if this Bill is passed as introduced.

Since Election 2007, voters have been required to prove their identity as well as their residential address before being issued a ballot. Of 38 authorized pieces of identification, only 13 may include a current address. Bill C-23 would also disallow the use of a ‘VIC’ — voter identification card — as one of the documents that could be used to establish a voter’s address.

Another big change is to seriously limit officials from Elections Canada (which is, and ought to remain, an impartial body mandated to implement the Elections Act) from consulting Canadians, disseminating information on electoral democracy and publishing research.

Bill C-23 was hastily introduced by the Conservatives with no prior consultation with the other 4 parties represented in the HOC nor with Elections Canada officials.

On April 10, 2014, Elections Canada convened a technical briefing session regarding this Bill, which was attended by 15 of Canada’s federally registered parties to discuss its far-reaching implications.

Following this session, a number of the parties currently without representation in the HOC issued a joint press release condemning this bill as presented and calling for its immediate repeal. These parties are committed to ensuring that Canadians are made aware of the implications of this draconian bill. This promises to be an election issue for the upcoming by-elections as well as the next general election scheduled for fall 2015, and Canadians of all political persuasions will be encouraged and mobilized to fight for true democratic values.

CHP Canada calls on the federal government to remove obstacles to voting and promote ways of improving our democracy rather than exacerbating existing challenges faced by many Canadians.

Become informed on this and other challenges to our democracy; then support¹ the only federal political party that is truly committed to recognizing and protecting our freedoms and our historic Christian heritage from which those freedoms were derived. Join the Christian Heritage Party² today.

Footnotes

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