

Bill C-76 Elections Modernization Act does not make system fairer

By **David Tilson**

On April 30, 2018, the Honourable Scott Brison, who was Acting Minister of Democratic Institutions, introduced Bill C-76: An act to amend the Canadian Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (Elections Modernization Act) in the House of Commons. The current Trudeau Liberal government claims the introduction of this legislation "serves to modernize the electoral system, making it more accessible, transparent, and secure." However, this bill only serves the interests of Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal Party, to ensure they have a competitive advantage heading into the next election, given their other antics haven't been successful to date.

The current Liberal government has stated the proposed Elections Modernization Act will:

"ensure a fair and level playing field by putting in place measures to guarantee transparency and fairness in the electoral process; make the electoral process more accessible by reducing barriers for persons with disabilities and Canadian Armed Forces members so they can vote and participate more fully in the electoral process; establish a pre-election period with transparency requirements and spending limits for political parties and third parties; set privacy standards for political parties to ensure the protection and security of Canadians' personal information; and modernize the administration of elections to make it easier for Canadians to vote and more difficult for elections law-breakers to evade punishment."

On the surface, this seems like prudent and necessary steps to strengthen the democratic process, however, the current Prime Minister doesn't have the credibility to be proposing changes to our election laws. When he realized he couldn't impose the electoral system that would benefit the Liberal Party of Canada, he abandoned his plan. We recall that when the opposition parties almost defeated a government bill, he tried to take away all of the tools we have to hold the government accountable. We also remember when opposition parties embarrassed him during Question Period, he tried to force through rule changes to make it that he only had to show up to work once a week. Canadians, therefore, have every right to be concerned about the real intentions of this proposed legislation, given the current Prime Minister's history with transparency and fairness.

Canadians can read between the lines. Every time the Prime Minister starts losing, he responds by rigging the rules to benefit himself. The plan behind the proposed Elections Modernization Act is obvious "use taxpayer dollars to campaign with government spending announcements, travel, and advertising in the lead-up to the next elections, while stifling his opponents. In fact, Prime Minister Trudeau has outright refused to ban taxpayer-funded government announcements, travel, and advertisements in the pre-writ period. Furthermore, while the Prime Minister takes steps to stifle opposition parties leading up to the next election, he's protecting well-funded foreign groups who perform the dirty work of the Liberal Party. He fears losing the support of these groups, as it's the only way his party can win elections and hence, he's increasing the amount of money third parties may spend to influence the next election.

What's also most concerning and undemocratic is that the current Prime Minister ordered Elections Canada to implement this proposed legislation, despite the fact that it hadn't been debated in Parliament. Now that he says he's open to amendments, he must instruct Elections Canada to halt the implementation of this legislation until the government receives opposition amendments.

It's clear the Liberal Party of Canada is struggling to achieve their fundraising goals because their policies are failing Canadians. Even the Prime Minister's cash-for-access scheme hasn't tipped the scales in favour of the Liberal Party. But instead of introducing policies that motivate Canadians to freely donate to the Liberal Party of Canada, he's changing the rules to limit the opposition parties' use of money that Canadians freely donated. This is hardly, "moving forward to improve our electoral system so that it is fairer for all Canadians?" as he stated in the House of Commons on May 30, 2018 in reference to the Bill.

Canadians have every reason to doubt the credibility of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the true intentions of Bill C-76 (Elections Modernization Act). This Bill does not make our electoral system fairer. It is a desperate, backdoor maneuver by the Prime Minister and the current Liberal government to ensure the scales are tipped in their favour, as Canada approaches the next election. This is not

the open or transparent government the Liberals promised during the last campaign. Canada is not a dictatorship where the Prime Minister can bypass Parliament to achieve his partisan goals.

Canadians deserve better from their government.