MONTH and DAY 2016

Deputy Name

Riding name

(INCLUDE ADDRESS—Office on the Hill or Riding Address)

Sir/Madam;

I am writing you today because I know the Canadian government has a unique opportunity at the moment, that of reforming the electoral process in order to better reflect the wishes of a greater number of Canadians. In this context, I would like to pledge my support to the idea of lowering the voting age to 16 years old, and invite you to share this support with the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

As you know, today’s youth are more involved and politically savvy than ever, as demonstrated by the 18.3% increase in voter turnout among 18–24-year-olds in the last federal election. The idea of lowering the voting age to 16 is being championed by more and more organizations and politicians alike, namely the Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (New Brunswick Francophone Youth Federation) who has been actively promoting this idea through the #Vote16NB viral campaign, the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française (French Canadian Youth Federation), who made it one of their 5 key issues in their political platform BY and FOR Youth during the last federal election, New Brunswick Green Party Leader David Coon who introduced a bill to that effect in the provincial legislature last April, and NDP MP Don Davies who did the same at the federal level this past January. I truly believe that such an initiative, paired with appropriate civic education programs, would increase political engagement not only among youth, but among their family and friends as well.

The benefits of lowering the voting age to 16 are many.

* Voting at 16 gives youth a voice. As our population ages, the electorate is unbalanced, and the importance given to issues that concern youth is reduced. Giving 16 year-olds the right to vote helps re-establish this balance and incites political parties and politicians to listen to their concerns.
* 16-year-olds are still in high school, where they can undertake civics education, discuss elections in a structured environment, and be empowered to make their own decisions. If they still live at home, they can discuss elections and electoral participation with their parents and families. Studies already show that 18-year-olds vote at a much higher rate than 19- to 24-year-olds due to these factors.
* The single greatest predictor of future electoral participation is past electoral participation. Once you’ve voted a first time, you’re more likely to keep voting throughout your lifetime. It’s much easier to encourage a 16-year-old to vote than it is a 21-year-old who is at university or working a full-time job, often in a different town from their parents. Voting at 16 helps create passionate, involved citizens over the long run.
* There is a positive relationship between voting and a sense of civic duty. Voting at the age of 16 can help instill a sense of national pride and belonging.
* Voting at 16 encourages families to discuss politics, and will therefore have a positive impact on the parents’ political engagement as well.
* Voting at the age of 16 has already been implemented in other parts of the world—namely in Austria, Nicaragua, Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador. This would be an excellent way for Canada to innovate and to proactively address the population’s growing apathy towards politics.
* When we exclude youth from the political system until the age of 18, we are simply feeding their apathy and disillusionment.

In hopes of working with you to ensure an electoral reform where youth feels involved, please accept my best regards.

**NAME**

City

Province/Territory