

FOR RELEASE MARCH 11, 2014

FAIR ELECTIONS ACT WOULD HARM CANADIAN DEMOCRACY, SAY EXPERTS

An open letter from democracy experts challenging key proposals in the Fair Elections Act (Bill C-23) was sent to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Members of Parliament today. The letter is signed by over 150 professors at Canadian universities who teach and conduct research on the principles and practices of constitutional democracies, including 15 past presidents of the Canadian Political Science Association. It appeared in the *National Post* on Tuesday, March 11.

The professors believe the Bill's proposal to eliminate the vouching system and the use of voter information cards as ID in federal elections would decrease voter participation, especially among youth, senior citizens, and First Nations citizens. Elections Canada's capacity to investigate electoral infractions and raise public awareness about the importance of voting would also be compromised. Also of concern are proposed reforms to campaign finance rules and expense reporting, which would allow political parties to dramatically increase their campaign coffers and spend more on political advertising. Giving money even greater influence on electoral outcomes undermines principles of political fairness and citizens' equality, they say.

The letter's authors are urging the Government to facilitate wider consultation on Bill C-23 at the committee level, allowing extensive testimony from both experts and ordinary Canadians.

MEDIA: for more information, contact Monique Deveaux 905-869-5599 mdeveaux@uoguelph.ca

Interviews:

Electoral law; voting rights; campaign finance:

Yasmin Dawood: Assistant Professor of Law, University of Toronto

Contact: yasmin.dawood@utoronto.ca Phone: 416-819-9462 (cell) 416-946-7829 (office)

Democratic institutions, constitutional reform, citizen engagement:

Maxwell A. Cameron: Professor of Political Science, University of British Columbia

Contact: Max.Cameron@ubc.ca Phone: (011) 51-945-576-220 (cell) or by Skype: maxwellcameron

Democracy; political inequality:

Monique Deveaux: Professor of Philosophy and Canada Research Chair, University of Guelph

Contact: mdeveaux@uoguelph.ca Phone: 905-869-5599

Democracy; citizen engagement; political representation:

Melissa Williams: Professor of Political Science, University of Toronto

Contact: melissa.williams@utoronto.ca Phone: 416-978-8220 (office) 647-991-5838 (cell)

Influence of money on politics; public trust; citizen engagement:

Patti Tamara Lenard: Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Public & International Affairs, University of Ottawa Contact: Patti.Lenard@uottawa.ca Phone: 613-796-6647 (cell)

French media interviews: Daniel Weinstock, Professor of Law, McGill University: 514-952-3763

###