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ARCHIVED - Minister of Democratic Institutions Mandate Letter | Prime Minister of Canada

February 1, 2017



Dear Ms. Gould:

I am honoured that you have agreed to serve Canadians as Minister of Democratic Institutions.

We promised Canadians real change – in both what we do and how we do it. Canadians sent a clear message in the last election, and our platform offered a new, ambitious plan for a strong and growing middle class. Canadians expect us to fulfill our commitments, and it is my expectation that you will do your part in delivering on those promises to Canadians.

We made a commitment to grow our economy, strengthen the middle class, and help those working hard to join it. We committed to provide more direct help to those who need it by giving less to those who do not. We committed to public investment to spur economic growth, job creation, and broad-based prosperity. We committed to a responsible, transparent fiscal plan for challenging economic times.

I expect Canadians to hold us accountable for delivering these commitments, and I expect all ministers to do their part – individually and collectively – to improve economic opportunity and security for Canadians.

It is my expectation that we will deliver real results and professional government to Canadians. To ensure that we have a strong focus on results, I will expect Cabinet committees and individual ministers to: track and report on the progress of our commitments; assess the effectiveness of our work; and align our resources with priorities, in order to get the results we want and Canadians deserve.

If we are to tackle the real challenges we face as a country – from a struggling middle class to the threat of climate change – Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen. I expect that our work will be informed by performance measurement, evidence, and feedback from Canadians. We will direct resources to initiatives that have the greatest, positive impact on the lives of Canadians, and that allow us to meet our commitments to them. I expect you to report

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regularly on your progress toward fulfilling our commitments and to help develop effective measures that assess the impact of the organizations for which you are answerable.

I made a personal commitment to bring new leadership and a new tone to Ottawa. We made a commitment to Canadians to pursue our goals with a renewed sense of collaboration. Improved partnerships with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments are essential to deliver the real, positive change that we promised Canadians. No relationship is more important to me and to Canada than the one with Indigenous Peoples. It is time for a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership.

We have also committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in government. It is time to shine more light on government to ensure it remains focused on the people it serves. Government and its information should be open by default. If we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians. It is important that we acknowledge mistakes when we make them. Canadians do not expect us to be perfect – they expect us to be honest, open, and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest.

Our platform guides our government. Over the course of our four-year mandate, I expect us to deliver on our commitments. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that we fulfill our promises, while living within our fiscal plan. Other issues will arise or will be brought to our attention by Canadians, stakeholders, and the public service. It is my expectation that you will engage constructively and thoughtfully and add priorities to your agenda when appropriate.

As Minister, you will be held accountable for our commitment to bring a different style of leadership to government. This will include: close collaboration with your colleagues; meaningful engagement with Opposition Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees and the public service; constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society, and stakeholders, including business, organized labour, the broader public sector, and the not-for-profit and charitable sectors; and identifying ways to find solutions and avoid escalating conflicts unnecessarily. As well, members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery, indeed all journalists in Canada and abroad, are professionals who, by asking necessary questions, contribute in an important way to the democratic process. Your professionalism and engagement with them is essential.

Canadians expect us, in our work, to reflect the values we all embrace: inclusion, honesty, hard work, fiscal prudence, and generosity of spirit. We will be a government that governs for all Canadians, and I expect you, in your work, to bring Canadians together.

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You are expected to do your part to fulfill our government's commitment to transparent, merit-based appointments, to help ensure gender parity and that Indigenous Peoples and minority groups are better reflected in positions of leadership.

There has been tremendous work by the House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform, outreach by Members of Parliament by all parties, and engagement of 360,000 individuals in Canada through mydemocracy.ca. A clear preference for a new electoral system, let alone a consensus, has not emerged. Furthermore, without a clear preference or a clear question, a referendum would not be in Canada's interest. Changing the electoral system will not be in your mandate.

As Minister of Democratic Institutions, your overarching goal will be to strengthen the openness and fairness of Canada's public institutions. You will lead on improving our democratic institutions and Senate reform to restore Canadians' trust and participation in our democratic processes.

In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities:

- In collaboration with the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, lead the Government of Canada's efforts to defend the Canadian electoral process from cyber threats. This should include asking the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) to analyze risks to Canada's political and electoral activities from hackers, and to release this assessment publicly. As well, ask CSE to offer advice to Canada's political parties and Elections Canada on best practices when it comes to cyber security.
- Sunshine is the best disinfectant to concerns about our political process, therefore significantly enhance transparency for the public at large and media in the political fundraising system for Cabinet members, party leaders and leadership candidates. Fundraisers should be conducted in publicly-available spaces, advertised in advance and reported on in a timely manner after the fact. Other measures may follow after discussion with the other political parties.
- Work to pass amendments to the Canada Elections Act to make the Commissioner of Canada Elections more independent from Government. In addition, work to repeal the elements of the Fair Elections Act which makes it harder for Canadians to vote and easier for election law breakers to evade punishment.
- Bring forward options to create an independent commissioner to organize political party leaders' debates during future federal election campaigns, with a mandate to improve Canadians' knowledge of the parties, their leaders, and their policy positions.
- Review the limits on the amounts political parties and third parties can spend during elections, and propose measures to ensure that spending between

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elections is subject to reasonable limits as well.

- Work with the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Justice to enhance the openness of government, including supporting a review of the Access to Information Act.

These priorities draw heavily from our election platform commitments.

I expect you to work closely with your Deputy Minister and his or her senior officials to ensure that the ongoing work of your department is undertaken in a professional manner and that decisions are made in the public interest. Your Deputy Minister will brief you on issues your department may be facing that may require decisions to be made quickly. It is my expectation that you will apply our values and principles to these decisions, so that issues facing your department are dealt with in a timely and responsible manner, and in a way that is consistent with the overall direction of our government.

Our ability, as a government, to successfully implement our platform depends on our ability to thoughtfully consider the professional, non-partisan advice of public servants. Each and every time a government employee comes to work, they do so in service to Canada, with a goal of improving our country and the lives of all Canadians. I expect you to establish a collaborative working relationship with your Deputy Minister, whose role, and the role of public servants under his or her direction, is to support you in the performance of your responsibilities.

We have committed to an open, honest government that is accountable to Canadians, lives up to the highest ethical standards, and applies the utmost care and prudence in the handling of public funds. I expect you to embody these values in your work and observe the highest ethical standards in everything you do. When dealing with our Cabinet colleagues, Parliament, stakeholders, or the public, it is important that your behaviour and decisions meet Canadians' well-founded expectations of our government. I want Canadians to look on their own government with pride and trust.

As Minister, you must ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the Conflict of Interest Act and Treasury Board policies and guidelines. You will be provided with a copy of Open and Accountable Government to assist you as you undertake your responsibilities. I ask that you carefully read it and ensure that your staff does so as well. I draw your attention in particular to the Ethical Guidelines set out in Annex A of that document, which apply to you and your staff. As noted in the Guidelines, you must uphold the highest standards of honesty and impartiality, and both the performance of your official duties and the arrangement of your private affairs should bear the closest public scrutiny. This is an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. Please also review the areas of Open and

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Accountable Government that we have expanded or strengthened, including the guidance on non-partisan use of departmental communications resources and the new code of conduct for exempt staff.

I know I can count on you to fulfill the important responsibilities entrusted in you. In turn, please know that you can count on me to support you every day in your role as Minister.

I am deeply grateful to have this opportunity to serve with you as we build an even greater country. Together, we will work tirelessly to honour the trust Canadians have given us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Justin Trudeau', written in a cursive style.

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada