



December 6, 2019

Mr. Stéphane Perrault  
Chief Electoral Officer of Canada  
Elections Canada  
30 Victoria Street  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M6

Email: [Dge-ceo@elections.ca](mailto:Dge-ceo@elections.ca)

**Re: Fixed Elections Dates and the Rights of Religious Communities in Canada**

Dear Mr. Perrault,

Thank you for your efforts in working to ensure that Canadians can exercise their democratic right to vote, and for keeping elections in Canada free and fair. We are grateful for your diligent efforts in safeguarding and strengthening this foundational decision-making mechanism of our democracy.

The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC) is a broad and inclusive ecumenical body, now representing 26 member churches including Anglican; Eastern and Roman Catholic; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern and Oriental Orthodox; and Historic Protestant traditions.

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) has shared with us their call that you work to ensure that fixed election dates in future election cycles do not conflict with major religious holidays, following the unfortunate conflict of the last election date with the Jewish holy day of *Shemini Atzeret*.

In the *Act to Amend the Canada Elections Act*, we are pleased to see that “cultural and religious” holidays are rightly recognized as important moments in the lives of many Canadians. The observance of a religious holiday, when coinciding with an election date or the scheduling of advance polls, can preclude or hinder some from voting, as well as from volunteering or participating in other forms of engagement during the election process. We would therefore encourage the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada to ensure that an early and broad base consultation is conducted with all religious communities in Canada well in advance of a foreseeable Federal Election. Such consultation will allow for proper discernment in the application of sections 56.2 (1) and 56.2 (4) of the amended Act, which prescribe the possible adjustment of a Federal Election day, from the third Monday in October.

As leaders and representatives of various Christian traditions in Canada, we would be pleased to participate in any such process of consultation coordinated by your office.

We appreciate and support the steps you and your office have already taken to increase opportunities for Canadians to cast their vote through advance polls and other alternate means. We are also aware of the efforts your office has made to consider and accommodate Indigenous and remote communities, other religious and cultural groups, and to respect, protect, and promote the human rights of all, in particular people with disabilities.

Please be assured of our prayers for you and the whole Government of Canada.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Noteboom', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter Noteboom  
General Secretary

Cc: The Rev. Stephen Kendall, President  
The Rev. Greg Sinclair, Chair, Christian Interfaith Reference Group