



## Press Release

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### **BrockU profs alarmed over proposed changes to Canada's election laws**

The government's proposed changes to Canada's election laws - in the form of the proposed Fair Elections Act (Bill C-23) - are a threat to Canada's democratic traditions, say Brock University political scientists.

"What is particularly worrisome about the proposed Fair Elections Act, especially the new restrictions banning the practice of "vouching" for those voters without standard forms of identification, is the way that it disguises a partisan agenda behind seemingly neutral language," says assistant professor Stefan Dolgert.

"Bill C-23 would make it harder for already marginalized Canadians to vote, gives the Conservatives an unfair advantage and disempowers Elections Canada from safeguarding our country's democratic processes," says assistant professor Janique Dubois.

Dubois and Dolgert were two of four Brock University professors - and more than 150 scholars across the country - who signed an open letter to the Prime Minister appearing in the National Post last week.

Bill C-23 proposes a number of changes to existing legislation, including:

- \* eliminating the use of Voter Information Cards as one of two pieces of ID people can use to prove their identity and address, and scrapping the practice of an eligible voter to "vouch" for the identity of those without substantial ID. The professors argue that this could cut out a vulnerable segment of the population such as students, seniors living in long-term care facilities, First Nations people, and those who have recently moved;

- \* transferring the enforcement arm of the agency, headed by the Commissioner of Elections, from Elections Canada to the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which means the Commissioner's activities would no longer be reported to Parliament;

- \* increasing the amount that supporters can donate to a given campaign from \$1,200 per calendar year to \$1,500 per calendar year, and the amount of money an individual can contribute to his or her own campaign from \$1,200 to \$5,000. "This creates a bias in favour of those with more personal wealth," say the professors; and

\* requiring Elections Canada to appoint central poll supervisors from lists of names provided by the candidate or party that came first in the last election, “favouring incumbents and their parties.” Currently, poll supervisors are appointed by Elections Canada.

**Stefan Dolgert and Janique Dubois are available to comment on these and other issues.**

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