



Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper
Leader, Conservative Party of Canada
1204-130 Albert St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

August 25, 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to raise a serious concern about a critical issue for the health of our democracy and citizen engagement in this election.

Since 1968, the national televised leaders debate has been a major event. For more than three decades we have never had an election without the television debates, broadcast by the major networks. Our national public broadcaster CBC is a critical national link. CBC has been joined by CTV and Global in bringing Canadians a timely, neutral debate organized to maximize its reach and impact. Since 1968 the national televised leaders' debate has been the main event on the campaign trail. In 2011, the national leaders' debate reached 10 million people.

As things now stand, this vital opportunity to engage and inform voters may not happen at all.

I have been surprised by the Conservative Party's decision to boycott the English debates. I still have the letter you sent to me in 2007 expressing your party's support for the national debates. That letter also confirmed that any party with one elected seat in the House should be included (attached).

In May, the broadcasters agreed with the opposition parties (NDP, Liberal and Green) that we would proceed with the debates, leaving an empty podium for you, the leader of the Conservatives. That approach has been abandoned now by the NDP, as Mr. Mulcair has said he will not participate either.

At this point the only parties invited to the national English debate who are honouring their commitment to participate are the Greens and the Liberals.

Unless either you or Mr. Mulcair (or ideally both) change your current boycott positions, we may have the absurd outcome that only French viewers will see a national debate that reaches all parts of Canada. Please, while there is time to stand up for fair, full and democratic election practices, please re-commit to the national televised leaders' debate, still scheduled for October 7. It is unconscionable that political parties, operating with no rules, would undermine and ultimately derail such an important tradition.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth May, O.C.
Candidate, Saanich-Gulf Islands
Leader, Green Party of Canada

CC: Thomas Mulcair, Leader, New Democratic Party
Justin Trudeau, Leader, Liberal Party of Canada

November 15, 2007

Elizabeth May, O.C.
Leader
Green Party of Canada
P.O. Box 997 Station B
Ottawa, ON K1P 5R1

Dear Ms. May:

Thank you for your letter of September 20 regarding the participation of the Green Party of Canada in the televised national leaders' debates. I am pleased to have this opportunity to respond.

As you know, the Conservative Party has always supported the concept of televised national leaders' debates during a federal election. The only condition that we have attached has been that the participants represent parties with at least one Member of Parliament elected under their party banner. Having one elected member is not a high bar to obtain and it helps to ensure that the party leaders represent democratically elected representatives in the House of Commons.


Unfortunately, the accord between your party and the Liberal Party underscores the necessity of this condition. My debate negotiators are of the view that the television networks are in danger of being drawn into an electoral strategy of the Green Party and Liberal Party that may, in part, contribute to an unfair and unbalanced debate.

I would note as well that the recent leaders' debate during the Ontario provincial election featured only party leaders who represented members of the legislature.

We made our views known to the television networks last June and I see no reason to alter our position.

On a personal note, I understand that you underwent surgery this summer and have been recovering. I offer you my best wishes for renewed strength as you recuperate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Harper', written in a cursive style.

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada