



December 3, 2008

Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean,  
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.  
Governor General  
Rideau Hall  
1 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A1

Excellency,

In my letter of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, I informed you that the three opposition parties had lost confidence in the government. The Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party have formally agreed to form a collaborative government with the support of the Bloc Québécois. Together these three parties represent the majority in the House of Commons. I am writing to you today as Leader of the party chosen to lead this collaborative government.

After the Official Opposition announced that it had lost confidence in the government, the Prime Minister pushed back the vote on the Official Opposition's confidence motion, a motion which is supported by the two other opposition parties, until December 8.

Following the December 1<sup>st</sup> announcement of a formal agreement between the three opposition parties, the Prime Minister is now considering proroguing the Parliament until the end of January 2009.

Excellency, I believe that you cannot accept the Prime Minister's request for prorogation. There are several reasons why you should refuse such a demand.

A Prime Minister cannot request that the Parliament be prorogued to avoid a confidence vote. It would be an abuse of power on the part of the executive branch without precedent in the history of Parliament. The fundamental obligation of the legislative branch is to give or withhold its confidence in the executive branch. A prorogation would infringe on the most fundamental right of Members of Parliament.

With this request for prorogation, the Prime Minister is asking you for permission to continue to lead a government that does not have the confidence of the House of Commons. You cannot accept this violation of our Constitution and this affront to our parliamentary tradition.

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The Prime Minister, your chief counsellor, has already de facto lost his legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of Member of the House of Commons. He has lost his legitimacy to give you counsel.

By manipulating the legislative process, the Prime Minister has created a situation in which Parliament is incapable of demonstrating if it still has confidence in the government. No proposed legislation has been introduced. The opportunity to consider opposition motions has been pushed back. The government has even delayed a vote on its own ways and means motion. The Prime Minister does not have the confidence of the House to present a new legislative agenda. If the Prime Minister allowed his government to be subject to a confidence motion now, he would be defeated.

Excellency, you cannot allow the Prime Minister to ignore the principle of responsible government, the cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy. The role of government in our parliamentary system is to be subject to the will of Parliament. It must be held responsible for its decisions and its conduct before Parliament. The government cannot request permission to delay the judgment of the House of Commons.

By advising you to prorogue the Parliament before being subject to a confidence vote, the Prime Minister is disregarding your rights and privileges. With respect to our Constitution and our parliamentary system, it is up to you to determine if the Prime Minister and his government command the confidence of the House of Commons. How can you appropriately make this determination if the Prime Minister refuses to submit his government to a confidence vote?

Given these arguments I respectfully request that you refuse the Prime Minister's call for prorogation until he has demonstrated to you that he still commands the confidence of the House of Commons.

A month without a government that commands the confidence of the House is too long. The matters of state cannot wait for the government to confront the will of the elected representatives of the Canadian people.

While this would be unacceptable at the best of times, it is particularly irresponsible in light of this unprecedented economic crisis. Canadians need a stable government ready to take on these challenges. Proroguing Parliament until the end of January will do nothing but prolong this parliamentary crisis and could well intensify the economic challenges our economy is facing. Who can predict what urgent intervention by the government will be required? To delay the inevitable, the intention of the opposition parties to defeat the government at the first occasion, will only exacerbate this period of uncertainty.

Canadians want a government that is ready to propose concrete measures to help our economy. The current government no longer has the confidence of the majority of Members of Parliament. The Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party are ready, with the support of the Bloc Québécois, to offer as of today, a stable government, entirely focused on the responsible management of our economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stéphane Dion". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "S" at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

Hon. Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P.  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Leader, the Liberal Party of Canada