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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Hon. Tony Clement
President of Treasury Board
Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
L'Esplanade Laurier, 9th Floor, East Tower
140 O'Connor Street
Ottawa, Canada K1A 0R5

6 June, 2014

Minister Clement,

Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned with the federal government's ability and commitment to protect their privacy. Data breaches at the Canada Revenue Agency, widespread collection of personal information at airports in meta-data sweeps, and legislation giving greater access to private information without the need for a warrant, are all contributing to Canadians' concerns that this government is failing to respect their privacy rights and may be opening the door to greater abuse through ill-conceived legal reforms.

Law-abiding Canadians have a right to privacy. Canadians want a balanced approach where the government is protecting Canadians' security while ensuring there are effective safeguards and oversight. We need to ensure that if the government is going to collect Canadians' private information, there is a good reason for it and it is done with appropriate protocols. Furthermore, Canadians have a right to know how much of their personal information is being collected, and when that information has been shared or compromised.

I am writing today to request that you convene an independent, Blue-Ribbon Panel of privacy experts to assess Canada's privacy regime. The panel should have a strong mandate to examine the operations of government agencies and departments, telecommunications companies, and security and spy agencies, and to make recommendations to Parliament on how Canadians' privacy can be protected in a digital age.

Canadians face a rapidly changing technological and geopolitical context. From citizens, to law enforcement, to the telecommunications industry, people are looking to the federal government for leadership in developing an effective and balanced legal framework that meets the challenges of the 21st century.

The increase in government surveillance and the erosion of privacy rights is complex, and inter-connected. Parliamentarians, and Canadians generally, need a full, unbiased picture of what is happening – and recommendations on what can be done about it.

The Panel should convene public forums and meetings where Canadians, officials, and experts can make their privacy concerns heard.

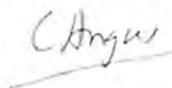
The Panel should:

1. Examine the protocols surrounding the federal government's collection, use and storage of Canadians' private information, including electronic communications and data and use of the internet, and assess its appropriateness with respect to privacy rights.
2. Examine the nature and extent of warrantless information sharing between the government and private companies and assess the appropriateness of current protocols.
3. Assess the degree to which privacy rights are being respected in information sharing agreements between the government of Canada and other governments.
4. Assess the adequacy of guidelines governing the storage and protection of data held by the government, and protocols that guide government responses to data breaches.
5. Assess means to strengthen and protect the office of the Privacy Commissioner as a vital part of the government's privacy protection regime.

The Panel should report back to Parliament with recommendations in each of the above key areas and regarding what overarching legal and institutional framework is needed to best balance the protection of Canadians' security with respect for privacy rights.

I look forward to working further on this issue with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Charlie Angus