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24<sup>th</sup> Feb 2015

*Dear Philip,*

### Recall of MPs Bill

I write on behalf of my noble friend Lord Gardiner of Kimble, thank you for your helpful contribution to the Report stage debate of the Recall of MPs Bill on 10 February. At the end of the debate on the Government's amendment to increase the number of signing places, and in response to your question about why the consultation was not undertaken before the Bill was introduced, he advised that our basis for the maximum of 4 signing places was in response to a recommendation from the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee (PCRC). He committed to write to you if he had any further particulars.

In December 2011 the Government published a White Paper and a draft Bill on the Recall of MPs, which provided for the designation of 1 petition signing place during an 8-week signing period. The White Paper suggested a single signing place would make it easier to find suitable accommodation, less expensive than having multiple locations and this would minimise the potential for a person to attempt to sign the petition more than once.

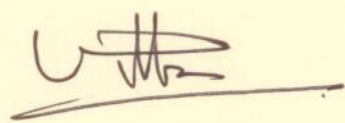
The PCRC conducted pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill between December 2011 and April 2012 and published its report in June 2012. Contributors to the PCRC's review, including the Association of Electoral Administrators, suggested that 1 signing place would be insufficient as it could inhibit participation and accessibility in the largest or rural constituencies. In response to these concerns the PCRC recommended that there should be at least 2 and no more than 4 signing places.

Having consulted with the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Electoral Commission and Returning Officers regarding the feasibility of increasing the number of signing places the Government increased the maximum number of signing places to 4 and that was the figure reflected in the Bill which was introduced to Parliament in September 2014. As you know, following further Parliamentary consideration the maximum number was

Professor the Lord Norton of Louth  
House of Lords

increased to 10 at Report stage in recognition that there will be some circumstances where this affords Petition Officers helpful flexibility. I am placing a copy of this letter in the library of both Houses.

I trust you will find this information helpful.

*Answer,*  


LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE