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PROROGATION ONLY A BLIP ON 'RICHTER SCALE OF UPSET,' CLEMENT SAYS

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Industry Minister Tony Clement says that on the "Richter scale of upset" his constituents just are not that concerned about his boss shutting down Parliament for five weeks.

Mr. Clement has outraged the Twittering classes opposed to prorogation with these sorts of comments today, especially with his earlier statement that only the "elites" and "chattering classes" care about prorogation.

"I know it's a big issue with the Ottawa media elite and some of the elites in our country, but I got to tell you if reaction in my constituency is any indication, I've had maybe three dozen emails," he said.

Mr. Clement made the controversial remarks earlier today at the Detroit auto show, where he has been meeting with car makers and executives. This afternoon he called The Globe to explain more about his thoughts on prorogation:

"I guess my point was, yah, I know this is a big issue in Ottawa. I know that a lot of people are running around with their hair on fire in Ottawa. All I can say is, in my riding so far, there are some people who are upset – I am not belittling that, I am not denying that – but on the Richter scale of upset, it's somewhat different from last year," he said.

"That's the way I should have said it, I guess."

Mr. Clement, who represents the Ontario cottage country riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, says his comments are based on the experience of a year ago when Prime Minister Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament to avoid an election and the threat of an opposition coalition.

The Industry Minister said he received 2,000 emails from his constituents at the time – 80% of whom were against the coalition, believing it was undemocratic. He said that this year, since Mr. Harper announced he was shutting down Parliament two weeks ago, he has received just 42 emails against prorogation.

As well, he has been out knocking on doors in his riding and has held some holiday levees.

"It's hard to judge these things. All I can do on a quantitative basis is compare and contrast. I am a slave to who actually talks to me and who feels strongly enough to email me or strongly enough to phone me. And that's the number I have, 80% of 2,000, which is 1,600 versus 42."

Mr. Clement will be working in Detroit for one more day, meeting auto makers and talking about jobs, the economy and what he can do to help get the car manufacturers back on track.

He returns to Ottawa on Wednesday.