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LaSalle-Émard-Verdun September 16 Federal By-Election
Citizens Speak Out in Their Own Names



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LaSalle-Émard-Verdun September 16 Federal By-Election

What Citizens Have to Say

People have a lot to say about the need to modernize the *Canada Elections Act*. In fact, in the experience of activists and candidates discussing with the residents of

LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, it's the only thing that's generating enthusiasm and discussion in this September 16 by-election! Many people thanked them and applauded their determination to bring to the forefront the need to revise the *Canada Elections Act* to meet the needs of Quebecers and Canadians to have control over elected officials and the decisions made in Parliament.

Here are just a few of the comments heard which reflect the spirit of the many discussions held on the streets and door-to-door:

One elderly woman who had heard about the Longest Ballot Project railed against those opposing the project, saying that seniors will not be able to find their way through the long list of candidates. "It's so paternalistic! We're the ones who have the most experience with these politicians and this system who give us absolutely no consideration the day after the vote and for the next four years, and on top of that, make the worst decisions against us!"

Others said that the project was interesting as a challenge to the parties sitting in Parliament, because "we have no say and the vote just gives them *carte blanche*. The current process has kept the same two parties in power for a long time. Your project is good for discussion because it puts the finger on what's wrong. I'll look into it."

A woman in her thirties said her generation really doesn't know what to do and what to vote for. "We are told that the electoral system in the United States is indeed the worst, but frankly our electoral system is no better. You're right when you say that it's us citizens who can change things. We can't expect anything good from governments. I'll take a look at your program."

LEV4Palestine Defends Its Right to Fully Participate in By-Election



LEV4Palestine (LEV4P) is the only citizens' group to have registered as a third party in the LaSalle-Émard-Verdun (LEV) federal by-election to be held September 16. By posting signs demanding an end to the genocide against Gaza, and holding the Liberal Party and the Canadian government to account for their criminal support of genocide, LEV4P has been campaigning since the start of the election. It's an election issue that can't be ignored.

The *Canada Elections Act* does not allow citizens to spend money to participate in elections to make their views known without registering as a "third party." It's incredible that Canada calls itself a democratic country but outlaws the participation of citizens and civil society organizations or any others. To make their voices heard, citizens have to adhere to regulations of all kinds. Elections Canada sets the regulations that require that any person or group wishing to take part in an election or influence its outcome must register as a "third party." Except to vote or stand as a candidate, no citizens can take part in an election by giving their views on an organized basis unless they register as a third party.

Once a "third party" is registered, Elections Canada regulates election advertising, partisan activities and election polls. The "third party" must also file a financial report after the election.

In order to intervene in the public space during the by-election, LEV4P had to follow Elections Canada's rules and register as a third party. The spending limit in the LEV by-election for a third party is \$5,166, even though the spending limit for a political party ranges from \$99,866.43 to \$190,801.02, depending on the party in question, and for candidates, the limit is \$126,490.05.

Determined to hold the Liberal Party and the Canadian government to account, LEV4P had to find an official agent and open a bank account for all financial transactions during the election.

LEV4P states on its website that it is conducting its campaign to:

"Bring awareness to Canadian complicity in the genocide of the Palestinian people through thought-provoking election signage across the entire riding;

"Attract media attention and force candidates to debate Canadian militarism, arms export and support for genocide.

"Affirm loud and clear that the people of LaSalle, Ville-Émard and Verdun stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine."

When the election was called, the group put up hundreds of signs in the streets of the riding to encourage citizens to denounce the crimes committed against the Palestinian people and demand that the Canadian government end all financial, political and military support for the Zionist government of Israel.

In addition, LEV4P holds rallies almost daily in front of Liberal candidate Laura Palestini's election office against Canada's participation in the genocide in Palestine, calling for an end to all Canadian military support for the Zionist state of Israel.

Even though LEV4P is within its rights to make its views known, suddenly, between July 29 and August 12, nearly 450 election posters worth \$2,000 were removed by Montreal city employees. Several CCTV images show city employees removing the posters.

On July 28, the Zionist mayor of Hampstead, Jeremy Levi, who openly supports Israel's war in Gaza, had tweeted that the LEV4P posters were "hate propaganda." He complained to Montreal's mayor and demanded that the signs be removed immediately. Even though complying with this request would violate the law, city employees began removing the signs the next day.

Levi is notorious for his speeches promoting crimes against the Palestinian people and for taking action against posters and signs that support the struggle of the Palestinian people, as well as defaming employees of the school board. He has already demanded that the police violently repress the encampments of students demanding their schools divest from companies that support Israel's crimes. On the dismantling of the encampment at McGill University, he declared: "A few months ago, I argued unequivocally for the necessary use of force to dismantle McGill's anti-Semitic, pro-Hamas 'Little Gaza.' Today, it has finally been forcibly dismantled, highlighting a critical delay that should alarm us all."



LEV4P sent a formal notice without delay to the City of Montreal demanding the return of the posters that had been removed, financial compensation of \$2,000 and an end to all violations of the *Canada Elections Act*. Its election advertising is protected by section 325 of the Act. Removing posters is a criminal offence punishable by fines.

Attempts by Zionist elites and their supporters, whether at the federal, provincial or municipal level, to silence those who are voicing their opinions in the public space are hateful. Attempts to suppress voices in support of the Palestinian people's right to be are doomed to failure, and LEV4P deserves everyone's full support in exercising its right to be heard during the by-election on such an important issue as Canada's foreign policy and the atrocities it supports in Palestine.

The use by elected officials of their public positions and privileges to criminalize third parties is shameful and cowardly. If the city, mayors or elected municipal officials want to intervene in the election, let them register as third parties too, and, what's more, let them account for the value of all the publicity they are providing for the Zionists' smears against those who oppose what the United States and its apartheid state of Israel is doing. LEV4P's right to speak for itself must be

defended and supported by all.

At last count, only 100 posters had been returned. The City of Montreal, pleading good faith errors, said it was studying the formal notice.



Note

1. "Questions and Answers for Third Parties," Elections Canada

Liberal Party Staffers Jump Liberal Ship Over Government Stand on Gaza

Fifty-two Liberal ministerial staffers, mostly of Muslim and Arab origin, are refusing to volunteer in the LaSalle—Émard—Verdun (LEV) by-election. They say this is because they object to their party's stand on the U.S./Zionist genocide in Gaza. The staffers are from almost every minister's office, news agencies inform.

Ministerial staffers are not public servants, but are hired to work for and promote their minister and their government. During elections and by-elections, some take leave from their jobs to work on the campaign, while others are expected to campaign during their free time.

Their letter, addressed to "the leader of the Liberal Party," reads that "[w]hile many of us started our political careers in elections as volunteers, we can no longer in good conscience campaign for a party that excludes us and our values." The letter calls on the Liberal government to condemn Israel's actions and recognize Palestine as a state.

Canada must "join our allies, including Norway, Spain, and Ireland in recognizing the state of Palestine," and "acknowledge anti-Palestinian racism as a unique form

of hate and work to address it in Canada," the letter says.

Another of its demands is that the government revoke existing arms export permits to Israel, and close loopholes that allow Canadian-made arms to be shipped through third countries.

Yet another is for an end to "all research collaboration on military and dual-use technologies between Canadian and Israeli researchers."

The letter reads in part that "you cannot take advantage of our labour at home while perpetuating our dehumanization abroad. As staff members, we are caught in an extremely difficult position but we have a moral obligation to advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves."

"Until we are no longer ashamed to tell our communities and families that we are actively campaigning for the Liberal Party, we will be pausing partisan activity," the group said in a statement.

In a previous letter to Trudeau in November 2023, the same people appealed to the government to take a stronger role in demanding a ceasefire in Gaza. That correspondence had asked for changes but did not threaten specific actions such as refusing to campaign for the party.

Their current letter refers to that last attempt to influence government policy.

The group's decision to refuse to participate in campaigning was in part in response to the Liberal Party's boycott of the Capital Pride march in Ottawa after organizers released a pro-Palestinian statement on August 6, which committed the organizers to "recognizing the ongoing genocide against Palestinians in opening remarks" at Pride events.

There is also anger that Liberal MPs and staffers, some with relatives in Gaza, have been scolded or told to keep their views to themselves. Meanwhile Liberal MP Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal), an outspoken supporter of the Israeli Zionist occupation and siege of Gaza, openly criticized his own party and speculated about leaving it, and was then rewarded with a new appointment in July as the Prime Minister's special adviser on anti-Semitism and Jewish affairs.

The staffers have also informed that they will not participate in activities as party members until the government changes its diplomatic posture to "join our allies in explicitly condemning Israel for its numerous war crimes and for the genocidal rhetoric from members of the Israeli Cabinet."

Former Liberal MP for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine, Marlene Jennings, one of a number of Zionist politicians in Montreal, shamelessly publicly expressed outrage over the mutiny. "If those staffers actually had the little bit of democratic values/fundamental ethics, they would have resigned en masse," she tweeted. "But they don't, do they!," meaning, we suppose, that they do not uphold "democratic values/fundamental ethics" even though that shoe would seem to fit her own foot.

[1]

The staffers also asked for and received the support of a group of influential Arab and Muslim Liberal Party donors, known as the Network 100—GTA, London, Ottawa, Montreal. Last November, the organization announced it was pulling out of the Liberal Party's top donor ranks over Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's disinclination at the time to call for a ceasefire.

"They're far more brave than we are," said Hussein Hamdani, a founding member of that fundraising group, in an interview. "We held back our money, sure.... They're putting their own livelihood at risk."

In related news, on August 28, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tried holding a meeting with Muslim community members at a reception hall in Laval, Quebec, just north of Montreal. His appearance was cancelled after many members refused to show up and, instead, pro-Palestinian demonstrators held a protest at the entrance of the reception hall.

Notes

1. As an MP for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Lachine, Marlene Jennings spent 14 years in the House of Commons, from 1997 until 2011, when she was defeated by the NDP during the 2011 federal general election.

During her time in the House of Commons, Jennings also occupied the roles of Deputy Opposition House Leader, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Canada-U.S.), Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for International Cooperation. She was also a founding member of Liberal Parliamentarians for Israel, and chaired the Canada-Israel Parliamentary Association.

In 2012, she was hired as executive director of the YM-YWHA/Montreal Jewish Community Centres while husband Luciano Del Negro served as Quebec vice-president of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) from its founding in 2004 to 2016.

(Parliament of Canada, The Canadian Jewish News, Lawyer Central)

Reader's Comment

Role of Political Police in Disrupting Elections

The Liberal government's proposals to deal with the alleged threat of foreign interference in Canada's elections disinform the polity about the source of the threat. Talk about foreign influence in elections in Canada is also a means used to justify giving the secret intelligence agencies, the Prime Minister and his ministers at the federal level or Premiers and their cabinets provincially, and anyone they see fit to delegate, arbitrary powers not subject to rule of law. These arbitrary powers, also known as prerogative powers or police powers, are sanctioned by the Constitution. The level of fraud and deception is such that it has become commonplace for governments to railroad legislation through the Parliament of Canada and provincial legislatures which gives them a veneer of legality as well to act above the law.

The choice by the police, ministers and those they consider to be prominent personalities or valid institutions of their system, to use the powers they have been given to promote their self-serving cause or their powers of "disruption," constitutes an unrecognized attack on the entire polity. It shows the issue is not whether there is foreign interference in the electoral process. Even agencies in charge of the campaigns of the cartel parties are oligopolies that act as hired guns to manage elections in a manner that runs attack ads, defamation campaigns, personalist politics to credit or discredit leaders and candidates, encourage or discourage the vote and so on. Polling firms, in the name of being neutral, set the agenda of what "issues" the people care about by asking misleading questions, and so on. Meanwhile, the views of "enemies" are attacked by official bodies while views of "friends" are widely promoted and given credibility. The entire business has become a sordid affair but this is not what is called foreign interference.

In the name of "protecting the national interest," "defending democratic institutions," "economic prosperity" and the like, the state power has been usurped by powerful supranational foreign interests which operate on the basis of police powers. This cannot but lead to the destruction of the liberal democratic institutions and growth of autocracy while the claims that the electoral process is "free and fair" are seen to be more bogus than ever.

International Days of Action in Support of Palestinian People

Demonstrate on October 5 in Montreal!

October 7 will mark one year since the resilient Palestinian people in Gaza showed the world their steadfast resistance against the murderous campaign of mayhem and genocide the Zionist state of Israel has carried out against them, sponsored by the U.S. and with the full support of Canada. In the face of genocide and huge personal losses, the Palestinian people have not flinched, not even once.

In the 12 months that have passed since the genocide began, over 80 per cent of Gazans have been forcibly displaced. Every university has been destroyed, hospitals continue to be targets of the Occupation Forces' missiles, attacks and invasion. Well over 40,000 Palestinians have been martyred. Yet, it is the Zionists who are incapable of winning this war while the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank remain unwavering in upholding their right to be.



The people of Canada and Quebec are determined to hold the government of Canada to account for supporting the Zionist genocide, violating the international rule of law which demands that the occupation forces get out of Gaza and the West Bank and that illegal settlements be dismantled and stopped.

Let us go all out for the October 5 demonstration at 2:00 pm at Place des Arts! The demonstration will march in the streets of Montreal to send a clear message in support of the Palestinian resistance.

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