



Ontario
Civil Liberties
Association

“The OCLA takes a vigorous and highly principled approach to defending free speech rights, which is an approach that is sorely needed in Canada today.”

— John Carpay,
President,
Justice Centre for
Constitutional Freedoms

“I am very pleased to learn of the Ontario Civil Liberties Association, and wish it the greatest success in its work, which could not be more timely and urgent as elementary civil rights, including freedom of speech, are under attack in much of the world, not excluding the more free and democratic societies.”

— Noam Chomsky,
Institute Professor, MIT

“Freedom of expression is our most fundamental and most precious freedom. It has been under attack in Canada for years. The Ontario Civil Liberties Association has taken a position on freedom of expression that is both courageous and principled. The OCLA now stands alone and its position should be supported by all Canadians who cherish democracy and freedom.”

— Robert Martin,
Professor of Law,
Emeritus,
Western University

ocla.ca



August 20, 2015

By Email

The Honourable Thomas J. Mulcair
Leader, NDP
thomas.mulcair@parl.gc.ca

Re: Freedom of expression of party candidates

Honourable Member Mulcair:

Recently, Morgan Wheeldon's NDP candidacy was summarily revoked by your office for past Facebook comments on Israel made in the context of political discourse. He used the word "cleansing", which was also used by former Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. This and other terms – such as "mowing the grass" – are common in Israel's mainstream media, regarding the politics of the occupation.

Jerry Natanine recently also suffered the same fate.

All candidates of all parties in Canada's federal election should have free speech concerning all matters, including the conduct of Israel. Free speech is a necessary condition for democratic participation and decision making.

Candidates and members of Parliament, like regular citizens, must be free to express both opinions and recommendations, especially on matters of national interest such as Israel and the conflicts in the Middle East.

Without a free and vibrant exchange on the most important questions for the nation, there cannot be valid and tested knowledge, or valid and tested moral positions. This is a natural law of democracy. Cleansing or suppressing expression is antithetical to democracy, and, as such, cannot be justified by any image-management device or imposition.

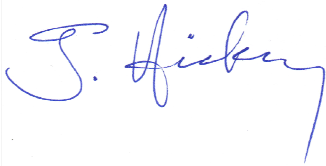
The NDP's stance in barring any criticism of Israel is undemocratic and wrong. Morgan Wheeldon and Jerry Natanine were not breaking confidence with a democratically-determined party policy platform, or engaged in any such mutiny. They have uttered words critical of Israel, in contexts of democratic discourse.

Your actions are incompatible with your claim of seeking a balanced approach. A balanced, informed, and tested approach cannot be found by suppressing free expression among potential and actual law makers.

The OCLA asks that you correct your stance on free speech regarding issues of public concern, that you allow democracy to operate rather than suppressing vital discussions, and that you offer reinstatement to Morgan Wheeldon and Jerry Natanine.

It is the OCLA's considered position that imposed ideological purity of expression on major conflicts cannot be a criterion for candidate selection in Canada.

Yours Truly,



Joseph Hickey
Executive Director
Ontario Civil Liberties Association (OCLA) <http://ocla.ca>
613-252-6148 (c)
joseph.hickey@ocla.ca

Cc: Marc Mayrand, Chief Electoral Officer, by fax: 613-954-8584