



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



September 22, 2014

By Email

Kevin Hargreaves, President
Cornwall Chamber of Commerce
113 Second St. E, Suite 100
Cornwall, ON K6J 1Y5
kelseys7091@cara.com
info@cornwallchamber.com

Re: Freedom of expression at October 15 All Candidates Debate

Mr. Hargreaves:

I write on behalf of the Ontario Civil Liberties Association (OCLA) regarding the “All Candidates Forum” to be held on October 15, 2014 and organized by the Cornwall Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with TV Cogeco. The forum will include presentations of candidates’ election platforms and a debate between mayoralty candidates.

We have been informed by Mr. Jamie Gilcig, candidate for Mayor of Cornwall, that your organization has decided to implement a dress code for the October 15 forum. Mr. Gilcig informs us that this dress code would prevent him from, for example, wearing a T-shirt showing a political message of his choice during the forum.

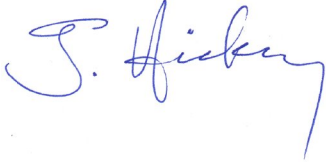
As you know, freedom of expression is vital to all Canadians. This fundamental freedom has been called the lifeblood of a democratic society. We are deeply concerned that your organization would seek to impose a code that could interfere with or deny a political candidate’s expression of a political message at a debate that will be a significant event in the process of electing Cornwall’s next mayor.

Although the Chamber of Commerce is not a government entity and may not be bound by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as the organizer of a televised candidates debate in a municipal election, it is highly concerning that you would take the position that Mr. Gilcig should “never mind” the *Charter* and the rights enshrined therein, as you communicated to this candidate in an email on September 18. Ignoring the spirit of the *Charter* in this way would subvert the Chamber of Commerce’s effort to provide community interaction with this year’s

candidates and raises concerns about the Chamber's commitment to democratic values.

We ask that you change the guidelines for the All Candidates Forum such that they do not interfere with Mr. Gilcig's and other candidates' freedom of expression. We also ask you to issue a public statement about how freedom of expression will be respected at the forum and the steps your organization will take to uphold this vital right.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Hickey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "J." and the last name "Hickey" clearly legible.

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

Cc: Jamie Gilcig, Candidate for Mayor of Cornwall (canvid@gmail.com)
Helen Finn, City Clerk, Cornwall (hfinn@cornwall.ca)
The Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
(minister.mah@ontario.ca)
Calvin Killoran, Manager, Programming and Community Relations, TV Cogeco Cornwall
(calvin.killoran@cogeco.com)
Lenard Hooper, City Editor, Cornwall Standard-Freeholder (lenard.hooper@sunmedia.ca)