



CITIZENS *for* PUBLIC JUSTICE

September 10, 2008

Mr. Ronald Cohen,
National Chair,
Canadian Broadcast Standards Council
P.O. Box 3265,
Station D Ottawa, ON
K1P 6H8

Mr. Glenn O'Farrell,
President and CEO,
Canadian Association of Broadcasters
P.O. Box 627,
Stn. B Ottawa, ON
K1P 5S2

Dear Sirs,

I write to express disappointment with the decision of the media consortium to disallow the presence of the leader of the Green Party in the federal leaders' debates, and to request that you rectify the situation.

Citizens for Public Justice is a national, faith-based organization with members across Canada. As a Christian organization, CPJ's work is rooted in God's call to do justice and to love our neighbours. While strictly non-partisan, CPJ does encourage Canadians to engage in faithful citizenship by addressing major public justice issues. Especially during elections, we support the flourishing of democracy and call upon all to exercise their rights and responsibilities to discuss, to learn and to vote.

It strikes us as perverse then, that a consortium of media representatives would make a decision to exclude one particular party leader from the nationally televised debates. One would expect, and Canadians deserve, much higher standards of fairness and democratic behavior from entities who are allowed to broadcast to the public.

The CJL Foundation
operating as CPJ.

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Under electoral law, taxpayers already fund the activities of the Green Party, so its activities appear to be legitimate to the lawmakers. Canadians might well expect to be able to see to what ends their money is being invested, through the nationally-televised debates. In the last federal election this party tallied 665,940 votes (almost 5% of the popular vote) and currently polls up to double digit support from electors. Indeed, had a system of proportional representation been adopted in Canada, the Greens would have received seats in the last election. Nonetheless, the Green Party claimed one member at the time of Parliament's dissolution, and will run candidates across the country in 2008.

This letter is not an endorsement of the Green Party's platform. It is, however, a plea that Canadian democracy be strengthened by preventing some contenders in the debate from blocking the right of Canadians to hear other legitimate voices. This situation underlines the urgent need for the creation of fair rules for enhanced participation in nationally-televised debates. The decision of the media consortium to refuse to allow the presence of the Green Party in nationally televised debates was a terrible mistake and a cynical blow to Canadian democracy.

We hope you will act to remedy this situation.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Gunn", with a horizontal line underneath.

Joe Gunn
Executive Director

CC John Cruikshank, Publisher, CBC news

Esther Enkin, Executive Editor of News, CBC

Robert Hurst, President of CTV News

Troy Reeb, Senior Vice President of News Canwest Global

Pierre Dion, President, Groupe TVA Inc.