



Monday, August 12, 2019

The Honourable Maxime Bernier
Leader of the People's Party of Canada

Dear Mr. Bernier,

On behalf of the Leaders' Debates Commission, I would like to inform you of, (a) your current participation status in these debates, and (b) the details of the debates that the Commission is organizing during the upcoming federal election campaign.

Your Participation in the Debates

According to the Order in Council that sets the mandate of the Commission, for a political party to qualify for participation in the debates, it must satisfy two of the following participation criteria:

Criterion (i): the party is represented in the House of Commons by a Member of Parliament who was elected as a member of that party;

Criterion (ii): the Commissioner considers that the party intends to endorse candidates in at least 90% of electoral districts in the general election in question;

Criterion (iii):

- a) the party's candidates for the most recent general election received at that election at least 4% of the number of valid votes cast; or,
- b) based on the recent political context, public opinion polls and previous general election results, the Commissioner considers that candidates endorsed by the party have a legitimate chance to be elected in the general election in question.

In the enclosed document on the interpretation of the participation criteria, we explain the approach and timeline to the application of the participation criteria.

In your recent submission to the Commission regarding the participation criteria, you outlined the reasons why you believe the People's Party of Canada should be considered for inclusion in the debates. We have reviewed your submission, and at this point, are not satisfied that the People's Party of Canada satisfies two of the above participation criteria so as to be invited to participate in the debates. However, as described below, the People's Party of Canada will have the opportunity to make additional submissions in this respect.

We assessed the above participation criteria in respect of the People's Party of Canada as set out below.

With respect to criterion (i), even though you are a sitting Member of Parliament, your party was not in existence during the last federal election. This precludes the People's Party of Canada from qualifying under this first participation criteria. Similarly, the People's Party of Canada does not qualify under criterion (iii)(a). Your party must therefore demonstrate to the Commission that it satisfies the two remaining criteria.

With respect to criterion (ii), based on your nomination process and the number of candidates you have designated, I conclude that your party satisfies the condition that requires fielding candidates in 90% of the ridings.

With respect to criterion (iii)(b), at this time in the electoral cycle, we do not consider that the People's Party of Canada has a legitimate chance of electing more than one candidate in the next federal election. I considered the information you provided on national polling and by-election results, however, I am on the view that the information does not provide a sufficient basis to conclude that more than one candidate endorsed by the People's Party of Canada has a legitimate chance of being elected.. As outlined in the enclosed document on the interpretation of the participation criteria, the Commission is of the view that its primary decision for the application of criterion (iii)(b) is assessing the chance of candidates to be elected. The Commission has consulted available opinion polls, riding projection sites and independent pollsters. None of these sources project, at this time, that the People's Party of Canada has a legitimate chance to elect more than one candidate. In addition, the Commission consulted poll aggregation and analysis websites¹. These sources also conclude that, at this time, the People's Party of Canada does not have a legitimate chance of electing more than one candidate in the next federal election. Please feel free to comment on this information.

This is a preliminary assessment. The Commission will continue to evaluate the People's Party of Canada's qualification under the participation criteria. To assist the Commission in this task, we ask you to submit additional information to the Commission in respect of criterion (iii)(b). The Commission will take this information into consideration in making its final determination.

In particular, the Commission asks you to submit a list of three to five ridings that you believe are the most likely to elect a candidate of your party no later than August 23, 2019. We will then seek additional information on the legitimate chance of candidates endorsed by the People's

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<http://338canada.com/ppc.htm>

<http://338canada.com/districts/districts.htm>

<https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/elections/poll-tracker/canada/>

<https://www.calculatedpolitics.com/project/2019-canadian-federal-election-region-quebec/>

Party of Canada being elected in any of those identified ridings. The Commission will then disclose this information to you for an opportunity to comment.

In addition, you will have until September 9, 2019, to submit any information, additional to the riding information requested above, that you deem necessary for the Commission to consider regarding your participation.

Going forward, the Commission will continue to assess the likelihood of the People's Party of Canada meeting criterion (iii)(b) in light of the considerations set out in our document on the interpretation of the participation criteria (enclosed) with the additional information provided by the People's Party of Canada.

The Commission will make a final decision by September 16, 2019 on whether the People's Party of Canada meets the participation criteria and can be invited to participate in the debates.

The Debates

The two debates will be held in the National Capital Region. The English debate is scheduled for Monday, October 7 and the French debate for Thursday, October 10. The venue will be announced shortly by the debates producer. The first meeting with representatives of the debates' producer and political parties will be held in Ottawa later this week. Since the People's Party of Canada does not yet qualify for the debates, it will not be present for these discussions. If and when the Commission determines that your party does satisfy conditions for participation, you will be invited to meetings with the producer and other parties. The Commission will not participate in these meetings. The choice of moderator or moderators, themes, questions, time management will be made by the producer of the debates. The Commission, however, will be briefed regularly on negotiations and preparations for the events.

The producer was chosen through a request for proposals. We are pleased with their proposal and believe the debates will have an unprecedented scope, reaching Canadians on a variety of different platforms and being available to Canadians with disabilities and minority language groups. The wide distribution will be supplemented by a public outreach campaign that aims to create interest and engagement of Canadians in the debates.

As of today, the Commission has determined that five parties qualify for the debates: the Bloc Québécois, the Conservative Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, the New Democratic Party, and the Green Party of Canada. The first four parties qualify because they elected members in the House of Commons and received 4% of the vote in the 2015 election. The Commission concludes that the Green Party of Canada qualifies for participation in the debates because it has at least one elected sitting member and has satisfied the Commissioner that it intends to field candidates in 90% of the ridings.

As a result, the Commission has issued invitations to these five parties. We have issued these invitations at this time in order to ensure that the Commission fulfills its mandate to make public its decisions with respect to participation in a timely manner. In addition, it is important for the producer of the debates to begin to meet with the participants to plan an orderly and well-

executed leaders' debate. This will improve the quality and ensure the high journalistic standards of the leaders' debates as mandated by the Order in Council.

The Commission believes the leaders' debates are a fundamental and essential feature of Canadian democracy. We thank you for your interest in participating in these debates and look forward to continuing communication with you on your status regarding this matter.

Yours truly,

David Johnston

Commissioner
The Leaders' Debates Commission

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