

August 23, 2019

The Right Honourable David Johnston
Commissioner
Leaders' Debates Commission
155 Queen St., Suite 301
Ottawa ON. K1P 6L1

Dear Mr. Johnston,

In your August 12, 2019 letter, you asked me to submit no later than today a list of three to five ridings that we believe are the most likely to elect a candidate of our party.

This request relates to point c., "Riding level polls, both publicly-available and internal party polls if provided as evidence by the party and riding projections" in the list of ten points used to assess criterion (iii)(b) published on the Commission's website ("Interpretation of Participation Criteria for the Leaders' Debates").

As a very young party, with Electoral District Associations (EDAs) established only a few months ago, we have little information about the regional distribution of our support across the country, and its concentration in specific ridings. We also do not have the financial resources to conduct polls in 338 ridings to determine whether more than one candidate has a reasonable chance of being elected at this time.

In any case, as I explained in my August 13 letter, my understanding of criterion (iii)(b) is that it simply states that our candidates must have a legitimate chance to be elected in the general election, and not at this time in the election cycle. Obviously, the election campaign could have a huge impact on this legitimate chance. More so for the other reasons I explained regarding the recent political context, including the high level of volatility and disaffection of the electorate, and the fact that populist parties similar to the PPC have experienced very rapid growth in other Western countries.

For all these reasons, the only information I can provide is a list of five candidates who are better known in their riding as public figures, and therefore will start this campaign with an advantage that others don't have:

- Maxime Bernier (Beauce)
- Renata Ford (Etobicoke North)
- Mark King (Nipissing-Timiskaming)
- Steven Fletcher (Charleswood-St. James-Assiniboia-Headingley)
- Corneliu Chisu (Pickering-Uxbridge)

I would also like to provide more information on point f., "Media presence and visibility of the party and/or its leader nation-wide." We have queried the Meltwater international media monitoring database to ascertain our media presence over the past year, since I left the Conservative Party and announced I would form a new party. Media hits include all Canadian online and print media sources.

Party Leader Name

Total Number of Media Hits

(From August 23,2018 to August 19, 2019)

Maxime Bernier	23,518
Elizabeth May	15,167
Yves- Francois Blanchet	935
Jagmeet Singh	39,738
Andrew Scheer	102,000
Justin Trudeau	385,000

You will note that I received 1.5X more media coverage than Elizabeth May, and 25X more media coverage than Yves-François Blanchet, two party leaders invited to the Debates. I also received more than half the media coverage of Jagmeet Singh, the leader of a party with a long history that currently holds 40 seats in the House of commons, as well as one quarter the coverage of the leader of the Official Opposition.

We also compared the social media presence of party leaders. Social media hits include mentions on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, comments on websites, and forums.

Party Leader Name

Social Media Hits

(From August 23,2018 to August 19, 2019)

Maxime Bernier:	1,670,000
Jagmeet Singh:	339,000
Elizabeth May:	298,000
Yves-François Blanchet:	38,800
Andrew Scheer:	2,590,000
Justin Trudeau:	8,580,000

The number of mentions I get on social media is considerably higher than Jagmeet Singh (5X more), Elizabeth May (5.6X more), and Yves-François Blanchet (43X more). I also receive about two thirds the number of social media mentions that the leader of the Official Opposition gets.

This media visibility is clear proof of the extraordinary interest the People's Party of Canada has generated and its impact on the Canadian political scene and on policy discussions.

Finally, the overwhelming majority of media commentators who have expressed an opinion over the past weeks argue that I deserve to be invited to the Debates, so that Canadians have a chance to hear about one of the important political options on the table and make a fully informed democratic choice. These commentators are best positioned to analyse the recent political context and draw conclusions from it. I attach a list of these commentaries and trust that you will consider them.

Please note that I intend to submit more information before the September 9, 2019 deadline.

Best regards,



The Honourable Maxime Bernier, P.C., M.P.
Leader
People's Party of Canada

Media commentaries supporting Maxime Bernier's participation in the Leaders' Debates

Maxime Bernier should be allowed to participate in the leaders' election debates

Michael Taube

Toronto Star, August 14, 2019

"Yet, leaders' debates should be about enhancing voter choice, knowledge and understanding. Restricting leaders like May and Bernier from participating only serves to hurt our democracy and electoral process. It also gives smaller parties the opportunity to claim that "elitism" is their greatest political adversary.

Why should we unnecessarily add this type of fuel to an already-raging fire?

My suggestion is for the commission to let Bernier in the leaders' debates. Let him say his piece, let the voters decide, and let democracy rule.

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/contributors/2019/08/14/maxime-bernier-should-be-allowed-to-participate-in-the-leaders-election-debates.html>

Short takes: Lake level, SNC questions, PPC ideas

Ian Pattison

The Chronicle Journal, August 18, 2019

"It'd be far better to let the man speak Oct. 7 and rise or fall on the strength or weakness of his words. If he's as popular as he says he'd be, or if he's as bad as he sometimes seems to be, we need to hear him say so alongside his rivals. Better we hear Bernier's ideas for Canada than Blanchet's plans for Quebec, no?"

http://www.chroniclejournal.com/opinion/columns/short-takes-lake-level-snc-questions-ppc-ideas/article_496b41d4-c232-11e9-bc06-bf092f76bc4e.html

Slim down our sacred small-business cow

William Watson

The Financial Post, August 20, 2019

"In practice, alas, there won't be such a debate, our former governor general having decided the one political party with heterodox views on these issues does not warrant a microphone in this supposedly diversity-loving country's leadership discussions."

<https://business.financialpost.com/opinion/william-watson-slim-down-our-sacred-small-business-cow>

Maxime Bernier's ideas should not disqualify him from debating other leaders

Chantal Hébert

The Toronto Star, August 19, 2019

"The positions Bernier is embracing will not go away just because he is kept off the leaders' debate podium.

The PPC has espoused a form of populism that has already spread widely in the U.S. and in western Europe. Is sweeping it under the rug really the best response or does that instead reinforce the message that Canada's political elites are not interested in levelling with voters?"

<https://www.thestar.com/politics/political-opinion/2019/08/18/maxime-berniers-ideas-should-not-disqualify-him-from-debating-other-leaders.html>

What's a debate if you don't hear from the opposite side?

John Ivison

The National Post, August 17, 2019

"The ruling seems profoundly undemocratic. Nobody wants to see a debate between the leaders of Canada's 16 registered political parties but Bernier's vehicle is clearly more serious than the Rhinoceros Party, with its pledge to privatize the Queen and tax the black market. (...) To block Bernier on the grounds of polls taken more than two months before the vote is ludicrous. (...)

As the PP pointed out in a statement expressing its disappointment at the preliminary decision, if the commission truly considered "recent political context," it would have to weigh the potential for rapid growth of any populist party in the Western world. (...)

Most Canadians, including this one, find many of those policies toxic. But a sizeable minority do not and, as Bernier pointed out, they have a right to hear views that differ from those of more established parties."

<https://nationalpost.com/opinion/john-ivison-whats-a-debate-if-you-dont-hear-from-the-opposite-side>

Let all the federal leaders debate

Bill Kelly

Global News 900 CHML, August 14, 2019

But, if these debates are to be an informative vehicle for Canadian voters to determine who will represent them in the next Parliament, why not include all of the political leaders?

I can understand the desire to exclude fly by night, fringe political movements, but Bernier is a long-time veteran in the political arena, and he came within a whisker of becoming leader of the Conservative Party not too long ago.

I'm certainly no advocate of Bernier as a political leader, or the policies of the People's Party. Quite the opposite actually. But national polling indicates that there is some interest and possibly some support for what he's trying to sell.

It's strange logic, really; you can't be in the debates because you don't have any MPs, but if you're excluded from the debates, the chances of gaining enough public support to have elected members is remote, at best.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/5758395/federal-leaders-debate-canada/>

Le NPD, parti anti-démocratique?

Mathieu Bock-Côté

Le Journal de Montréal, 14 août 2019

« Les positions du PPC méritent d'être débattues aux prochaines élections, et Maxime Bernier de se faire entendre. La démocratie s'enrichit de la diversité des choix qu'elle offre, et s'appauvrit quand elle oblige tout le monde à communier autour d'une idéologie officielle. Un débat qui proscrie à l'avance les désaccords de fond n'en est plus un. »

<https://www.journaldemontreal.com/2019/08/15/le-npd-parti-antidemocratique>

Maxime Bernier devrait-il être du Débat des chefs? La Commission Ferrandez-Taillefer répond
Paul Arcand

98,5 FM, 16 août 2019

« C'est un courant qui est de droite. C'est pas marginal. C'est le genre de candidat qui mérite d'être entendu je pense, dans le cadre d'un débat, et c'est aux autres chefs de le challenger sur ce qu'il avance et ce qu'il défend. »

<https://www.985fm.ca/nouvelles/opinions/242181/maxime-bernier-devrait-il-etre-du-debat-des-chefs-la-commission-ferrandez-taillefer-repond>

Trudeau had the government take over the political leaders' debates. And surprise — he decided to kick out Maxime Bernier

Ezra Levant

The Rebel, August 15, 2019

“Maxime Bernier probably doesn't have a statistical chance at becoming the prime minister. But he is certain to put forward ideas that many Canadians share — especially ideas that are considered politically incorrect. Ideas that the establishment club doesn't even want to talk about.

Whether or not you like Bernier isn't the point. It's whether or not you think governments ought to be able to ban their challengers."

https://www.therebel.media/news-justin-trudeau-leaders-debates-election-maxime-bernier-rebel-media-ezra-levant-show-august-15-2019?safari_redirect

Even if you don't like the PPC, Bernier should be in the debate

Andrew Lawton

True North, August 13, 2019

"The first round of invitations from the state-sanctioned Leaders' Debates Commission has been sent out to the Conservatives, the Liberals, the NDP, the Greens, and the Bloc Quebecois – but not to the People's Party. True North's Andrew Lawton says the decision to not invite Maxime Bernier shows a reversal of a previous interpretation of the rules, and amounts to a "sham" process with moving goalposts.

<https://tnc.news/2019/08/13/lawton-even-if-you-dont-like-the-ppc-bernier-should-be-in-the-debate/>

Let Bernier debate so Canadians can see what he's really all about

Dan Leger

The Chronicle Herald, August 16, 2019

"Whatever motivates Bernier, he's working to build a party based on right-wing ideas that would have seemed un-Canadian in the pre-Trump era just a few years ago. He's crisscrossing the country signing up members and organizing constituency associations, the fundamental building blocks of every party.

He's been pretty successful, wooing people who hate the Liberals but are disillusioned with the lack of policy vigour in the Scheer Conservatives, particularly on hot-button issues like immigration and minority rights.

The PPC claims to have 40,000 members across Canada and has named at least 312 out of 338 potential candidates. They won't all be good candidates, but they're evidence of the party's reach."

<https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/opinion/local-perspectives/dan-leger-let-bernier-debate-so-canadians-can-see-what-hes-really-all-about-342271/>

Maxime Bernier's exclusion from Leaders' Debate undermines mandate of new Debates Commission

Kristy Koehler

The Gauntlet, August 15, 2019

“(i)t’s a travesty to exclude a federal leader who has a seat in the House of Commons and an almost-full slate of candidates. Denying him the ability to speak is an exercise in hypocrisy on the part of a Debates Commission that purports to facilitate the democratic process.”

<http://www.thegauntlet.ca/maxime-berniers-exclusion-from-leaders-debate-undermines-mandate-of-new-debates-commission/>

A debate without Bernier sets a terrible precedent for democracy

Ali Taghva

The Post Millennial, August 21, 2019

“While presumably everyone to the left of Bernier, especially the NDP may be celebrating, the truth is, the exclusion of upstart parties are nothing to be celebrated. In an open and democratic society, they should even be condemned. (...)

This decision in effects sets a precedent where most modern political movements, even those which are well funded and well organized are relegated to the backwaters of history for multiple elections to come.”

<https://www.thepostmillennial.com/a-debate-without-bernier-sets-a-terrible-precedent-for-democracy/>

Campagne électorale: c’est fait pour débattre

François Bergeron

L’Express, 21 août 2019

« Surtout, le programme du PPC se démarque radicalement – notamment sur l’immigration et sur le climat – de celui des autres partis politiques fédéraux, qui cherchent tous, plus ou moins sincèrement, à se rapprocher du «centre» occupé par les Libéraux de Justin Trudeau. Maxime Bernier a raison de dire que ce ne sera pas un vrai débat sans lui. »

<https://l-express.ca/campagne-electorale-cest-fait-pour-debattre/>
