AFFIDAVIT OF EZRA LEVANT

I, EZRA LEVANT, of the City of Toronto, in the Province of Ontario, AFFIRM AND SAY:

1. I am the founder and principal of the Applicant, Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”). As such, I have personal knowledge of the matters described in my affidavit. Where my information is based on information obtained from others, I have indicated the source of that information and believe it to be true.

BACKGROUND

2. This Application is for judicial review of the decisions of the Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”), refusing Rebel News’s application for the media accreditation required to cover the official French Language Federal Leaders’ Debate taking place Wednesday, September 8, 2021, and the English Language Federal Leaders’ Debate taking place Thursday, September 9, 2021 (collectively, the “Debates”).
3. On or about August 16, 2021, the Commission published a press release inviting media representatives to apply for accreditation (the “Accreditation”) for the Debates. The press release also provided instructions to media representatives who wished to cover the debates, noting that they must apply for accreditation by sending an email to mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca. The period during which media representatives would be allowed to apply for Accreditation spanned ten (10) days, closing at 23:59 EDT on August 25, 2021 (the “Announcement”). Attached and marked as Exhibit “01” is a copy of media Accreditation Announcement.

4. On August 24, 2021, Rebel News responded to the Commission’s invitation by submitting eleven (11) “Letter(s) of Assignment”, one for each of its eleven (11) applicant journalists seeking accreditation, to the Commission at the email address provided by the Commission in the Announcement, mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca. Attached and marked as Exhibits “02-12” are copies of the Letters of Assignments.

5. These Letters of Assignment were submitted for the following Rebel Media journalists:

   a) Alexandra Lavoie;

   b) Andrew Chapados;

   c) Abdusselam Bezirgan;

   d) Adam Soos;

   e) David Menzies;

   f) Drea Humphrey;

   g) Katherine Krozonouski;

   h) Lincoln Jay;
i) Sheila Gunn Reid;

j) Sidney Fizzard; and

k) Tamara Ugolini;

hereinafter referred to collectively as the “Journalists”.

6. The Commission refused each application submitted by Rebel News for Accreditation of the Journalists.

7. The Commission’s Decision was collectively set out in various letters sent from David Johnston, Commissioner of the Commission, to Rebel News in response to each corresponding Letter of Assignment submitted by Rebel News (the “Rejection Letters”). Attached and marked as Exhibits “13-23” are copies of the Rejection Letters.

8. Hereinafter, the Commission’s denial of Accreditation to Rebel News and its Journalists and the Rejection Letters shall be referred to collectively as the “Decision”.

9. The Decision was received by Rebel News after business hours on August 31, 2021 only four (4) business days before the Debates, leaving Rebel News with little time to retain and instruction Counsel and to prepare a response.

10. The Decision did not provide a mechanism for appeal of the Decision.

11. Unifor and the Canadian Media Guild will be referenced herein. Unifor and the Canadian Media Guild are large trade unions to which most, if not all, of the media organizations who have been Accredited by the Commission belong. These unions are registered campaign groups and actively engage in partisan advocacy to effect policy change in Canada.
THE PARTIES

Rebel News

12. Rebel News is a federal company carrying on business as a popular, independent online news and media company operating across Canada and around the world.

13. Rebel News is a prominent, tireless advocate for press freedom in Canada. Rebel News’ journalists and commentators often take strong editorial positions on important public issues affecting Canadians, and convey those positions through different media, including on websites (http://www.RebelNews.com), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, print media, paperback books, e-books, radio ads, and billboards.

14. Rebel News are equal opportunity critics and commentators who challenge, question, and cover every political party, both left-leaning and right-leaning, unlike Unifor and Canadian Media Guild reporters who have registered third-party campaigns running ads specifically targeting conservative leaders or political organizations or politicians to whom they are ideologically opposed. An example of one of these Unifor ads attacking Erin O’Toole, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrjcZS1OCWM. Unifor also authorizes attack websites such as https://www.2021otoole.ca/ against conservative political groups and politicians.

15. Rebel News has a reach and audience that routinely surpasses the reach of legacy media organizations in Canada (our “Reach”). In the last year, Rebel News had 10.2 million users who visited our website. There were 22.5 million sessions (2.2 sessions per user), and 37.8 million page views.

16. Last quarter (April 1 to June 30, 2021), Rebel News averaged 1.86 million sessions per month
(that's about 22.3 million sessions per year). We also averaged 831,000 users per month and 3.3 million pageviews per month in that same time period.

17. Rebel News has 1.48 million subscribers on its YouTube channel.

18. Most of our Reach is domestic to Canada.

19. During the Leaders’ Debates in 2019, Rebel News produced over a dozen video reports of the 2019 Leaders Debates. Cumulatively, these reports receive in excess of a million views. In accordance with the 2019 Legal Proceedings (defined below) which granted our access to cover and report at the Leaders’ Debates in 2019, our reporters were not only featured on our own channels, but were also broadcast on every other channel that was carrying the event. The questions our reporters put to potential political leaders were not just for the benefit of Rebel News’ Reach; they were for the benefit of anyone in the country who was watching — many millions of Canadians.

20. As such, Rebel News represents and services a large part of the Canadian population and presents contrasting views to most legacy media organizations. There is a strong public interest in Rebel News being able to report, cover, and provide commentary and criticism of politics in Canada.

21. By comparison, for evening news broadcasts, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (the “CBC”) had 320,000 viewers spread across 27 stations, an average of 12,000 viewers each. Attached and marked as Exhibit “24” and “25” are copies of articles from the Toronto Sun reporting on CBC audience numbers.

22. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News
has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

23. Rebel News routinely discloses its intentions in a transparent and clear manner, and does not hide the fact it might be involved in a story. There is always full disclosure, in a clear and coherent manner, of any intentions or connections outside of the reporting of news events that might be perceived as “conflicts of interests” by another party.

24. Unlike many of our competitors, Rebel News does not take money from any government. We believe this is integral to and the only way to retain our freedom of expression and editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and reach to challenge the views presented in the legacy Canadian media.

a) In fact, Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault’s department refused to name published awarded nearly $61 million in pre-election Federal funding through a program called “Aid to Publishers”. Attached and marked as **Exhibit “26”** is a copy an article from Blacklock’s reporting on this additional and secret, pre-election Federal funding.

25. On September 16, 2019, Canada’s Globe and Mail published my opinion piece titled “Press freedom applies to everyone — even The Rebel” wherein I detailed the Liberal Party of Canada’s prior refusals to accredit myself, other Rebel News reporters, and other conservative reporters. Attached and marked as **Exhibit “27”** is a copy of the article.

26. Each of the individuals on behalf of whom Rebel News submitted a Letter of Assignment is a Journalist who reports upon and covers Canadian public and political affairs. For instance, Journalists David Menzies and Sheila Gunn Reid serve as broadcasters, journalists, correspondents, and political commentators with Rebel News. The same is true for each of the other Journalists described herein.
27. The Commission is a body created by an Order in Council (PC Number: 2018-1322) dated October 29, 2018 (the “Order in Council”) and as amended by Order in Council (PC Number: 2018-1322). According to Paragraph 1 of the Order in Council, the Commission consists of the Debates Commissioner, the Advisory Board, and the Secretariat. Attached and marked as Exhibits “28” and “29” are copies of the Order in Council and the amendment.

28. According to Paragraph 2 of the Order in Council, the mandate of the Commission is to:

a) Organize one leaders’ debate in each official language during each general election period;

b) Ensure that the leader of each political party meet two enumerated criteria listed in subsections (i), (ii), and (iii) of paragraph 2(b) to be invited to participate in the Debates;

c) Ensure that the Debates are broadcast and otherwise made available in an accessible way to persons with disabilities;

d) Ensure that the Debates reach as many Canadians as possible, including those living in remote areas and those living in official language minority communities through a variety of media and other fora;

e) Ensure that the Debates are broadcast free of charge, whether or not the broadcast is live;

f) Ensure that any reproduction of the Debates is subject to only the terms and conditions that are necessary to preserve the integrity of the debates;

g) Ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the Debates;

h) Undertake an awareness raising campaign and outreach activities to ensure that Canadians know when, where and how to access the Debates; and
i) Provide advice and support in respect of other political debates related to the general election, including candidates’ debates, as the Debates Commissioner considers appropriate.

29. Significantly, the Order in Council provides at Paragraph 4 that in fulfilling its mandate, the Commission is to be guided by the “pursuit of the public interest and by the principles of **independence, impartiality, credibility, democratic citizenship, civic education, inclusion** and cost-effectiveness.” Critically, the Order in Council makes no mention at all of “advocacy” or involvement therein by media organizations or representatives, and certainly does not reference “advocacy” as a bar to media participation. It should be pointed out that these characteristics apply to the Commission and are not meant under the Order in Council to apply to the media.

a) As is evidenced herein, the Commission has failed to fulfill its mandate by, among other things:

i. Ignoring the public interest by excluding the millions of Canadians who rely on Rebel News to provide them with reporting, coverage, and commentary on political affairs and current events in Canada;

ii. Failing to exercise independence by relying on the Canadian Association of Journalists (the “CAJ”) Ethics Guidelines (the “**CAJ Ethics Guidelines**”), as described later herein;

iii. Failing to exercise impartiality by creating two arbitrary, distinct classes of applicants for Accreditation;

iv. Failing to adhere to the principle of inclusion by expressly excluding Rebel News, the Journalists, and millions of Canadians who rely on Rebel News to provide them with reporting, coverage, and commentary on political affairs and current events in Canada; and
v. Failing to adhere to any cost-effectiveness, but choosing to force Rebel News to seek costly and resource-demanding judicial review twice, as particularized herein, rather than simply allow Rebel News to attend, cover, and report on the Debates, which would have presented absolutely no harm to the Commission.

30. The Commission’s website contains a section titled “Why Debates Matter” which reads, in part:

“Debates play an essential role in Canada’s democracy. They give you a chance to see the character, temperament, and unscripted approaches of leaders seeking to be Canada’s Prime Minister. Making an informed decision is part of a thriving democracy. But it’s difficult to make an informed decision; people are busy, and it’s hard to know what information to trust. A live debate is a trusted source of information, because it’s one of the very few times during an election campaign that you can hear directly from leaders – unedited and unfiltered.

“You’ll see leaders together in one place, live on stage, answering questions and challenging each other’s ideas and opinions. This will help you make your own decision about the issues that matter to you. It is also an opportunity to learn about issues that matter to other Canadians, and be exposed to views that are different from your own, and those around you. It’s a window into the world of others.

“A debate is something we can participate in together. It would be easy to see the things that separate us as Canadians; we are spread apart across a huge land mass; we live in different places; we speak different languages, we come from different backgrounds and yes, we care about different things. But this is an opportunity for the country to come together: to watch or listen to the same thing, at the same time, to gain an understanding about the issues at hand, what they mean to people across the country.”

Attached as Exhibit “30” is a copy of Why Debates Matter.

31. The Debates provides the opportunity for media representatives to ask the party leaders questions of public importance and challenge party leaders on the Debates in a media scrum. Without Accreditation, Rebel News would lose such an opportunity thereby depriving Rebel News and its viewership access to the national dialogue, access to the elections, and a voice in our democracy.
THE 2019 LEADERS' DEBATE ACCREDITATION ACTION


33. Rebel News applied for accreditation for two of its journalists to attend and cover the 2019 Debates and participate in the media scrum, David Menzies and Keean Bexte. Their respective applications for accreditation were denied.

34. The denial of accreditation was extremely brief and was conveyed in email correspondence sent from Collin Lafrance, the Chief of the Canadian Press Gallery, who did not form part of the Commission, to Rebel News at or about 9:08 am. EDT on October 4, 2019 — the Friday before the 2019 Debates — stating:

   “Your request for media accreditation for the 2019 Federal Leaders’ Debates has been denied. It is our view that your organization is actively involved in advocacy.”

   (the “2019 Decision”).

35. Rebel News immediately filed an application for judicial review in this Honourable Court (Federal Court File Number T-1631-19) seeking mandatory injunctive relief for an order enjoining the Commission to grant Rebel News accreditation. Hereinafter, litigation arising from legal proceedings commenced by Rebel News against the Commission and the results and decision thereof shall be referred to as the “2019 Legal Proceedings”.

36. Rebel News succeeded in its application and the Court ordered the Commission to provide accreditation to David Menzies and Keean Bexte.

37. Subsequently, David Menzies and Keean Bexte attended the 2019 Debates and Rebel News
contributed valuable content to the public discourse surrounding the 2019 Federal Election.

38. The CAJ provided their comment on the 2019 Legal Proceedings by way of a blog post on their website. Attached as Exhibit “31” is a copy of the CAJ blog post entitled “CAJ encouraged court decision on press accreditation will push for transparency.”

39. Thereafter, the Commission made an Application for mootness to nullify the 2019 Legal Proceedings. The proceedings were nullified by order pronounced on June 18, 2020. That ruling is under appeal.

40. If this matter does not get decided now, it will likely never be decided. The Commission shows a litigative pattern of purposely evading review of the matters pertaining to this action. In this respect, the Commission’s behaviour is high-handed. As evidenced herein, the Commission knew they would deny Accreditation to Rebel News again at the Debates.

THE DEBATES’ APPLICATION PROCESS, ACCREDITATION, AND THE DECISION

41. The ‘Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election’ portion of the Commission’s website (the “Accreditation Page”), provided information and the procedure for media representatives seeking Accreditation for the Debates. Attached as Exhibit “32” is a copy of the Accreditation Page.

42. Curiously, the Announcement and the Accreditation Page are different in that the Accreditation Page appears to be a modified version of the Announcement with extra language added, as hereunder described and which is prejudicial to Rebel News.

43. As described in the background preamble of this affidavit, on the Accreditation Page, the Commission detailed its interpretation of what constitutes high journalistic standards and purports to have adopted the CAJ Ethics Guidelines, which, combined together, constituted the evaluation
criteria for Accreditation (the “Standards”). The Accreditation Page states that the Commission would rely on the Standards in evaluating Accreditation applicants. Attached as Exhibit “33” is a copy of the CAJ Ethics Guidelines.

44. On or about August 16, 2021, the Commission published the Accreditation Page inviting media representatives to apply for accreditation for the Debates. The press release also provided instructions to media representatives who wished to cover the debates, noting that they must apply for accreditation by sending an email to mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca. The period during which media representatives would be allowed to apply for Accreditation spanned ten (10) days, closing at 23:59 EDT on August 25, 2021 (the “Application Process”).

45. On August 19, 2021, the CAJ authored a press release in its blog to its members discussing the Application Process. Attached as Exhibit “34” is a copy of the CAJ press release on Accreditation.

46. The Application Process for the Debates was brand new.

47. The Accreditation Page provided three options to apply under for Accreditation through the Application Process:

a) Option 1 - Any media representative that was a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery would automatically be eligible for accreditation;

Attached and marked as Exhibit “35” is a list of the membership of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

b) Option 2 - Any media representative that was a member of one of the following four professional media organizations would automatically be eligible for accreditation:
i. Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) (active (journalist) membership only);

ii. National NewsMedia Council (NNC);

iii. Conseil de presse du Québec (CPQ); and

iv. Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ);

(hereinafter, media organizations being granted automatic Accreditation and who were not subject to the Standards are referred to as “Grandfathered Media Organizations”);

c) Option 3 - Any media representative that was not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2, would be forced to apply for accreditation under Option 3 and would be subject to the Standards.

48. On or about August 24, 2021, for each Journalist, Rebel News submitted an application for Accreditation in accordance and in compliance with the Application Process along with the Letters of Assignment.

49. After business hours on August 31, 2021, by way of the Rejection Letters specific to each Journalist, the Commission rendered the Decision and rejected every Journalist for which Rebel News had applied for Accreditation through the Application Process.

50. Immediately thereafter, on September 1, 2021, Rebel News retained Counsel and provided instructions to apply for judicial review to challenge the Decision.

51. On the Application Page, the Commission specifically included a section addressing conflicts of interest. It states in part:

“The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may
have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes.

“However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

“when an organization: becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions; or

“when a reporter: writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fund raises and makes financial contributions.”

In making the above statements, the Commission references the CAJ Ethics Guidelines and a blog post by the CAJ entitled “Alberta press gallery has a duty and a right to determine access” which specifically discusses and targets Rebel News (the “CAJ Rebel Blog Post”). Attached as Exhibit “35” is a copy of the CAJ Rebel Blog Post.

52. The very fact that the Commission set out Standards for Accreditation, and in doing so, specifically referred to and relied on materials which expressly singled-out and targeted Rebel News — in the Standards themselves — shows bias and material unfairness.

53. In fact, the CAJ Rebel Blog Post explicitly states:

“The CAJ also supported Rebel News’ access to the federal Leadership Debates in 2019 because the Leaders' Debate Commission was not transparent in its accreditation process and waited until the last business day to issue its decision, and had no appeal process. Further, we objected to a government body using the Canadian Association of Journalists' ethics guidelines to try to define who is a journalist.”

The CAJ objected to the Commission using its guidelines as Standards.
54. The manner by which the Commission has used and has relied on the statements and guidelines of the CAJ in crafting the Application Process and governing Accreditation for the Debates is deeply suspect — both in substance, purpose, and intent — is contradictory, capricious, and is tainted by logical contradictions, ethical irregularities, circular reasoning, and irrationality. Some examples are:

a) Adopting the CAJ Ethics Guidelines as Standards despite the CAJ’s express objection to the same, especially since the objection appeared expressly in a document directly cited by the Commission in their Standards;

b) Purposefully crafting and framing Accreditation Standards which, on their face, work to purposefully and altogether exempt all Grandfathered Legacy Media from any requirements or Standards whatsoever, at worst; or at best, which carve out arbitrary special Standards for all most but Rebel News;

i. All or most Grandfathered Legacy Media would themselves surely fail to meet the requirements, definitions, guidelines, and Standards set by the Commission which were unfairly and arbitrarily and intentionally applied in a prejudicial and discriminatory manner against Rebel News — going so blatantly far as to adopt, rely, and refer to the CAJ Rebel Blog Post which expressly names and targets Rebel News;

c) Professing the Commission’s purported overarching objective of ensuring “high journalistic standards”, while refusing or failing to evaluate the standards of any or media organizations except for Rebel News and purposely giving a “free pass” to a league of Grandfathered Legacy Media without any scrutiny or evaluation whatsoever;

d) Effectively drafting a “bill of attainder” — specifically written to pre-determine the outcome for Rebel News and Rebel News only; and
e) In comparing the conflict of interest portion of the CAJ Ethics Guidelines with the Commission’s conflict of interest definition on the Accreditation Page, it is evident that the Commission has distorted and manipulated the CAJ’s definition by inserting the CAJ Rebel Blog Post into its definition.

55. The Accreditation Page does not provide for an appeal process nor was a mechanism for appeal provided in the Rejection Letters and the Decision.

56. Between the time that Rebel News applied for Accreditation and the Decision, the Commission did not communicate or seek further information, clarification, input, or provide notice of any issues with Rebel News’ application for Accreditation despite having ample time to do so.

57. The Commission’s Decision infringes on the rights of freedom of expression, which is openly admitted in the Decision, and freedom of the press, as enshrined in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, of Rebel News, the Journalists, and millions of Canadians who rely on Rebel News to provide them with the coverage, reporting, and commentary relating to politics and current affairs in Canada.

58. Whether Rebel News reports on stories, upon which it harbours an editorial position, has absolutely no relevance to the Debates nor whether Rebel News should be permitted to attend, cover, and ask questions of politicians seeking leadership in the upcoming election during the media scrum which will occur at the Debates — especially as Grandfathered Legacy Media who engage in similar activity have been automatically accredited.

59. Whether Rebel News crowdfunds, for any reason, has absolutely no relevance to the Debates nor whether Rebel News should be permitted to attend, cover, and ask questions of politicians seeking leadership in the upcoming election during the media scrum which will occur at the Debates — especially as Grandfathered Legacy Media who engage in similar activity have been
automatically accredited. This is exceptionally poignant as Rebel News does not receive funding of any kind from the government.

60. The Commission states that if it did not enforce its conflict of criterion it set out in its Application Process, it would bring the Commission and Debates into disrepute. As is evidenced herein and hereunder, the Commission did not enforce its own criterion against Grandfathered Legacy Media but did so against Rebel News:

   a) Infringing on principles of procedural fairness;

   b) Violating Rebel News’ legitimate expectation of fairness;

   c) Exercising an apprehended and actual bias; and

   d) Infringing on the constitutional rights of Rebel News, the Journalists, and millions of Canadians.

ACTIVITIES OF GRANDFATHERED LEGACY MEDIA NOT SUBJECT TO THE STANDARDS

61. As is indicated elsewhere herein, the Commission’s Standards declared that a media organization is in a conflict of interest if it:

   a) Becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions; or

   b) When a reporter writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public
relations work, fund raises and makes financial contributions.

62. Grandfathered Legacy Media who were given automatic Accreditation by the Commission are actively engaged in identical or extremely similar activities as Rebel News, including but not limited to items specifically identified in the Decision. Some examples are as follows:

a) Litigation:

i. In the middle of the last election, Press Gallery members Rosemary Barton and John-Paul Tasker were named Plaintiffs to CBC’s lawsuit against the Conservative Party in the midst of the Canadian Federal Election which they covered. Attached and marked as Exhibit "37" is a copy of a CBC article reporting on litigation to which it and its members are parties;

b) Providing financial assistance to sources:

i. The Toronto Star offered a bounty for video footage of former Toronto Mayor Rob Ford. Attached and marked as Exhibit “38” is a copy of an article from MacLean’s reporting on the aforementioned financial support;

c) Crowdfunding:

i. Outlets like the Narwhal and the National Observer seek supporter contributions to fund their coverage, including for the election. Attached and marked as Exhibit “39” is a copy of the Narwhal donation webpage;

ii. Several media outlets have started to set up charitable foundations/trusts, such as La Presse and Le Devoir, in order to receive donations/funding. Attached and marked as Exhibit “40” is a copy of the webpage for the La Presse Foundation;
d) Political advertising:

i. Several outlets have participated in ad campaigns in support of the funding for select candidates;

ii. Access to Information documents revealed that the CBC and other media spent $5,000.00 to take out ads in the Hill Times in support of the media bailout;

iii. The Winnipeg Free Press, in particular, has used its opinion pages to advocate for the bailout of legacy media by the Federal Government. Attached and marked as Exhibit “41” is a copy of one of these advocacy pieces by the CBC which uses the Winnipeg Free Press as an advocacy source;

e) Petitions:

i. Press Gallery members Rabble have numerous petitions on their website. Attached and marked as Exhibit “42” is a copy of one of these petitions and evidence that they seek donations as well. Attached and marked as Exhibit “43” is another article asking readers to sign another petition;

ii. Press Gallery member, Susan Delacourt (The Toronto Star), supports and shares petitions on Twitter. Attached and marked as Exhibit “44” is a copy of one such tweet;

iii. Press Gallery member, Susan Riley, who regularly writes for Hill Times, supports and shares petitions on Twitter. Attached and marked as Exhibit “45” is a copy of one such tweet;

f) Reporting on stories they are actively involved in:

i. CBC reporting on media organizations who receive money from the Government of
Canada, CBC receives the bulk of its funding from the Government of Canada. Attached and marked as **Exhibits “46-51”** are copies of articles by media organizations, most of whom receive federal funding reporting on the government providing media organizations with federal funding;

ii. The CBC routinely reports on stories about itself;

g) Opinion pieces:

i. Press Gallery members include regular opinion and advocacy journalists like Paul Wells (Maclean’s), John Ivison (The National Post), Mark Bonkoski (Postmedia), John Ibbitson (The Globe and Mail), Susan Delacourt (The Toronto Star), and Heather Scoffield (The Toronto Star);

h) Advocacy, support, and endorsements for political candidates and causes:

i. Most (if not all) print publications regularly endorse political parties during elections;

ii. The Globe and Mail’s Andrew Coyne has endorsed the Liberals (under Michael Ignatieff) and the NDP in previous elections;

iii. Press Gallery members Rabble advocates on numerous causes and even posts its own “Activist Toolkit” ([https://rabble.ca/toolkit](https://rabble.ca/toolkit)) and “3 Minute Actions” ([https://rabble.ca/toolkit/3-minute-action](https://rabble.ca/toolkit/3-minute-action));


v. Unifor, the general trade union representing a significant portion of the media industry
and members of the Press Gallery regularly and strongly engage in political activism and advocacy. Press Gallery members of Unifor actively contribute funds to Unifor which are then used for advocacy and political purposes and to affect policy. Attached and marked as Exhibit “52” is a copy of an offensive taken by Unifor against past Prime Minister Stephen Harper;

i) Questionable public relations and other advocacy work:

i. Outlets like the National Post and the CBC offer paid content/advertorial/branded content services for various clients. Attached and marked as Exhibit “53-55” are examples;

ii. As is evidenced by the aforementioned exhibits, the National Post, including many other organizations, brand sponsored “stories” and run them alongside other news content to give the consumer the impression that these sponsored advertisements are news content and not advertisements. This is misleading at best, deceptive and unethical at worst;

iii. The Globe and Mail still runs “China Daily” which offers Chinese state-run propaganda a direct channel to Canadian readership. Attached and marked as Exhibit “56” is a copy of an article criticizing this practice.

iv. Press Gallery “Life” members include paid lobbyists like Don Newman and Greg Weston ([https://www.press-presse.ca/en/press-gallery-members#life-members](https://www.press-presse.ca/en/press-gallery-members#life-members)). Newman is currently registered to lobby the government for 6 different clients. Attached and marked as Exhibit “57” is a list of organizations for which he is a registered lobbyist;

j) Fundraising:

i. The Toronto Star runs annual fundraisers for its Fresh Air Fund. Attached and marked as Exhibit “X” is a copy of the fund-raising page on their website;
k) Political contributions:

i. Reports revealed that Liberal candidate Martin Francoeur approached journalists at Le Nouvelliste, seeking donations to his campaign;

ii. The Globe and Mail’s Adam Radwanski has made past political contributions to the Liberal Party;

l) Foreign state media:

i. Press Gallery members include Itar-Tass, The National News Agency of Ukraine and the Vietnam News Agency;

ii. Xinhua News Agency, the propaganda arm of China’s Communist Party, was only removed from the Press Gallery over a paperwork issue, after being a member for 57 years. Attached and marked as Exhibit “59” is a copy of an article on the matter;

63. Lack of transparency:

i. See Paragraph 24(a) of this Affidavit and Exhibit “26” detailing the secret, pre-election funding legacy media organizations by the Federal Government.

RELIEF SOUGHT AND MOTION

64. I do verily believe that the evidence herein demonstrates a strong likelihood that the Applicant will be successful in this judicial review proceeding.

65. I do verily believe that the Applicant will suffer irreparable harm if it is not granted Accreditation to attend the Debates, which cannot be quantified in monetary terms or cured.

66. I make this Affidavit in support of the within motion seeking the remedies as set out in the Notice
of Motion, and generally in the Notice of Motion and for no improper purpose.

AFFIRMED BEFORE ME at the town of Banff,

in the Province of Alberta, this 5th day of

September, 2021.


Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515

EZRA LEVANT
This is Exhibit "1" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Leaders' Debates Commission opens media accreditation for the 44th General Election

August 16, 2021 – Ottawa (Ontario)

The Leaders' Debates Commission is inviting media representatives to apply for accreditation for the next leaders' debates.

The two debates will take place at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Québec on Wednesday, September 8 (French) and Thursday, September 9 (English).

All media representatives wishing to have access to one or both of the debates must apply to be accredited by the Commission.

Media representatives will have 10 days to apply for accreditation.

The application deadline is Wednesday, August 25 at 23:59 EDT. All applications along with the supporting documentation and information must be submitted to: mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Process

Media representatives seeking accreditation for the leaders' debates will have to apply under one of the three options described below.

All media representatives must indicate whether they are wishing to attend the French language debate, English language debate or both debates in their application to the Commission.

They must also indicate whether they are wishing to attend on-site or attend virtually.

Please note: On-site capacity may be limited due to COVID-19 public health measures.

Option 1:

Any media representative that is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery will automatically be eligible for accreditation.

Supporting documentation and information

Applicants under Option 1 must provide the following:

- A statement that they are a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery; and
- A passport size photo (JPEG format).

Option 2:

Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations will automatically be eligible for accreditation:

- Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) (active (journalist) membership only);
- National NewsMedia Council (NNC);
- Conseil de presse du Québec (CPQ); and
- Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ).

Supporting documentation and information

Applicants under Option 2 must provide the following:

- A statement that they are a member of one of the four professional media organizations listed above; and
- A passport size photo (JPEG format).

Option 3:
Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2, may apply for accreditation under Option 3. This option is also available to foreign media representatives seeking accreditation at the debates.

Supporting documentation and information

Canadian media representatives applying under Option 3 must provide all of the following:

- A letter of assignment, identifying that the applicant is assigned to the leaders' debates, that is signed and dated by their assignment editor/authorized editor/publisher (PDF format). This letter should include information on reach and audience (print circulation, radio/television audience, digital audience/website traffic/social media/website subscribers); and
- Media organization website link, identifying that they contribute or belong to a media organization that either produces original news content related to coverage of Canadian/international political news or covers political, social and policy issues, and whose content is updated each week.
- Six recent news articles/reports within the last six months under their byline, identifying that journalism is their regular activity; and
- A passport size photo (JPEG format).

Foreign media representatives applying under Option 3 must provide all of the following:

- A letter of assignment, identifying that the applicant is assigned to the leaders' debates, that is signed and dated by their assignment editor/authorized editor/publisher (PDF format). This letter should include information on reach and audience (print circulation, radio/television audience, digital audience/website traffic/social media/website subscribers); and
- A scanned copy of a valid international press card provided by a recognized national professional body or a passport size photo (JPEG format).

To view all the information related to the media accreditation for the 44th General Election, click [here](#).

COVID-19

The Leaders' Debates Commission is working collaboratively with the Debate Broadcast Group to produce debates that will be compliant with COVID-19 public health measures in place at the time of the two leaders' debates. These protocols may have an impact on the number of media representatives that the Commission can accredit.

Accredited media will benefit from the same access, whether they are working in a physical or virtual environment.

Applications

The Commission will make every effort to respond as soon as possible to media accreditation applications. All communications, including the decisions on accreditation, will be conducted in writing via email.

For questions related to media accreditation, contact mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Date modified: August 16, 2021
This is Exhibit "2" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders' Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders' Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the "Debates")

Applicant: Adam Soos

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders' Debate Commission's ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist, Adam Soos (Calgary Journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News' YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada's legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “Derek Sloan explains why he chose to run in Alberta, not Ontario”
   August 23, 2021

2. “‘We’ve got a weak leader’: Albertans tell us what they think about CPC leader Erin O’Toole”
   August 11, 2021

3. “‘It is what it is’: Edmonton football fans mixed over Eskimos to Elks name change”
   August 10, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/it-is-what-it-is-edmonton-football-fans-mixed-over-eskimos-to-elks-name-change

4. “Can Derek Sloan win? Former Conservative MP in campaign mode at Alberta event”
   August 9, 2021

5. “Albertans react to trans athlete Laurel Hubbard competing in women’s powerlifting competition”
   August 7, 2021
This is Exhibit "3" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders' Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)

Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders' Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Alexandra Lavoie

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Alexandra Lavoie (Quebec-based journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News' YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada's legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “Irresponsible of our federal government’: Small businesses to close while Big Box retailers benefit”
   August 14, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/irresponsible_of_our_federal_government_small_businesses_to_close_while_big_boxRetailers_benefit

2. Anti-COVID measures festival in Quebec draws ‘superspreader’ criticism from mainstream media”
   August 12, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/anti_covid_measures_festival_in_quebec_draws_superspreader_criticism_from_mainstream_media

3. “Should the unvaccinated be publicly identified? Montrealers weigh in”
   July 29, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/should_the_unvaccinated_be_publicly_identified

4. “Would you invite someone who is unvaccinated to your house? Quebeckers weigh in”
   August 4, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/would_you_invite_someone_who_is_unvaccinated_to_your_house

5. “Following Health Canada guidelines on mixing vaccines could get Canadians kicked off cruises”
   August 3, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/vaccines_mixing_health_canada_travel_cruises_pfizer_moderna_astrazeneca

6. “Discrimination’: Montreal protesters say no vax pass”
   July 27, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/discrimination_Montreal_protesters_say_no_vax_pass
This is Exhibit "4" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders' Debate Commission  
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders' Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the "Debates")

Applicant: Andrew Chapados

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders' Debate Commission's ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Andrew Chapados (Reporter and Host of "Andrew Says"), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

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principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “CDC recommends camps for COVID ‘High-Risk’ individuals”  
   August 12, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/cdc_recommends_camps_for_covid_high_risk_individuals

2. “Who is the new ‘Queen of Canada’ Romana Didulo?”  
   July 23, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/who_is_the_new_queen_of_canada_romana_didulo

3. “Toy Giant Hasbro says 3-6 month old babies have racial preference”  
   July 22, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/toy_giant_hasbro_says_3_6_month_old_babies_have_racial_preference

4. “PPC rallygoers biggest issues: freedom, lockdowns, vax passports, immigration”  
   August 20, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/ppc_rallygoers_biggest_issues_freedom_lockdowns_vax_passports_immigration

5. “‘The Cult of Diversity’ with Maxime Bernier on Andrew Says 37”  
   August 19, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/andrew_says_august_19_2021

6. “Meet the Toronto nurse who REFUSED a COVID test and quarantine”  
   March 10, 2021  
   https://www.rebelnews.com/meet_the_toronto_nurse_who_refused_a_covid_test_and_quarantine
This is Exhibit "5" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders’ Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)

Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: David Menzies

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s (“LDC”) invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist David Menzies (Reporter), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

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principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant

[Signature]
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “No jab, no job: Premier Ford set to expel MPP Rick Nicholls for not taking vaccine”
   August 19, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/no_jab_no_job_premier_ford_set_to_expel_mpp_rick_nicholls_for_not_taking_vaccine

2. “Mayor of Port Dover, Ont. tries to cancel motorcycle rally; party roars on anyway”
   August 18, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/mayor_of_port_dover_ont_tries_to_cancel_motorcycle_rally_party_roars_on_anyway

3. “TRAFFIC CHAOS: Over-budget, behind-deadline Toronto mega-project posts misleading road signage”
   August 12, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/toronto_mega_project_posts_misleading_road_signage

4. “Trinity Bible Chapel remains shuttered by court order, but the sermon shall go on nevertheless”
   August 11, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/trinity_bible_chapel_remains_shuttered_by_court_order_but_the_sermon_shall_go_on_nevertheless

5. “Actor FIRED for attending freedom rally”
   June 18, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/actor_fired_for_attending_freedom_rally

6. “Estimated 100,000 Montreal protesters rail against Quebec lockdown, clamour for Premier to resign”
   May 2, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/estimated_100_000_montreal_protesters_rail_against_quebec_lockdown_policies_clamour_for_premier_legault_to_resign
This is Exhibit "6" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders’ Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Drea Humphrey

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s (“LDC”) invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Drea Humphrey (British Columbia Bureau Chief), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “Lacey Lee Elliott: TV host cancelled after vid on NOT trusting the media”
   July 29, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/lacey_lee_elliott_global_news_host_cancelled_not_trusting_the_media

2. “Maxime Bernier on his “common sense revolution,” splitting the pro-freedom vote”
   August 11, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/maxime_bernier_on_his_common_sense_revolution_splitting_the_pro_freedom_vote

3. “Can 300k votes restore freedom in Canada?”
   August 6, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/uniting_like_minded_canadian_voters_canadian_voters_association_launches_300k_ca

4. “Three health care pros speak out: Two vaccine free, one vaccine INJURED!”
   August 5, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/bonnie_henry_british_columbia_medical_professionals_speak_out_covid_vaccines

5. “The people that are giving you information rely more on their paychecks than they do on their oath”
   July 27, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/the_people_that_are_giving_you_information_rely_more_on_their_paychecks_than_they_do_on_their_oath

6. “Vancouver airport segregating travellers based on vaccination status”
   July 26, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/vancouver_airport_segregating_travellers_based_on_vaccination_status
This is Exhibit "7" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders’ Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Katherine Krozonouski

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s (“LDC”) invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Katherine Krozonouski (Video Journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. ""Give me my rights back!": Weekly Toronto Freedom Rally sees at least one arrest, one ticket"
   May 4, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/give_me_my_rights_back_weekly_toronto_freedom_rally_sees_at_least_one_arrest_one_ticket

2. "Church of God in Aylmer, Ontario scores a victory in fight to keep its doors open"
   May 3, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/church_of_god_in_aylmer_ontario_scores_a_victory_in_fight_to_keep_its_doors_open

3. "Catherine McKenna won't discuss her department's failures -- and please stop asking sexist questions!"
   July 30, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/catherine_mckenna_retirement_wont_answer_questions sexism_climate_barbie

4. "Would you let unvaccinated friends in your house? Torontonians respond"
   July 27, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/would_you让人们进入你的房子？多伦多居民回应

5. "Cop shows up during interview! Indie journo in hot water after covering anti-lockdown rally"
   July 22, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/cop_shows_up_during_interview_indie_journo_covering_an ti-lockdown_rally

6. "OPP send SIX CRUISERS to mother & daughter's walking protest"
   June 3, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/opp_send_six_cruisers_to_mother_and_daughters_walking_protest
This is Exhibit "8" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)

Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders' Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Lincoln Jay

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders' Debate Commission's ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Lincoln Jay (Video Journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “O’Toole breezes past our question on COVID-19 vaccine medical, religious exemptions”
   August 19, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/otoole_breezes_past_question_covid-19_medical_religious_exemptions

2. “Thousands protest Quebec vaccine passport in Montreal”
   August 18, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/thousands_protest_quebec_vaccine_passport_in_montreal

3. “Toronto’s nightlife reacts to possibility of COVID vaccine passports”
   August 5, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/torontos_nightlife_reacts_to Possibility_of_covid_vaccine_passports

4. “Double standard of enforcement after statues toppled in Manitoba”
   July 7, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/double_standard_of_enforcement_after_statues_topped_in_manitoba

5. “Canadians react to Ontario’s reopening plan”
   June 26, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/canadians_react_to_ontarios_reopening_plan

6. “Migrants continuing to enter U.K. through English port of Dover”
   May 23, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/migrants_continuing_to_enter_uk_through_english_port_of_dover
This is Exhibit "9" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders’ Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debate-debats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Sheila Gunn Reid

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Sheila Gunn Reid (Chief Reporter), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic...
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “Central Alberta anti-lockdown politician running on a pro-biz, pro-freedom deplatformed by the Royal Canadian Legion”
   August 19, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/central_alberta_anti-lockdown_glen_carritt_politician_deplatformed_royal_canadian_legion

2. “GOVERNMENT HYPOCRISY: 122 firearms lost or stolen from federal government in 2018”
   August 17, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/122_firearms_lost_or_stolen_from_federalgovernment_in_2018

3. “Retired police sergeant gets court summons for speaking at lockdown protest”
   August 16, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/retired_police_sergeant_gets_court_summons_for_speaking_at_lockdown_protest

4. “Recent Trudeau hire reveals an election could be coming soon”
   August 16, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/recent_trudeau_hire_reveals_an_election_could_be_coming_soon

5. “UPDATE: Lawyer says Pastor Tim Stephens unlawfully arrested under amended AHS order”
   May 16, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/lawyer_says_pastor_tim_stephens_unlawfully_arrested_under_amended_ahs_order

6. “Albertans are going to take an enormous hit | Michelle Stirling joins Sheila Gunn Reid”
   May 1, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/albertans_are_going_to_take_an_enormous_hit_michelle_stirling_joins_sheila Gunn_reid
This is Exhibit "10" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
August 24, 2021

Leaders' Debate Commission
mediaaccreditation@debates-clebats.ca

Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Sydney Fizzard

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s ("LDC") invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Sydney Fizzard (Video Journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “‘Nothing makes sense’: Manitoba man suspended from job for attending lockdown protest”
   August 4, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/nothing_makes_sense_manitoba_man_fired_for_attending_lockdown_protest

2. “Manitoba lockdown protester arrested again for Facebook post”
   July 29, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/manitoba_lockdown_protester_arrested_again_for_facebook_post

3. “Manitoba COVID dissent crackdown takes aim at independent media”
   July 19, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/manitoba_covid_dissent_crackdown_takes_aim_at_independent_media

4. “Stop organizing protests? ‘They’d have to kill me’ says Manitoba man”
   June 24, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/stop_organizing_protests_theyd_have_to_kill_me_says_manitoba_man

5. “Protest organizer treated like political dissident, charged more than $13,000”
   June 22, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/protest Organizer_treated_like_political_dissident_charged_more_than_13000

6. “Defiant pastor on the run from police in Manitoba, will only be arrested at church”
   June 4, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/defiant_pastor_on_the_run_from_police_in_manitoba
This is Exhibit "11" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English Leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Tamara Ugolini

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s (“LDC”) invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Tamara Ugolini (Journalist), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

Rebel News respects and adheres to the norms, principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism and is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada. Rebel News does not accept government money, unlike many of its competitors. It views this as the only way to retain its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence. For this reason, Rebel News is one of the few Canadian media outlets having the power, freedom, and will to challenge the views presented in Canada’s legacy media. Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC. Rebel News also abides by the highest journalistic
principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant
Recent News Articles/Reports

1. “‘My partner’s going to look it up’: COVID cops flop trying to enforce gathering rules”
   July 22, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/my_partners_going_to_look_it_up_covid_cops_flop_trying_to_enforce_gathering_rules

2. “Justin Trudeau faced with onslaught of boos and heckling during first campaign stop in Cobourg, Ont.”
   August 17, 2021

3. “‘Woke’ mob targets small business owner for questioning gender conversion therapy for children”
   July 17, 2021

4. “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada”
   August 9, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/vaccine_segregation_at_the_airport_and_25000_fine_upon_return_to_canada

5. “‘Families need to be heard’ | Fixing Canada’s long-term care crisis with Kathy Pearsall”
   August 5, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/families_need_to_be_heard.fixing_canadas_long_term_care_crisis_with_kathy_pearsall

6. “Freedom group beats bylaw cops at their own game, holds music festival”
   July 20, 2021
   https://www.rebelnews.com/freedom_group_beats_bylaw_cops_at_their_own_game_holds_music_festival
This is Exhibit "12" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Dear Sirs / Mesdames:

Re: Letter of Assignment (Option 3)
Media Accreditation Application for the 44th General Election French & English leaders’ Debates to be held on September 8, 2021 & September 9, 2021 (the “Debates”)

Applicant: Abdusselam “Mocha” Bezirgan

I am the founder and principal of Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and provide this letter of assignment further to the Leaders’ Debate Commission’s (“LDC”) invitation for media accreditation applications in respect of the Debates.

Rebel News is seeking accreditation for our journalist Abdusselam “Mocha” Bezirgan (Chief Videographer), to attend and cover the Debates on behalf of our organization. Rebel News is requesting on-site and/or virtual access for both Debates.

Rebel News is a popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content relating to Canadian and international political news including the Canadian Parliament and Government affairs. Our journalists and commentators report on important social and public policy issues affecting Canadians through different media platforms, including its website (https://www.rebelnews.com/), podcasts, YouTube videos and ads, and print media.

Rebel News’ YouTube channel has nearly 1.5 million subscribers and averages 2 million weekly viewers, making it one of the most-watched Canadian news channels on YouTube. Its website receives over 8 million yearly visitors. Rebel News has been granted media accreditation by governments around the world, including Alberta, the United Nations, the United States (both the White House and Congress), the United Kingdom, the European Union, Sweden, the Netherlands, Israel, Poland, and India. Rebel News has also been granted accreditation in partly-free countries such as Iraq and Morocco.

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principles and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Attached, please find the requested supporting documentation.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me to discuss this matter further.

Yours very truly,

REBEL NEWS NETWORK LTD.

Ezra Levant

[Signature]
### Recent News Articles/Reports

1. **“Montreal police CHOKE protester during violent arrest”**  
   July 12, 2021  
   [https://www.rebelnews.com/montreal_police_choke_protester_during_violent_arrest](https://www.rebelnews.com/montreal_police_choke_protester_during_violent_arrest)

2. **“Trudeau campaign bus blocked by Indigenous activists”**  
   August 23, 2021  
   [https://www.rebelnews.com/trudeau_campaign_bus_blocked_by_indigenous_activists](https://www.rebelnews.com/trudeau_campaign_bus_blocked_by_indigenous_activists)

3. **“WATCH: Quebec restaurant owner reacts to airports allowing dine-in while his doors are shut”**  
   April 19, 2021  
   [https://www.rebelnews.com/quebec_restaurant_owner_reacts_to_airports_allowing_dine_in_while_his_doors_are_shut](https://www.rebelnews.com/quebec_restaurant_owner_reacts_to_airports_allowing_dine_in_while_his_doors_are_shut)

4. **“Police threaten protesters with JAIL at Quebec City anti-lockdown protest”**  
   April 8, 2021  

5. **“Calgary police, public health again enter Fairview Baptist Church while services ongoing”**  
   March 9, 2021  
   [https://www.rebelnews.com/calgary_police_public_health_again_enter_fairview_baptist_church_while_services_ongoing](https://www.rebelnews.com/calgary_police_public_health_again_enter_fairview_baptist_church_while_services_ongoing)

6. **“Fairview Baptist pastor given three tickets for breaching COVID rules”**  
   March 15, 2021  
   [https://www.rebelnews.com/fairview_baptist_pastor_given_three_tickets_for_breaching_covid_rules](https://www.rebelnews.com/fairview_baptist_pastor_given_three_tickets_for_breaching_covid_rules)
This is Exhibit "13" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Alexandra Lavoie

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Alexandra Lavoie at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence
in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or
- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
² https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is she a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest,
which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

a. Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;
b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and


I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**
In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:
b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and
c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:
In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:

b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and
c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

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In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we’ll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:
Leaders' Debates Commission
Commission des débats des chefs


I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

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In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and

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I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdowns laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

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In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Alexandra Lavoie, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content that gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. On multiple occasions, you have prompted and/or requested your readers to visit Rebel News’ fundraising and petitioning campaigning on various issues, thus a creating conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

1. “Following Health Canada guidelines on mixing vaccines could get Canadians kicked off cruises” (August 3, 2021): In your reporting about vaccinations and cruises, you write “[s]o we have a government that strongly recommended the mixing of vaccines to the population, and now those people are seeing their promised freedoms suppressed simply due to having listened to their government. How long will people tolerate what is happening? Is this what could happen on airlines, too? How far will people’s tolerance go? If like me, you find things are going too far, please go to NoVaxPassport.com to support us and to sign our petition against these extreme measures.”

2. “We're suing the Montreal police for assaulting another Rebel News reporter” (June 9, 2021): in this article, you report on an incident involving the police with respect to a rally against COVID restrictions. You write “[w]hen my Toronto colleagues came to report on the massive anti-lockdown protests, showcasing what the mainstream media here in Quebec refuse to, they were deliberately targeted by police, and have faced many instances of police misconduct for just doing their jobs as journalists. That’s why we plan to sue the Montreal police to hold them accountable. Head over to DefendJournalists.com, if you’d like to help chip in towards our lawsuit to help shine a light on the darkness of Montreal’s heavy-handed policing. In the upcoming weeks, you will see our full legal filing there with the details of each incident.” DefendJournalists.com—which is operated by Rebel News—prompts donations from the reader and says “help us sue the Montreal Police.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist
or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders’ debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are
broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing her to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.
Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "14" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Andrew Chapados

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Andrew Chapados (Reporter and Host of “Andrew Says”) at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards.” As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.
The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
² https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application.**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.

**Assessment of your application**

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.
Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is he a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest, which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the
Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**

In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

a. Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;

b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop.” August 24, 2021; and


I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**

In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:

b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and

c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

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At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:


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I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Andrew Chapados, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, which do not contain an exhaustive review of your publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Quarantine rule change nets university basketball player $3,755 fine” (July 2, 2021): In this article, you report on Roy Anku, who, “was fined a whopping $3,755 under the Quarantine Act for ‘Failure to comply with an order prohibiting or subjecting to any condition the entry to into [sic] Canada.’” You note that “as a 21-year-old student, Roy couldn’t produce a line of credit out of thin air.” You then solicit donations for Mr. Anku, and write the following: “Please consider donating to help Canadians who have received unjust lockdown fines by going to www.FightTheFines.com, where you can receive a charitable tax receipt for your contribution.”

2. “Entrepreneur starts fund to help struggling Canadian small businesses” (January 21, 2021): In this article, you report on “entrepreneur Travis Kanellos and his business partner, professional Lacrosse player Dan Lomas,” who “have started Fund the Grind, aimed at supporting establishments.” Within the article, you solicit donations by writing the following: “While Rebel News tackles COVID fines across the world through our FightTheFines.com civil rights campaign, other entrepreneurs have taken it upon themselves to help small businesses in their own way.”
3. “No, “store policy” can’t include ‘No Mask Exemptions’” (March 24, 2021): In this article, you state that “the Rebel News inbox has been flooded with instances of stores and restaurants not abiding by mask laws, specifically with regards to exemptions.” Within the article, you “encourage our readers to go to www.UnMask.ca for information on properly filing a human rights complaint if they have been discriminated against illegally.” You also solicit donations by writing the following: “due to the mass of viewer requests regarding stores claiming trespass, or suggesting that customers use ‘curb-side pickup’ as opposed to providing them equal treatment under the law, citizens may need to contact local bylaw authorities or go to our portal at www.FightTheFines.com if they are fined.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Ttoole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the
The federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates
represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "15" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Abdusselam “Mocha” Bezirgan

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Abdusselam “Mocha” Bezirgan (Chief Videographer) at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.
The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or
- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
² https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.

**Assessment of your application**

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.
Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is he a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest, which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the
Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i)   **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**

In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

a. Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;
b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii)  **The Stop The Censorship petition:**

In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (*An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act*) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:

b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and
c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:

In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:

b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and
c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

(iv) The Bring Back Harper Petition:

In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we'll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:

I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:

In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and
c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We're going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdowns laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:

In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:
I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Abdusselam “Mocha” Bezirgan, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content that gives rise to a conflict of interest, one of your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested your readers to visit Rebel News’ fundraising campaign in the past, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following article, which is not an exhaustive review of your publications, is illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Montreal police CHOKE protester during violent arrest” (July 12, 2021): In this article, you report on the “Montreal police [being] caught on camera choking a protester for allegedly not wearing a mask during a demonstration.” You then identify an individual (Alex Bowles) who has been fined at this protest by the authorities. You then solicit donations for Mr. Bowles and write the following: “Rebel News has retained a lawyer to fight Alex’s obstruction charge and his $1,550 fine through our largest civil liberties campaign ever, FightTheFines.com. Make sure to donate there to help Alex and nearly 2,000 other Canadians fight their lockdown fines and charges. And for more reporting on lockdowns across Canada, visit LockdownReports.com.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News.
where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must ”ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders’ debates.” The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.
In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.
Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston

Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "16" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Adam Soos

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Adam Soos (Calgary Journalist) at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes.
However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ [https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access](https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access)
² [https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines](https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines)
The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, five news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;  
- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;  
- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and  
- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.

**Assessment of your application**

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.
Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is he a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

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In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest, which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the
Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:

In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

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At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:

(b) Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and

c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

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In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:


b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and

c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

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At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:


I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:

In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We're going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdowns laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:

In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau’s February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.
At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip.” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit.” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Adam Soos, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content that gives rise to conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. On multiple occasions, you have prompted and/or requested your readers to visit Rebel News’ fundraising and petitioning on various issues, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

1. “It's bulls***: Calgarians react to mandatory vaccination requirement for sporting events” (August 28, 2021): in this article, you note the Calgary Sports and Entertainment Corporation has decided that “they will be requiring full vaccination for anyone wishing to attend an event at their venues…” You write that “Rebel News took on thousands of cases with our FightTheFines.com initiative, and we provided top-notch legal teams for people who received ridiculous COVID tickets and fines. We are now taking the fight to the corporations and government agencies who are coercing people into being vaccinated, but we need your help to hire the very best lawyers if we hope to win. This is a David and Goliath battle for the soul of the country and for the fundamental rights of Canadians. Go to FightVaccinePassports.com today and help us take a stand against medical tyranny.” Rebel News’ FightVaccinePassports.com page prompts readers to sign petitions and “help fund our lawsuits”.
2. “Charges DROPPED against Pastor Artur Pawlowski’s “right-hand man” (August 19, 2021): In this article, you report on criminal charges being dropped against Pastor Peter Reicher while the criminal proceeding continues against Pastor Artur Pawlowski. You write that Pastor Pawlowski was “criminally charged” for violating provincial COVID restrictions. You also write that “[p]lease go to FightTheFines.com or SaveArtur.com to help the fight for freedom today.” Both pages prompt readers to donate funds with respect to fines issues in view of violating COVID restrictions.

3. “Antifa ATTACKS Pastor Artur Pawlowski’s prayer rally in Portland” (August 09, 2021): in this article, you report on an incident with respect to Pastor Artur Pawlowski. You write “Pastor Artur is facing the legal battle of his life — he could be sent to prison for 21 days for daring to gather for worship. If you think that is unacceptable, go to SaveArtur.com and make a contribution to his legal battle today.” SaveArtur.com appears to be run by Rebel News and prompts readers to donate to “[h]elp pay the legal fees of Pastor Artur”.

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel
News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set
out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada’s democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston

Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "17" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of David Menzies

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of David Menzies (Reporter) at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes.
However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;\(^1\) or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.\(^2\)

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- **Option 1** - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- **Option 2** - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- **Option 3** - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

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1. [https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access](https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access)
2. [https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines](https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines)
The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application.**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.

**Assessment of your application**

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In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We're going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdowns laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:

In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.
At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India,” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, David Menzies, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles publish at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, which do not contain an exhaustive review of your publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Tamara on the beach: Why we hired a lawyer to fight an $880 ticket” (July 26, 2020): In this article, you report on Rebel’s “most recent Fight The Fines case of Tamara Ugolini.” You explain that: “We are fighting back against these silly Wuhan virus fines—primarily because no other institution is. But folks, we need your help.” You state that Rebel has retained “top legal talent” that “charge about $4,000 per case.” Within the article, you solicit donations by writing that “if we all chip-in a donation – be it $5 or $50 or $500 – we can pay our lawyers’ bills and continue to fight for justice. Please visit www.FightTheFines.com. And if you’re able to, kindly make a donation.”

2. “Take Toronto Back Petition” (undated): In this petition, you claim that “Enough is enough. Toronto Mayor John Tory must enforce the laws, clean up Toronto parks, and take them back from filthy illegal occupiers.” You invite readers to “sign our petition if you agree.”

3. “‘Computer glitch’ preventing Quarantine Act tickets from being prosecuted in Ontario” (April 12, 2021): In this article, you report on the “government inefficiency and ineptitude” connected with an “Ontario court computer system’s inability to
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process tickets of more than $1,000.’” Within the article, you link to the Fight The Fines webpage.

4. “Police issue summons to journalist after quarantine hotel investigation” (February 11, 2021): In this article, you report on police charging you and your cameraman, Mocha, while you were “practicing journalism.” You state that “[t]here is no fine on the ticket, but that’s irrelevant, because we will, of course, fight this outrageous ticket in court all the way.” You invite donations by writing the following: “And if you would like to help contribute to our legal fees, please visit www.FightTheFines.com and kindly make a donation.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-
length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates
represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston

Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "18" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Drea Humphrey

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Drea Humphrey at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.
The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions; or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

1. https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
2. https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.

**Assessment of your application**

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.
Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is she a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest, which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:
(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

- a. Tamara Ugozuli, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;
- b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**
In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:

- b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and
- c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.
I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) **The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:**
In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:


b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and

c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

(iv) **The Bring Back Harper Petition:**
In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we'll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:


Leaders’ Debates Commission  
Commission des débats des chefs

I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) **The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:**
In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan's lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

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I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.
Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Drea Humphrey, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, among a larger number of your related publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Investigating a COVID hotel in British Columbia” (February 19, 2021): In this article, you report that “[h]ealthy, law-abiding Canadians are officially being detained against their will and forced to pay for their “stay” inside hotels, better known as “COVID jails,” as part of the federal government's plans for certain Canadians trying to return home from international travel.” Within the article, you solicit donations on this issue, by writing: “If you’d like to help us continue to provide legal counsel for the Canadians who are reaching out to us before and during their detainment at these hotels, please donate what you can at NoCOVIDJails.com.”

2. www.StopMedicalSilencing.com (June 1, 2021): In the description of this petition, you state that “[s]ince the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, many frontline doctors and nurses have been shamed, silenced, and even punished, for sharing medical opinions that differ from those of our unelected public health officials.” You state that readers should sign the petition, by writing: “[s]tand with me by signing and sharing this petition to help remove the political muzzle from our medical professionals’ brilliant minds.”

3. “Free churches and free press with Drea Humphrey” (June 2, 2021): In the description of this article, which can be accessed only by subscription, it states that “Drea has recently launched a brand new campaign to advocate for the free thought, free expression and independence of healthcare professionals who are facing increased censorship and consequences for deviating from the accepted COVID-19 narratives. You can see her campaign and sign the petition at www.StopMedicalSilencing.com.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel
News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates.” The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

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out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the
press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’
debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health
of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who
have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important
part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates
represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an
unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its
Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into
disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing
her to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to
ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public
interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by
the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the
Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media
organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of
interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the
outcome of those stories.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media
Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for
the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "19" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Katherine Krozonouski

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Katherine Krozonouski at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists (“CAJ”) guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence
in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunding to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;\(^1\) or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.\(^2\)

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

\(^1\) [https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access](https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access)

\(^2\) [https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines](https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines)
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter ("Letter of Assignment"). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is she a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest,
which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases... If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

a. Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;
b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**
In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:
b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and
c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:
In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:

b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and
c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

(iv) The Bring Back Harper Petition:
In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we’ll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:
Leaders’ Debates Commission Commission des débats des chefs


I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:

In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We’re going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdown laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:

In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.
Leaders' Debates Commission

Commission des débats des chefs

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Katherine Krozonouski, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, which do not contain an exhaustive review of your publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Attending drive-in church service results in summons to court for COVID infraction” (April 26, 2021): In this article, you state: “Katherine Krozonouski here for Rebel News, with another Fight The Fines case that will make your blood boil.” Furthermore, you explain that “[a]ll the lawyers we use as part of our Fight The Fines program are provided at no cost to the people we are helping.” Within the article, you solicit donations by writing: “Please make sure to visit FightTheFines.com to make a donation, and keep helping us fight tyranny.”

2. “Six OPP cruisers sent to ticket lone teen protester a waste of police resources” (June 29, 2021): In this article, you reported on Christina McMichael and her daughter Meghan receiving tickets “after Meghan walked in front of her school with signs in a solo protest,” and again “the next day, while at a peaceful protest.” You also write the following: “don’t worry, because we are helping them fight these tickets in court at no cost to them through out Fight The Fines campaign. This is Rebel News’ largest civil liberties project ever, where we help Canadians fight their lockdown tickets by hooking them up with top notch criminal defence lawyers.” You also solicit donations by stating: “If you want to help us fight these tyrannical lockdown tickets, please visit FightTheFines.com today, and make a donation.”

“Sorry, testing’s closed: Student returning to Canada fined for refusing quarantine hotel,” (August 9, 2021): In this article, you report on Gregory Vovtchenko, who “is a student who was recently travelling home from Mexico to Canada,” and “wanted to avoid the dreaded COVID hotels.” You state that “[a]ll was well until he encountered border agents and nurses at the Canadian border who told him that his negative PCR test from Mexico wasn’t valid.” You explain that “[l]ike so many of our Fight The Fines victims, Gregory comes off as a tolerant and patient individual, one who isn’t used to being in trouble with the law.” You solicit donations from readers, by writing the following: “Jenna [the Fight The Fines
paralegal] and her team are eager to challenge this fine in court, and you can help by donating to FightTheFines.com.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The
Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada’s democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing her to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of
interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston

Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "20" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Lincoln Jay

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Lincoln Jay at Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence..."
in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;\(^1\) or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.\(^2\)

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

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- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

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\(^1\) [https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access](https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access)

\(^2\) [https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines](https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines)
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is he a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest,
which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

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c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

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At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Lincoln Jay, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising in the past, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following article, only one of a number of your related publications, is illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Father & son denied home quarantine, sent to hotel after returning from surgery overseas” (May 21, 2021): In this article, you report on Matt Catteroll. You state that “[u]pon returning to Manchester from Abu Dhabi, Matt and his son were forced into a quarantine hotel, where they were both left without necessary medication — even though they had been told before they left for the trip that they could self-isolate at home upon return.” In this article, you solicit donations by writing the following: “We don’t think this is just in any manner, and that’s why we are providing Matt with a legal team at no cost to him, with the help of your support of our campaign at FightTheFines.co.uk. If you want to help fight back against these unjust measures, please donate via that same website at FightTheFines.co.uk so we can back Matt 100 per cent.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.
The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.
In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying outs its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "21" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Sheila Gunn Reid

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Sheila Gunn Reid at Rebel News Network Ltd. (“Rebel News”) and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence
in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  o becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or

- when a reporter:
  o writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
² https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;
- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;
- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and
- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is she a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

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In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

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I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Sheila Gunn Reid, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content that gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. On multiple occasions, you have prompted and/or requested your readers to visit Rebel News’ fundraising and petitioning campaigning on various issues, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

1. “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit” (July 8, 2021): In this article, you write that Rebel News is filing a “formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau’s February 2018 trip to India.” You go onto write “How many other times have Canadian taxpayers paid for things that no one had any intention of using, so that bureaucrats could abuse their expense accounts for nicer accommodations? Is this standard operating practice in the federal government? This requires an audit. At AuditTrudeau.com, you can sign our petition demanding that the Auditor General examine these expense claims. Rebel News is also hiring a lawyer who will draft a formal complaint asking for an audit. To offset our legal costs to draft that letter demanding accountability from the government for their sketchy expense claims, please donate today at www.AuditTrudeau.com.”

2. “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India” (July 9, 2021): In this article, you appear to continue you reporting on Prime Minister Trudeau’s February 2018 visit to India. You write “Rebel News is hiring a law firm to draft a letter calling on the Auditor General to forensically audit the 2018 India trip. To sign the petition and donate to offset the legal costs to hold Trudeau's people accountable, please visit www.AuditTrudeau.com.”

3. “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip” (July 13, 2021): In this article, you write “[I]lawyers for Rebel News have sent an official legal letter to the Auditor General asking for a full audit of Justin Trudeau’s February 2018 state visit to India”. You also state that readers “can still donate and sign our petition to the AG at www.AuditTrudeau.com.”
4. “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We’re going to find out in Saskatchewan” (March 10, 2021): In this article, you report that Rebel News is commencing a constitutional challenge to the Saskatchewan’s COVID measures. You write “We are trying to raise $150,000 to fight for the civil liberties of Saskatchewan residents. We are already helping so many people fight their lockdown tickets in Saskatchewan through FightTheFines.com, but we want the lockdown responsible for punishing people with these fines thrown out all together… What she's [your lawyer] doing in Saskatchewan can be a template for other provinces if she's successful. But this is very expensive, as any Charter challenge is. It is time consuming and it demands a lot of research and resources. So we can't do it without your help… Civil liberties organizations are not doing this work, and so it falls to us here at Rebel News. We need your help…If you want to help us end the lockdown in Saskatchewan and start the cascade that will end the lockdowns across the country, please donate today at OpenSaskatchewan.com.”

5. “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan” (March 18, 2021): In this article, you write Full Gospel Outreach Centre church in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan that has been fined for failing to enforcing provincial COVID measures. You write “If you would like to help Full Gospel Outreach and Pastor Vern Temple with their legal fees, so they can continue to use their limited resources to help the most vulnerable in Prince Albert, please donate today at www.FightTheFines.com”.

6. “BREAKING: Rebel News is appealing Federal Court decision to keep Justin Trudeau's COVID jail system in place” (July 12, 2021): In this article, you report on the Federal Court’s decision to reject Rebel News’ (among others) challenge to the Federal government’s policy of quarantine hotels. You write “Rebel News has already spent nearly $200,000 fighting the COVID jail system, for the Charter rights of innocent, healthy Canadians to come home or leave without being taken into dangerous facilities against their wishes and being charged ridiculous fees for it. The challenge of this wrongheaded and dangerous decision has already had chilling ramifications for the freedoms of Canadians and those trying to fight for them. The appeal could cost as much as $70,000, but we think fighting for the rights of 34 million Canadians to travel as they wish without being sent to jail for three days is worth it. Can you help us? Please donate today at www.NoCOVIDJails.com.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News,
where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the
story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada’s democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing her to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "22" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Sydney Fizzard

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Sydney Fizzard at Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 (“Order in Council”) to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” (“Media Accreditation Process”).

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence..."
in journalism.” The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunding to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;¹ or
- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.²

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

¹ https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access
² https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;  

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;  

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and  

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is he a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest,
which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

a. Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;

b. Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and


I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**
In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:
b. Rebel News, “Justin Trudeau introduces worst censorship law of any western democracy,” June 25, 2021; and
c. The Ezra Levant Show, “Liberals waited until Parliament was over before revealing their plan to censor the Internet,” July 29, 2021. The article provides a link to the Stop the Censorship Petition. As such, the petition is directly incorporated into the story published by Rebel News.

I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:
In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:

b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and
c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

(iv) The Bring Back Harper Petition:
In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we'll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:
Leaders' Debates Commission  
Commission des débats des chefs


I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:
In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;

b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We're going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdown laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:
In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Sydney Fizzard, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, which do not contain an exhaustive review of your publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “Manitoba COVID dissent crackdown takes aim at independent media,” (July 19, 2021): In this article, you report on Todd McDougall, who “was arrested under a warrant issued by a Manitoba justice for what appears to be a non-arrestable offence.” You explain that: “Fortunately, we are able to help Todd with his legal fight. On the case is a top-tier Canadian lawyer, Leighton Grey. These tickets and arrests will be challenged, and may well open a door for all Manitobans to bask in their constitutionally-granted freedoms soon once again.” You solicit donations by writing: “If you wish to help Todd McDougall, go to FightTheFines.com where you can donate today.” You also extend the offer of possible financial support for legal defence to your readers by stating: “Or if you need legal aid yourself and wish to share your story, go to FightTheFines.com.

2. “Manitoba lockdown protester arrested again for Facebook post,” (July 29, 2021): In this article, you reported on the arrest of Patrick Allard. You state: “We are helping Patrick fight multiple tickets issued against him previously for breaching the Public Health Act, and we’re doing that through our portal at FightTheFines.com.” You also extend the offer of possible financial support for legal defence to your readers by stating: “Don’t forget, if you yourself need help fighting against lockdown tickets and want to share your story, go to FightTheFines.com, and if we think we can help, we will provide top-notch legal assistance to stand by your side.”

3. “Stop organizing protests? ‘They’d have to kill me’ says Manitoba man,” (June 24, 2021): In this article, you report on Patrick Allard, who “was previously a FightTheFines.com client.” You solicit donations by writing that: “We are helping Patrick with his legal fees and if you wish to support him or others in his position, please go to FightTheFines.com and donate. All donations now qualify for a
charitable tax receipt. Think of it this way: would you rather pay taxes to Justin Trudeau, or direct some of that money instead to help fight for freedom?"

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must “ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders’ debates.” The
Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying out its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing him to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of
interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.

**Conclusion**

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "23" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LEADERS’ DEBATE COMMISSION DECISION RE: MEDIA ACCREDITATION FOR 44TH GENERAL ELECTION

Applicant Name: Ezra Levant of Rebel News Network Ltd. on behalf of Tamara Ugolini

Date of Decision: August 31, 2021

I have reviewed and considered the application filed on behalf of Tamara Ugolini at Rebel News Network Ltd. ("Rebel News") and submitted by Ezra Levant, principal and founder of Rebel News on August 25, 2021. As further described below, I have determined that the request for media accreditation should be denied.

The Commission’s mandate

The Leaders’ Debate Commission (the “Commission”) is mandated by its constituting Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 ("Order in Council") to organize two leaders’ debates for the federal election, one in each official language.

On August 16, 2021, the Commission made public its media accreditation process for the federal election on September 20, 2021: see “Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election” ("Media Accreditation Process").

Under the Order in Council, the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." As set out in the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission considers that high journalistic standards requires that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission stated:

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists ("CAJ") guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence
in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers, purchases political advertising and launches petitions;\(^1\) or

- when a reporter:
  - writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions.\(^2\)

In the Media Accreditation Process, the Commission outlined three options and processes to obtain media accreditation:

- Option 1 - Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery;

- Option 2 - Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations: Canadian Association of Journalists, National NewsMedia Council, Conseil de presse du Québec, and Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec;

- Option 3 - Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2.

Under Options 1 and 2, a representative will automatically be eligible for accreditation, as membership in one of the listed organizations satisfies the principles of responsible and ethical journalism consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

\(^1\) [https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access](https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access)

\(^2\) [https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines](https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines)
With respect to Option 3, as noted in the Media Accreditation Process document, the Commission must review the application and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that their reporting is free of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and as adopted by the Commission.

The Commission noted that it may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

**Summary of your application**

On August 25, 2021, Ezra Levant, founder and principal at Rebel News, applied for media accreditation on your behalf under Option 3 by way of letter (“Letter of Assignment”). In the Letter of Assignment, Mr. Levant included Rebel News’ website, six news articles under your byline and a passport size photo. He also explained that Rebel News is a “popular online news and media company operating across Canada that regularly produces, publishes, and broadcasts original news content related to Canadian and international political news including Canadian Parliament and Government affairs.” He submitted that Rebel News has been granted media accreditation in other countries. With respect to principles, and practices of independent, ethical journalism, Mr. Levant made the following submissions:

- Rebel News “abides by the highest journalistic principles, and practices, as demonstrated by its commitment to independence, accuracy, fairness, transparency, and accountability”;  

- Rebel News “is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada”;  

- “Rebel News does not accept government funding” and as such “retain[s] its freedom of expression and strong editorial independence”; and  

- “Rebel News does not represent interests of political parties, governments, non-parliamentary organizations, or any entity other than Rebel News, and are committed to following the rules of the LDC.”

While the Letter of Assignment indicates your title and provides some of your bylines, the Letter solely discusses Rebel News, its operations, and its goal of upholding high journalistic standards. There is no reference to your individual conduct or individual approach to journalism or how you meet the Media Accreditation Process criteria discussed above. The Letter of Assignment was identical to that of 10 other applications received from representatives of Rebel News (all signed by Mr. Levant) except for the list of articles that you authored.
Assessment of your application

In reviewing your application, I find that Rebel News’ reach and audience are sufficiently large to make it eligible for accreditation.

The issue to determine is whether the applicant upholds high journalistic standards (as set out above), including that your reporting is free of conflict of interest.

Whether an applicant is in a conflict of interest must be analyzed in conjunction with their media organization and whether that organization itself is in a conflict of interest. This is especially the case when submissions to the Commission on accreditation by an applicant predominately set out the conduct and the standard of the media organization, and not the individual applicant. Put another way, where an organization is in a conflict of interest, its journalists—on whose behalf the organization applies to accredit to cover the debates—are also in a conflict of interest. This is because the applicant is not acting independently, nor is she a “freelance” journalist, seeking to cover the debate.

As noted above, the Commission adopted guidance on conflicts of interest set out in the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines. Although the CAJ’s guidance documents apply to its membership, which is made up of individual journalists, the Commission employs the CAJ’s Ethics Guidelines to examine the conduct of a journalist’s associated media organization. These guidelines specifically discuss and provide ethical considerations for media organizations and/or editorial boards concerning accuracy, independence, conflicts of interest, and diversity in the pursuit of journalism.

In your Letter of Assignment, Rebel News advises that it is a member of the Independent Press Gallery of Canada without further detail about the organization. Based on the publicly available information, it appears that the Independent Press Gallery of Canada is a not for profit organization incorporated in 2020. A review of its website does not show a list of its members. The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement, which is based on the Bordeaux Declaration, and published on its website, provides the following guidance on conflicts of interest:

13. The journalist shall not use the freedom of the press to serve any other interest and shall refrain from receiving any unfair advantage or personal gain because of the dissemination or non-dissemination of information. He will avoid — or put an end to — any situation that could lead him to a conflict of interest in the exercise of his profession. He will avoid any confusion between his activity and that of advertising or propaganda. He will refrain from any form of insider trading and market manipulation.

The Independent Press Gallery of Canada’s Mission Statement on conflicts of interest is consistent with CAJ’s Guidelines on conflict of interest.

Rebel News submits that it does not accept government funding and as such maintains strong editorial independence. While these can be indicia of reporting free of conflict of interest,
which I have considered, the Commission also reviewed regular activities of Rebel News to ensure that its reporting is free of conflict of interest.

The Commission found a number of activities on Rebel News’ website that reveal a conflict of interest. Though not an exhaustive list, these activities include (i) the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund; (ii) the Stop The Censorship petition; (iii) the No COVID Jails lawsuit; (iv) the Bring Back Harper petition; (v) the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit; (vi) and the Audit Trudeau letter. I describe each in turn below:

(i) **The Vaccine Passport Legal Fund:**
In the Vaccine Passport Legal Fund, Rebel News states that readers can sign Rebel News’ petition opposing vaccine passports, and can donate to “a legal defence fund to help Canadian families who are being forced against their will to take the Covid-19 vaccine.” Rebel News appeals to its readers for help: “We need your help to crowdfund those 20 precedent-setting cases… If you can help, even by chipping in $20 or if you can, $100 or even more, please contribute on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to vaccine passports. The following is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published related to vaccine passports:

- Tamara Ugolini, “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada” August 9, 2021;
- Alexandra Lavoie, “Feds working with provinces to establish international vaccine passport, Trudeau says at Hamilton campaign stop,” August 24, 2021; and

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge, organizing a petition to oppose vaccine passports, and publishing on news related to vaccine passports, Rebel News is in conflict of interest when reporting on vaccine passports.

(ii) **The Stop The Censorship petition:**
In the Stop the Censorship petition, Rebel News states that “Justin Trudeau and Steven Guilbeault must withdraw their online censorship plans.” Rebel News links to a Government of Canada News Release, “Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Open Online Environment,” which discusses Bill C-36 (proposing amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Criminal Code, and related amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act). Rebel refers to this News Release and Bill C-10 (An Act To Amend The Broadcasting Act) as “the largest censorship plan in Canadian history.” Rebel News also states that if Trudeau and Guilbeault fail to withdraw their censorship plans, “we plan to fight them in the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to Bills C-36 and C-10. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on these Bills:
I find that by organizing the Stop Censoring Petition, threatening the government with a lawsuit and reporting on news related to Bills C-10 and C-36, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(iii) The No COVID Jails Lawsuit:
In the No COVID Jails lawsuit, Rebel News is “suing the Trudeau government over the unconstitutional COVID jails.” Rebel News states that they “are applying to a federal judge to strike down this illegal and shameful COVID hotel program nationwide.” Rebel News promotes its legal defence fund directly to its readers and provides a donation link next to articles that concern “COVID jails” and the donation page for the lawsuit states: “If you think we have to continue to fight, please help us by contributing on this page.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on news related to quarantine hotels, or what Rebel News refers to as “COVID jails.” Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on the quarantine hotels, or “COVID jails”:


b. Keean Bexte, “Secret Yukon COVID quarantine hotel hiding in downtown Whitehorse,” January 12, 2021; and

c. Keean Bexte, “NO COVID JAILS: Woman held against her will at Calgary quarantine hotel,” January 30, 2021. In this video, a direct link to the fundraiser for the lawsuit challenging the COVID hotel program appears at 9min and 50 seconds.

I find that by engaging in crowdfunding on the issue of quarantine hotels to support their lawsuit and reporting on news related to quarantine hotels, Rebel News is in conflict of interest.

(iv) The Bring Back Harper Petition:
In the Bring Back Harper petition, Rebel News states that readers should sign the Rebel News petition if they agree that “we should bring back Stephen Harper to unite the Conservative Party and put Canada first.” Furthermore, Rebel News states that: “If and when O’Toole gets crushed this spring, we'll deliver the petition to Harper to let him know we need him more than ever.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on matters related to federal politics generally, including on Erin O’Toole in particular. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on federal politics, or O’Toole:
Leaders’ Debates Commission
Commission des débats des chefs


I find that by organizing the Bring Back Harper petition and reporting on federal politics matters, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(v) The Open Saskatchewan Lawsuit:
In the Open Saskatchewan lawsuit, Rebel News invites readers to support Rebel News’ legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Rebel News explains that they have “filed a constitutional challenge to Saskatchewan’s lockdown law” and that they are “suing for a breach of Charter rights.” Rebel News requests readers’ help “crowdfund our legal eagles,” and states that Levant is “sure we’ll end up spending close to $150,000 by the time we’re done.”

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on lockdown laws:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Cops PRESSURED by health authority to ticket Full Gospel Outreach Church in Saskatchewan,” March 18, 2021;
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “PROOF: Saskatchewan's unnecessary lockdown is “a union shakedown” (Guest: Kelly Lamb),” November 11, 2020; and
c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Can lockdowns be defeated legally? We're going to find out in Saskatchewan,” March 10, 2021. This article contains a direct link to the fund in support of the legal challenge in Saskatchewan.

I find that by crowdfunding for a legal challenge against Saskatchewan’s lockdown laws and reporting on lockdowns laws, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

(vi) The Audit Tracker Letter:
In the Audit Tracker letter, Rebel News claims it is “filing a formal legal complaint to the Auditor General asking for a forensic and thorough examination of Justin Trudeau's February 2018 trip to India, after expense improprieties were revealed in exclusively obtained internal government documents.” Rebel News also created a petition encouraging readers to support this view.

At the same time, Rebel News regularly reports on issues related to government conduct, particularly that related to Trudeau. Below is a non-exhaustive list of articles Rebel News has published on government conduct, or Trudeau:

a. Sheila Gunn Reid, “Formal complaint submitted to Auditor General over Trudeau India trip,” July 13, 2021. The article provides a link to the Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.
b. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Justin Trudeau bought $850 worth of coal to power one of his fancy parties in India.” July 9, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter including the petition and fundraising campaign.

c. Sheila Gunn Reid, “EXCLUSIVE: Trudeau underlings pressured India hotel to help cheat expense limit,” July 8, 2021. This article contains a direct link to Audit Tracker letter, including the petition and fundraising campaign.

I find that by filing a legal complaint with the Auditor General in respect to matters Rebel News is reporting on, Rebel News is in a conflict of interest.

Based on the review of the above, Rebel News is actively involved in campaigns about stories it covers. It becomes an actor in these stories. This conduct is a conflict of interest.

I now consider the content published by the individual applicant, Tamara Ugolini, as distinct from the general content published by Rebel News discussed above. In addition to Rebel News’ general content, which gives rise to a conflict of interest, your articles published at Rebel News also result in a conflict of interest. You have requested that your readers consider donating to Rebel News’ fundraising on numerous occasions, thus creating a conflict of interest and breaching CAJ’s Guidelines. The following articles, which do not contain an exhaustive review of your publications, are illustrative of such conflict of interest:

1. “$800k in COVID tickets loom over Niagara area anti-lockdown leader,” (August 25, 2021): In this article, you report on Rob Primo, who “is facing eight different summonses,” and “[i]f found guilty, each summons holds a maximum penalty of $100,000 and up to one year in prison.” You state that “[h]ere at Rebel News, we have undertaken the largest civil liberties initiative in Canada to date, to push back against overreaching health mandates in the name of hygiene hysteria.” You solicit donations by writing that “[t]hrough our Fight the Fines campaign, we crowdfund legal defence for individuals who have been fined for exercising fundamental rights like freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.”

2. “Spa hit with DOZENS of COVID fines, summonses forced to start over after online hate” (August 18, 2021): In this article, you “get an update” from one of Rebel’s “Fight The Fine cases, Jess Downey from BoHo Beauty Microblading and Spa.” You provide two links to the Fight The Fines fundraising page within this article.

3. “Vaccine segregation at the airport and $25,000 fine upon return to Canada,” (August 9, 2021): In this article, which you identify as a “Fight The Fines segment,” you report on how “married couple William O’Kane and Kim Green explain how they were ticketed upon arrival into Canada after they refused to take a follow-up COVID-19 test and be sent to a government-run quarantine hotel.” You solicit donations by writing: “If you’d like to contribute to William and Kim’s legal fight, as well as those of over 2,000 Canadians who have received COVID-related fines and even criminal charges, please donate at FightTheFines.com.”

In maintaining high journalistic standards, the Commission does not evaluate a journalist’s opinion or a media organization’s editorial policy. It is concerned with whether a journalist
or media organization acts as an active participant in the stories they cover, through petitions, fundraising campaigns or litigation. A media organization can ask for financial contributions to fund its journalism or operations. It cannot use fundraising to influence policy. That constitutes a conflict of interest.

In my view, Rebel News has put itself and its journalists and videographers in a conflict of interest position by launching petitions, lawsuits and funding drives for these initiatives. This is illustrated by its “Fight Vaccine Passport” petition Fight Vaccine Passports at Rebel News, where Rebel News asks its audience to sign a petition and contribute money to help Rebel News’ lawyers to launch a lawsuit to roll back vaccine passports. This contravenes generally accepted codes of journalistic ethics, including the CAJ’s code.

The Commission will not accredit journalists and organizations who have a pattern of breaching the CAJ’s code of ethics with respect to conflicts of interest. The Commission wants to avoid distortion of the information at the press conferences following the debates with questions from journalists who are actively involved with the subject of the questions. The press conferences following the debates are not meant to be opportunities for the journalists to advocate their positions. Rather, it is meant to be an opportunity for the leaders to do so.

Moreover, the press conference would be tainted in the eyes of some if a participating journalist is broadly known to be actively engaged in promoting a particular position being discussed with the leaders. For example, when journalists representing Rebel News ask Erin O’Toole about his leadership performance and abilities, one cannot ignore the fact that Rebel News has launched a petition to replace Erin O’Toole as leader of the Conservative Party with former Prime Minister Stephen Harper. As Rebel News is actively involved in the campaign, it is not engaging in journalism. This concern is accentuated when such campaigns contain calls for financial donations from the media organization’s audience.

Rebel News submits in its application that news organizations or journalists that receive “government money” have a conflict of interest. This is not necessarily the case. While the federal government does provide funding for the public broadcaster, this comes with arms-length provisions that guarantee the public broadcaster’s independence, as in many other countries. Fiscal measures and government grants are allocated and distributed through an impartial jury system composed of media professionals. Accepting government funds does not necessarily create a conflict of interest.

**Freedom of Expression**

I acknowledge that my decision has an impact on the freedom of expression of the applicant. I have considered the Commission’s statutory mandate, which provides that the Commission must "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders’ debates." The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. I consider that the high journalistic standards extend not only to the debates themselves but must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are
broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, I conclude that it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

In an effort to accredit as many media organizations and journalists as possible, while at the same time upholding high journalistic standards, the Commission interpreted high journalistic standards to ensure that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. I consider that this is the minimal standard that journalists and media organizations must abide by in order to meet high journalistic standards. The applicant does not challenge the use by the Commission of this criterion to evaluate its application.

In denying the applicant’s accreditation, I have considered that the impacts on the applicant’s freedom of expression are outweighed by the salutary effects of the Commission carrying outs its mandate. I recognize that the applicant will be precluded from asking direct questions to the leaders who participate in the debates. However, the applicant will be free to publish reports of the debates and the questions and answers provided during the press conference following the debates.

The Commission’s mandate requires it to uphold high journalistic standards that may in some instances lead to a decision to deny accreditation to some applicants. The Commission set out those standards in the Media Accreditation Process. This document explains that the press conferences are more than media or campaign events. They are part of the leaders’ debates process and thus involve a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons. Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way.

Further, if the Commission did not enforce the conflict of interest criterion it set out in its Media Accreditation Process, it would bring the Commission and the debates’ Process into disrepute. While there may only be a few questions being asked by the applicant, allowing her to proceed would undermine the Process and there would be justification for others to ignore it. There will be no deterrent. The Commission is a public body and it is in the public interest to uphold the Process, which it has adopted, and appears to have been endorsed by the applicant.

I consider that it would undermine the public trust and the high journalistic standards the Commission must uphold if the Commission accredited journalists and their media organizations who did not abide by high journalistic standards and were in a conflict of interest by being actively involved in the stories they are covering and influencing the outcome of those stories.
Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I find that you do not meet the criteria in the Media Accreditation Process document and, as such, your application for media accreditation for the 2021 Leaders’ Debates is denied.

David Johnston
Commissioner, Leaders’ Debates Commission
This is Exhibit "24" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
GUNTER: As CBC ratings plummet, they ask for more taxpayer dollars

Lorne Gunter
Aug 08, 2021 • August 8, 2021 • 3 minute read • 40 Comments

https://torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/gunter-as-cbc-ratings-plummet-they-ask-for-more-taxpayer-dollars
The CBC’s ad revenues continue to plummet. Why? Is it because tech giants like Google have hijacked the CBC’s ad space?

Not exactly. There’s no easy way to hijack ad windows on a TV broadcast.

Nope. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation advertising revenues are off a third in the past decade (18% in the past year alone), because fewer and fewer Canadians are watching the state broadcaster and advertisers know it.

If you can’t provide them with the eyes of potential customers, they’re not interested in paying for commercial time.

Just over a quarter of Canadians watch CBC English television on anything like a regular basis. And far fewer than that tune in frequently.

The audience for suppertime local news shows got so bad – a combined total of just 320,000 viewers spread across 27 stations (an average of 12,000 viewers each) – that the CBC finally
GUNTER: As CBC ratings plummet, they ask for more taxpayer dollars | Toronto Sun

decided to produce one, central-Canadian based program to show countrywide.

I guarantee almost no one noticed the change or missed the old shows.

Most nights in non-pandemic times, The National, the CBC’s flagship late-night news, draws fewer than 500,000. That’s a third as many viewers as CTV’s Toronto affiliate brings to its local newscast.

Not even the Tokyo Olympics have perked up ad sales very much.

For decades, the CBC has been the propaganda arm of the Laurentian elites, particularly the Liberal party. And for decades they could get away with it because most Canadians didn’t get many channels.

However, now with cable and satellite and streaming services, Canadians are no longer compelled to watch CBC’s one-sided, “progressive” propaganda and rehashes of middling American hits like Family Feud.

So what is the Ceeb to do if it doesn’t increase the $200 million it makes annually from ads? Will it struggle to get by on the mere $1.3 billion the Liberals pump into their favourite news and entertain ment source each year — from taxpayers?
An internal CBC planning document obtained by Blacklock’s Reporter whines that “without additional funding, program spending in future years will have to be reduced to match available resources and some services will have to be reduced.”

Awww. You mean like in the real world where if you don’t have customers, you don’t get revenues?

Except the CBC doesn’t live in the real world. It lives in a fairyland of chocolate-covered rainbows and ponies and lemonade fountains where Ottawa makes all badness go away lest the Corp sic its elite viewers on the government to insist Mother Corp be bailed out because, after all, it is the way Canadians communicate with one another.

So instead of making substantial cuts (like to its seven vice-presidents, 10 directors general and five –five! – directors of finance), the CBC is insisting its buddies in Ottawa dip into your pockets and mine for an additional $200 million in subsidies annually.

And the Libs look set to give it to them. Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault, the same man who brought us the Trudeau government’s Internet censorship law, seems intent on upping the CBC’s yearly allowance to $1.5 billion. That would be a $3.5 billion raise since the Liberals took office in 2015.

See ya, CBC! Case for winding down the national broadcaster
If it’s not bad enough that taxpayers are forced to contribute more every time fewer Canadians watch the CBC’s biased, irrelevant and uninspired programming, it gets worse.

The Corporation’s CEO, Catherine Tait, has justified insisting on more money by claiming the CBC is “a beacon for truth and trust against fake news.” I simply can’t fathom being that pompous, that self-important.

A free press is essential to a democracy, but any one cog or outlet – including the CBC – could disappear without Canadians’ freedom coming under threat.

The CBC routinely argues it is the lynchpin of Canadian democracy, which is so biased and delusional it should cost them their whole subsidy at once.
TRENDING

1. More than 100 Ontario youth sent to hospital for vaccine-related heart problems: Report
2. GAFFES AND SCANDALS: Bernier cuffed and arrested by RCMP
3. ASK AMY: Reconnected romance demands disconnection
4. Kaley Cuoco splits from husband Karl Cook
5. Critics say 'Dune' will thrill ardent fans, may mystify others

THIS WEEK IN FLYERS

COMMENTS

Postmedia is committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion and encourage all readers to share their views on our articles. Comments may take up to an hour for moderation before appearing on the site. We ask you to keep your comments relevant and respectful. We have enabled email notifications—you will now receive an email if you receive a reply to your comment, there is an update to a comment thread you follow or if a user you follow comments. Visit our Community Guidelines for more information and details on how to adjust your email settings.
This is Exhibit "25" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
LILLEY: Canadians are ditching CBC, so why do we keep funding it?

Brian Lilley
Jan 18, 2020 • January 20, 2020 • 3 minute read • Join the conversation
Every single time I critique CBC, I’m told that we need to have the state broadcaster, that Canadians rely upon it.

But the numbers would beg to differ.

Whether we are talking audience share or advertising revenue, CBC is a broadcaster in decline.

Did you know that across Canada, over a total of 27 stations coast to coast, the average audience for CBC’s supper hour newscast was 329,000 people? That’s not 329,000 people per market, that is across the country.

Compare that to just one of CTV’s local supper hour newscasts, CFTO in Toronto, which averaged 1.4 million viewers per night in the first week of 2020. That doesn’t include other major markets like Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary or Ottawa where CTV outstrips CBC. It doesn’t include Global News, which is dominant in Western Canada and like CTV doesn’t take a $1.5 billion per year subsidy from the taxpayers.
These CBC ratings aren’t numbers that I’ve made up, they were contained in CBC’s most recent annual report and highlighted by Ottawa-based media outlet Blacklock’s Reporter.

Other nuggets in that annual report include that CBC’s prime-time audience share in television was 5%, down from 7.6% in 2017–18. We also learned that CBC News Network’s total audience share is 1.4% of all TV viewers.

These slumping ratings mean slumping ad sales, the report says advertising revenue is down 21% overall — the decline in English Canada was actually much bigger, a 37% drop. If it were not for CBC’s French language division having a pretty good year, things would have been much worse.

Ad revenues dropped from $318.2 million in 2018 to $248.7 million in 2019 and things are not likely to get better. Well, except for the increase in government revenue.

Justin Trudeau’s Liberals were elected on a promise to increase CBC’s base funding by $150 million a year. That promise has been met and I’m sure Trudeau will soon be considering more money for his favourite news and media outlet.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC
Meanwhile, as I reported about two weeks ago now, CBC is asking the CRTC for permission to broadcast less Canadian content on TV even as they take more of our money. As part of their broadcast licence renewal application, the state broadcaster is asking the broadcast regulator for permission to show less “mandated content,” meaning less Canadian content.

Would we even notice?

CBC’s latest attempt to get ratings heading in the right direction has seen them bring in Family Feud Canadian Edition. Nothing says telling Canada’s stories to Canadians quite like importing a dated American game show and selling it like it is something new.

What’s next? Showing Home Alone 2 and editing out Donald Trump?

CBC does well in radio — as someone who worked for years in private radio and competed against CBC Radio, I can say they have an audience and do a good job.

Yet on TV, Canadians are voting with their clickers.
Long before cutting the cord became a concern for TV executives, CBC was the third horse in a three-horse race. They were the least preferred option for comedies or dramas and the least preferred for news.

This may come as a shock to some media folks, especially on Parliament Hill, but CBC’s The National has been the third most watched national newscast for decades. Their recent reboot has only made things worse, pushing ratings below 400,000 viewers a night and at times I am told below 300,000 viewers.

CBC is out of touch with Canadians and what they want to see.

Their supporters may say ratings shouldn’t matter for a state broadcaster like CBC but if they aren’t producing shows we want to watch with their massive subsidy then what is the point of continuing to fund them?

blilley@postmedia.com
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THIS WEEK IN FLYERS

COMMENTS

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This is Exhibit "26" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Now The Subsidies Are Secret

Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault’s department refuses to name publishers awarded nearly $61 million in pre-election “emergency relief.” The grants were to ensure readers receive “timely information they require from their government,” Guilbeault wrote in a letter to MPs.

“These measures demonstrate the government’s commitment to both a robust, diverse and sustainable news ecosystem and ensuring Canadians can receive the timely information they require from their government,” Guilbeault wrote in a July 21 letter to the Commons heritage committee. The letter did not elaborate on links between subsidies and coverage of cabinet announcements.

The letter disclosed unnamed publishers received $60.8 million as “emergency support” through an existing heritage department program called Aid To Publishers. The grants were in addition to annual subsidies already paid, including proceeds from a $595 million media bailout approved by Parliament in 2018.

“This final component helps address some of the gaps that have been identified by the industry,” the department said in a statement. Staff would not answer repeated requests for names of publishers and the amounts they received under the ad hoc program called Emergency Support For Cultural Industries.

“The abrupt, unanticipated and destabilizing effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has served to exacerbate financial pressures on the industry at a time when access to reliable news is perhaps more important than ever,” wrote Minister Guilbeault.

The grants were intended for magazine and weekly newspaper publishers. “We remain committed to supporting the long-term vitality of the sector,” wrote Minister Guilbeault.

Emergency Support for Community Newspapers and Magazines

These measures demonstrate the Government’s commitment to both a robust, diverse and sustainable news ecosystem, and ensuring that Canadians can receive the timely information they require from their government. We remain committed to supporting the long-term vitality of the sector, including by advancing work to ensure that web giants more fairly share their revenues with creators and media.

Periodicals in Canada are already heavily subsidized. Bayard Presse Canada Inc. of Toronto, publisher of children’s magazines like Chickadee, received $1.35 million on April 1. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, publisher of Ontario Out Of Doors, received $568,703. OP Media Group Ltd. of Vancouver, publisher of Pacific Yachting magazine, received $251,999. The Halifax publisher of Frank Magazine was paid $109,594.
Other subsidies included $1,473,363 to the publisher of Reader’s Digest, a total $1,354,619 for The Western Producer of Saskatoon, a total $1,166,408 to Maclean’s magazine, a total $1,073,549 to Canadian House & Home and $1,007,018 to Chatelaine magazine.

An $817,081 grant was paid April 1 to Ontario Farmer. Subsidies worth $720,241 were given to Canadian Geographic magazine, and $570,794 to Toronto Life.

The Catholic Register received $503,475 in subsidies, separate from $346,369 given to The B.C. Catholic, a periodical published by the Archdiocese of Vancouver. Cottage Life received $407,457. Fashion magazine was awarded $379,662.

By Staff
This is Exhibit "27" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

[Signature]

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Press freedom applies to everyone – even The Rebel

EZR A L E V A N T
CONTRIBUTED TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL
PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 16, 2019

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 16, 2019
This article was published more than 1 year ago. Some information in it may no longer be current.
Ezra Levant is the president of The Rebel News Network Ltd.

JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ezra Levant is the president of The Rebel News Network Ltd.

It’s become standard practice for the Liberal government to refuse to accredit me or other reporters from my company, Rebel News, at press conferences. Other right-leaning reporters are banned, too. But, at a recent press conference at Ottawa’s National Arts Centre, during a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, there I was, smiling at Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland from the front row.

I had been smuggled into the room by the former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Okay – that sounds more dramatic than it really was. The former director of the CIA is Mr. Pompeo himself. And he didn’t really smuggle me in. But he did let me walk into the news conference as part of his own delegation, which included U.S. journalists. And I doubt he told Ms. Freeland about it.

That’s just as shocking as if it had really been a CIA operation: The only way I was able to attend a news conference by my own government was with the assistance of a foreign government.

It happened in the summer, too, when Ms. Freeland co-hosted a media freedom conference in London along with her then-British counterpart, Jeremy Hunt.

There, Ms. Freeland gave a speech and invited journalists to a question-and-answer session. But her staff singled out two of the seven reporters who showed up and told them they would not be welcome.

There just wasn’t enough room for all seven, they said. The Globe and Mail, CTV, CBC, Global TV and Al Jazeera could come. But the two conservative reporters could not – Andrew Lawton, the former Sun newspaper columnist who now writes for True North Canada; and Sheila Gunn Reid, a reporter for my company, Rebel News.

Mr. Lawton and Ms. Gunn Reid had been accredited by the British government, which organized the conference. Both had crowdfunding their travel from Canada. It was literally a conference about media freedom. But not for journalists with the wrong politics.
The other journalists waiting to talk with Ms. Freeland – including the Al Jazeera reporter – were stunned by her attempt to de-platform Mr. Lawton and Ms. Gunn Reid. And to their credit, they refused to attend the news conference without them.

Faced with a boycott, Ms. Freeland blinked and grudgingly allowed some media freedom at the media freedom conference. Ms. Gunn Reid got to ask her questions. Why had Ms. Freeland asked the UN to ban Ms. Gunn Reid from their conferences? Why had the Liberals refused to respond to her Access to Information requests?

Ms. Freeland’s answer was shocking, especially in juxtaposition to what she had just said in her official speech: “We all need to defend our independent press – even, and perhaps especially, when it criticizes us.”

That’s the script she read when she was onstage with celebrities such as Amal Clooney. But when it was just Canadian reporters, Ms. Freeland let the mask slip.

“You are here asking me a question, and that’s my choice and my decision,” she said. In fact, her choice had been to exclude Ms. Gunn Reid. But do press freedoms really require her permission?

“I do also think that it is important for governments, for countries, for multilateral organizations to be thoughtful about media organizations that are truly independent and truly impartial,” she continued.

Ms. Freeland didn’t explain that accusation. She had no problem inviting Al Jazeera, the state broadcaster of Qatar. Later that day, she privately welcomed the Foreign Minister of Pakistan to the conference – one of the most brutal censors in the world.

Ms. Freeland did not reject censoring journalists. She justified it, if it was “thoughtful.” She ended by accusing Rebel News of being white supremacists.

It’s standard now.

Indeed, the Parliamentary Press Gallery – the reporters’ guild that controls access to many media conferences – has banned us without notice, explanation or any appeal. China’s state broadcaster, Xinhua, is a member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. But we’re banned.

Not everyone appreciates our point of view. But we clearly speak to many Canadians. Our reporters have been accredited by governments around the world, in places such as Sweden,
the Netherlands and India, and even in partly free countries such as Iraq and Morocco. Only Canada has banned us.

I'm not surprised the Liberals don't like us. We ask prickly questions. But that’s part of our democratic system. If you need help understanding the problem, imagine if former prime minister Stephen Harper had banned liberal journalists from his government events.

Ms. Freeland’s conduct is remarkable given her former career as a journalist.

Liberals need to know how freedom of the press works – it’s a gift you have to give to your opponents, if you want it for yourself.
This is Exhibit "28" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
PC Number: 2018-1322

Date: 2018-10-29

Whereas leaders’ debates are an essential contribution to the health of Canadian democracy and are in the public interest;

Whereas it is desirable that leaders’ debates reach all Canadians, including those with disabilities, those living in remote areas and those living in official language minority communities;

Whereas it is desirable that leaders’ debates be effective, informative and compelling and benefit from the participation of the leaders who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or whose political parties have the greatest likelihood of winning seats in Parliament;

Whereas it is desirable that leaders’ debates be organized using clear, open and transparent participation criteria;

Whereas it is desirable that there be a commissioner who is responsible for the organization of leaders’ debates;

Whereas it is desirable that the commissioner responsible for leaders’ debates have the benefit of the advice of an advisory board;

And whereas it is in the public interest that the Leaders’ Debates Commission be established without delay;
Therefore, Her Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, establishes the Leaders' Debates Commission, in accordance with the annexed schedule.

Attendu que les débats des chefs contribuent de façon essentielle à la santé de la démocratie canadienne et qu’ils sont dans l’intérêt public;

Attendu qu’il est souhaitable que les débats des chefs rejoignent tous les Canadiens, y compris ceux qui vivent avec un handicap, ceux qui vivent dans des régions éloignées et ceux qui font partie de communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire;

Attendu qu’il est souhaitable que les débats des chefs soient efficaces et informatifs, qu’ils suscitent l’intérêt et qu’ils profitent de la participation des chefs qui sont les plus à même de devenir premier ministre ou dont le parti politique est le plus à même de remporter des sièges au Parlement;

Attendu qu’il est souhaitable que les débats des chefs soient organisés selon des critères de participation clairs, ouverts et transparents;

Attendu qu’il est souhaitable qu’un commissaire soit chargé de l’organisation des débats des chefs;

Attendu qu’il est souhaitable que le commissaire chargé des débats des chefs bénéficie des conseils d’un comité consultatif;
Attendu qu’il est dans l’intérêt public que la Commission des débats des chefs soit créée sans délai,


**SCHEDULE**

**LEADERS’ DEBATES COMMISSION**

Commission

1 There is established a commission, to be known as the Leaders’ Debates Commission, consisting of the Debates Commissioner, the Advisory Board and the Secretariat.

2 The mandate of the Leaders’ Debates Commission is to

(a) organize one leaders’ debate in each official language during each general election period;

(b) ensure that the leader of each political party that meets two of the following criteria is invited to participate in the leaders’ debates:
(i) at the time the general election in question is called, the party is represented in the House of Commons by a Member of Parliament who was elected as a member of that party,

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

(iii) 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, based on the recent political context, public opinion polls and previous general election results, the Debates Commissioner considers that candidates endorsed by the party have a legitimate chance to be elected in the general election in question;

(c) ensure that the leaders’ debates are broadcast and otherwise made available in an accessible way to persons with disabilities;

(d) ensure that the leaders’ debates reach as many Canadians as possible, including those living in remote areas and those living in official language minority communities, through a variety of media and other fora;

(e) ensure that the leaders’ debates are broadcast free of charge, whether or not the broadcast is live;
(f) ensure that any reproduction of the leaders’ debates is subject to only the terms and conditions that are necessary to preserve the integrity of the debates;

(g) ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders’ debates;

(h) undertake an awareness raising campaign and outreach activities to ensure that Canadians know when, where and how to access the leaders’ debates; and

(i) provide advice and support in respect of other political debates related to the general election, including candidates’ debates, as the Debates Commissioner considers appropriate.

3 The Leaders’ Debates Commission is to

(a) conduct any necessary research or rely on any applicable research to ensure that the leaders’ debates are of high quality;

(b) develop and manage constructive relationships with key opinion leaders and stakeholders;

(c) conduct its activities in a manner that does not preclude other organizations from producing or organizing leaders’ debates or other political debates;
(d) ensure that the decisions regarding the organization of the leaders’ debates, including those respecting participation criteria, are made publicly available in a timely manner;

(e) ensure that the leaders’ responses to the invitations to participate in the leaders’ debates are made publicly available before and during the debates; and

(f) conduct an evidence-based assessment of the leaders’ debates that it has organized, including with respect to the number of persons to whom the debates were accessible, the number of persons who actually accessed them and the knowledge of Canadians of political parties, their leaders and their positions.

4 In fulfilling its mandate, the Leaders’ Debates Commission is to be guided by the pursuit of the public interest and by the principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, democratic citizenship, civic education, inclusion and cost-efficiency.

5 (1) The Leaders’ Debates Commission is an agent of Her Majesty and, in that capacity, may enter into contracts or agreements with third parties in fulfilling its mandate.

(2) The Leaders’ Debates Commission is to ensure that calls for proposals regarding the production of the leaders’ debates identify clear criteria by which proposals will be evaluated, including the presentation of strategies to
(a) maximize the reach of the leaders’ debates and engagement with Canadians, including those who may face barriers to voting;

(b) create momentum for and awareness of the leaders’ debates before the debates take place and to sustain engagement of Canadians after the debates take place;

(c) make the leaders’ debates more accessible to Canadians with disabilities, those living in remote areas and those living in official language minority communities; and

(d) ensure that the leaders’ debates are reflective of high production and journalistic standards, while ensuring brand neutrality.

Debates Commissioner

6 (1) The Debates Commissioner is the director of the Leaders’ Debates Commission and, in that capacity, conducts the ordinary business of the Commission and is responsible for the appointment of the members of the Secretariat.

(2) The Debates Commissioner is appointed to hold office during good behaviour, on a part-time basis, subject to removal for cause.
(3) The Debates Commissioner is to consider and apply as far as possible the advice provided by the Advisory Board, to ensure that the organization of the leaders’ debates benefits from the expertise and experience of the members of the Advisory Board and that the leaders’ debates reflect the public interest.

Advisory Board

7 The mandate of the Advisory Board is to advise the Debates Commissioner to allow the Debates Commissioner to fulfil his or her mandate.

8 (1) The members of the Advisory Board are appointed by the Debates Commissioner to hold office on a part-time basis.

(2) The Advisory Board is to be composed of seven members, and its composition is to be reflective of gender balance and Canadian diversity and is to represent a range of political affiliations and expertise.

9 (1) The Advisory Board is to meet at least four times in the period of one year before a general election and at least two times in the period of five months after a general election.

(2) The meetings of the Advisory Board are to be chaired by the Debates Commissioner.

Report
10 (1) The Leaders’ Debates Commission is to provide to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, no later than five months after the day on which a general election is held, a report in both official languages that

(a) presents an in-depth analysis of the Leaders’ Debates Commission’s experience in organizing leaders’ debates for the general election in question; and

(b) provides thorough advice with regard to the future of the Leaders’ Debates Commission, recommendations regarding the scope of the Commission’s mandate and a detailed rationale for those recommendations, as well as a discussion of key considerations, including operation in the full range of electoral contexts such as minority governments, and ways to encourage leaders’ participation in the leaders’ debates.

(2) The Minister of Democratic Institutions is to table the report in Parliament.

ANNEXE

COMMISSION DES DÉBATS DES CHEFS
Commission

1 Est constituée la Commission des débats des chefs, composée du commissaire aux débats, du comité consultatif et du secrétariat.

2 Le mandat de la Commission est :

a) d’organiser un débat des chefs dans chaque langue officielle au cours de chaque période électorale d’une élection générale;

b) de veiller à ce que le chef de chaque parti politique qui répond à deux des critères ci-après soit invité à participer aux débats des chefs :

(i) au moment où l’élection générale en cause est déclenchée, le parti est représenté à la Chambre des communes par un député ayant été élu à titre de membre de ce parti,

(ii) il a l’intention, de l’avis du commissaire aux débats, de soutenir des candidats dans au moins quatre-vingt-dix pour cent des circonscriptions en vue de l’élection générale en cause,

(iii) ses candidats ont obtenu, lors de l’élection générale précédente, au moins quatre pour cent du nombre de votes validement exprimés ou les candidats qu’il soutient ont une véritable possibilité d’être élus lors de l’élection générale en cause, de l’avis du commissaire aux débats, compte tenu du contexte politique récent, des sondages d’opinion publique et des résultats obtenus aux élections générales précédentes;

c) de veiller à ce que les débats des chefs soient diffusés et autrement rendus disponibles, de manière accessible, aux personnes handicapées;
d) de veiller à ce que les débats des chefs rejoignent le plus grand nombre possible de Canadiens, y compris ceux qui vivent dans des régions éloignées et ceux qui font partie de communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire, au moyen d’un éventail de médias et d’autres tribunes;

e) de veiller à ce que les débats des chefs soient diffusés gratuitement, que la diffusion soit en direct ou non;

f) de veiller à ce que la reproduction des débats des chefs soit uniquement assujettie aux conditions qui sont nécessaires pour en préserver l’intégrité;

g) de veiller à ce que des normes journalistiques élevées soient appliquées lors des débats des chefs;

h) de mener une campagne et des activités de sensibilisation pour que les Canadiens sachent quand, où et comment avoir accès aux débats des chefs;

i) d’offrir des conseils et du soutien dans le cadre d’autres débats politiques liés à l’élection générale, notamment les débats de candidats, lorsque le commissaire aux débats le juge indiqué.

3 La Commission :

a) effectue les recherches nécessaires ou s’appuie sur des recherches existantes, le cas échéant, pour que les débats des chefs soient de qualité élevée;

b) établit et maintient des relations constructives avec des leaders d’opinion et des intervenants clés;
c) exerce ses activités de manière à ne pas empêcher d’autres organismes de produire ou d’organiser des débats des chefs ou d’autres débats politiques;

d) veille à ce que les décisions concernant l’organisation des débats des chefs, y compris celles portant sur les critères de participation, soient rendues publiques rapidement;

e) veille à ce que les réponses des chefs aux invitations de participer aux débats soient rendues publiques avant et pendant les débats;

f) évalue les débats qu’elle a organisés, en se fondant sur des données probantes, notamment le nombre de personnes à qui les débats étaient accessibles et le nombre de personnes qui y ont effectivement eu accès, ainsi que les connaissances des Canadiens au sujet des partis politiques, de leurs chefs et de leurs positions.

4 Dans l’accomplissement de son mandat, la Commission est guidée par la poursuite de l’intérêt public et par les principes de l’indépendance, de l’impartialité, de la crédibilité, de la citoyenneté démocratique, de l’éducation civique, de l’inclusion et de l’efficacité financière.

5 (1) La Commission est mandataire de Sa Majesté et, à ce titre, elle peut conclure des marchés ou des ententes avec des tiers pour l’accomplissement de son mandat.

(2) La Commission veille à ce que les demandes de propositions pour la production des débats des chefs fassent état des critères précis selon lesquels les propositions seront évaluées, notamment la présentation de stratégies visant à:
a) augmenter autant que possible la portée des débats et la mobilisation des Canadiens, y compris ceux qui pourraient devoir composer avec des obstacles pour voter;

b) générer un effet d’entraînement en vue des débats des chefs, sensibiliser les Canadiens aux débats avant leur tenue et maintenir leur mobilisation par la suite;

c) améliorer l’accessibilité des débats des chefs aux Canadiens qui vivent avec un handicap, ceux qui vivent dans des régions éloignées et ceux qui font partie de communautés de langue officielle en situation minoritaire;

d) veiller à ce que les débats des chefs répondent à des normes élevées en matière de production et de journalisme et à ce que la neutralité quant à l’utilisation des marques soit respectée.

Commissaire aux débats

6 (1) Le commissaire aux débats est le directeur de la Commission et, à ce titre, il en dirige les affaires courantes et est responsable de l’embauche du personnel du secrétariat.

(2) Le commissaire aux débats est nommé à titre inamovible, sauf révocation motivée, et il exerce sa charge à temps partiel.

(3) Le commissaire aux débats tient compte des conseils fournis par le comité consultatif et, autant que faire se peut, les applique de telle sorte que l’organisation des débats des chefs bénéficie de l’expertise et de l’expérience des membres du comité et que les débats reflètent l’intérêt public.
Comité consultatif

7 Le mandat du comité consultatif est de conseiller le commissaire aux débats dans l’accomplissement de son mandat.

8 (1) Les membres du comité consultatif sont nommés par le commissaire aux débats et ils exercent leur charge à temps partiel.

(2) Le comité consultatif est composé de sept membres et sa composition reflète la parité entre les sexes et la diversité de la population canadienne et représente un éventail d’allégeances politiques et d’expertises.

9 (1) Le comité consultatif se réunit au moins quatre fois durant la période d’un an précédant l’élection générale et au moins deux fois durant la période de cinq mois suivant celle-ci.

(2) Les réunions du comité consultatif sont présidées par le commissaire aux débats.

Rapport

10 (1) La Commission présente au ministre des Institutions démocratiques, au plus tard cinq mois après la date à laquelle l’élection générale a eu lieu, un rapport dans les deux langues officielles, qui comprend :

a) une analyse approfondie de l’expérience de la Commission sur l’organisation des débats dans le cadre de l’élection générale en cause;
b) des conseils détaillés sur l’avenir de la Commission, des recommandations sur la portée du mandat de la Commission — lesquelles sont accompagnées d’une justification détaillée — ainsi qu’une discussion sur les principaux facteurs à prendre en considération, notamment ses activités dans le cadre de tous les contextes électoraux, par exemple en présence d’un gouvernement minoritaire, et sur les moyens à utiliser pour encourager la participation des chefs aux débats.

(2) Le ministre des Institutions démocratiques dépose le rapport devant le Parlement.

Date modified: 2021-09-01
This is Exhibit "29" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Whereas, by Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 of October 29, 2018, the Leaders’ Debates Commission was established; 

And whereas it is desirable to amend the mandate of the Commission; 

Therefore, Her Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, amends the schedule to Order in Council P.C. 2018-1322 of October 29, 2018, as amended by Order in Council P.C. 2019-1381 of December 4, 2019, 

(a) by replacing paragraph 2(b) with the following: 

(b) set participation criteria for the leaders’ debates and ensure that the leader of each political party that meets those criteria is invited to participate in the debates; 

(b.1) make the participation criteria public
(i) for a general election held in accordance with subsection 56.1(2) of the Canada Elections Act, no later than June 30 before the day set by that subsection; or

(ii) for a general election not held in accordance with subsection 56.1(2) of the Canada Elections Act, no later than seven days after the issue of the writs;

(b) by adding the following after paragraph 2(d):

(d.1) endeavour to ensure that the leaders’ debates are available in languages other than French and English, and, in doing so, pay special attention to Canada’s Indigenous languages;

(c) by adding the following after paragraph 2(g):

(g.1) provide final approval of the format and production of the leaders’ debates, while respecting journalistic independence;

Attendu que, par le décret C.P. 2018-1322 du 29 octobre 2018, la Commission des débats des chefs a été créée;
Attendu qu’il est souhaitable de modifier le mandat de la Commission,


a) par remplacement de l’alinéa 2b) par ce qui suit :

   b) d’établir des critères de participation aux débats des chefs et de veiller à ce que le chef de chaque parti politique qui répond à ces critères soit invité à participer aux débats ;

b.1) de rendre publics ces critères :

    (i) pour une élection générale tenue conformément au paragraphe 56.1(2) de la Loi électorale du Canada, au plus tard le 30 juin précédant le jour visé à ce paragraphe ,

    (ii) pour une élection générale qui n’est pas tenue conformément au paragraphe 56.1(2) de la Loi électorale du Canada, au plus tard sept jours après la délivrance des brefs ;

b) par adjonction, après l’alinéa 2d), de ce qui suit :


d.1) de veiller à ce que les débats des chefs soient disponibles dans des langues autres que le français et l’anglais et, ce faisant, d’accorder une attention particulière aux langues autochtones du Canada;

…/2

- 2 -

c) par adjonction, après l’alinéa 2g), de ce qui suit :

g.1) de donner l’approbation finale quant au format et à la production des débats des chefs, tout en respectant l’indépendance journalistique;

Date modified: 2021-09-01
This is Exhibit "30" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Why debates matter

Debates play an essential role in Canada's democracy. They give you a chance to see the character, temperament, and unscripted approaches of leaders seeking to be Canada’s Prime Minister.

Making an informed decision is part of a thriving democracy. But it's difficult to make an informed decision; people are busy, and it's hard to know what information to trust. A live debate is a trusted source of information, because it's one of the very few times during an election campaign that you can hear directly from leaders – unedited and unfiltered.

You'll see leaders together in one place, live on stage, answering questions and challenging each other's ideas and opinions. This will help you make your own decision about the issues that matter to you. It is also an opportunity to learn about issues that matter to other Canadians, and be exposed to views that are different from your own, and those around you. It's a window into the world of others.

A debate is something we can participate in together. It would be easy to see the things that separate us as Canadians; we are spread apart across a huge land mass; we live in different places; we speak different languages, we come from different backgrounds and yes, we care about different things. But this is an opportunity for the country to come together: to watch or listen to the same thing, at the same time, to gain an understanding about the issues at hand, what they mean to people across the country.

It’s a chance to learn about each other, and the people who want to lead our country.

How to Watch Critically

Watching a debate is part of making an informed decision on Election Day.

But how do you know what to listen for, how to watch critically, and what you should be paying attention to?

Here are some tips on how to watch critically.

Debates Around the World

In parliamentary democracies such as Canada, where voters do not directly elect the Prime Minister, election debates serve as an occasion for party leaders to increase their party's chance at electoral success. In presidential democracies, such as the United States, election debates serve as an opportunity for candidates to argue that they deserve voters’ support.
Why debates matter

both cases debates are an important part of electoral campaigns.

Read more

Date modified: September 27, 2019
This is Exhibit "31" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
OTTAWA / Oct. 9, 2019 / CNW — The Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) is encouraged that a Federal Court decision on accreditation will push the Leaders' Debate Commission to be more transparent.

A Federal Court judge ruled Rebel Media and the True North Centre for Public Policy should have access to the federal debates taking place this week. The Leaders' Debates Commission refused to provide their representatives accreditation, stating the organizations engage in advocacy.

The CAJ agrees that the Leaders' Debates Commission must be more transparent in its accreditation process, and that it was poor practice to wait until the last business day before the leadership debate to issue its decision. Any decision on denying access should be timely, transparent and subject to an appeals process.

According to media reports, the Commission used the Canadian Association of Journalists' ethics guidelines in rendering its decision. The CAJ code of ethics are guidelines, they are not binding, nor is the CAJ a regulatory body or an agency which defines journalism.

“"The Rebel and True North are reportedly seeking a judicial review of the decision and the process used by the commission. We look forward to reviewing the reasons for the federal courts' ruling, which will be released at a later date," said CAJ president Karyn Pugliese.

Earlier this month, the CAJ was alerted that Andrew Lawton, a fellow with True North, had been barred from a public Liberal party event in Thunder Bay, Ont. The CAJ wrote to the Liberal Party, and received a note stating that it was a mistake and Lawton was welcome to attend events that are open to the public across the country. When pressed for further details, a media official with the party replied that they had nothing more to say.

The Canadian Association of Journalists is a professional organization with more than 700 members across Canada. The CAJ's primary roles are public-interest advocacy work and professional development for its members.

For more information contact:

Karyn Pugliese, CAJ president
karyn@caj.ca

—

Brent Jolly, CAJ vice-president
289-387-3179
brent@caj.ca

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0 Comments
This is Exhibit "32" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election

The Leaders' Debates Commission is mandated by its constituting Order in Council to organize two leaders' debates for the next federal general election, one in each official language.

Media representatives wishing to have access to the debates organized by the Commission must apply to be accredited by the Commission.

Principles

The Commission believes debates are more than media or campaign events; they are a public trust. Debates play an essential role in the health of Canada's democracy by informing the electorate about the leaders of political parties who have the greatest likelihood of becoming Prime Minister or those likely to play an important part in public policymaking by winning seats in the House of Commons.

Political debates represent a unique space where citizens can hear from party leaders in real time and in an unmediated, unfiltered, and undistorted way. The Commission is mandated to protect the public interest in the debates. A key component of the integrity and independence of the debates resides in the professionalism of the journalists involved. The importance of this component is evident in the Commission's mandate to "ensure that high journalistic standards are maintained for the leaders' debates."

Public confidence in the debates is further bolstered by the fact that journalists, not political parties nor the Commission, have full independence in deciding the themes for the debates and the questions to be asked to the leaders. This principle was affirmed by the Commission in its report to the Government on the 2019 leaders' debates, in which the Commission wrote "that the journalistic independence of the media participants be ensured" at the debates.

The two debates the Commission is mandated to organize represent a rare opportunity for the ideas of the party leaders to be tested, by each other and by professional journalists. The Commission is committed to creating and maintaining a credible, informational, fair and transparent process that helps citizens make informed decisions on Election Day.

In order to protect the integrity of the debates, the principles of high journalistic standards and journalist independence must extend to the press availabilities of the leaders held immediately after the debates when each leader takes questions from journalists. These press availabilities are broadcast live to millions of viewers and, as such, are a natural extension of the debates and an integral part of the press coverage of the events. Consequently, the Commission believes it is reasonable to expect that the journalists accredited to the debates and the press availabilities, both in a physical or virtual environment, adhere to the standards of professional journalism.

The overarching objective behind this media accreditation process is to ensure "high journalistic standards." The Commission considers that high journalistic standards means that journalists adhere to and observe the principles of responsible and ethical journalism.

In particular, the Commission has interpreted high journalistic standards to mean that journalists should not have a conflict of interest in the story that they are covering. As such, the absence of a conflict of interest is the principal criteria the Commission will use to evaluate applications for accreditation.

The Commission has reviewed the Canadian Association of Journalists (“CAJ”), guidelines on conflict of interest and it has decided that these guidelines meet the high journalistic standards that the Commission is mandated to uphold. The Commission will therefore rely upon these guidelines in evaluating applicants. The Commission has chosen to use the CAJ guidelines because the CAJ "is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides advocacy and professional development for journalists across Canada." The CAJ exists to promote "excellence in journalism." The CAJ guidelines are widely accepted and adopted by journalists throughout Canada.

The Commission recognizes that media organizations, columnists or commentators may have an editorial point of view or endorse political candidates or political causes. However, a conflict of interest arises when the media organization or journalist becomes an active participant in the story that they are covering.

According to the CAJ, there is a conflict of interest:

- when an organization:
  - becomes an actor in the stories it tells, including providing and applying financial and legal assistance to some of its sources to work toward a desired outcome or offering free legal services, crowdfunds to help some individuals in stories hire lawyers,
purchases political advertising and launches petitions;Footnote 1 or
  • when a reporter:
    o writes opinion pieces about subjects they also cover as journalists, endorses political candidates or causes, takes part in
demonstrations, signs petitions, does public relations work, fundraises and makes financial contributions. Footnote 2

Process for media accreditation: General Criteria

In 2019, the Commission saw unprecedented media interest in the debates it organized. While there are space constraints on the
number of media representatives it can accredit, the Commission will endeavor to accommodate as many requests as possible. In
addition, the Commission will comply with the COVID-19 public-health measures in place at the time of the two leaders’ debates. These
protocols may have an impact on the number of media representatives that the Commission can accredit.

Media representatives seeking to be accredited will have to apply under one of the three options described below.

All of the options listed below have the same objective: to identify and accredit journalists who meet the principles of responsible and
ethical journalism, and the “high journalistic standards” set out in the Commission’s mandate, and whose reporting is absent of conflict
of interest.

All media representatives must indicate whether they are wishing to attend the French language, English language or both
debates in their application to the Commission.

They must also indicate whether they are wishing to be on-site or attend virtually.

Please note: On-site capacity may be limited due to COVID-19 public health measures.

Option 1:

Any media representative who is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery will automatically be eligible for
accreditation.

Upon review of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery’s membership requirements, the Commission has determined that it will
accredit members of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery. This is because they cover Canadian politics as a regular part of their
activity and the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery has published a white paper, which recognizes the principles of responsible and
ethical journalism, including the absence of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ and other journalism and professional media
organizations.

Supporting documentation and information

Applicants under Option 1 must provide the following:

  • A statement that they are a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery; and
  • A passport size photo (JPEG format).

The Commission will verify that the applicant is a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery by checking the publicly
available list of members.

Option 2:

Any media representative that is a member of one of the following four professional media organizations will automatically be eligible
for accreditation:

  • Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) (active (journalist) membership only);
  • National NewsMedia Council (NMC);
  • Conseil de presse du Québec (CPQ); and
  • Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec (FPJQ).

Upon review of these bodies’ membership requirements, the Commission has determined that these organizations represent a cross-
section of professional bodies that contend with the responsible and ethical practice of journalism. The CAJ and FPJQ represent the
interests of individual journalists while the NMC and the CPQ are bodies that rule on complaints from the public.

The NMC, CPQ and FPJQ have guidelines for membership that contain principles of responsible and ethical journalism or have adopted
the CAJ guidelines. These guidelines and principles are consistent with the standards of professional journalism, including the absence
of conflict of interest as defined by the CAJ. The Commission will therefore rely upon the membership of these organizations as a means
to accredit prospective applicants.

The Commission will obtain the membership list from each organization listed above and verify that the applicant is a member.

Supporting documentation and information

Applicants under Option 2 must provide the following:
Media Accreditation for the 44th General Election | Leaders' Debates Commission

A statement that they are a member of one of the four professional media organizations listed above; and
A passport size photo (JPEG format).

Option 3:

Any media representative that is not a member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery or one of the four professional media organizations listed under Option 2, may apply for accreditation under Option 3.

This option is also available to foreign media representatives seeking accreditation at the debates.

Consistent with the overarching objective behind this media accreditation process, the Commission will consider whether the applicant upholds the high journalistic standards set out above, including an absence of conflict of interest in their reporting.

Supporting documentation and information

Canadian media representatives applying under Option 3 must provide all of the following:

- A letter of assignment, identifying that the applicant is assigned to the leaders’ debates, that is signed and dated by their assignment editor/authorized editor/publisher (PDF format). This letter should include information on reach and audience (print circulation, radio/television audience, digital audience/website traffic/social media/website subscribers); and
- Media organization website link, identifying that they contribute or belong to a media organization that either produces original news content related to coverage of Canadian/international political news or covers political, social and policy issues, and whose content is updated each week;
- Six recent news articles/reports within the last six months under their byline, identifying that journalism is their regular activity; and
- A passport size photo (JPEG format).

The Commission will review the above information and the regular activities of the applicant to ensure that the reporting is absent of conflict of interest. The Commission may also review and rely upon the reporting and content available in the public domain produced by the applicant to determine whether the applicant practices professional journalism that is free of conflict of interest.

Foreign media representatives applying under Option 3 must provide all of the following:

- A letter of assignment, identifying that the applicant is assigned to the leaders’ debates, that is signed and dated by their assignment editor/authorized editor/publisher (PDF format). This letter should include information on reach and audience (print circulation, radio/television audience, digital audience/website traffic/social media/website subscribers); and
- A scanned copy of a valid international press card provided by a recognized national professional body or a passport size photo (JPEG format).

The Commission will also consider whether foreign media representatives applying for accreditation are assigned by media organizations with a correspondent in Canada or are assigned by widely recognized media organizations in their country of origin.

Timeline

The Commission is opening the media accreditation process the day after the 44th General Election is called.

Media representatives will have 10 days to apply.

The Commission will make every effort to respond as soon as possible to media accreditation applications. All communications, including the decisions on accreditation, will be conducted in writing via email.

Applications

All applications along with the supporting documentation and information must be submitted to:
mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

For questions related to media accreditation, contact mediaaccreditation@debates-debats.ca

Footnotes

Footnote 1
https://caj.ca/blog/Alberta_Press_Gallery_has_a_duty_and_a_right_to_determine_access

Footnote 2
https://caj.ca/ethics-guidelines

https://www.debates-debats.ca/en/media-accreditation/44/
This is Exhibit "33" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
ETICS GUIDELINES
Submitted by the CAJ Ethics Advisory Committee, June 2011

PREAMBLE
This document – along with the accompanying “Principles for Ethical Journalism” – is intended to help both seasoned professionals and new journalists to hold themselves accountable for professional work. While many specific questions are considered here, it is impossible to capture all potential scenarios in a document such as this. Instead, it seeks to provide examples of the application of our general ethical principles, and to help journalists apply those principles and their best judgment when faced with scenarios not covered here. Updates will be issued periodically as new issues come under consideration by the association’s Ethics Advisory Committee; suggestions for additions or amendments should be directed to the committee chair or the CAJ president.

ACCURACY
- We are disciplined in our efforts to verify all facts. Accuracy is the moral imperative of journalists and news organizations, and should not be compromised, even by pressing deadlines of the 24-hour news cycle.
- We make every effort to verify the identities and backgrounds of our sources.
- We seek documentation to support the reliability of those sources and their stories, and we are careful to distinguish between assertions and fact. The onus is on us to verify all information, even when it emerges on deadline.
- We make sure to retain the original context of all quotations or clips, striving to convey the original tone. Our reporting and editing will not change the meaning of a statement or exclude important qualifiers.
- There is no copyright on news or ideas once a story is in the public domain, but if we can’t match the story, we credit the originating source.
- While news and ideas are there for the taking, the words used to convey them are not. If we borrow a story or even a paragraph from another source we either credit the source or rewrite it before publication or broadcast. Using another’s analysis or interpretation may constitute plagiarism, even if the words are rewritten, unless it is attributed.
- When we make a mistake, whether in fact or in context, and regardless of the platform, we correct it promptly and in a transparent manner, acknowledging the nature of the error.
- We publish or broadcast all corrections, clarifications or apologies in a consistent way.
- We generally do not “unpublish” or remove digital content, despite public requests, or “source remorse.” Rare exceptions generally involve matters of public safety, an egregious error or ethical violation, or legal restrictions such as publication bans.
FAIRNESS

- We respect the rights of people involved in the news.
- We give people, companies or organizations that are publicly accused or criticized opportunity to respond before we publish those criticisms or accusations. We make a genuine and reasonable effort to contact them, and if they decline to comment, we say so.
- We do not refer to a person’s race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender self-identification or physical ability unless it is pertinent to the story.
- We avoid stereotypes of race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status. And we take particular care in crime stories.
- We take special care when reporting on children or those who are otherwise unable to give consent to be interviewed. While some minors, such as athletes, may be used to being interviewed, others might have little understanding of the implications of talking to the media. So when unsure, or when dealing with particularly sensitive subjects, we err on the side of seeking parental consent. Likewise, we take special care when using any material posted to social media by minors, as they may not understand the public nature of their postings.
- We do not allow our own biases to impede fair and accurate reporting.
- We respect each person’s right to a fair trial.
- We do not pay for information, although we may compensate those who provide material such as photos or videos. We sometimes also employ experts to provide professional expertise, and pay for embedded activities. We are careful to note any such payments in our stories. (See TRANSPARENCY, below).
- It is becoming common to be asked for payments in foreign countries, whether it’s for guides, to make connections, or to help a source travel to meet reporters. But it’s important to question the subject’s motives in such cases, and to be transparent in telling audiences what occurred (See TRANSPARENCY, below).

Right To Privacy

- The public has a right to know about its institutions and the people who are elected or hired to serve its interests. People also have a right to privacy, and those accused of crimes have a right to a fair trial.
- However, there are inevitable conflicts between the right to privacy, and the rights of all citizens to be informed about matters of public interest. Each situation should be judged in light of common sense, humanity and relevance.
- We do not manipulate people who are thrust into the spotlight because they are victims of crime or are associated with a tragedy. Nor do we do voyeuristic stories about them. When we contact them, we are sensitive to their situations, and report only information in which the public has a legitimate interest.
- Journalists are increasingly using social networking sites to access information about people and organizations. When individuals post and publish information about themselves on these sites, this information generally becomes public, and can be used. However, journalists should not use subterfuge to gain access to information intended to be private. In addition, even when such information is public, we must rigorously apply ethical considerations including independent confirmation and transparency in identifying the source of information. (See DIGITAL MEDIA, below.)
INDIPE NDENCE

- We serve democracy and the public interest by reporting the truth. This sometimes conflicts with various public and private interests, including those of sources, governments, advertisers and, on occasion, with our duty and obligation to an employer.
- Defending the public’s interest includes promoting the free flow of information, exposing crime or wrongdoing, protecting public health and safety, and preventing the public from being misled.
- We do not give favoured treatment to advertisers and special interests. We resist their efforts to influence the news.
- We pay our own way whenever possible. However, not all journalists or organizations have the means to do so. So if another organization pays our expenses to an event that we are writing about we say so, and this includes when covering industries such as travel, automotive, the military and foreign trade (See TRANSPARENCY, below). (There are some generally understood exceptions; for instance, it is common practice to accept reviewers’ tickets for film previews, concerts, lectures and theatrical performances.)
- We do not solicit gifts or favours for personal use, and should promptly return unsolicited gifts of more than nominal value. If it is impractical to return the gift, we will give it to an appropriate charity.
- We do not accept the free or reduced-rate use of valuable goods or services offered because of our position. However, it may be appropriate to use a product for a short time to test or evaluate it. (A common exception is unsolicited books, music, food, or other new products sent for review.)
- We generally do not accept payment for speaking to groups we report on or comment on.
- We do not report about subjects in which we have financial or other interests, and we do not use our positions to obtain business or other advantages not available to the general public.
- We do not show our completed reports to sources – especially official sources – before they are published or broadcast, unless the practice is intended to verify facts. Doing so might invite prior restraint and challenge our independence as reporters.
- We gather information with the intent of producing stories and images for public consumption. We generally do not share unpublished information – such as notes and audio tapes of interviews, documents, emails, digital files, photos and video – with those outside of the media organizations for which we work. However, sometimes such sharing may be necessary to check facts, gain the confidence of sources or solicit more information.
- Columnists and commentators should be free to express their views, even when those views conflict with those of their organizations, as long as the content meets generally accepted journalistic standards for fairness and accuracy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- As fair and impartial observers, we must be free to comment on the activities of any publicly elected body or special interest group. But we cannot do this without an apparent conflict of interest if we are active members of an organization we are covering, and that includes membership through social media.
- We lose our credibility as fair observers if we write opinion pieces about subjects we also cover as reporters.
Editorial boards and columnists or commentators endorse political candidates or political causes. Reporters do not.

We carefully consider our political activities and community involvements—including those online—and refrain from taking part in demonstrations, signing petitions, doing public relations work, fundraising or making financial contributions if there is a chance we will be covering the campaign, activity or group involved.

If a journalist does choose to engage in outside political activity or espouse a particular political viewpoint, this activity could create a public perception of bias, or favouritism that would reflect on the journalist’s work. Any journalist who engages in such activities—including running for office—should publicly declare any real or potential conflicts.

Our private lives online present special challenges. For example, the only way to subscribe to some publications or social networking groups is to become a member. Having a non-journalist subscribe on your behalf would be one solution, as would be joining a wide variety of Facebook groups so you would not be seen as favouring one particular constituency. (See DIGITAL MEDIA, below.)

TRANSPARENCY

We generally declare ourselves as journalists and do not conceal our identities, including when seeking information through social media. However, journalists may go undercover when it is in the public interest and the information is not obtainable any other way; in such cases, we openly explain this deception to the audience.

We normally identify sources of information. But we may use unnamed sources when there is a clear and pressing reason to protect anonymity, the material gained from the confidential source is of strong public interest, and there is no other reasonable way to obtain the information. When this happens, we explain the need for anonymity.

We avoid pseudonyms, but when their use is essential, and we meet the tests above, we tell our readers, listeners or viewers.

When we do use unnamed sources, we identify them as accurately as possible by affiliation or status. (For example, a “senior military source” must be both senior and in the military.) Any vested interest or potential bias on the part of a source must be revealed.

We independently corroborate facts if we get them from a source we do not name.

We do not allow anonymous sources to take cheap shots at individuals or organizations. (See FAIRNESS, above.)

If we borrow material from another source we are careful to credit the original source. (See ACCURACY, above.)

We admit openly when we have made a mistake, and we make every effort to correct* our errors immediately.

We disclose to our audiences any biases that could be perceived to influence our reporting. (See CONFLICT OF INTEREST, above.)

We openly tell our audiences when another organization pays our expenses, or conversely, when we have made payments for information.
PROMISES TO SOURCES

- We only promise anonymity when the material is of high public interest and it cannot be obtained any other way. (See TRANSPARENCY, above.) And when we make these promises to sources, we keep them.
- Because we may be ordered by a court** or judicial inquiry to divulge confidential sources upon threat of jail, we must understand what we are promising. These promises – and the lengths we’re willing to go to keep them – should be clearly spelled out as part of our promise. The following phrases, if properly explained, may be helpful:
  - **Not for attribution:** We may quote statements directly but the source may not be named, although a general description of his or her position may be given (“a government official,” or “a party insider”). In TV, video or radio, the identity may be shielded by changing the voice or appearance.
  - **On background:** We may use the essence of statements and generally describe the source, but we may not use direct quotes.
  - **Off the record:** We may not report the information, which can be used solely to help our own understanding or perspective. There is not much point in knowing something if it can’t be reported, so this undertaking should be used sparingly, if at all.
- When we are not willing to go to jail to protect a source, we say so before making the promise. And we make it clear that the deal is off if the source lies or misleads us.

DIVERSITY

- News organizations – including newspapers, websites, magazines, radio and television – provide forums for the free interchange of information and opinion. As such, we seek to include views from all segments of the population.
- We also encourage our organizations to make room for the interests of all: minorities and majorities, those with power and those without it, holders of disparate and conflicting views.
- We avoid stereotypes, and don’t refer to a person’s race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender self-identification or physical ability unless it is pertinent to the story. (See FAIRNESS, above.)

ACCOUNTABILITY

- We are accountable to the public for the fairness and reliability of our reporting.
- We serve the public interest, and put the needs of our audience – readers, listeners or viewers – at the forefront of our newsgathering decisions.
- We clearly identify news and opinion so that the audience knows which is which.
- We don’t mislead the public by suggesting a reporter is some place that he or she isn’t.
- Photojournalists and videographers do not alter images or sound so that they mislead the public. When we do alter or stage images, we label them clearly (as a photo illustration or a staged video, for example).
- We use care when reporting on medical studies, polls and surveys, and we are especially suspect of studies commissioned by those with a vested interest, such as drug companies, special interest groups or politically sponsored think tanks. We
make sure we know the context of the results, such as sample size and population, questions asked, and study sponsors, and we include this information in our reports whenever possible.

- When we make a mistake, we correct* it promptly and transparently, acknowledging the nature of the error. (See ACCURACY, above.)

### DIGITAL MEDIA: SPECIAL ISSUES

- Ethical practice does not change with the medium. We are bound by the above principles no matter where our stories are published or broadcast.
- We consider all online content carefully, including blogging, and content posted to social media. We do not re-post rumours. (See ACCURACY, above.)
- The need for speed should never compromise accuracy, credibility or fairness. Online content should be reported and edited as carefully as print content, and when possible, subjected to full editing.
- We clearly inform sources when stories about them will be published across various media, and we indicate the permanency of digital media.
- When we publish outside links, we make an effort to ensure the sites are credible; in other words, we think before we link.
- When we correct* errors online, we indicate that the content has been altered or updated, and what the original error was. (See ACCURACY, above.)
- So long as the content is accurate, we generally do not “unpublish” or remove digital content, despite public requests to do so, including cases of “source remorse.” Rare exceptions generally involve matters of public safety, an egregious error or ethical violation, or legal restrictions** such as publication bans.
- We try to obtain permission whenever possible to use online photos and videos, and we always credit the source of the material, by naming the author and where the photo or video was previously posted. We use these photos and videos for news and public interest purposes only, and not to serve voyeuristic interests.
- We encourage the use of social networks as it is one way to make connections, which is part of our core work as journalists. However, we keep in mind that any information gathered through online means must be confirmed, verified and properly sourced.
- **Personal online activity**, including emails and social networking, should generally be regarded as public and not private. Such activity can impact our professional credibility. As such, we think carefully before we post, and we take special caution in declaring our political leanings online. (See CONFLICT OF INTEREST, above.)

*Note: The CAJ ethics committee is currently at work on guidelines for online corrections.

**Note: For more information on legal implications on journalism practice see the Canadian Journalism Project’s law page at J-Source.ca.
This is Exhibit "34" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Blog

Press accreditation procedure for the federal leaders' debates

Posted on Aug. 19, 2021 / Advocacy / Subscribe 0

During the last federal election, the CAJ called for the Leaders’ Debates Commission to be more transparent in its accreditation process. This year, the Commission has released accreditation instructions which include three application options. Members of professional media associations, including the CAJ, are among those eligible to go through the accreditation process.

If you are applying for press accreditation for the federal leaders debate, you may be asked to prove that you are a Class A CAJ member. To do so, you may provide your CAJ membership card to the commission or send us a note to request a proof-of-membership letter.

If you require a letter, please request one in advance of the accreditation application deadline on August 25.

More information.

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0 Comments
This is Exhibit "35" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery Members

On the following page you will find a list of Press Gallery members, broken down into various categories. The list and the various categories are updated monthly and any changes appear on "Changes this Month".

**by Name**

**By Name**

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### by Agency

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Ibbotson, John 613-566-3600 The Globe and Ma
Kirkup, Kristy 613-566-3615 The Globe and Ma
Raman-Wilms, Menaka 613-567-1110 The Globe and Ma
Silcoff, Sean 613-566-3613 The Globe and Ma
Walsh, Marieke 613-566-3605 The Globe and Ma
Al-Mehdar, Zainab 613-232-5952 The Hill Times, 24
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Sanci, Tessie 613-232-5952 The Lobby Monitor
Hemmadi, Murad 416-454-2681 The Logic
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Fillon, Raymond 613-234-3357 TVA, 300-207 Que
Lamarche, Michelle 613-234-3357 TVA, 300-207 Que
Latraverse, Emmanuelle 613-234-3357 TVA, 300-207 Que
Parent, Pierre 613-234-3357 TVA, 300-207 Que
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Guillaume St-Pierre 613-232-6078 Le Journal de Québec, 300-207 Queen
Marieke Walsh 613-566-3605 The Globe and Mail, 1400-100 Queen
## Staff

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<td>613-992-4511 (Office)</td>
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<td>Pierre Cuguen</td>
<td>Manager, Press Events</td>
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<td>Christine Thibeault</td>
<td>Coordinator, Press Event Support</td>
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**Honorary Members**

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<td>La Presse</td>
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<td>The Lawyers Daily</td>
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<td>Le Devoir</td>
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<td>The Lobby Monitor</td>
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<td>National Observer</td>
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<td>Toronto Star</td>
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### National Post

| National Post | 613-369-4800
|---------------|------------------|

### Wall Street Journal

| Wall Street Journal | 613-670-5748
|---------------------|------------------|

### New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal

| New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal | 506-999-4450
|---------------------------------|------------------|

### Winnipeg Free Press

| Winnipeg Free Press | 613-992-4511
|---------------------|------------------|

### Ottawa Citizen

| Ottawa Citizen | 613-596-3664
|----------------|------------------|

### Television - Télévision

| Aboriginal Peoples TV | 613-567-1550
|------------------------|------------------|

| Global TV | 613-369-4900
|-------------|------------------|

| CBC News | 613-288-6000
|------------|------------------|

| New Tang Dynasty TV | 613-820-2580
|---------------------|------------------|

| CITY | 613-618-0300
|-------|------------------|

| Radio-Canada | 613-288-6000
|---------------|------------------|

| CNN | 404-247-0462
|------|------------------|

| TFO | 613-255-0998
|-----|------------------|

| CPAC | 613-567-2722
|------|------------------|

| TVA | 613-234-3357
|-----|------------------|

| CTV | 613-236-7343
|-----|------------------|

| CTV2 | 613-789-0606
|------|------------------|

### Radio

| CBC News | 613-288-6000
|------------|------------------|

| Radio-Canada | 613-288-6000
|---------------|------------------|

### Magazines

| Maclean's | 613-670-8523
|-----------|------------------|

### Changes this Month

#### Added--Ajoutés

| Dupaul, Jonathan | 613-288-6000 Radio-Canada, 181 Queen
|------------------|---------------------------------|

| Ferron-Boissé, Olivier | 613-234-3357 TVA, 300-207 Queen
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|

| Horwood, Matthew | 613-232-5952 The Lobby Monitor, 246 Queen
|-------------------|---------------------------------|

| Hyland, Olivier | 613-288-6000 CBC News, 181 Queen
|-----------------|---------------------------------|

| Jeffery, Stephen | 613-232-5952 The Lobby Monitor, 246 Queen
|------------------|---------------------------------|

### Changes this Month

#### The following changes were made to the list for

**Les changements suivants ont été apportés à la list**
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<td>Kane, Laura Dhillon</td>
<td>613-236-4122</td>
<td>The Canadian Press, 56 Sp</td>
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<td>Labine, Jeff</td>
<td>613-789-2772</td>
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<td>Larivière, Christian</td>
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<td>The Globe and Mail, 1400-</td>
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**Removed—Retranchés**

**Change—Modifiés**

**From/De**

**To/A**
This is Exhibit "36" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
TORONTO, Aug. 18, 2020 /CNW/ - This past Sunday, the national board of the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) gathered for a regular meeting. One of our main agenda items was to discuss the recent news of the Alberta Legislative Press Gallery’s refusal to issue memberships to employees of Rebel News.

Late last week, Postmedia announced its extraordinary decision to pull its newspapers from the press gallery. While the CAJ respects their prerogative to operate their newsrooms as they see fit, we are concerned this decision could place its journalists in a difficult position to adequately serve the public.

Press galleries are independent self-regulatory bodies that have long been part of Canadian legislatures. They are recognized by the speaker to oversee the press accreditation process and other rules for legislative journalists. Press galleries have a right and responsibility to admit as members only those who meet their standards and definitions for journalism, so long as the process is transparent and fair. In 2016, the Alberta government requested a review in the wake of the controversial decision by the then NDP-led government to block access to the legislature to members of Rebel News. Heather Boyd, a former Western Canadian bureau chief for The Canadian Press, was hired to study the issue. Her subsequent report clearly outlined how individual reporters were the most appropriate arbitrators of who should (and should not) be accredited as members of the legislative press gallery. It is worth noting that Rebel News has, by its own admission, previously been denied press credentials by the Parliamentary Press Gallery.

The internet and widespread access to technology have opened the field to new players in the field of journalism, including: independent news sites, podcasters, citizen journalists, bloggers, YouTubers and others. We’ve also seen the rise of sites and organizations that mimic journalism, including: government propaganda sites, such as Ontario News Now, or Alberta’s Canadian Energy Centre; newsletters, websites, and video content produced by corporate, lobby and advocacy groups such as Progress Alberta, the Broadbent Institute’s PressProgress; and disinformation sites, such as the now defunct YellowVestGroup.com.

Press galleries may exclude lobbyists, protestors, government and corporate communications staff. They may also decide to exclude bloggers and citizen journalists, who do not engage in journalism frequently, professionally or whose actions violate a code of ethics. It’s important to vet applicants for security reasons, as they will have access to government buildings and officials.
The CAJ is not a regulatory agency and does not enforce a specific prescriptive definition of journalism. Like most in the industry, we embrace a broad definition of journalism. Much like a press gallery, the CAJ restricts our Class A membership to professional journalists and we draw upon transparent guidelines to make those decisions. The employees of Rebel News would not meet our criteria.

In reviewing the evolution of the Rebel News, it is clear the organization sometimes becomes an actor in the stories it tells. To date, this has taken several different forms, but includes providing financial and legal assistance to some of its sources. Rebel News for example, crowdfunds to help some individuals in its stories hire lawyers. It also purchases political advertising, and launches petitions; including, most recently, fundraising to hire a plane to fly through the skies while carrying a #FireMorneau sign. It has also offered free legal services to “non-violent Canadians” who disassemble blockades. Earlier this summer, as well, the organization launched a petition demanding Ontario Premier Doug Ford keep summer camps open.

To be clear, crowdfunding to support newsgathering is an accepted practice. Publishing opinions, even unpopular opinions, is an important function of journalism. The critical distinction between these practices and those employed by Rebel News are that its staff often actively participate in the story, working toward their desired end by applying legal, financial or other resources.

Much of this is openly posted on their campaigns page. The CAJ has previously noted this is inconsistent with our suggested code of ethics, particularly the following points:

- We do not allow our own biases to impede fair and accurate reporting.
- We carefully consider our political activities and community involvements—including those online—and refrain from taking part in demonstrations, signing petitions, doing public relations work, fundraising or making financial contributions if there is a chance we will be covering the campaign, activity or group involved.

This places Rebel News outside the definition the CAJ uses to distinguish our membership. This distinction was similarly reinforced by Justice Derek Green, as he considered who has constitutional protection as a journalist in the context of the Justin Brake case. In his decision, issued on March 28, 2019, Justice Green stated that one condition for constitutional protection was that, “he or she [the journalist] is not actively assisting, participating with or advocating for the protesters about whom the reports are being made.”

The CAJ has supported Rebel News in the past because other issues that could impact journalists were at play. In 2016, the Alberta government attempted to block Rebel News’ access to the provincial legislature in Edmonton. The CAJ objected to government officials’ attempt to control who can hold them to account. We maintain it is not for governments to define who is a journalist. We further stated that we disagreed with the arguments the government used to define journalism. At the time we argued that: “news organizations are still news organizations when their owners aren’t journalists” and that many online-only news operations are legitimate sources of news. We stand by those statements.

The CAJ also supported Rebel News’ access to the federal Leadership Debates in 2019 because the Leaders’ Debate Commission was not transparent in its accreditation process and waited until the last business day to issue its decision, and had no appeal process. Further, we objected to a government body using the Canadian Association of Journalists' ethics guidelines to try to define who is a journalist.
Indeed, journalism in Canada is not a licensed profession. There is no industry accrediting body, such as a college of physicians, or a law society, as is the case for lawyers. Nevertheless, in Canada, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a constitutional guarantee for the freedom of expression, which ensures the ability to express ideas freely. There is no dispute that this provision is a cornerstone of our democratic society. At the same time, however, the act of producing journalism is predicated on upholding high ethical standards, which demands that information gathered during the reporting process be presented accurately, fairly and transparently for public consideration.

The CAJ is Canada's largest national professional organization for journalists from all media, representing more than 600 members across the country. The CAJ's primary roles are to provide high-quality professional development for its members and public-interest advocacy.

Return to list

0 Comments
This is Exhibit "37" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
CBC is taking the Conservative Party of Canada to court for what it says is the 'unauthorized use of copyright-protected material' in an online campaign ad. The party plans to 'dispute' the action. (Nathan Denette/The Canadian Press)

The CBC is taking the Conservative Party of Canada to court for using the broadcaster's footage in an online advertisement.
In a legal application to the Federal Court of Canada, the CBC served notice it wants the Conservative Party of Canada and its executive director, Dustin Van Vugt, to acknowledge the party "engaged in the unauthorized use of copyright-protected material."

The court documents filed Thursday listed The National co-host Rosemary Barton and parliamentary bureau reporter John Paul Tasker as applicants in the filing, along with the CBC.

In a statement Saturday, Jennifer McGuire, CBC News general manager and editor in chief, and Luce Julien, general director of information programming for Radio-Canada, said the court filing would be amended to remove the names of the journalists as applicants.

"To be clear, CBC/Radio Canada was the driver of this process, not the journalists," the statement said. "CBC/Radio Canada named and added the journalists to the application because their images and content were used inappropriately. In order to avoid any confusion about the role of Rosemary Barton and John Paul Tasker, we intend to file an amendment to remove their names as applicants when the court opens on Tuesday."

CBC-Radio Canada named the journalists in the lawsuit, according to the statement, "because their images and journalism were misused for partisan purposes negatively impacting perceptions of their independence."

The application says the video, titled "Look at What We've Done," was published around Oct. 4 on a Conservative Party website (notasadvertised.ca), a Facebook page and a YouTube page.

It says the video includes footage from The National, Power & Politics and a CBC Politics broadcast of a town hall attended by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. It includes footage of Barton and Tasker, as well as "At Issue" panelist Andrew Coyne and commentator Rex Murphy.

CBC/Radio-Canada holds the copyright on all those clips, the application says.

It also says the clips were "taken out of context and are edited and relied on to make partisan points for the benefit" of the party.
In response, the Conservatives used the lawsuit as a fundraising pitch, arguing in an email to supporters that CBC "footage should be usable by those who fund them."

The party is asking for donations so that it can "hit back hard" against "this attack on free expression."

As well, the Conservative Party says in a statement on its website that it plans to fight the CBC legal action.

"The Conservative Party has grave concern that this decision was made on the eve of an election that CBC is to be covering fairly and objectively," the statement says. "The Conservative Party considers this a complete distraction in the final days of a tightly contested election, and we will dispute this lawsuit fully."

The court document filed by CBC says several letters were sent to the Conservative Party to take down the ad in question on Oct. 7 and 8. It came down on Oct. 10.

The application also says the Conservative Party has repeatedly made similar violations, both recently and in the run-up to the 2015 election.

In their statement, McGuire and Julien said they received no assurance from the Conservative Party that it wouldn't happen again, so "it is therefore critical for us to provide clarity through the court to safeguard the integrity and professional independence of our journalism and our journalists."

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5 ANALYSIS
Annamie Paul is leading the Green Party's national campaign — but hasn't left Toronto once
228 reading now
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AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Toronto Star explains why it paid $5,000 for the Rob Ford rant video

By The Canadian Press
November 7, 2013

TORONTO – A video of Toronto Mayor Rob Ford ranting about killing someone is of “huge public interest” and relevant to the mayor's character, the Toronto Star's editor-in-chief said in explaining why the paper paid $5,000 for it.

“The issue is so big that to pose the question, 'Why did you pay for it,' ... I don’t understand it,” Michael Cooke said in the wake of the explosive video's release.

The video, published Thursday on the Star's website, shows the mayor in a profane fury. The paper reported it was filmed on a cellphone at a Ford supporter’s home, where Ford had arrived “clearly impaired.”

Cooke couldn't say if the paper's earlier decision not to pay for a video that appears to show the mayor smoking crack cocaine factored in to their decision to pay for this one, but said he sometimes wishes the paper did buy that first video.

“The mayor is in front of us a day or so ago saying he’s nothing left to hide and he’s called...us all liars and maggots from the beginning when we reported two of our journalists seeing that video seeing the mayor smoking crack, or what we thought to be crack,” Cooke said.

“The mayor’s friends went to stunning lengths to find and suppress that video, we think, certainly we’ve written stories about it, and all the while he’s denied its existence so our feeling last night was that if we didn’t grab that video quick it might disappear.”

The Toronto Sun obtained a short clip of the longer video of Ford’s tirade, but reported that while it discussed the video with the “vendor,” it didn’t enter into negotiations to buy it.

The Star said it was told the money went to “the legal and beneficial use of a family.""}

The amount the Star paid for the video is “consistent with fees paid by news organizations for exclusive videos or photographs,” the paper reported, and less than it has paid for some book excerpts, Cooke added.

“We paid for that video because of the huge, huge public interest both in Toronto and worldwide,” he said.

“We decided that the crisis at city hall makes it essential to get all the information relevant to the mayor’s true character and his views in front of Torontonians.”
Some readers expressed surprise or were critical on Twitter about the payment.

“Kinda disappointed the Star paid for that video,” one user tweeted. “That now becomes a story and debate in and of itself.”

“Apparently the star paid for the video,” another user tweeted. “Isn’t that against the ethics (of) journalism?”

Cooke said the decision wasn’t an unusual one because news outlets pay all the time for video, citing the example of a citizen who is the only one to capture footage of a plane crash.

Ivor Shapiro, the chairman of Ryerson University’s school of journalism, agreed, suggesting some of the criticism may stem from a long-standing taboo on “chequebook journalism.”

“Many news organizations do not pay subjects of stories for information that leads to a news story,” Shapiro said.

It would be unfair to call this a case of chequebook journalism, he said.

“First of all, I don’t know that we never pay for information anyway as journalists,” Shapiro said. “But even if there were a complete taboo against paying for information, the reason we don’t pay for information is because it taints the quality of the information. This does not apply as the video was made before.”

Chris Waddell, the director of the school of journalism and communication at Carleton University, said he thought paying for news was not a good practice to get into.

He raised the case of the widely seen video of 18-year-old Sammy Yatim being shot by police on a Toronto streetcar in July.

“I would hope, in other cases like the Sammy Yatim case, that people’s first thought is not, ‘Gee, how much could I make selling this video,’ (but), ‘It might be an important piece of evidence the public needs to know,” Waddell said.

“I would think (news outlets’) general interest would be for people to provide information for free, including video, rather than encouraging people to ask for money.”

The video appears to be filmed surreptitiously in a home, which leads to other ethical debates in the age of ubiquitous smartphones, Waddell suggested.

“How much do you want to know about the circumstances under which it was shot, or is it your view that just everything that happens to everybody everywhere all the time is available to be put up?” Waddell said.

“(Even) as a public figure are you allowed to have a public life and a private life?”
This is Exhibit "39" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
This is Exhibit "40" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Montreal

Montreal's La Presse to become non-profit entity

Desmarais family, the publication's longtime owners, will donate $50M before severing ties

Steve Rukavina · CBC News · Posted: May 08, 2018 11:24 AM ET | Last Updated: May 8, 2018

La Presse publisher Guy Crevier, left, responds to a question as president Pierre-Elliott Levasseur looks on during a news conference in Montreal, where the media company announced plans to adopt a not-for-profit structure. (Paul Chiasson/Canadian Press)

A bastion of Quebec journalism, La Presse, is undergoing a major change, severing ties with the powerful Desmarais family and becoming a non-profit entity.
The announcement Tuesday is aimed at enabling the French-language publication to accept private donations as well as government support.

- **How to save local news without massive government bailouts**

- **OPINION**  There is reason to be hopeful about the future of news. Yes, really

Non-profits are a common model in the U.S., where wealthy foundations and donors help bankroll investigative and public interest journalism.

The Desmarais family has owned La Presse for more than 50 years as part of its conglomerate, Power Corp.

The family will donate $50 million to the new entity.

"The new structure is designed to be a modern approach adapted to the realities of today's written media," La Presse said in a statement.

"La Presse will be able to pursue its mission: producing high-quality, thorough and reliable news and promoting diversity of opinion with respect for ideas and individuals."

The change in structure requires the repeal of a provision of a Private Act adopted in 1967 under Quebec law regarding the ownership of La Presse.

**Support from Ottawa?**

At the announcement, La Presse president Pierre-Elliott Levasseur urged the federal government to financially support the written press through philanthropic models and direct assistance.

The Canadian government indicated it would do so in its last budget, tabled in February.

The Liberal government proposed $50 million over five years to support independent, non-governmental organizations that will spur on local journalism in underserved communities.

Levasseur said that a non-profit model makes it easier for the Liberals to justify using taxpayer dollars to bail out struggling media organizations.
"They understand the important contribution that written media plays in a healthy democracy, but they're not willing to help rich families or rich companies," Levasseur said.

In December 2017, La Presse stopped printing paper copies and went exclusively digital. On Tuesday, it was announced that La Presse was cutting ties with the Desmarais family and becoming a non-profit entity. (Benjamin Shingler/CBC)

The budget also said the government will spend the next year exploring models that would allow private giving or philanthropic support for non-profit journalism and local news.

Founded in 1884, the French-language newspaper was created by conservatives who were dissatisfied with then Prime Minister John A. Macdonald.

In December 2017, the newspaper stopped printing paper copies and went exclusively digital, featuring a website, mobile app and a daily tablet edition called La Presse+.

La Presse has one of the largest newsrooms in Canada, with 585 employees.
Montreal’s La Presse to become non-profit entity | CBC News

With files from The Canadian Press

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AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Financially struggling newspapers to get federal money within weeks, heritage minister says

Newspapers don't have an audience problem; they have a revenue problem, says publisher

Charles Rusnell · CBC News · Posted: Apr 27, 2020 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: April 28, 2020

'Newsroom leaders in this country need to be thinking about how to create communities around their publications that are willing to invest in those publications either as donors or subscribers,' says academic Sean Holman. (David Donnelly/CBC)
Federal Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault says he expects money from an emergency COVID-19 general business wage subsidy program to start flowing within weeks to Canada's beleaguered newspaper industry.

Critics say this financial lifeline may come too late, however, to save the pandemic crisis-accelerated loss of newspapers and media jobs — specifically, because a $595-million financial-assistance program first announced 18 months ago has yet to provide any money to increasingly desperate newspaper publishers.

"That is a very long time to wait for the newspaper business when newspapers are closing almost every week," said Winnipeg Free Press publisher Bob Cox, who is also chair of the Canadian News Media Association, an industry lobby group, earlier this month.

Cox said he doesn't know exactly how many newspapers have closed since the pandemic began but that it has been dozens, including more than 20 in the Maritimes. At least six publications in Quebec have dropped Monday-to-Friday print editions, and four have closed in Manitoba.

Québecor, which owns the Journal de Montréal, Vidéotron and other media properties, announced at the end of March that it would temporarily lay off 10 per cent of its workforce. And Postmedia, the country’s largest newspaper publisher, was considering temporary salary cuts to stave off COVID-19 losses, according to a report in The Tyee.

Postmedia announced April 28 it would close 15 weeklies in Manitoba and southern Ontario in May, because the papers were losing money and faced further declines in advertising sales in the pandemic.

Cox said advertising revenues are generally down about 50 per cent.

"On an annualized basis, that would be more than $1 billion [in lost ad revenues] for the whole industry in Canada," Cox said. "No one knows how long the COVID impact will be. My estimate for industry losses related to COVID in 2020 is at least $500 million."
Edward Greenspon, president of the non-profit Public Policy Forum in Ottawa, said daily ad revenues for newspapers have fallen two-thirds in 12 years from $2.7 billion in 2007 to about $900 million last year. He said ad revenue for weekly newspapers fell by about half during that same period.

The pandemic, "will certainly take a huge bite out of that," said Greenspon, who was editor-in-chief of the Globe and Mail from 2002 to 2009 and co-authored Shattered Mirror, a report into the state of Canada's newspaper industry produced by the Public Policy Forum.

Cox said the $595-million in federal funding, which includes a series of tax measures and was included in the 2019 budget, already has been overtaken by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The government money is supposed to offset advertising revenue lost to internet giants such as Google and Facebook and help pay to keep journalists employed.

"But then COVID came along, and everything changed," Cox said. "Now, we have lost a lot of our advertising revenues as well. So really, we have got to talk about a new way of supporting newspapers and the news media industry in general."
**Temporary handouts not the solution**

Cox said there has to be a way to build sustainable business models that will allow news outlets to provide news to communities and pay employees a decent wage.

"We don't really want temporary government handouts. That is not the best route."

Cox said he has spoken with Heritage Ministry officials, for example, about adopting legislation now being proposed in Australia that would force Google and Facebook to pay for media content they carry.

Another proposal is to raise the tax credit on digital news subscriptions from 15 per cent to 50 per cent to encourage more people to support Canadian media outlets.

Sean Holman, a journalism professor at Mount Royal University in Calgary, said he wouldn't argue against financial support for the newspaper industry in the midst of a growing crisis. But
he said newspapers contributed to the economic problem, because they failed to adapt to a changing cultural and digital media environment.

For years, even as their advertising declined, newspapers viewed their job as delivering readers to advertisers, he said. And too often, they did that by producing "clickbait" stories that generated page views but not reader loyalty.

**Creating communities**

"If your focus is always on getting the story that is going to get big clicks, then that doesn't leave a lot of room to show readers the kind of value that you can provide from a public interest standpoint," Holman said.

"I think newsroom leaders in this country need to be thinking about how to create communities around their publications that are willing to invest in those publications either as donors or subscribers," he said.

Newspapers, Holman argues, don't have an economic problem; they have a culture problem.

"The longer the Canadian news media persists in believing that it's an economic problem, the longer it will be an economic problem for them."

- Postmedia closing several Manitoba, Ontario newspapers due to falling ad sales

In an interview with CBC News last week, Guilbeault said the government is cognizant of both the importance of newspapers during the COVID-19 crisis and the heightened existential crisis for the industry caused by the pandemic.

"Clearly, we are trying to get the money out the door as quickly as possible," Guilbeault said, referring to the wage-subsidy program.

"Our goal is that the news media can start getting their checks as of August or September. We're not sure we will be able to make it. But that is what we're working really hard to achieve."
Guilbeault also pointed to changes announced earlier this month by the federal Finance Department that allow publishers of magazines and non-daily newspapers that receive support through the Canada Periodical Fund to qualify for the Canadian journalism labour tax credit.

The tax credit program offers a 25 per cent tax credit and is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2019.

**Many journalists wary of funding**

The government, Guilbeault said, is also spending $30 million on a COVID health advertising campaign, with 90 per cent of that money directed to nearly 900 Canadian media outlets, many of which are community newspapers.

Many journalists, however, are wary of the government funding journalism. Karyn Pugliese, president of the Canadian Association of Journalists, said there needs to be more transparency and accountability around the funding.
"We want to know, for example, everybody who is applying for this money, and we want to have accountability of how it's being used," Pugliese said.

Reporters on Parliament Hill scrum Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett, left, and Minister of Indigenous Services Marc Miller. Many journalist are wary of taking government funding for fear it will undercut their independence. (Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press)

As it stands, newspaper companies can take federal money and still lay off employees.

This accountability is needed "not just for the survival of the industry financially but for the survival of the appearance of independence, and the true independence of the industry," Pugliese said.

The CAJ, she said, also wants to ensure "that government can't just cut funding when they don't like what you're covering."

- **For cash-strapped newspapers, COVID-19 presents more challenges — and opportunities**
Some in the newspaper industry have accused the CBC of undercutting newspapers through the broadcaster’s publicly subsidized expansion into digital news since 1996.

But Cox and Guilbeault say CBC is a potential ally for newspapers. Guilbeault pointed to a pilot project in which CBC Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Free Press have formed a partnership to promote each other's journalism on their websites on weekends.

Cox said the experiment is small but that these kinds of partnerships "are going to be more and more necessary as the news media becomes more fragile."

"We have to work together to make sure our communities are served," he said.
Guilbeault said he would like to see more local media partnering with CBC and using its platform, which is federally funded, to make local journalism more widely available across the country.

Roger Holmes is a third-generation community newspaper publisher in Wainwright, Alta., near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. He published the Wainwright Star.

Holmes said he is uneasy about accepting money from the federal government since the media would have to "bite the hand that is feeding it."

He would prefer that the government instead funnel the money it's now spending on internet ads to print publications, which are still in demand in rural Canada.

LISTEN | How small Alberta newspapers are handling a drop in ad revenue:

Printer: 'I'm the bad guy'

Still, Holmes acknowledges that federal money is needed now to halt the rapid failure of local newspapers because of the COVID-19 crisis. His family also owns a commercial press that before the pandemic printed 50 community newspapers for independent publishers from Alberta and Saskatchewan.

"I'm the bad guy, because I want to get paid every week and, for some of them, I have had to stop printing their papers because they were not able to pay me," Holmes said.

"A lot of them are down to skeleton crews. Some of them just one or two employees or mothers and husbands and wives. So, it's desperate," he said.

Cox points out that even as newspapers are failing during the pandemic, readership has soared.

"We don't have an audience problem. We have a revenue problem," Cox said.

Where to next?
"There is demand for what we do, and there are a lot of people who appreciate what we do as a public service in the public interest.

"And I think that should be proof enough that we are deserving of some government attention."

Holmes remembers his father talking about tough times in the news business during the 1920s and the Depression of the 1930s.

Now, he's witnessing the "hollowing out" of newspapers, first through the massive loss over the past few years of advertising revenue to internet giants Google and Facebook, and now through the COVID-19 crisis.

"We're just kind of wondering where do we go next," said Holmes.

---

**Corrections**

- An earlier version of this story referred to the $595 million in federal funds for media as being "stalled." In fact, the earliest that the tax credits that constitute that relief can be applied is in the 2019 tax year.

*Apr 27, 2020 1:43 PM ET*
Financially struggling newspapers to get federal money within weeks, heritage minister says | CBC News

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This is Exhibit "42" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Sign the petition for domestic worker rights

United Steelworkers (/category/cahoots-organization/united-steelworkers)
July 12, 2018

CIVIL LIBERTIES WATCH (/ISSUES/CIVIL-LIBERTIES-WATCH)

FEMINISM (/ISSUES/FEMINISM)
LABOUR (/ISSUES/LABOUR)

Thank you for reading this story...

More people are reading rabble.ca than ever and unlike many news organizations, we have never put up a paywall – at rabble we’ve always believed in making our reporting and analysis free to all, while striving to make it sustainable as well. Media isn’t free to produce. rabble’s total budget is likely less than what big corporate media spend on photocopying (we kid you not!) and we do not have any major foundation, sponsor or angel investor. Our main supporters are people and organizations -- like you. This is why we need your help. You are what keep us sustainable.

rabble.ca has staked its existence on you. We live or die on community support -- your support! We get hundreds of thousands of visitors and we believe in them. We believe in you. We believe people will put in what they can for the greater good. **We call that sustainable.**

So what is the easy answer for us? Depend on a community of visitors who care passionately about media that amplifies the voices of people struggling for change and justice. **It really is that simple. When the people who visit rabble care enough to contribute a bit then it works for everyone.**

And so we’re asking you if you could make a donation, right now, to help us carry forward on our mission. **Make a donation today.**

---

**COMMENTS**

We welcome your comments! rabble.ca embraces a pro-human rights, pro-feminist, anti-racist, queer-positive, anti-imperialist and pro-labour stance, and encourages discussions which develop progressive thought. Our [full comment policy can be found here](/about/comment-policy). [Learn more about Disqus on rabble.ca and your privacy here.](/node/115848)

Please keep in mind:

**Do**

**Don’t**
This is Exhibit "43" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Petition for Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women

The Harper government has a long track record of ignoring Aboriginal issues in this country. Stephen Harper doesn’t seem to think that listening to Aboriginal peoples and hearing their voices is a very important task at all. The recent death of Loretta Saunders should be adding urgency to create a federal plan to investigate missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada.
Harper and the Conservative government. Change.org and the petition's author have set a goal of 8,000 signatures. Can't we do better than that?

Thank you for reading this story...

More people are reading rabble.ca than ever and unlike many news organizations, we have never put up a paywall – at rabble we’ve always believed in making our reporting and analysis free to all, while striving to make it sustainable as well. Media isn’t free to produce. rabble’s total budget is likely less than what big corporate media spend on photocopying (we kid you not!) and we do not have any major foundation, sponsor or angel investor. Our main supporters are people and organizations -- like you. This is why we need your help. You are what keep us sustainable.

rabble.ca has staked its existence on you. We live or die on community support -- your support! We get hundreds of thousands of visitors and we believe in them. We believe in you. We believe people will put in what they can for the greater good. We call that sustainable.

So what is the easy answer for us? Depend on a community of visitors who care passionately about media that amplifies the voices of people struggling for change and justice. It really is that simple. When the people who visit rabble care enough to contribute a bit then it works for everyone.

And so we’re asking you if you could make a donation, right now, to help us carry forward on our mission. Make a donation today (/donate).
- Report typos and logical fallacies.
- Be respectful.
- Respect copyright - link to articles.
- Stay focused. Bring in-depth commentary to our discussion forum, babble (/babble).

- Bully or troll.
- Post spam.
- Engage trolls. Flag suspect activity instead.

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Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
I don't sign petitions in my job, but I can circulate good ideas. Some kind of student-debt forgiveness for COVID-19 health-care providers -- more than just temporary relief -- is a really good idea. #cdnpoli

Deborah Griffin - Public Relations Professional @StrictlyIn... · Apr 11, 2020
Sharing... Forgive Student Loan Debt for Healthcare Providers Responding to COVID-19. This petition can be found at Change.org

https://twitter.com/SusanDelacourt/status/1249013208742060034

Screen captured on September 4, 2021
This is Exhibit "45" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
YOU have the power! Sign the petition. Your action will protect pensioners! goo.gl/nWzWb3 via @CARPAAdvocacy

6:44 AM · Oct 25, 2017 · Twitter Web Client

2 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 3 Likes

Screen captured on September 4, 2021.

https://twitter.com/susan_p_riley/status/923168328839032832
This is Exhibit "46" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant.

AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson

A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta

My Commission expires on February 15, 2024

Appointee No. 0754515
Opinion

The government just made its toxic media bailout plan even worse

People in line for media bailout dollars shouldn't be the ones deciding who gets media dollars

Andrew Potter · for CBC News · Posted: May 24, 2019 4:00 AM ET | Last Updated: May 24, 2019

The government's panel will be staffed by pretty much the same legacy news organizations and vested interests that have spent the last three years demanding the government bail them out in the first place. (Patrick Doyle/Canadian Press)

The news release put out Wednesday by Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez begins well: "The Government of Canada understands that for a democracy to function properly, it needs to have solid, independent news media."

https://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/media-bailout-1.5147053
If only he had stopped there. But instead, the release goes on for another 700 words to outline a plan whose principal effect will be to undermine the independence of the news media.

The purpose of the release was to announce the plan for the "independent panel of experts" who will be tasked with helping figure out the toughest part of the government's $600 million bailout of the print news business: namely, who should be eligible for the money?

Making a list of State Approved Media Outlets For Purposes of Getting Public Money was always going to be a Pravda-y sort of business.

The general expectation was the Liberals would follow their established script for these sorts of things and find a widely respected and reasonably non-partisan public figure to head it up. Maybe a former governor general or retired Supreme Court justice could be cajoled into doing it, though a former newspaper publisher or head of a journalism school might do in a pinch. In any event, the icky politics of the gig would be laundered through some eminence's reputation.

- **Federal government names organizations that will help spend $660M journalism fund**

- **Tories accuse Trudeau of bribing media with tax breaks**

Instead, Rodriguez has handed deciding the membership of the panel over to eight associations, a group that includes News Media Canada (a newspaper industry lobby group), a handful of press councils and professional organizations, and two media unions including Unifor, an organisation whose leadership has actively campaigned essentially on behalf of the Liberals.

That is, the panel will be staffed by pretty much the same legacy news organizations and vested interests that have spent the last three years demanding the government bail them out in the first place.

Each organization is invited to name a member to the panel, and that member's job will be to advise the minister on the eligibility criteria for the tax measures in order to ensure that they are "efficient, transparent and fair."
The rationale that the news release gives for the choice of these groups is that they "represent the majority of Canadian news media publishers and journalists" — but this only underscores how bizarre it is. When handing out public money, it's not normal practice to invite the expected prime beneficiaries of the handout to determine the criteria for who ought to get the handout. Try asking your kids to hand out Halloween candy sometime and see how that goes.

It boggles the mind that the Liberals have chosen this route in helping them decide who will be eligible for the money. (Erik White/CBC)

If there's any good news here, it is that it is now dead clear to everyone just why the Liberals' bailout package is such a toxic initiative. The news media play a number of useful roles in a healthy democracy, but one that is often cited is the job of "holding power to account." One very common way journalists do this is by pointing out conflicts of interest — in particular, the conflicts that arise when public money is being handed out by people who stand to gain by handing it out.

There's a tendency at this point for both supporters and opponents of the media bailout to point to the existence of the CBC as support for their respective positions. There is certainly a conversation to be had about the independence of public broadcasting and the place of the
CBC's particular funding model in that conversation. But the point here is not to debate state funding for media or to re-litigate the merits of the bailout — those horses are running free.

What is at issue is the proposed composition of the panel, and there is no question that the members of any organization that plays along with this panel are in principle ceding their right to object to these sorts of conflicts of interest. Which is to say, they are abandoning one of the prime democratic functions of a free press.

That is why none of these organizations should agree to be on the panel. Of course most of them probably don't see it that way — people in blatant conflicts rarely do. That is why it falls to the only actually independent national organization named to the panel, the Canadian Association of Journalists, to step up.

In its corporate "aims and objectives" the CAJ describes itself as "the national voice of Canadian journalists" and declares that it "upholds the public's right to know" and supports investigative journalism. In the name of these principles, the CAJ leadership must refuse to participate in this panel.

It would have been better if this bailout had never happened. Having been put in the budget, it would have been better if the bailout had been set up in a way that didn't involve having some official government-appointed panel help decide who is in and who is out. But having gone this far down the path, it boggles the mind that the Liberals have chosen this route in helping them decide who will be eligible for the money.

You could spend some time coming up with suggestions to expand the diversity of the panel's membership (someone from academia, more digital representation, a civil liberties watchdog, etc.) but that would miss the point. Because compared to this actual plan, literally any other method of choosing the panel's membership would be less inclined to undermine public trust in the media's independence.

Calm down, you might say, the panel is in the end just advisory, and the final decision about who gets the bailout money will be decided by the politicians. To this, the only response is that it's a sign of how much we've lost our bearings when a politician deciding who in the media gets a cheque is seen as the more principled alternative to leaving it up to a bunch of conflicted stakeholders.
This is Exhibit "47" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Andrew Coyne: It's when you read details of media bailout that the chill sets in

If this goes through, everything will be subsidized: print, broadcast, the works — a whole industry of CBCs. You couldn’t do a better job killing the news business.
If you weren’t careful, you might have missed it: a brief 160-word item, tucked deep inside the budget, labelled Supporting Canadian Journalism.

Mostly it was a rehash of the measures already announced in November’s Fall Economic Statement: a labour cost subsidy (in the form of a tax credit — presumably this sounds more palatable) for journalism organizations, a tax credit/subsidy for digital news subscribers, and charitable tax status for news organizations that register as non-profits. Only if you turned back further still, to an annex marked Tax Measures: Supplementary Information, would you find the details.

What you would discover, if you did, was how a bad idea in principle was likely to be infinitely worse in practice.

There are any number of objections to the government getting into the game of propping up failing news organizations: that taking money from the people we cover will place us in a permanent and inescapable conflict of interest; that it will produce newspapers concerned less with appealing to
readers than to grantsmen; that it will not only leave us dependent on government, but without standing to oppose such dependence in others; that it will solve none of our problems, but only encourage us to put off dealing with them; that it is all so bloody unnecessary.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

$600M in federal funding for media 'a turning point in the plight of newspapers in Canada'

But the most potent objection is that, as the government cannot possibly bail out everybody — for in the internet age what was formerly a tidy little constellation of newspapers and other outlets has exploded into a vast universe of what could plausibly be called news organizations — it must inevitably get into choosing who should receive its blessing and who should not.

Whether this is done directly by the prime minister or by his designates, whether the preference is based on partisanship, or ideology, or connections, or mere incumbency, it is not an appropriate role for government in a democracy. Subsidizing speech the government likes is not materially different from suppressing speech it doesn’t like, and indeed may have much the same effect.

You might understand that in the abstract, but it’s when you see the details of how they propose to go about it that the chill really sets in.

Henceforth, if this goes ahead, the Canadian journalism business will be divided into two groups: on the one hand, a coterie of government-approved trough-feeders adorned with little merit badges identifying them as Qualified Canadian Journalism Organizations, and on the other, everyone else. Eligibility for QCJO status is ostensibly to be decided by an “independent panel” of journalists, but the government has already dictated a list of its own not-so-independent criteria in advance.

Thus, a QCJO would have to be “organized as a corporation, partnership or trust” (no sole proprietorships), incorporated in Canada and 75 per cent Canadian-controlled (no foreign-based or -owned publications); and “primarily engaged,” not only in producing “original news content,” but news content of a particular kind: “matters of general interest and reports of current events, including coverage of democratic institutions and processes,” but not “primarily focused on a particular topic such as industry-specific news, sports, recreation, arts, lifestyle or entertainment.”
So: the government will subsidize department stores, but not boutiques. Why? The same reason the 25 per cent wage subsidy, like the 15 per cent subscription subsidy, is restricted to news organizations that “primarily” produce “written content.” Because that description neatly excludes anyone outside the existing Canadian newspaper industry. And that’s who this policy is designed for: not the future of news but the past; not the scrappy startups who might save the business, but the lumbering dinosaurs who are taking it down.

That’s, as I say, before the independent panel has even been struck. What additional criteria its members will come up with can only be guessed at — the November statement suggested they would also be asked to “define and promote core journalism standards” and “define professional journalism,”
which sounds even more ominous.

How independent will the panel be? How will its members be chosen, and by whom? If previous such exercises, for example the Senate selection model, are any guide, they will not be partisan Liberals, as such — just reliably progressive in outlook. Of course they will be. For they will have already selected themselves: not just by their enthusiasm for the idea of a government body picking which news organizations live or die, but by the firm conviction that they are just the sort of person who ought to be a member of that body.

And why not? Membership on the panel, as on the (presumably separate) administrative body that will “evaluate” organizations according to how well they adhere to the panel’s criteria, will carry with it extraordinary power — over businesses, over careers. Possibly news organizations will be prohibited from lobbying panel members, but nothing can prevent them from sucking up to them, whether in the issues they cover or the stances they take.

But then, again, their work would be half-done before they had started: self-selection would have already winnowed the field. What sort of news organization do you think would operate as a non-profit, the kind that charitable tax status would benefit? Would it be likely to be, say, a strong believer in the profit motive? What sort of organization would be most likely to apply for the labour subsidy? The kind that advocates for less government intervention in the economy? And yet, those organizations that refused to apply would find themselves at a competitive disadvantage relative to those that did.

The inevitable result will be to tilt the field, gradually perhaps but irreversibly, in favour of progressives and of progressive views — not necessarily congenial to the government of the day, but certainly to government, and absolutely certainly within the ambit of “acceptable” opinion. The radical, the unorthodox, the unsettling or unappealing — to some, though not to others — need not apply.

You say something like this is already in place, in broadcasting? Yes it is. I’m not sure the CBC is really an advertisement for the wonders of subsidized newsgathering. But that’s not the point. Maybe there’s a place for the CBC, or something like it, as one offering among others. The point is, if this goes through, everything will be subsidized: print, broadcast, the works — a whole industry of CBCs. If you were searching for a way to kill the news business, you couldn’t do a better job.
EDITOR'S NOTE: A line in this column saying “A QCJO would have to be “organized as a corporation, partnership or trust” (no sole proprietorships), incorporated in Canada and 75 per cent Canadian-owned” has been corrected to say “Canadian-controlled”.

MOST COMMENTED
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TRENDING

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Michael Taube: Why O'Toole would be a more effective prime minister than Trudeau

Brian Mulroney on the rising 'hostility' between Canada and the United States

Rex Murphy: I miss Donald Trump and the hypnotic hold he had on his enemies

THIS WEEK IN FLYERS

COMMENTS

Postmedia is committed to maintaining a lively but civil forum for discussion and encourage all readers to share their views on our articles. Comments may take up to an hour for moderation before appearing on the site. We ask you to keep your comments relevant and respectful. We have enabled email notifications—you will now receive an email if you receive a reply to your comment, there is an update to a comment thread you follow or if a user you follow comments. Visit our Community Guidelines for more information and details on how to adjust your email settings.
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Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
From its inception, I've had concerns about the federal government’s attempt to assist the suffering mainstream media from, what some say, is its inevitable
As someone who firmly believes that the fifth estate plays an integral role in holding government accountable, I know that we need a healthy, vibrant and independent media to inform the public about what is happening and what it means to you and me, the taxpayers of the true north strong and free.

READ MORE: Addition of Unifor to controversial media panel comes under fire in question period

And free is the operative word in this discussion; if the federal government cuts cheques to media outlets, be it print or electronic media, can the public be assured that the coverage that those media outlets provide actually be objective, or would the coverage of government policy be influenced, intentionally or unintentionally, by that government subsidy?

It's a fair question, but perhaps an analysis of the current situation may offer some insight.

We know that the CBC continues to receive substantial funding from the federal government, which, on the surface, might indicate that the CBC is beholden to the government of the day and would slant its coverage and editorial opinion to curry favour with that government.

But the offerings of some of the commentators on the people’s network, such those of Andrew Coyne, Chantel Hebert and Rex Murphy, certainly debunk the idea that it is cheerleading for the government of the day.

COMMENTARY: Ottawa’s ill-conceived plan to ‘help’ the media only makes matters worse

TRENDING STORIES

O’Toole and Singh rising, but Trudeau still seen as best pick for PM this election: poll
CTV and Global News, neither of whose news organizations receive government money, likewise offer strong and insightful coverage and commentary on the goings-on Parliament Hill.

Yet, there remains, in some circles, a concern that the media bailout plan will, in effect, buy support for the government from those who receive the subsidy, which feeds the well-worn narrative of a media bias.

**READ MORE:** [Tax credits for news subscriptions among Liberal plans to boost struggling newsrooms](https://globalnews.ca/news/5328558/canada-media-fund/)

However, the perceived media bias may, in fact, be a construct of the public’s perception of what it sees. A critique of a political policy that someone doesn’t agree with would be considered “good journalism,” but a critique of a policy or politician that someone doesn’t like is perceived to be a “biased” media report.

So, is the bias in the news coverage, or is it in the mind of the reader or viewer?

That manifests itself most obviously in the United States, where some entire networks are dedicated to promoting a particular political ideology and their news coverage and commentary is blatantly tilted to promote their political leanings.

We’re not there yet in Canada and I hope that we never devolve to that status.

But the fear is that doling out government money to revenue-starved media outlets could be a dangerous first step down that precipitous path.
Listen to the latest from the Bill Kelly Show

Lion's Lair Finalist Justin Wong, CEO & Co-Founder of XP Fantasy joined the Bill Kelly Show... 06:12
Lion's Lair 2021: XP Fantasy is an affordable daily fantasy esports website for fans world... Sep 3

Lion's Lair Finalist Jonathan Hillis, CEO & Founder of Payd joined the Bill Kelly Show... 07:18
Lion's Lair 2021: Payd is an early-stage SaaS company looking to help students (future, cu... Sep 3

Tech Talk - September 3, 2021... 17:44
It's time for Tech Talk with Adam Oldfield! Sep 3

Do vaccine mandates violate charter rights? Ont. Doc's urged to be 'judicious' about... 53:21
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Sep 3

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There are plenty of jobs out there. Why aren’t Canadians filling them?

O'Toole and Singh rising, but Trudeau still seen as best pick for PM this election: poll

‘The ultimate selfishness’: Doctors grow frustrated as anti-vaxxers protest hospitals
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Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Tax credits for news subscriptions among Liberal plans to boost struggling newsrooms

By Amanda Connolly • Global News
Posted November 21, 2018 5:44 pm

Canadians may soon be able to write off some of the cost of subscribing to digital news outlets.
Finance Minister Bill Morneau unveiled measures worth a projected $595 million over five years to support the struggling journalism industry during his fall fiscal outlook on Wednesday afternoon.

READ MORE: Liberals not cutting corporate tax, instead reveal $16B plan to boost competitiveness with U.S.

Newsrooms have been hit hard by a decline in advertising revenue in recent years as digital ad dollars increasingly go to giants like Google and Facebook.

That has led to significant and repeated layoffs over the past decade in Canadian newsrooms, leaving many struggling to provide coverage of a wide swath of issues.

WATCH: Morneau announces incentives for businesses to increase Canada’s competitiveness

Fall Economic Update: Morneau announces incentives for businesses to increase Canada’s competitiveness – Nov 21, 2018

“We’re encouraged by the federal government’s recognition of the difficult news revenue landscape for many media companies in Canada” said Ron Waksman, Vice-President of National and Network News for Global News. “As
a leading innovator in digital and broadcast news, we’ll be studying the measures outlined by the Minister with an eye to continuing to provide Canadians with trusted, original, local and national news because journalism matters now more than ever.”

In an effort to encourage Canadians to buy the subscriptions that keep many newsrooms afloat, the government plans to introduce a temporary tax credit in Budget 2019.

**TRENDING STORIES**

**Cancelled flights, lost luggage, no customer support: why flying has become a ‘nightmare’**

**Afghan refugee who survived horrific spousal attack pleads for girls still in country**

That would let Canadians write off 15 per cent of the cost of a subscription to “eligible digital news media.”

**READ MORE: Plans to boost support for struggling Canadian news industry expected next week**

As well, a tax credit would also be offered to news organizations to “support the labour costs associated with producing original news content.”

The latter will be available to both non-profit and for-profit news organizations, and comes as the government also plans to introduce a new category to let non-profit journalism organizations qualify as charities and issue tax receipts to donors.

But exactly which organizations will be allowed to qualify for all of the new measures remains unclear.
In order to determine which organizations should be eligible for the tax credits for the cost of labour, “an independent panel will be established from the news and journalism community.”

WATCH BELOW: Trump administration’s actions take centre stage

Fall Economic Update: Trump administration’s actions take centre stage – Nov 21, 2018

Finance officials said on Wednesday the goal will be to have people on that panel who have actually worked in journalism.

However, they would not rule out that it could also include corporate executives from media organizations who do not actually work as journalists themselves.

READ MORE: The risks and rewards of billionaires buying media enterprises

The Conservatives have already been critical of the Liberals for doing anything for the media industry, accusing them in recent days of using money to curry favour with journalists ahead of the next election.
“It would be unacceptable for the Liberals to even appear to be trying to influence favour with the media,” said Conservative MP Peter Kent, who is himself a former journalist.

The Conservatives also are critical of the political plans of Unifor, Canada’s largest private-sector union, which represents workers at several media organizations. Unifor has launched a plan to campaign against the Conservatives leading up to the next federal election and several Conservatives have argued this strategy calls into question the independence of journalists represented by the union.

— With files from the Canadian Press
There are plenty of jobs out there. Why aren’t Canadians filling them?

O’Toole and Singh rising, but Trudeau still seen as best pick for PM this election: poll

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‘Everything’s gone’: Westside Road evacuees return to properties

Canadian employers struggle to find workers amid pandemic labour shortage

RCMP investigate death of four-year-old boy in Creston campground

Tax credits for news subscriptions among Liberal plans to boost struggling newsrooms - National | Globalnews.ca
This is Exhibit "50" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Plans to boost support for struggling Canadian news industry expected next week

By Andy Blatchford · The Canadian Press
Posted November 16, 2018 4:51 pm

Quebec's print news media is in a state of emergency, according to the CSN. They want the government to bail the industry out. Jean-Vincent Verville/Global News
The federal government is expected to lay out fresh plans next week to support Canada’s struggling news industry.

The measures, expected in Finance Minister Bill Morneau’s fall economic statement Wednesday, will be designed to help journalism remain viable after years of shrinking advertising revenues.

READ MORE: New York Times publisher pleads with Trump to stop ‘dangerous’ attacks on journalists

The decline has already shuttered newsrooms, led to job cuts in many others, and eroded coverage of key democratic institutions across Canada about everything from municipal councils to provincial legislatures to Parliament.

In last winter’s federal budget, Ottawa committed $50 million over five years for local journalism in “under-served communities.”

The government also pledged in the budget to search for additional ways of supporting Canadian journalism.

WATCH BELOW: ‘La Presse’ goes non-profit
Internal federal documents obtained by The Canadian Press under access-to-information legislation say the government assembled a working group of officials from the finance and heritage departments following the February budget.

Their goal, the memo said, was “to identify options to address the issues affecting journalism in Canada ahead of the fall economic statement.”

The fall statement will be one of the last opportunities in the current fiscal year to announce the new measures.

COMMENTARY: Journalism ain’t easy, but the good days make the bad ones worth it

“A range of options to ensure the continued viability of the journalism industry in Canada are being considered,” reads the briefing note prepared for deputy finance minister Paul Rochon ahead of his meeting last July with the president and the publisher of Montreal’s La Presse newspaper.

WATCH BELOW: Hundreds of U.S. newspapers denounce Trump’s attack on media
In the budget, Ottawa promised to take a closer look at potential models to enable private donations and philanthropic support for “trusted, professional, non-profit journalism and local news.”

The government said eventual steps could include new ways for Canadian newspapers to innovate and receive charitable status for “not-for-profit” journalism.

WATCH BELOW: The role of journalism in a post-truth age
The briefing document for Rochon noted how La Presse announced its plan to adopt a not-for-profit structure last May – a couple of months after the budget – to position the newspaper to take advantage of the federal commitments on journalism.

A separate July briefing note laid out options for “government action” but those sections of the document were redacted.

“There are calls for the government to intervene to save the legacy newspapers under the premise that this is the key way of ensuring the continued production of civic-function journalism,” reads the memo.

The document summarized recent industry trends – including how overall operating revenues tumbled to $3.2 billion in 2016 from their peak of $5.5 billion in 2008. The decrease included a steep drop of 34 per cent between 2012 and 2016.

READ MORE: These are the Canadian journalists who lost their lives while doing their job

It said the decline has been caused mainly by falling advertising revenues and, when it comes to online ads, noted how Canadian news outlets have
struggled to compete with giants like Facebook and Google, which scoop up about 80 per cent of the digital business.

The number of daily newspapers in Canada was down to just 88 by May 2018, the document said. A decade earlier, there had been 139.

The news industry’s challenges have also led to job losses.

The memo said news organizations slashed salary spending by 37 per cent between 2006 and 2016, a period that saw the number of workers in the industry fall to 24,000 from 36,000. Between 2007 and 2017, employment in journalist positions declined 5.7 per cent – to 11,688 from 12,396.

“There are indications that journalists are less able to cover stories about Canada’s democratic institutions. Dedicated coverage of public interest news (e.g. legislatures, town halls, courts) has declined,” the note said.

In the lead up to the federal budget, the government was bombarded with ideas on how to help the news industry.

A report last year from the Public Policy Forum called for a sales tax on foreign companies selling digital subscriptions in Canada, a fund to help finance reliable news and information with $100 million in federal seed money, a new “local” mandate for news agency The Canadian Press and changes to the CBC’s online advertising.

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Cancelled flights, lost luggage, no customer support: why flying has become a ‘nightmare’

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This is Exhibit "51" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Support for news media a solid, welcome step

By: Bob Cox | Posted: 7:00 PM CST Friday, Nov. 23, 2018
This is Exhibit "52" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

[Signature]

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Unions set to launch major anti-Harper offensive

Conservative Leader Stephen Harper makes a campaign stop in Ottawa on Sunday, August 9, 2015. Canadian's will head to the polls on October 19, 2015.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

GIUSEPPE VALIANTE
MONTREAL
THE CANADIAN PRESS
PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

This article was published more than 5 years ago. Some information in it may no longer be current.
Canada's largest unions say if enough of their members vote strategically in key ridings across the country, Stephen Harper and the Conservatives will not get a fourth term in office.

The anti-Harper strategy requires a highly organized communications attack that will give the union-selected candidate in a targeted riding the ability to use scarce election resources more freely.

Workers say their assault will begin shortly after Labour Day and will be the culmination of months of preparation.

Union heads have been training workers across the country on election campaign basics while collecting data through polling and focus groups on which ridings to target and what messages resonate most with voters.

Two main organized labour groups leading the charge are the Quebec Federation of Labour, which will focus on French Canada, while Unifor will be a major player in Ontario and in the rest of the country.

QFL secretary Serge Cadieux said the plan starts with the union calculating how many members it has in key ridings where the Conservatives won in 2011 or could win this time around.

"For example, take the riding of Denis Lebel," Cadieux said, referring to Harper's former infrastructure minister who represents the Lac Saint-Jean region north of Quebec City.

"Let's say we have 9,000 members in that riding and our research shows that the Bloc Quebecois candidate has the best chance of beating Lebel. I'll meet with the candidate and tell them we will visit every single one of our 9,000 members in the riding to get out their vote and the candidate can concentrate on the other voters."

The number of union votes in certain ridings can be significant: the QFL boasts a membership of 600,000 people in Quebec while Unifor claims to be the country's largest private-sector union with a membership role of 305,000 people.

Offering to contact thousands of people in a riding on behalf of a candidate is a precious time-saver, Cadieux explained, and allows the lucky party to concentrate limited resources elsewhere.
Cadieux said the federation will support any party – be it the Liberals, NDP, Bloc – which has the best shot at winning the riding, in order to keep the Tories out.

Unifor President Jerry Dias said his union's strategy outside Quebec is similar. However, his people will be supporting all the incumbent NDP candidates.

Dias said his union will focus on ridings with a "critical mass" of unionized voters, and will be encouraging strategic voting in ridings without NDP incumbents.

"We don't believe we can just tell our members how to vote," he said. "We are going to be very active – very active – on getting out Harper's record. Our whole strategy is engaging our members so that they'll participate in the democracy of our country."

Dias said unions used polling companies to collect data on voters who chose the Conservatives in 2011 by relatively small margins and could swing to the Liberals or the NDP this time around.

Part of that data was collected by Engage Canada, an anti-Harper organization known as a third party. Third parties are not affiliated to political parties but can campaign for certain issues by collecting donations. Third parties face strict limits on advertising spending during election campaigns but can spend virtually unlimited amounts of money before Parliament is dissolved.

Two well-placed sources with ties to the union movement said Engage Canada spent – at least – several million dollars on anti-Harper ad-buys on radio and television targeting voters considered as soft Tory supporters.

Much of Engage's money came from unions, sources said, which was neither confirmed nor denied by the organization.

"Engage Canada received donations from across the country We did approach the unions and are very grateful for their generous support of our campaign," a spokesperson responded by e-mail.

Dias said Unifor was "a major supporter of Engage – we played a significant role. There is no question there was significant money raised but I won't get into it."

The research conducted by Engage will be used by unions in the targeted ridings, Dias said.
"Engage was incredibly effective," Dias said, at convincing former Tory supporters to reconsider their prior choice.

The research (Engage conducted) "was about identifying the issues that Harper is weak on. He's vulnerable on health-care. He's very vulnerable on the economy," Dias said.

Unifor and the QFL's invective towards Harper hasn't gone unnoticed by the Conservatives.

Lebel, in a message to Conservative supporters, said the QFL has "secretive plans to target and defeat Conservatives. Even worse, they are working with other union groups to defeat Conservatives in 60 ridings across Canada. This is a clear attempt to return to the days when big money and secretive third parties influenced Canadian democracy."

Hassan Yussuff, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, said he is convinced this strategy will work – if members vote.

"The reality is we represent 3.3 million workers and if you add one family member to that equation, you're looking at potentially 6 million votes," he said. "If they go out and vote and bring their family along ... there is no question we're going to change the outcome."

Dias said the messaging to Unifor members will focus on what he said were the Conservatives' attacks on unions, the government's scaling back of health care funding and what he said was the poor performance of the Canadian economy.

"There are no restrictions on us communicating directly with our members," he said. "We know which ridings they're in, we know which ridings we're targeting and we are very organized when it comes to our communications strategy."
This is Exhibit "53" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
The buyer’s perspective on CBC’s branded content arm

Tandem has drawn opposition from staff and advocacy group, but will those concerns reach advertisers?

CBC Tandem, the public broadcaster’s yet-to-be launched branded content division, has raised the eyebrows and ire of many journalists and members of the public alike, but those in the know are doubtful as to whether that is going to lessen the appeal among media buyers.

In an effort to allay fears over the launch of CBC Tandem and its branded content plans, Canada’s public broadcaster issued new guidelines last month to establish a clear division between its news and advertising content.

But the opposition has remained strong among current and former staff. Advocacy group Friends Of Canadian Broadcasting has gone so far as to call for Tandem’s outright cancelation through a petition, and the CRTC has received calls to investigate, though the regulator has said it may be limited in what it can do. As of press time, Tandem remained under construction and inactive.

While this start-and-stop launch was probably far from what CBC hoped for, media strategy experts who spoke with MiC say Tandem holds a lot of potential. While they ponder the effect of so much criticism on Tandem’s advertiser appeal, they say it likely won’t affect CBC’s journalistic integrity to the extent the reporters, editors and producers in its news division fear.

In a November statement, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting’s rallying cry declared that “the CBC’s credibility is not for sale,” and it says it will be intervening in the CRTC’s January hearings on CBC’s licence renewal. The group has long-standing objections to what it deems the “over-commercialization” of the CBC, having opposed paywalling digital content or creating paid ad-free tiers it believes undermine universal access, a fundamental principal of public broadcasting. To that end, the group believes branded content undermines the credibility of all news media, but that it is especially inappropriate for the country’s national public broadcaster.

“I think all the fuss is a bit strange, really,” says Scott Stewart, general manager of Glassroom. “A team like Tandem is nothing new on either the publishing or the broadcast side of industry.” If branded content inherently affected journalistic integrity, he says, it would have been noticed at
branded content inherently affected journalistic integrity, he says, it would have been noticed at The Globe and Mail, Corus, Rogers, Bell Media or any other national organization “that have been producing strategic content solutions for their advertising clients for years — and doing a really good job at it, frankly.”

However, those outlets have recently faced some backlash for their branded content practices. In September, The Globe and Mail ran paid content from state-owned China Daily, which publisher and CEO Phillip Crawley admitted “should have been more clearly marked.” In November, Canadaland obtained a document suggesting that several op-eds in the Vancouver Sun written by senior officials at the University of British Columbia were part of an advertising deal with the school, despite not being marked as such, though Postmedia has said the op-eds were published independently of that deal.

Regardless, Stewart says the creation of Tandem adds bench strength to an existing service that is increasing in advertiser demand. While the name Tandem is new, CBC has been offering branded content services to advertisers for several years. In 2020, it created paid content features for the Shaw Festival, Government of Ontario, National Gallery of Canada, and Prince Edward Island Tourism, among others.

With that in mind, if working with the CBC makes sense contextually for an advertiser, Stewart says he can’t see the halting launch diverting a brand strategy or creating an aversion to working with Tandem.

However, Heidi McLeod, national account director at MediaTonik, says the controversy could be a deterrent for clients who are new to content marketing. But if the content is relevant, relatable, and offers information and insights, she says branded content with the pubcaster is an excellent option for clients as part of their media mix.

“At the end of the day, people tend to remember stories more than other ways of presenting information,” McLeod says. “In a digital format, content also allows publishers to build an audience segment that the client can re-target against, and this is where the opportunity becomes lower in the funnel and even more valuable. I think it is an antiquated notion to say that the audience is confusing true editorial with custom content when it is properly labelled and transparent.”

According to CBC’s new December guidelines, branded content’s placement would be restricted to digital platforms, and no CBC/Radio-Canada journalists or hosts would be involved in its creation or presentation. In addition, branded content would be clearly labeled as “paid content,” rather than the more common (and somewhat more opaque) “sponsored content.” It would not appear on national news digital pages.

On local digital pages, branded content already appears in designated areas marked with separate borders and shading to clearly indicate it is different from other content on the page. Until this design format is ready on CBC.ca, branded content will be restricted to entertainment and lifestyle pages.

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TAGS: CBC, CBC Tandem
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AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
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Appointee No. 0754515
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3 Michael Taube: Why O’Toole would be a more effective prime minister than Trudeau

4 Brian Mulroney on the rising ‘hostility’ between Canada and the United States

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WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

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Support and Focus Vital to Coping with Physical and Emotional Impact of NPH

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September 16, 2019

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

There can be a happier ending for wet AMD patients

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WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

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December 17, 2018
SPONSORED
Sponsored: Ex-CFLer speaks out on his battle with melanoma

'I feel like I’m a lucky guy'

June 15, 2018

Patient Diaries
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Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Shame on the Globe and Mail for running Chinese government propaganda

By Rosie DiManno  Star Columnist
Thu., Sept. 24, 2020  5 min. read

This is when the Globe and Mail got it right. From the paper’s July 30 lead editorial, headlined: “The continued imprisonment of the two Michaels is an act of pointless cruelty.”

“We keep hearing that Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig are suffering in conditions ‘akin’ to torture, but there is no such thing. Their false arrest and unjustified incarceration amount to torture, period.”

This is when the Globe and Mail got it wrong. The double-truck spread, smack in the middle of the glorified Report on Business section, on Sept. 19 — last Saturday.

Headlines include: “Tree fellers turn into tree lovers.” “University’s admissions offer out of this world.” “A chain of celestial lights to celebrate inclusiveness.”

Which, inclusivity, doesn’t include the ethnic minority Uighurs, a million interned since 2017 in at least 87 camps surrounded by watch towers and barbed wire fences within Xinjiang region — camps the Chinese government denied existed until satellite imagery put the lie to those claims.

I won’t go into details about the content of the cheerful stories published in the Globe’s prime real estate pages — I’m not the one being paid to shill — under the “CHINA WATCH” banner. Suffice to say that “CHINA WATCH” is the international propaganda arm of state-run English-language newspaper China Daily.

Only in tiny letters at the bottom of each page does it state: Content produced by China Daily and distributed in the Globe and Mail.

I’m not in the habit of calling out other newspapers, particularly since the Star has a policy of not calling out our own selves when we deserve to be boxed about the ears. But the Globe brands itself “Canada’s National Newspaper” and fancies itself the paper of record.

So, on the record, the Globe has accepted Judas silver coins to whoremonger for the Communist Party that rules The People’s Republic of China. A Chinese government which is at diplomatic and political war with Canada — hence the two poor Michaels, caught up in the interminable wrangle, essentially held hostage by the regime for 654 days (as of Wednesday).

Now, everybody knows these are trying times for the newspaper industry. But of all the papers in Canada, the Globe and Mail is least threatened by economic hardship, owned by the Thomson family — its chairman, David Thomson, wealthiest Canadian, as per Forbes, with a net worth of $32.5 billion, as of last year. If the Globe splashes around in the red, the Thomson clan can just sell off one of its Group of Seven paintings. Not that it would ever come to that.

Further, the Globe was the first signatory in this country to The Trust Project, a global coalition of media organizations with the intent of promoting truthful, accurate, fair and transparent journalism — because journalism is under siege everywhere, lacerated as purveyors of fake news.
China Daily is fake news. China Watch is fake news. At the very least, the Globe should have made that clearer. I put the matter to the Globe brain-trust in emailed queries.

“As you point out in your questions, the China Daily pages are indeed paid advertisements,” acknowledged Phillip Crawley, Globe publisher and CEO, in his emailed response. “The content is visually distinct and had been labelled as produced by a third party (China Daily). However, we believe the pages should have been more clearly marked to reflect that it was a paid advertisement for our readers. We will explore how to make this more clear in the future.”

Crawley added: “We have run these ads occasionally for years and like all advertising, they have no impact on our editorial coverage. You can see this in our daily reporting of China, our editorials” — he cited an opinion piece regarding the arrest of Jimmy Lai — “and the excellent investigative work put out by our Asia correspondent, Nathan VanderKlippe, who is based in Beijing.”

(Lai is a long-time champion of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement.)

Indisputably, excellent coverage of China — the Globe was the first Western newspaper to open a bureau in what was then called Peking, more than six decades ago.

But readers won’t learn the truth about Tiananmen Square in the China Daily (or China Watch), won’t be told about the horrors inflicted and ethnic cleansing inflicted on the mostly Muslim Uighurs, won’t be enlightening on the regime’s crackdown throttling of Hong Kong and certainly won’t be provided with an accurate representation of why the two Michaels were thrown in prison.

That was the China version of tit-for-tat — the regime’s ham-fisted response two years ago, scooping up the Canadian businessmen shortly after the arrest of Meng Wanzhou on a warrant from the United States. America accuses Meng, chief financial officer of Huawei, of fraud, alleging she misled the bank HSBC about Huawei’s business dealings in Iran. Meng is under house arrest in Vancouver, fighting extradition to the U.S.

On Tuesday, China again urged Canada to immediately release Meng and let her return home so as to “safely bring bilateral relations back to the right track,” according to Chinese media reports. At the daily news briefing, a government spokesperson asserted: “Under the pretext of ‘at the request of the United States,’ Canada arbitrarily took compulsory measures on a Chinese citizen, which severely violated her legitimate rights and interests.”

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been able to do nothing — that we know of — to secure the release of the two Michaels, after nearly two years of detention. In June, Kovrig and Spavor were charged with espionage-related offences, which is bollocks.

A whole bunch of boldface Canadians have since signed a letter urging this country to knock off the extradition proceedings against Meng, so that the Michaels can be sprung. This is hostage diplomacy — a prisoner swap, the stuff of despots and unethical governments.

And we won’t even get into the further strong-arm squabbling between China and the U.S. over China-owned TikTok and China’s pressuring of Canada to integrate Huawei technology into our 5G network.

China has invested colossally and with sophistication in propaganda supplements that have appeared in respected publications such as the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, as well as opening scores of state TV satellite bureaus around the world — all pegged to “reporting the news from a Chinese perspective.” Which means gerrymandered and self-serving. All while literally ripping out international coverage within China: foreign magazines censored, the BBC flickering to black when carrying stories on such sensitive topics as Taiwan and Tibet and foreign correspondents booted out of the country.

Because the Red Dragon can. The Globe and Mail has, under the rubric of provided content, become a party to that.

China is a bully and the Globe, alas, is a pimp.
This is Exhibit "57" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

[Signature]

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
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### Government Institutions

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<td>Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)</td>
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If you would like to view a summary of the last 12 months for a lobbying activity, use the [12-Month Lobbying Activity Search](https://lobbycanada.gc.ca/app/secure/ocl/irs/do/advSrch?V_SEARCH.command=refineCategory&V_TOKEN=1234567890&V_SEARCH.scopeCategory=12Month)
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**Date Modified:**
2021-07-20

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https://lobbycanada.gc.ca/app/secure/ocl/lrs/do/advSrch?V_SEARCH.command=refineCategory&V_TOKEN=1234567890&V_SEARCH.scopeCategory=...
This is Exhibit "58" referred to the Affidavit of Ezra Levant AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellén Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Help us send kids to camp

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About the Fresh Air Fund

FRESH AIR FUND
COVID-19 Update

https://www.thestar.com/initiatives/fresh_airFund.html
May. 14, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund Donation FAQ's
Jun. 11, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
History of The Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund
Jun. 11, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
How to apply to The Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund for camp funding
Jun. 11, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
What We Do
Jun. 11, 2021
Vinay Menon: My family knew nothing about camping but it was still a magical experience. Every kid should get that chance

Aug. 07, 2021

Long-time Star employee Grant ‘Smitty’ Smith donated to help kids escape the ‘concrete jungle’

Aug. 05, 2021

The lessons and love of nature learned at camp — even a grim one — have stuck with me for life

Aug. 04, 2021

Bob Hepburn: ‘A truly inspirational gift.’ Donation of $250,000 ‘to help more children’ pushes Fresh Air Fund over the top

Jul. 31, 2021
FRESH AIR FUND
An overnight cabin retreat was my own coming-of-age ‘summer camp’ experience. The Fresh Air Fund provides opportunities I never had
Jul. 28, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
For Patricia Hart, 90, time has not dampened camp memories the Star’s Fresh Air Fund provided her as a girl from a poor family
Jul. 24, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
At summer camp kids can learn to understand people and get along, to make friends, live with strangers
Jul. 17, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Named in honour of a Norwegian king, this Ontario camp was kids’ heaven
Jul. 10, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
As a guy from Jamaica who fell in love with the outdoors, I say everyone should have the chance
Jul. 07, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
It’s finally, actually happening. Camps are coming back — and so is the ‘Swamp Princess’
Jul. 03, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Mike Wilner: Camp is an escape — and kids need that escape now more than ever
Jun. 30, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Heather Mallick: Children need summer camps. Camp trains you. Camp turns you into a yearning al fresco adult
FRESH AIR FUND
At 90, Star reader writes of a lifetime of joyful camp memories — and is now giving back to help kids experience the same
Jun. 23, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Camping wasn’t a realistic pastime in Hong Kong, but I learned to love the outdoors at summer camp in B.C.
Jun. 20, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Every child deserves a chance to be wild — a break from COVID that only nature can offer
Jul. 05, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Bruce Arthur: Giving to the Star’s Fresh Air Fund helps those who had an especially hard, dark pandemic see some daylight
Jun. 11, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
I never went to summer camp. I missed out on summers spent without adults, making new friends
Jun. 09, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Sure, camp is about making lifelong friends, gaining maturity, breathing in fresh, unadulterated air. To that I say, pfft
Jun. 05, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
I almost drowned twice so I know how important it is for kids to learn how to swim
Jun. 02, 2021
FRESH AIR FUND
Day camp left me with a love of the outdoors that is still going strong. And it was a great place to catch crayfish
May. 29, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
My magical summer in Madrid turned into an exercise in self-discovery. Think of what camp can do for other kids
May. 26, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Rediscovering the great outdoors changed my life for the better. That’s what camp can do for kids every summer
May. 22, 2021

FRESH AIR FUND
Emma Teitel: Kids need the magical reprieve of camp, now more than ever
May. 15, 2021
This is Exhibit "59" referred to the
Affidavit of Ezra Levant
AFFIRMED before me on September 5, 2021.

Ellen Audrey Williamson
A Commissioner for Oaths in and for the
Province of Alberta
My Commission expires on February 15, 2024
Appointee No. 0754515
Francoeur in a delicate position

MARTIN LAFRENIERE

August 27, 2021 1:00 a.m. / Updated at 3:05

Francoeur in a delicate position
Martin Francoeur has just signed his candidacy for the Liberal Party of Canada in the riding of Trois-Rivières when he finds himself in a delicate position. The former editor of Le Nouvelliste personally contacted members of the newsroom to ask for financial support, suggesting that they pay the money on behalf of their spouse if ever his request caused "a little embarrassment".

They members of the editorial staff were approached by Mr. Francoeur before the start of the electoral campaign, while a third person from the Nouvelliste editorial staff was approached by a representative of his team. In an exchange by Messenger, the Liberal candidate writes to a person in the editorial staff to mention that he is collecting contributions for the nomination campaign regarding his candidacy. “Fundraising is an important part of nomination and election campaigns. This is what can make the difference. If you ever feel like it and you can contribute, it would definitely help me! If you ever have a little embarrassment, you put it on behalf of your boyfriend and it's the same."

Following a series of discussions on Thursday afternoon with Martin Francoeur, the Liberal candidate finally admitted, after carrying out certain checks and reflections, having personally contacted two people from the Nouvelliste newsroom in this context.

«Ces personnes sont des amies, au-delà d’être des collègues. Ce sont des personnes que je côtoie en dehors, parfois, de mon occupation comme journaliste, dont je connais la famille, les conjoints. Ces conjoints ne sont pas du réseau journalistique. J’ai contacté ces personnes qui ont des familles qui auraient pu contribuer si elles avaient voulu aider un ami. J’ai fait l’erreur de penser que ça pouvait être des personnes, dans l’entourage de ces collègues, qui auraient pu me donner un coup de main. Une contribution politique peut mettre dans l’embarras quelqu’un qui exerce une profession comme le journalisme. Il y a des personnes dans l’entourage de ces amis-collègues qui auraient pu avoir la volonté de contribuer et ne pas avoir la même restriction professionnelle. Si c’était à refaire, je ne le referais pas. c’est clair». affirme M. Francoeur. en assurant qu’il n’a recu aucune
Martin Francoeur se dit désolé du malaise provoqué par sa démarche et il affirme avoir avisé son équipe de cesser de contacter son réseau d’amis provenant de son milieu professionnel dès qu’il a été mis au courant de la situation, soit après avoir qu’il aurait pu s’y prendre autrement pour inciter des conjoints de collègues de travail à être généreux durant sa campagne de financement.

« C’est probablement une erreur que j’ai faite. C’est nouveau, pour moi, l’aspect de l’engagement politique. Est-ce que j’aurais dû ou pu contacter directement les conjoints? Peut-être. Ce n’est pas ce que j’ai fait. Je me rends compte que cette portion a pu heurter certaines personnes et je m’en excuse profondément. Avec le travail d’introspection que j’ai fait, j’ai constaté que ça pouvait avoir un impact autant sur ma campagne que sur Le Nouvelliste. Je n’ai pas voulu que ça porte ombrage à mon employeur des 27 dernières années. J’aurais probablement dû passer par les conjoints. »

Selon le candidat libéral, le fait d’inciter une personne à contribuer via son conjoint respecte la loi électorale.

« Je pense que oui. Toute personne peut faire un don. Si le conjoint (d’un collègue) avait voulu contribuer à ma campagne, il aurait pu le faire. Je peux comprendre qu’une personne du milieu journalistique éprouve un malaise à le faire et qu’il y a des règles déontologiques. À partir du moment où ces gens sont aussi mes amis, ça aurait pu être une contribution recevable. Des gens de leur entourage auraient pu être tentés de collaborer à la campagne. On a arrêté toute démarche qui pouvait porter à confusion. Je ne veux pas être associé à toute forme de malaise. »

Le Nouvelliste a constaté jeudi après-midi que le message de sollicitation écrit par Martin Francoeur à une personne de la rédaction, via Messenger, avait été retiré.

Loi électorale
La section 368 (2) de la Loi électorale du Canada interdit à toute personne ou entité (selon Élections Canada, un candidat et un parti politique sont des exemples d’entités) de cacher ou de tenter de cacher l’identité de l’auteur d’une contribution régie par la présente loi. La même section de la loi interdit à toute personne ou entité d’agir de concert avec d’autres personnes ou entités en vue d’accomplir un tel fait. D’après Élections Canada, la loi électorale du Canada s’applique lors de démarches de financement effectuées avant une campagne électorale.

Élections Canada n’émet pas de commentaire sur un cas précis, car même s’il a la responsabilité d’administrer la Loi électorale du Canada, l’organisme n’a pas le mandat de mener des enquêtes sur certains agissements. C’est le commissaire aux élections fédérales qui fait ce boulot après la réception de plaintes, son rôle étant de veiller à l’observation et au contrôle d’application de ladite loi.

Le Nouvelliste a contacté le service des relations avec les médias du bureau du commissaire aux élections fédérales afin de savoir si les démarches de M. Francoeur auprès de certains de ses anciens collègues de travail, en leur suggérant en cas de malaise de mettre leur don au nom d’un autre, créait pour ces potentiels contributeurs une infraction. Une porte-parole mentionne ne pas pouvoir «spéculer quant à la légalité d’un incident ou une situation en particulier».

**Réactions du Nouvelliste et de la FPJQ**

La direction du Nouvelliste a réagi après avoir été informée de la situation. Le 17 août, elle a envoyé une lettre à son ancien éditorialiste le sommant de cesser d’agir ainsi.

«Il a été porté à notre attention que Martin Francoeur a lui-même contacté deux journalistes du Nouvelliste pour leur demander de contribuer au financement de sa campagne ou de le faire au nom de leur conjoint s’ils n’étaient pas à l’aise. Cela va à l’encontre des règles déontologiques journalistiques et soulève des questions à propos de la loi électorale. Le Nouvelliste a jugé que ces informations étaient d’intérêt public et a décidé de publier une nouvelle comme il l’aurait fait pour n’importe quel autre candidat», mentionne Stéphan Frappier, le directeur général.
«Ça me fait encore plus sourciller», témoigne Michaël Nguyen, président de la Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, appelé à réagir face au comportement du candidat libéral. «Le candidat est libre de solliciter des dons, mais de faire un don au nom du conjoint, je ne suis pas sûr de la légalité.»

Michaël Nguyen indique que le fait de solliciter d’ex-collègues membres d’une salle de rédaction place ces personnes dans une situation potentielle de conflit d’intérêts en raison de leur profession. Selon lui, Martin Francoeur devrait avoir un certain égard envers ses anciens collègues.

«C’est un journaliste. Il devait être au courant de ça. C’est son choix de solliciter des (ex) collègues. Ça semble légal, mais ce n’est pas l’idéal. Ça place les journalistes dans une situation inconfortable. Ce n’est pas la meilleure des idées. Ça vient d’un journaliste expérimenté et crédible, c’est pour ça que ça fait froncer les sourcils. Ça semble légal, mais avec son background, il en connaît plus sur notre métier qu’un autre candidat», commente le président de la FPJQ en rappelant que le rôle des journalistes n’est pas d’agir comme agents de candidats politiques, mais de rapporter des faits.

Before entering active politics, Martin Francoeur worked for Le Nouvelliste for 27 years. He sat on the board of directors of the Quebec Press Council for nearly five years and was a member of the board of directors of the FPJQ for four years.
Francoeur in a delicate position | Federal Elections | News | The Nouvelliste - Trois-Rivières

27 août 2021

TROIS-RIVIÈRES

Martin Francoeur officiellement candidat du PLC dans Trois-Rivières

9 août 2021

LES PLUS POPULAIRES

ACTUALITÉS

«Il a tué mon fils»: des parents pleurent leur fils mort dans un accident lors duquel un chauffeur de camion s’est endormi

02h02

ACTUALITÉS

5,4 km de nature en plein Trois-Rivières

3 septembre 2021

PAULE VERMOT-DESROCHES

COVID longue: à 38 ans, vivre comme si on avait 90 ans

02h02

VÉRIFICATION FAITE
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### NEWS  FEDERAL ELECTIONS

#### L'EFFET COOP

1. **Agriculture durable chez Nutrinor: de meilleures pratiques en réponse aux attentes des consommateurs**
   - 25 août 2021

2. **Percolab Coop: la chicane, c'est permis!**
   - 26 août 2021

3. **Fédération des coopératives d'habitation de l'Estrie: voir l'habitation autrement**
   - 26 août 2021

4. **Coopérative forestière Petit Paris: moteur économique de la région**
   - 25 août 2021
ÉLECTIONS FÉDÉRALES

4 septembre 2021 9h32

Le NPD détaille son programme de soins dentaires

LA PRESSE CANADIENNE

Article réservé aux abonnés

Une hausse d’impôts pour soutenir le programme national de soins dentaires, dit Singh.
Jean-Yves Duclos défend les dépenses libérales

STÉPHANE ROLLAND
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Retirer trop vite le soutien à l’économie serait une erreur, dit Jean-Yves Duclos.

LIRE LA SUITE
Maxime Bernier se sent d’attaque pour la campagne

MORGAN LOWRIE

Maxime Bernier assure que son Parti populaire du Canada est là pour rester.
Plus de 45 000 expatriés canadiens sont déjà inscrits pour voter à l’élection

Des dizaines de milliers de Canadiens vivant à l’étranger, y compris ceux qui ne voyagent pas en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19, ont fait la demande pour voter à distance à l’élection fédérale.
Le «nuage» stagne sur la campagne de Martin Francoeur

SÉBASTIEN HOULE
Le Nouvelliste

Article réservé aux abonnés

Martin Francoeur avait convoqué la presse vendredi après-midi pour commenter le premier débat des chefs, présenté la veille sur les ondes de TVA. Après une analyse à sens unique, où le Bloc et le NPD n’ont pas été évoqués, le candidat libéral dans Trois-Rivières a dû faire face à un barrage de questions concernant l’enquête que vient d’enclencher le commissaire aux élections fédérales dans l’affaire des contributions politiques sollicitées à d’anciens collègues par le biais de leur conjoint.
Le bloquiste René Villemure dévoile ses engagements et écorche des adversaires

MARC ROCHETTE
Le Nouvelliste

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le candidat du Bloc québécois dans Trois-Rivières, René Villemure, a dévoilé vendredi ses cinq engagements électoraux. Non seulement le gouvernem
de 65 à 74 ans dans l’équation des conditions de vie des aînés.

Yves-François Blanchet: Singh est «dans le trouble» au Québec

PATRICE BERGERON
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le chef bloquiste Yves-François Blanchet appelle les Québécois à choisir la «marque reconnue», le Bloc québécois, et non le «produit sans nom», le NPD.
ÉLECTIONS FÉDÉRALES

3 septembre 2021 9h45 / Mis à jour à 13h55

Le contrat d'O'Toole aux Québécois pas livré

LINA DIB
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

À un peu plus de deux semaines du jour du vote, les Québécois attendent toujours le « contrat » que le chef conservateur Erin O'Toole disait avoir mis à la poste.

LIRE LA SUITE
Habitation: quels sont les besoins au Canada?

MIA RABSON
La Presse canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Les partis promettent de nouvelles habitations, mais combien sont nécessaires?
Les régions aussi ont des besoins de transport collectif et adapté

STÉPHANIE MARIN
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le transport collectif et celui adapté pour les personnes à mobilité réduite ne sont pas que l’affaire des grandes villes. Ils sont particulièrement importants pour les Québécois qui habitent en région et devraient donc être une priorité pour les chefs fédéraux qui font actuellement campagne, plaide une association regroupant plus de 75 organismes de transport régional.
À l'issue d'un débat rouge-orangé, Trudeau et Singh se «démarquent»

ÉMILIE PELLETIER
Le Soleil

Article réservé aux abonnés

De la pandémie aux services en garderie en passant par la laïcité et le troisième lien, les chefs des quatre principaux partis fédéraux ont débattu pour la première fois de la campagne. L'analyse de Thierry Giasson, professeur et directeur du département de science politique de l'Université Laval à l'issue de cette confrontation télévisée.
Élections Canada a du mal à recruter du personnel pour le scrutin du 20 septembre

LA PRESSE CANADIENNE

Article réservé aux abonnés

Élections Canada affirme avoir encore un «besoin important» de préposés au scrutin à travers le pays pour les élections fédérales du 20 septembre.
Vérification: Erin O’Toole veut-il ramener les armes d’assaut au Canada?

CLARA DESCURNINGES
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Si une personne dit qu’il pleut et une autre dit qu’il fait beau, le travail journalistique ne consiste pas à citer l’une et l’autre, mais bien à regarder par la fenêtre.
Plusieurs attaques directes lors du premier débat des chefs fédéraux

Trois des quatre chefs fédéraux n’ont pas retenu leurs coups, jeudi soir, au premier débat électoral, alors qu’un quatrième est resté en retrait, s’en tenant à son discours bien rodé.
Dons politiques: le candidat libéral Martin Françoeur sous enquête

CATHERINE LÉVESQUE
La Presse canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le candidat libéral de Trois-Rivières, Martin Françoeur, est sous enquête par le commissaire aux élections fédérales pour avoir demandé des contributions politiques à d’anciens collègues par le biais de leurs partenaires de vie.
Des aînés coincés par la PCU, déplore Yves Perron

Neuf mois après qu’elle ait pris fin, la PCU continue de faire parler d’elle et s’invite dans la campagne électorale. Le bloquiste Yves Perron, qui tente de conserver son siège dans Berthier-Maskinongé, se désole que plusieurs aînés ayant reçu la fameuse Prestation canadienne d’urgence voient leur Supplément de revenu garanti amputé, sans possibilité de réévaluation. «On est encore en campagne électorale pour 18 jours, mais ça, ça ne peut pas attendre, il faut que ça se règle», martèle le bloquiste, qui demande au gouvernement d’intervenir immédiatement.
Les maires des villes canadiennes demandent aux partis fédéraux d’injecter plus d’argent dans les systèmes de transport en commun, pour lutter contre la baisse des revenus d’exploitation causée par la pandémie.
C'est le Nouveau parti démocratique (NPD) de Jagmeet Singh qui présente le plus de candidates à l'échelle du pays à l'occasion des élections fédérales.
C'est à l'usine Kruger, de Trois-Rivières, que le ministre libéral sortant, François-Philippe Champagne, a dévoilé jeudi la vision de son parti pour «s'attaquer à l’enjeu numéro un de la pénurie de main-d’oeuvre».

ÉLECTIONS FÉDÉRALES

2 septembre 2021 11h42 / Mis à jour à 18h32

Erin O’Toole vante le libre-échange pour l’emploi

LA PRESSE CANADIENNE

Article réservé aux abonnés
Les Canadiens pourraient avoir le droit de vivre et de travailler au Royaume-Uni, en Australie et en Nouvelle-Zélande dans le cadre d'une nouvelle zone de libre-échange souhaitée par les conservateurs.

Les verts ne présenteront pas de candidats partout
Le Parti vert pourrait bien être absent des bulletins de vote dans près d'une centaine de circonscriptions le 20 septembre, un autre coup dur pour la cheffe Anamie Paul, qui tente de recadrer le parti écologiste de gauche.

La plateforme libérale publiée... puis critiquée

En plein milieu de cette campagne électorale, les libéraux ont publié leur plateforme. Il reste maintenant deux semaines et demie aux électeurs pour...
Pas encore de recours massif au vote postal, selon Élections Canada

JOAN BRYDEN
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le recours massif au vote postal que certains observateurs prévoyaient pour participer aux élections fédérales du 20 septembre prochain au Canada ne s’est pas matérialisé jusqu’à maintenant.
ÉLECTIONS FÉDÉRALES

1 septembre 2021 1h00 / Mis à jour à 3h00

Jacques Bouchard parle environnement avec le maire Angers

MARC ROCHETTE
Le Nouvelliste

Article réservé aux abonnés

C’est accompagné du sénateur Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu que le candidat conservateur dans Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Jacques Bouchard, a rencontré pour une première fois mardi le maire de Shawinigan, Michel Angers, pour
Yves Perron réclame une couverture cellulaire fiable

Le député sortant dans Berthier-Maskinongé, Yves Perron, entend se battre pour que les gens de son comté aient une couverture cellulaire fiable.
Les plus petits partis manquent de candidats

CLARA DESCURNINGES
La Presse Canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Au lendemain de la date limite pour déposer sa candidature, les plus petits partis ne pourront pas présenter des candidats partout au Québec et ignorent encore si tous ceux qu'ils ont seront validés par Élections Canada.

LIRE LA SUITE
ÉLECTIONS FÉDÉRALES

31 août 2021 15h12

Le NPD cible les imposants «flips immobiliers»

LA PRESSE CANADIENNE

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le chef du NPD, Jagmeet Singh, a déclaré qu'il allait sévir contre les stratagèmes d'achat et de revente de propriétés à prix extrêmement élevés en augmentant le montant imposable des gains en capital de 50 à 75 %.
O'Toole équilibrerait le budget «sans coupes»

CHRISTOPHER REYNOLDS
La Presse canadienne

Article réservé aux abonnés

Un gouvernement conservateur équilibrerait le budget d’ici 10 ans «sans compressions», a déclaré mardi Erin O’Toole, évoquant un plan qui repose sur une décennie de croissance économique accélérée.
Si une personne dit qu’il pleut et une autre dit qu’il fait beau, le travail journalistique ne consiste pas à citer l’une et l’autre, mais bien à regarder par la fenêtre.
Francoeur in a delicate position | Federal Elections | News | The Nouvelliste - Trois-Rivières

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