

## OPEN LETTER

September 18, 2014

Mr. Justin Trudeau, M.P.  
Leader, Liberal Party of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Sent by email to: [justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Mr. Trudeau;

We, the undersigned, former Liberal Members of Parliament, are concerned about your recent pronouncement that people who hold a particular view on a given moral issue, as a matter of conscience, cannot be Liberal candidates for the position of M.P. unless they agree to park their consciences at the entrance to the House of Commons and vote directly opposite to their fundamental beliefs, as directed by you. We believe your undemocratic position will alienate many voters who have, in the past, voted Liberal. We ask that you rescind your decision, for at least the following reasons.

First, the firm position of all previous Liberal Leaders, including Pierre E. Trudeau, has been that, on moral issues, Liberal Members of Parliament were able to vote according to their respective consciences. This clear and consistent position served the Party well, as witnessed by the number of years the Liberal Party was the Government in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For you to fully reverse this wise, long held position of all your predecessors, without any cogent reason, legal or otherwise, has the potential to alienate many former Liberal voters.

Second, since your edict singles out the issue of being opposed to abortion, but only that issue, it clearly discriminates against a select class of people, namely those who oppose abortion, and no one else, such as those who might oppose, or be in favour of, say, assisted suicide. We believe that such discrimination is a clear violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 2 (a) which guarantees everyone, even Liberal Members of Parliament, “freedom of conscience“, and (b), which guarantees everyone, even Liberal Members of Parliament, “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression”.

Third, your pronouncement deprives the members of local Liberal Riding Associations from nominating for election, anyone who is pro-life, and, by logical extension, anyone who has firm personal beliefs on any issue that differs from Party policy as imposed by you. This clearly negates your promise that Liberal nominations will be fair, open and democratic.

Finally, if your order is not rescinded, it will stand as a precedent for you, and future Liberal Leaders, to issue similar edicts on other moral issues, such as being either for or against assisted suicide, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, human cloning, animal/human genetic splicing/mixing and many such issues which we cannot even imagine today, but which may develop as our technological knowledge increases at an ever more rapid pace. After all, if the Leader can ban people from running for the Party because they are opposed to abortion, then why not because they advocate euthanasia, or agree with human cloning, or are opposed to either or both these concepts? Where does one draw the line?

As Liberal leader, we urge you to return to democratic principles and sensible Party tradition and rescind your ban on people who hold a particular moral belief, from running for the Party, unless they agree to do exactly as demanded by you. How can such a discriminatory policy serve the democratic ideals of our great nation?

Sincerely,

Garnet Bloomfield  
London-Middlesex  
(1980-1984)

Murray Calder  
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey  
(1993-2004)

Rex Crawford  
Kent  
(1988-1997)

Pat O'Brien  
London-Fanshawe  
(1993-2006)

John O'Reilly  
Haliburton-Kawartha  
Lakes-Brock  
(1993-2004)

Janko Peric  
Cambridge  
(1993-2004)

Tom Wappel  
Scarborough Southwest  
(1988-2008)