

# Candidate launches debates complaint

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**GUELPH** — A Guelph fringe party candidate has filed a complaint with Elections Canada after not being allowed to participate in three debates.

Karen Levenson, a candidate with the Animal Alliance Environment Voters, said it's not fair that debate organizers get to decide who has a voice.

"This is about not being able to participate in democracy," she said.

Levenson said she was excluded from debates hosted by the Muslim Society of Guelph, the Village on the Arboretum and a televised debate hosted by the Guelph Chamber of Commerce.

"What would happen at the other extreme if the Chamber had invited only invited one candidate (to their debate)?" she asked.

But Lloyd Longfield, president of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce and host of the Chamber's debates, said the chamber never called its debate an 'all-candidates debate.' Instead they advertised the debates as simply a 'candidates debate.'

He said the more people included in the debate, the fewer topics can be discussed.

"We were trying to get out as much information as possible," he said.

The Chamber debate included candidates from the New Democratic, Liberal, Conservative and Green parties.

He said he thinks voters got a relevant sample from the four candidates who participated.

Independent candidate John Turmel was removed by the police from the debate.

The uninvited candidate stood at the front of the room shouting, putting the event on hold until he could be escorted off the property.

Levenson said she supports Turmel.

"I was standing with him for democracy," she said. Levenson said she was upset that Green Party candidate Mike Nagy would not stand in support of the fringe candidates.

"They were all fringe candidates at one time," Levenson said.

Instead, she said Nagy and New Democratic Party candidate Tom King were playing tic-tac-toe on a scrap of paper while waiting for the police to remove Turmel.

Mike Nagy said Green party policy calls for all candidates to be invited to every event.

But all candidates must respect one another and contribute to the debate, he said.

Levenson has filed her complaint with the commissioner of Elections Canada. She argues a debate is a form of donation since it benefits the participating candidates.

If some of the candidates are left out, she says in her five-page letter, the debate amounts to an unfair campaign donation.



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Karen Levenson, one of seven candidates in the byelection, says she wants to be included in all debates.

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