

Shannon Tobin For MHA of Lake Melville

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Dear Mr. Chaulk,

I am running in the district of Lake Melville. Yesterday I was informed by media reports that you were going back on your commitment from Feb 17th that you were going to get materials translated for indigenous voters. When pressed on this particular issue you stated the following

"It's always a worry when you've got to worry about transportation of the materials back and forth, but we can adjust in that area ... but we'll deal with that and we'll deal with that particular region on its own. That doesn't mean that everything else has to stop. We're gonna continue and we'll make sure that they're able to exercise their vote up there, their voice."

Lacking sufficient translation of election materials for our indigenous voters seems to me to be nothing more than another example of systemic racism. We have been disappointed in Elections NL multiple times during this election in our district and today we are disappointed with your further ignorance of the issue of providing materials in indigenous languages. Indigenous people in our province have spoken their languages (Inuttut & Innu Aimun) for generations and should be given the right to participate in our democracy in their own language. These materials should have been translated well in advance of this election. To excuse it as it didn't meet your timelines goes against your previous statement that you would "deal with that particular region on its own".

To further our frustration, we received a complaint from the local Returning Officer who stated to my campaign manager that our scrutineer should not be speaking Innu Aimun at the polling station in Sheshatshiu when she was at advance poll as our scrutineer. When we discussed it with our scrutineer, we found out that she was acting as a translator for voters whose primary language was Innu Aimun as they were unclear with the directions provided by your staff in English. In fact, our scrutineer relayed to us that she was translating anything she said in Innu Aimun to English for the benefit of your staff.

Elections NL did not have a translator or a person who spoke the language at the polling station, and your decision to not provide these materials in the indigenous languages made it difficult for indigenous voters to exercise their right to vote and in their voice. It created a significant barrier for registration and will create a significant barrier for those who are accessing mail in ballots.

As someone who is seeking to represent Lake Melville as their MHA it is my duty to bring to your attention that the communities of Lake Melville have a significant population who speak Inuttut and Innu-Aimun as their first language. It is offensive that the people from our communities are not being engaged properly by the non-partisan organization (Elections NL) with whom sole responsibility is to provide every person in our province with the right to vote with little to no barriers involved. Lacking translation services is a significant barrier that should have been dealt with long ago.

Therefore, I am requesting immediately to be sent the instructions you are providing in the voter packages. If Elections NL won't translate them I will at my own cost. As I much rather fix an issue for the people of my district than just point fingers and blame others.

Thank-you,  
Shannon Tobin  
Lake Melville Candidate

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