

File No.:

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE**

B E T W E E N:

JOAN RUSSOW and THE GREEN PARTY OF CANADA

Applicants

- and -

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA,
THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA and
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN IN RIGHT OF CANADA

Respondents

AFFIDAVIT OF MARIAN COYNE

I, MARIAN COYNE, of the City of Glasgow in the Country of Scotland, MAKE
OATH AND SAY:

1. I was elected in March 2000 as Spokesperson for the European Federation of Green Parties. Prior to that, I was active in the Scottish Green Party, where I have variously held office as International Affairs Spokesperson, Executive convener, and Party Leader between 1994 and 1999.
2. The European Federation of Green Parties has 30 member Parties from all parts of the European continent. Delegates from the member Parties elect largely volunteer committee to administer and guide the Federation between twice-yearly Council meetings.

3. Across Europe, Green Parliamentarians are numbered in hundreds, and they contribute 36 Members of the European Parliament of 700. They are coalition partners in Government in Finland, Germany, Italy, and Belgium, and make a significant and increasingly popular impact on the political agenda in Europe. Yet their level of electoral support is nowhere higher than 20%. They are able to contribute to the governance of these countries because of the proportional electoral systems in place.

4. In Germany, the Green Party has never received more than 9% support in any national election or more than 15% at state level. But because of Germany's proportional system, the German Greens have been represented in the Bundestag since 1983 and are presently represented in 10 out of 16 State Parliaments. Since 1980 they have participated in the government of 9 states, and are currently participating in the German national government with 3 Green Ministers.

5. To give another example, in Finland, there is no lower threshold for parliamentary elections, and consequently the Greens have had parliamentary representation since 1983, and they currently have two Green Government Ministers. For European elections, Finnish Greens benefit from the exposure they have received by electing Green members in national elections. In the European parliament, which is also elected by proportional arrangements, currently there are two Finnish Greens.

6. There is great diversity among the electoral systems in Europe, and generalizations soon lose meaning, but one valid generalization based on the Greens' experience is that proportional electoral systems allow greater diversity of representation at every level of political life, and are usually accompanied by high levels of voter turnout. This is not accompanied by any apparent loss of stability, or popular mandate for government. Conversely, countries which retain 'first past the post' electoral systems are observed to suffer from voter apathy (leading to low turnout), and a strong sense of disaffection from the political process itself. Greens relate this phenomenon directly to the lack of real choice available to voters, and the stagnating predominance of long-entrenched political establishments. Evidence from recent initiatives in the UK where a form of PR has been introduced in elections for the European, Welsh and Scottish parliaments supports the contention that proportional systems are likely to deliver a more diverse range of political representation, with consequent renewal of popular interest in the democratic process and without any loss of intelligibility or stability

7. Belgium is a country of some 11+ million inhabitants, of whom 6 million are Dutch-speaking Flemish and 5 million are French-speaking Walloons. The Belgians have evolved a set of governmental arrangements that accommodates the diverse characteristics of these people, and their various political priorities. The

result is a coalition at national level of Liberals, Socialists and Greens, with nationalist Parties and Christian Democrats in opposition. The governing equations at Regional level are different. No party is in overall majority, and the coalitions must negotiate a joint political programme weighted in proportion to each Party's electoral showing. Belgian voters understand this, and a lively public debate is ensured on the issues. Politicians remain accountable to their electorate. Party supporters know that their whole programme cannot be realized and, as a result, priority-setting debate within Parties is vigorous. Green representation is visible and influential at all levels (the Deputy Prime Minister is a Green), but this influence is directly proportional to their electoral appeal.

8. The Westminster model of representation has always been based on the rule of “first past the post” or “winner take all.” While some inroads have been made by non-mainstream parties (most notably the Scottish National Party, which is now the second Party in Scotland), it has remained the case that small and less known parties have struggled to overcome the difficulties they face in being seen as a viable political option for voters. In 1999, the first elections for the new Scottish Parliament were held using a form of proportionality as a 'corrective' to the acknowledged distortions produced by the status quo. One third of the Parliamentary seats were allocated on an 'Additional Member' system. The Scottish Green party had participated in every level of election over the previous decade without achieving a single success, and our political priorities were accordingly deemed 'marginal'. Yet even without significant media exposure, or an

expensive campaign, the Scottish Green Party achieved 4% popular support and had one Parliamentarian elected. This ground-breaking achievement was followed one month later by a proportional election held for the European Parliament. Support for Scottish greens rose to 5.8% (below the electoral threshold), but English Greens, profiting from increased visibility following the Scottish breakthrough, did succeed in crossing the threshold in two regions, allowing two Greens to be elected to the European Parliament. As another confirmation that Green politics is not 'marginal' but representative of voters' interests, Greens took three out of 25 seats on the new strategic London Assembly in May 2000, elected under a proportional system. Green support on this occasion rose to 12%. There is no indication that either the Scottish Parliament or the London Assembly is suffering from instability or inertia as a result of the election of Greens, or other 'minority' Parties. The elected members from such Parties as the Greens enjoy a high level of recognition and approval, and they are seen to contribute to the legitimization of the Parliamentary process by their inclusion. Greens' high priority on including women as candidates offers an alternative to the male domination of traditional parties.

9. Green political insights and programmes have been developed over the past twenty five years around the world in response to the global lack of wise stewardship of our fragile Earth. In those European countries with proportional electoral systems, Greens are elected to translate the public's concern into political action. In other European countries without proportionality such as the Westminster elections in UK, Greens remain outside the exercise of political power, and their concerns are

treated as marginal . A change in voting system to proportionality confirms the relevance and electoral appeal of Greens as active political agents for democratic change. European Greens wish to support the right of citizens everywhere to fair representation of their views in the political process. The evidence from Europe indicates the greater efficacy of electoral systems which promote political representation on a proportional basis to achieve this aim.

AFFIRMED BEFORE ME at the City)
of ____ in the Country of)
____ this)
day of March, 2001)
)

Marian Coyne

A Commissioner for Taking Affidavits, etc.

