

Applicants' statement on settlement of Twitter charter challenge

November 2, 2018

This September we were blocked on Twitter by Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson.

Earlier in October, represented by the legal team at Champ & Associates, we sought a court order declaring that the Mayor had infringed our constitutional right to freedom of expression, as protected by s. 2(b) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In a victory for free speech, we have now reached a settlement. We are satisfied that Mayor Watson has admitted he was in the wrong and are encouraged that he seems committed to a more respectful and open dialogue with his constituents than in the past.

We were disappointed that Mayor Watson had taken the drastic step of blocking us - and not just against us, but many others as well. We were not harassing or abusive in our tweets, but simply asking questions and engaging in political debate with Ottawa's Mayor from a critical perspective.

It was profoundly undemocratic for the Mayor to block certain people from viewing his tweets or participating in conversations in his Twitter threads.

The settlement we have reached directly addresses the concerns we raised with this case. It includes an agreement that the Mayor will unblock us, as well as everyone else he has blocked.

Mayor Watson now agrees that his Twitter account is an official public account of the Mayor of Ottawa. This is an important recognition and one that we hope will give pause to other elected officials who believe otherwise when it comes to their accounts and block critical voices.

We are also confident that this case has sent a strong message to elected officials from coast to coast to coast.

- James Hutt, Emilie Taman, and Dylan Penner

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