

Former B.C. premier Christy Clark defends federal pro-life candidates

As potential federal election candidates who hold pro-life views on abortion are squeezed out by some federal political parties, pro-life candidates are getting support from a surprising source.

“Proudly pro-choice” Christy Clark, the former Liberal premier of British Columbia, is slamming some of Canada’s federal political parties for marginalizing Canadians who hold pro-life views on abortion by making it difficult for them to become political candidates or dropping them as candidates if their pro-life views come to light through social media posts.

Clark, who was B.C. premier from 2011-17, made her comments about pro-life candidates on Facebook and Twitter, following the English language federal leaders debate on Oct. 7.

And she said the efforts in some parties of blocking people with pro-life views from being candidates is robbing Canadians from having good people who disagree on that issue from being involved in public life through politics.

“The talk about abortion rights during the debate really bugged me,” Clark said. “(Green Party leader Elizabeth) May and (Conservative leader Andrew) Scheer have both said they won’t change the laws on abortion, and then both took heat for allowing candidates to run with them who are pro-life. So what?”

While Clark said she personally is “proudly pro-choice,” she said that within her governments there were pro-life members who contributed significantly to the well-being of the province of British Columbia.

“I’m proudly pro-choice, but as a leader, I worked with lots of people in my caucus who disagreed with me on that. They weren’t dangerous radicals from the alt-right. They were just people with deeply held, very different views from mine. And they accepted that limiting access to abortion was not on our party’s agenda.

“We were united around one thing: growing our economy. The result? Many of those same people whom (NDP leader) Jagmeet Singh and (Liberal leader) Justin Trudeau apparently want to bar from holding public office made huge contributions to making B.C. better.”

Both the federal NDP and governing Liberal parties have all but banned pro-life activities within their parties.

Scheer, a Catholic, has said that while he personally holds pro-life views, he has "promised" that a government led by him would not reopen the abortion debate, although he wouldn't stop MPs from putting forward private member's bills.

The Green Party's position is a little more confusing, as leader May has said in the past she can't stop party members from trying to advance private member's bills on the issue. But the party has since put out a number of statements indicating the party is pro-choice. One Catholic candidate in the eastern Ontario region has been dropped by the party allegedly for making anti-abortion statements on Catholic blog sites.

Former Green Party candidate Marthe Lépine has been dropped by the party in the Glengarry-Prescott-Russell riding over comments she made online about abortion, party spokesperson John Chenery said. He added that the "Green Party will always fight for access to timely, safe, legal abortions."

Lépine, who ended campaigning as an independent, told Canadian Catholic News she was surprised the Greens scuttled her candidacy because she was vetted by the party before getting the green light to run as a candidate.