

FEDS SPENDING \$5.5M ON NEW INDEPENDENT LEADERS' DEBATES COMMISSION

NO NEED FOR PM TO TRY DICTATING RULES OF NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION: MILTON MP LISA RAITT

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Burlington MP and Minister of Democratic Institutions Karina Gould announced the federal government is dedicating \$5.5 million to create an independent leaders' debates commission.

The announcement was made Tuesday (Oct. 30) and stated the commission will be tasked to organize two leaders' debates - one in each official language (English and French) - for the upcoming 2019 federal general election.

"Leaders' debates are a fundamental exercise in democracy. An indepen-

dent commission will make the debates a more predictable, reliable and stable element of federal election campaigns," Gould said.

"Canadians agree that a debates commission needs to be sustainable, non-partisan, independent, and established with the priorities and interests of Canadians in mind," she continued.

"Going forward, the leaders' debates commission will ensure that Canadians with disabilities, those living in rural and remote areas, and official language minority communities will have access to vital information about their choice of leader, party and platform."

The commission is expected to be in place by spring 2019 and led by a commissioner with a seven-member advisory board.

Gould also announced the federal government's nominee for the first de-



Burlington MP Karina Gould and Minister of Democratic Institutions.

Twitter photo

bates commissioner will be former governor general David Johnston.

"Central to its oversight of the 2019 federal leaders' debates, the commission will work to ensure that the leaders' debates are accessible to all Canadians on a

variety of platforms," a media release stated.

"Canadians recommended a phased, thoughtful, and independent approach to leaders' debates."

But Milton MP Lisa Raitt, who is also deputy leader of the Conservative

Party of Canada and official Opposition, believes there was "no need to impose a leaders' debate commission," on Canadians.

"And there is even less need for the Prime Minister to try dictating the rules of the next election. What

makes the Prime Minister think he has the right to impose the criteria for the next round of election debates?" she said.

"There were more debates in the last election than in generations, and the rules of those debates were agreed to by all parties coming together with major broadcasters," Raitt added.

The decision to create the debates commission was made after online consultations with Canadians, a series of roundtables with specialists, broadcasters, academics and stakeholders across the country, and a study by the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, stated the release.

The debates commission will prepare a report to Parliament after the 2019 debates, which will outline findings, lessons learned and recommendations on whether or not to make the commission a permanent oversight body.

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