

Members and National Council,

We have had an extraordinary year and are seeking remedies to the following situation

The Toronto Chapter has been subject of a hostile takeover by a group which has goals outside and counter to the PR mandate of FVC. This has been executed easily, given the “click-and-join” Internet environment. For \$10 any member of the public can join FVC and in two months vote and run for office.

The group instigating the takeover is RaBIT, an organization devoted to AV, a non-PR system. The move is therefore legally known as a hostile takeover. We are not the first organization that has confronted such a move. A hostile takeover of the Sierra Club was effected by an anti-immigration group (*) and the same happened to the RSPCA when they were joined in numbers by a pro-hunting group. In both cases the courts ruled in favour of those attempting to preserve the goals of the organization.

Getting back to Toronto Chapter, recently nominations for the executive included several RaBIT members. We had anticipated this and put into place a Conflict of Interest motion and a nominations committee to apply it. This process has been questioned by National Council which itself has four RaBIT members. Also, we have been threatened. If we had continued with our election and AGM, Dave Meslin predicted a lot of shouting and to implement a “media strategy,” which we imagine meant reporters with accusations of exclusion, lack of democracy, etc. In fact, we were going to hire security guards if we had gone ahead with the election. Because we could not ensure a safe and peaceful environment for our members and guest speaker at our AGM, we decided it was best to have a social gathering.

As next steps we are requesting that NC temporally suspend/decertify the chapter while we seek remedies. Now that this vulnerability has been exposed, we realize that we could be easily taken over by First Past the Post enthusiasts or any other group with its own ideas about electoral reform. It is the responsibility of the current executive to protect the mandate. This is known in legal terms as “fiduciary duty.” We hasten to add that RaBIT has done nothing illegal—unethical perhaps, but not illegal.

Please be assured that we are working assiduously to resolve our issue. In the meantime, we plan to move ahead with our mission in Toronto through the use of action groups. We will be putting out a call for individuals interested in any one of our current initiatives: membership; municipal; federal; women.

Yours as a fellow enthusiast for Proportional Representation,

Joyce Hall

*Nonprofits that, like the Sierra Club, have multiple voting members are especially vulnerable to hostile takeovers. This vulnerability is exacerbated when the membership admission requirements are minimal.

Read more: <http://charitylawyerblog.com/2010/10/25/nonprofit-coup-detat/#ixzz2WZSLKw82>