
Statement by the Hon. Gerry Byrne, PC, MP Member for Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte

(September 30, 2009) -- Ottawa, ON – Today, MP Gerry Byrne responded to allegations raised by defeated mayoral candidate Charles Pender concerning federal Liberal activism in the municipal election campaign.

Mayor Pender was quoted in several Newfoundland and Labrador media sources today as saying, “I think Mr. Greeley had a strategy with the support of Gerry Byrne's Liberal campaign team, which is a formidable opponent”.

“I can assure Mr. Pender that his allegations and concerns are neither justified nor factual”, Mr. Byrne said.

“I have had no involvement in the City of Corner Brook’s Mayoral race. I hold a strong belief that municipal elections and offices are not the place for partisan politics of any kind. I further hold the belief that candidates in municipal elections should neither seek, nor be offered, an endorsement from other political office holders of any other level of government. Such actions often contribute to the perception of blurred lines of independence and impartiality during municipal decision making and do not serve the operations of a municipal council well. Municipal government is historically based on the system of non-partisan, independent representation by non-affiliated individuals holding seats on council. It should remain that way.

In this spirit, I can assure not only Mr. Pender but all the citizens of Corner Brook and Newfoundland and Labrador that at no point in time did I suggest to any person who might be identified as a federal campaign supporter of mine, or to anyone else for that matter, that they should vote, endorse or campaign for any particular candidate in this municipal election.

If individuals who are campaign supporters of mine did come forward to participate in the electoral campaigns of either of the two candidates for the office of Mayor of the City of Corner Brook, I can only say that I am proud that they chose to participate in the democratic process as is their right. They did so, however, not as Liberals or as Gerry Byrne supporters but as free minded citizens of Corner Brook exercising their democratic rights as citizens and taxpayers. I further note that such participation clearly benefited both candidates during the course of the campaign. It was not exclusive to one or the other.

Any perception of partisan motive or involvement on my part by Mr. Pender is patently false and can be put to rest.”