Nine Canadians Lead Unprecedented Fight Against Election Fraud

When Leeanne Bielli’s phone rang last spring, she never expected it would be Elections Canada calling.

More surprising, it was a robocall informing her of a last-minute change to the location of her Don Valley East polling station for the 2011 federal election. Leeanne scrambled for pen and paper to jot down the new address, but it was too late. The message ended as abruptly as it started.

Having no reason to question the authenticity of a call from Elections Canada, she believed that without the new address she would not be able to cast her ballot. As a direct result, Leeanne did not vote in the 2011 federal election. It would be almost a year before she learned the truth – she had been the victim of electoral fraud.

Three hundred kilometres north, in the Ontario riding of Nipissing-Timiskaming, Peggy Walsh-Craig received a similar call last spring, also purportedly from Elections Canada. “I remember quite clearly [the automated message] said that due to higher than expected voter turnout, my polling station had been changed.” It also reminded her of another call she received earlier in the election campaign, during which she was asked to indicate whether she planned to vote Conservative. Peggy said she would not.

In the same riding, Ken Ferance also experienced a pattern of similar calls – as did Sandra McEwing, Bill Kerr and Jeff Reid in Winnipeg, Kay Burkhart in Saskatoon, Yvonne Kafka on Vancouver Island, and Thomas Parlee in Whitehorse.

Not until after news of the so-called robocall scandal broke this spring did these nine people, along with the rest of us, learn the calls were fraudulent. Moreover, they were likely part of a widespread, organized and targeted campaign of voter suppression and election fraud that may have affected thousands of voters – and the outcomes in ridings across the country.

Put yourself in Leeanne’s shoes for a moment. Imagine realizing that you had been intentionally tricked out of your right to vote. Now imagine it was your mother or father’s phone that rang last spring.

For these nine Canadians, such a blatant violation of the most fundamental democratic right could not go unchallenged. This March, they each decided to step forward and launch a legal application to overturn the results in their riding.

However, relentless litigation from Conservative Party lawyers through the spring and summer has driven legal costs well above what was anticipated. As a result, legal costs have now outstripped donations.

Today, these landmark legal cases are at a critical stage. With legal proceedings still underway and the Federal Court hearings set to begin in December, a new influx of donations is urgently needed to refill the Fund’s coffers.

Nothing short of public faith in our electoral system and the integrity of Canada’s democracy lies in the balance.

Donate to the DEMOCRACY 24-7 LEGAL FUND online at www.canadians.org, by phone at 1-800-387-7177, or by mail to The Council of Canadians, 700-170 Laurier Ave W., Ottawa, ON K1P 5V5.