

This is just one more example of how democracy and the election process works in Canada . This is why we need to reform the entire process, right now we are controlled by crooked , dirty rotten political parties. Surely if Canada is going to point their finger at other countries and call them corrupt, we better clean up our own house.

This is not just a practice that the Liberal Party do , all political parties in Canada do, for they “political parties” are vehicles used to steal what was “ONCE” the peoples government. My dear people , we have lost control and if we are to correct this corrupt system, we must refuse to vote , because when we vote , then that means we support the present corrupt system.

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RICHARD LAUTENS/TORONTO STAR

MP Joe Volpe is seen yesterday in the garage of his Dufferin St. and Lawrence Ave.-area home. The federal Liberal party is investigating an official complaint that the Volpe leadership campaign bought memberships in a Montreal riding.

Dozens improperly signed up Many surprised Montrealers get cards, probe finds Volpe campaign named as paying for 9 memberships

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Dozens of people in Montreal, including the dead, have been improperly signed up as federal Liberal party members.

A *Toronto Star* investigation has found unsuspecting Quebecers — some surprised to find out they were instant Liberals — were sent membership cards and letters urging them to vote next weekend at all-important meetings to elect delegates to the Liberal convention to choose a new leader.

Using membership lists from the Quebec wing of the federal Liberal party, the *Star* talked to more than 70 families who reported significant problems in their own case, or in that of other family members. Most often, they hadn't paid the membership fee which party rules stipulate must be paid by the actual member.

Toronto MP Joe Volpe's campaign was named as having paid for the memberships for nine people, according to *Star* interviews. Scores of others don't know who called them. A Volpe campaign insider said last night the instructions were that the Volpe name wasn't generally to be cited in telephone recruitment.

The federal Liberal party is investigating an official complaint that the Volpe campaign bought memberships in Papineau riding. The complaint was forwarded by riding officials, who also examined a list of members signed up by the leadership campaign of Toronto MP Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke-Lakeshore). No anomalies were found with regard to Ignatieff.

The key official in Volpe's Quebec recruitment drive was Nick Discepola, a former Quebec MP who is now Volpe's national campaign chair.

Yesterday, Discepola did not return phone calls.

Liberal leadership hopeful Stéphane Dion, the sole Quebec candidate in the race, said yesterday he has heard questions swirling around about party memberships.

"I'm aware of the concerns. I don't have the answers. It will be for the camp of Mr. Volpe to answer. I have confidence in Joe's honesty," said the Montreal MP, following a meeting with the *Star*'s editorial board.

Yesterday, the Liberals' national director, Steve MacKinnon, said in an interview from Ottawa there is "a very clear process" for the allegation facing the Volpe campaign in Papineau.

The Volpe recruitment process, according to insiders, involved about 20 telephone operators at Volpe headquarters on Crémazie Blvd. for \$10 an hour for several weeks. They concentrated on the city's Italian-Canadian community. Once the paperwork was done — which theoretically would involve completing and signing application forms and paying the \$10 fee — names were sent to the provincial wing of the federal party so that membership cards could be sent out.

None of these insiders would go on the record.

The Volpe campaign signed up 4,352 members in Quebec in a drive ending with a key July cut-off date. Members in good standing by that date are eligible to help select delegates in riding meetings next weekend who will then go to the party's leadership convention Nov. 28 to Dec. 3.

The point of having large memberships is that it appears to give the campaign clout, showing the candidate is a force to be reckoned with in the race (among the nine candidates) and has a strong organizing team. Corey Hobbs, spokesperson for the Volpe campaign, said yesterday the organization had "a very simple process" in Quebec. People were called and asked if they were a Liberal and if they wished to support leadership candidate Joe Volpe.

"If they said `yes,' we filled out ... a membership form for them and our field workers went to them and got them to sign their memberships and pay their fees. And that was the recruitment process, pretty simple, and that's how we did it in Quebec."

Asked if there was a single case in which a membership was bought by the campaign, he said: "Absolutely not."

Hobbs added that Volpe, who is MP for Eglinton-Lawrence, would not be available for comment.

At his Dufferin St. and Lawrence Ave. home, Volpe last night refused to comment.

Interviewing mostly in Italian, the *Star* uncovered 75 cases of problems with the Montreal-area lists. Only a couple of dozen people who were called said they were paid-up members without apparent problems. Some people listed as members didn't even

remember being called or having received anything in the mail. Some weren't Liberals, most hadn't paid or signed, two men were deceased (one of them in 1989) and a woman received a membership card with a maiden name she hadn't used in 27 years. She said she didn't know which camp arranged for the card, but she complained to her Westmount-Ville Marie riding association.

**`No, no, I didn't pay.
When she called, she said he'd do it for
free'
Michelina Ferrara, 71, of Montreal**

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Volpe campaign**

She told the *Star*: "I understand totally there was something that stunk from the very beginning. ... This is not right. I'm 50 years old. I know enough to know someone paid for my membership."

She didn't want her name used.

Paying on another person's behalf, or signing an application form for them, is against the rules of the Quebec party, which state each person "with his or her own funds, pay the membership fee."

After obtaining Quebec membership lists, the *Star* concentrated on calling people in core Montreal Island ridings for which the Volpe campaign submitted the most members, including Paul Martin's riding of LaSalle-Émard (619), Ahuntsic (593), Papineau (557), as well as ridings where fewer were recruited such as Hochelaga (112), Westmount-Ville Marie (92) and Bourassa (50).

Many ridings show hundreds of names of people listed as members, all with the same expiry date of July 3, 2007. That means they were supposedly members by July 4, 2006, making them eligible to participate in the delegate selection meetings.

It is important to note that most people interviewed had no idea there was any problem with not having paid or signed and many had positive feelings about the Liberal party, even if they hadn't joined. Those who knew there was a problem expressed confusion and anger.

"Someone called me from the Volpe Liberal party," said Antonina Sanzari, 69, listed on the membership role with her husband, Lorenzo, 72, in the riding of Hochelaga. "No, nothing was paid," she added.

Michelina Ferrara, 71, in Hochelaga, also said she wasn't asked to pay anything when she got a call earlier this summer.

"No, no, I didn't pay. When she called, she said he'd do it for free. It was Giuseppe (Volpe)," she said. "She said to me I don't have to pay for anything (and) that he had a committee and it did it for free, for nothing."

Elena Ciarelli, 65, and her husband, Francesco, 68, both retired, received membership cards for Ahuntsic riding, but only Francesco is named on the list used by the *Star*. She says she was called by someone working for Volpe and that they didn't pay. "She said nothing on the subject of money," she said, of the woman who called her.

The membership lists also included problems with:

- Sebastiano Sperduti, who has been dead for 17 years and was unlikely to have been a Liberal party member. He had a stroke the day after he arrived in Canada in 1979 and died in 1989, at 67.

He's on the roles (listed at an address where he never lived), as is his daughter, Giovanna, in LaSalle-Émard. Somebody called her and asked if she was a Liberal member. She said she always voted Liberal but didn't have a card. The person "asked me if I wanted a card, if I wanted to join, if I wanted to attend the elections to choose the leader."

Earlier this week, she received a card informing her she was now "a member in good standing of the Liberal Party of Canada, Quebec." The card was dated July 4, 2006 and expires July 3, 2007.

- Marcello Palmieri's parents, Michele and Antonia, received cards in the mail recently, telling them they were members in good standing in Ahuntsic riding. He didn't know whether his mother wanted to join, but his father died last December.

The cards say their membership is effective July 4, 2006 and expires in a year.

Asked what he thought when a card arrived for his dad, Marcello said: "I dunno, I guess I was a bit surprised. ... I was curious about it but, like I said, I know both my parents weren't really involved in politics ... I don't think they requested anything of this kind."

- Carmela Cristiano, over 60, has lived in Canada for 41 years. She says someone left a message on her answering machine about the Liberal party. Last week, she received a membership card. "I didn't ask for a membership card. I don't know why they sent me this card." She didn't pay or sign to be a member in the riding of Hochelaga.

- Giuseppina Alfieri, 67, from Hochelaga, says a long-time friend — who the *Star* knows worked the phones for Volpe's organization — called to ask her to join.

Asked if she had paid, she said her friend told her she would pay for her and she would pay her back later. Did she sign anything? "No, I didn't sign anything because I live far."

Earlier in the leadership campaign, Volpe was criticized after the "kiddie donor" scandal, in which the campaign returned about \$27,000 in contributions made by children. Volpe said he hadn't known about the donations.