

Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism

An Open Letter to Mayor Mandel

October 6, 2009

Mayor Stephen Mandel
Office of the Mayor
2nd Floor, City Hall
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

Dear Mayor Mandel:

On October 20, 2009 former U.S. president George W. Bush will visit Edmonton. This visit is a violation of Canada's obligations under international law and of Canadian law. As Lawyers Against War has pointed out in a letter to Prime Minister Harper, which is attached, "Accusation of war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out by the Bush administration under the supervision and direction of G.W. Bush as President and Commander in Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces are well documented....None of these accusations have been dismissed or confirmed by a court of law. However, the credible inculpatory evidence supporting the accusations is overwhelming and there does not appear to be any credible exculpatory evidence refuting the accusations."

In light of the credible accusations and reliable evidence of such war crimes and crimes against humanity, George W. Bush is inadmissible to Canada under the *Canadian Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* as well as under Canada's international obligations.

According to the Globe and Mail, the total cost to Canadians for the RCMP services alone will be in excess of \$500,000 this year. Bush is coming to Edmonton as a private citizen as part of a speaking tour which by his own statements is being carried out in order to bring in lucrative fees. Various corporations active in Alberta are sponsoring this visit for purposes which are not made public. Included in the sponsors is Economic Development Edmonton.

It is totally unacceptable that the City of Edmonton utilize public funds for purposes of bringing war criminal George W. Bush to Edmonton.

We wish to emphasize that the policy being followed by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Services in providing public sponsorship and publicly-funded security to an individual person who is legally *persona non grata* is a grave breach of your responsibilities. That it is taking place at a time when the policies followed by the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Services are criminalizing dissent and making free political expression contingent on wealth makes it all the more grievous.

In Edmonton, the police have begun to routinely deny citizens and residents permits to organize political expression and protest. Where a permit is provided, inflated policing costs are charged to the organizers. The families of missing and murdered women, mainly from the indigenous nations, were forced to pay the police \$3,000 last year to organize a Valentine's Day march to remember their loved ones and call for action. *Take Back the Night* organizers were

denied a permit. The Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism and the Canada-Palestine Cultural Association were denied a permit to march on the streets last January, and the organizers threatened with unspecified charges. When the more than 1,500 people participating upheld their right to march in the streets, an organizer was charged with “parading without a permit.” The City of Edmonton knows very well that the police are pursuing a policy which is a violation of Canadians’ civil rights and the City declined, in the end, to proceed to trial. Yet it continues to permit the police to criminalize dissent and arbitrarily decide who can exercise their democratic rights without facing police harassment.

In light of all these facts, we citizens and residents of Edmonton consider it entirely unacceptable that the City of Edmonton is providing assistance to George Bush and using public finances to aid and abet this war criminal. We therefore request that you immediately take the following steps:

1. Inform the organizers that should the Canadian government continue to place itself above the law and not prohibit George W. Bush from entering Canada they will be held responsible for all security and policing surrounding the event.
2. Immediately request from Economic Development Edmonton a full accounting with regard to their sponsorship of Bush’s visit and inform EDE that no public funds should be spent promoting the event on October 20th.
3. Request that the Edmonton City Police pursue the arrest of George W. Bush for war crimes, crimes against the peace and crimes against humanity.

Yours truly,
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for Edmonton Coalition Against War and Racism
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cc: Edmonton City Councillors
Michael J. Boyd, Chief of Police
Brian Gibson, Chair, Edmonton Police Commission