



Interview Summary: Ted Lojko

Ted Lojko, Liberal organizer and former campaign manager for Han Dong, was interviewed by Commission Counsel on March 5, 2024.

Notes to reader

- Commission Counsel have provided explanatory notes in square brackets to assist the reader.
- This summary contains information that relates to the Commission's mandate under clauses (a)(i)(A) and (B) of its Terms of Reference. Information provided during the interviews that relates to other aspects of the Commission's Terms of Reference has been omitted from this summary, but may be adduced by the Commission at a later stage of its proceedings.

1. Background

- [1] Ted Lojko was Han Dong's campaign manager for the 2019 Liberal nomination contest in Don Valley North, as well as in the 2019 and 2021 general elections. He currently lives in Gananoque and runs an ice cream store, co-owns a restaurant, and does part-time communications work for Mr. Dong's Parliament Hill office.
- [2] Mr. Lojko was born in Brantford, Ontario. He attended the University of Waterloo, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto. He lived in Toronto for approximately 25 years before moving to Gananoque around 2011-2012.
- [3] Mr. Lojko worked as a supervisor for the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission on economic and community development. He then worked in consulting on community and housing development. In the 1980s, Mr. Lojko worked for a seafood company, Chianti Foods, as the Vice President of Market Development. At the time of the 2019 election, Mr. Lojko ran a bed and breakfast.

- [4] Mr. Lojko got involved in politics in the mid-1970s, when he worked on a mayoral campaign in Brantford, Ontario. Since then, he has worked on many election campaigns both provincially and federally, as well as on municipal campaigns. He has been involved in over 30 provincial and federal nomination and election campaigns.
- [5] Mr. Lojko has run for municipal and provincial office himself. He served as mayor of Gananoque from 2019 to 2022.

2. Relationship with Han Dong

- [6] Mr. Lojko met Mr. Dong around 1997, while working at Chianti Foods. Mr. Dong sold squid wholesale in Toronto. Mr. Lojko believed he would be well suited to work in politics. Mr. Lojko connected Mr. Dong to the political world and got him to volunteer on Maria Minna's election campaign. Following Ms. Minna's election, Mr. Dong was hired to work part time in Ms. Minna's office. Mr. Lojko eventually suggested to Mr. Dong that he may have more opportunities for work at the provincial level. Mr. Dong then began working for Gerry Phillips at Queen's Park.
- [7] Over the years, Mr. Lojko and Mr. Dong stayed in touch and they were involved in several campaigns together.
- [8] In 2014, Mr. Dong was elected MPP for the riding of Trinity-Spadina. Mr. Lojko ran Mr. Dong's nomination and election campaigns. In 2018, Mr. Dong lost his bid for re-election as an MPP.

3. The 2019 election in Don Valley North

- [9] In 2019, Mr. Lojko began hearing rumors that Geng Tan, the Liberal incumbent MP for the federal riding of Don Valley North, would not be running for re-election. He heard that the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada was not prepared to sign Mr. Tan's nomination papers. Mr. Lojko recalls that Mr. Dong spoke with Mr. Tan about the anticipated vacancy. Mr. Lojko believes (but was not certain) this was before Mr. Tan announced publicly he would not be seeking re-election.

- [10] Upon hearing the rumors that Mr. Tan would not be running again, and following Mr. Tan's eventual announcement confirming the rumors, Mr. Lojko encouraged Mr. Dong to run for the Liberal Party nomination in Don Valley North. Mr. Lojko had encouraged Mr. Dong to run federally in the past. Elizabeth Betowski, Mr. Tan's 2015 election campaign manager, also encouraged Mr. Dong to run for the nomination.
- [11] In response to questions about Michael Chan's involvement in Mr. Dong's decision to run in Don Valley North, Mr. Lojko stated there was likely some communication between Mr. Dong and Mr. Chan. Mr. Lojko explained that Mr. Chan is part of the Chinese Canadian community and that he keeps track of who is running where. However, the main sources of encouragement were Mr. Lojko and Ms. Betowski, as well as other close friends and Mr. Dong's wife.

The nomination campaign

- [12] Mr. Dong ran for the nomination against Bang-Gu Jiang.
- [13] Mr. Lojko was Mr. Dong's campaign manager for the nomination contest. The other key members of Mr. Dong's campaign team were Ms. Betowski and Tom Allison.
- [14] The campaign focused on signing up as many new members as possible to vote at the nomination meeting and contacting existing members to secure their support.
- [15] To be eligible to vote, a person had to sign up as a Liberal Party member. There was no membership fee. Mr. Lojko could not remember if eligible voters had to be 14 or 16 years of age, but he knew that they had to be a resident of the geographic area [the riding]. Permanent residents (non-citizens) were eligible to vote in the nomination contest if they met these criteria based on Liberal Party rules. Mr. Lojko explained that if the campaign signed up someone who was not a resident of the geographic area, they would not submit the membership (and would instead pass the information along to the party) because it would be a waste of time to focus on individuals who were not eligible to vote at the nomination meeting.
- [16] Mr. Lojko believed that international students would not be eligible to vote in the nomination contest unless they could prove they were living on their own with an address in the area. Liberal Party rules required documented proof of residency within

the geographic area (riding). He thought many international students would not have proof of residency because they would be living in residence with their educational institution. He agreed, however, that international students may be able to establish their residency, but his recollection was that the campaign did not sign up many, if any, international students. Mr. Lojko did not believe that there was any risk of foreign interference by allowing international students or non-citizens to vote in the nomination. Mr. Lojko believed if any non-citizens and international students were signed up, very few of them (if any) actually attended the nomination meeting and very few (if any) actually voted.

- [17] At the nomination meeting, voters were required to show ID, which had to match the information on the membership list. The normal piece of ID used was a driver's license. If the person did not have a driver's license, they could use another piece of government ID and a document listing their name and address. These are also Elections Canada's rules. Someone with proper identification, including a spouse, could also vouch for another voter's identity.
- [18] A common issue faced by nomination campaigns was that people could sign up for a membership more than once or they would sign up using the wrong information. Mr. Lojko gave the example of people signing up with their Chinese name rather than with the name on their government identification. He explained that the campaign could, in theory, sign up members and then circle back to make sure that all the required information was correct so that the membership list would be as accurate as possible. Doing so was difficult in this campaign because it was hastily organized due to the short timeframe.
- [19] Mr. Lojko described several different strategies the campaign used to sign up members: volunteers would knock on doors; the campaign would contact people based on lists obtained from other politicians in the area; and Mr. Dong and his wife would visit group classes, community activities, or seniors' homes.
- [20] The campaign focused on outreach to groups they could mobilize to show up to the nomination meeting to vote. Mr. Dong's campaign did not focus its efforts on the Chinese community, since they were unsure how members of the Chinese community

would vote, as both Mr. Dong and his opponent were both Chinese-Canadian. Instead, the campaign engaged in outreach to other ethnocultural groups, mainly the Armenian and Muslim communities, as well as supporters of former MPP David Kaplan.

- [21] The campaign did not target international students. Mr Lojko emphasized that it is very difficult to motivate young people to attend a nomination meeting. Moreover, it can be difficult to get non-citizens out to vote because they are often afraid doing so could impact their immigration status. In Mr. Lojko's experience, people from authoritarian countries are reluctant to get involved in politics because they fear repercussions if the party they support is unsuccessful. Mr. Lojko also explained that, at the end of the nomination, you wanted to avoid allegations that the nomination process was unfair.
- [22] All new members had to be signed up at least a week or two before the nomination vote. Once the new memberships had been submitted to the Liberal Party after the cutoff date, the Liberal Party sent a list of all eligible voters to the candidates. This allowed the campaign to contact members who they had not signed up and try to convince them to vote for their candidate.
- [23] Ultimately, it is the campaign manager and the key campaign organizers who determine how to use the list that the Liberal Party sends. Other people in the campaign would have access, but Mr. Lojko would not give access to people who did not know what they were doing or who could ruin the database.
- [24] When asked about campaign volunteers, Mr. Lojko explained that there were probably some international students who may have volunteered, but he did not recall recruiting them specifically. If there were any international students volunteering during the nomination campaign, they would have helped with marshaling people to the nomination vote. The majority of volunteers at the nomination meeting were friends of Mr. Dong, and adults. Generally speaking, young people would volunteer on campaigns to get community service hours or to add to their CV.
- [25] Mr. Lojko described the campaign as civil. It is not wise to take on an "us vs them" mentality when campaigning in a nomination contest, since the successful candidate would need to rely on their opponent's supporters in the general election campaign. The

strategy was to talk about why Mr. Dong was the best candidate, not bad mouth the opposition.

The nomination vote

- [26] The nomination vote occurred on September 12, 2019, the day after the writ for the general election dropped.
- [27] Mr. Lojko described the nomination meeting as chaotic, which he said was typical for such meetings, especially in ridings with a large “ethnocultural” community. There were issues with finding places for people to park, people showing up who were not on the list, and people showing up without the right ID.
- [28] Mr. Lojko explained that there are three key parts to the nomination meeting: getting out the vote; controlling the site in order for people to park, get information, and have unobstructed access to the voting room; and scrutineering. As campaign manager, he oversaw all three components.
- [29] The campaign’s get out the vote strategy varied by cultural group. For example, there was one person from the campaign assigned to work with the Muslim community, which generally organized itself. With respect to the Armenian community, the campaign talked to organizations that the community was connected to, which would organize their members to get out and vote. For the Chinese community, there were many seniors, so the campaign provided transportation. Mr. Lojko stated that a majority of the Chinese voters who showed up at the nomination to vote for Mr. Dong were seniors or personal contacts of Mr. Dong. For all potential voters, the campaign would phone, knock on doors, and meet with members in groups to notify them of where and when the nomination vote was taking place.
- [30] Mr. Lojko recalled that Mr. Dong’s campaign hired two busses for the nomination contest. He believed they were coach busses and that some of the campaign’s Chinese-speaking volunteers were on the busses. The campaign busses picked up people at the locations where they had signed up members (i.e. community centers or churches). In the lead-up to the nomination meeting, Mr. Dong’s campaign would notify members who they had signed up or who had indicated support for Mr. Dong about the

busses. The campaign would call them in advance or notify someone involved in the community group that was assisting the campaign.

- [31] Mr. Lojko explained that one issue that often arises with providing bus transportation is that people who are not eligible to vote get on the bus. People see their neighbors get on the bus and think they will be able to vote if they show up at the meeting. When those people get to the nomination meeting, they can become irate when they are told that they are not on the voting list. Members may also get on the bus without bringing proper ID and, when they discover they are unable to vote, may insist on being driven home to get their ID and shuttled back to the nomination meeting. In an ideal situation, there would be someone on the bus checking to make sure everyone on the bus is eligible to vote and has proper ID. However, Mr. Dong's campaign did not have the resources for that. Mr. Lojko stated that at the 2019 nomination meeting, there were people who showed up and were not on the list and who were then turned away.
- [32] In addition to providing transportation, the campaign had a holding area across the street from the voting venue where seniors could sit, drink water, and eat food while they waited to vote if the line was long. Mr. Lojko noted that seniors could be dissuaded from voting, or might experience health problems, if required to wait in a long line-up.
- [33] Ms. Jiang's turnout at the nomination meeting looked similar to Mr. Dong's. Their campaign also offered transportation (busses or vans), although Mr. Lojko could not remember the specifics. Mr. Lojko stated that Ms. Jiang's campaign appeared to be more organized, and to have more volunteers, than Mr. Dong's campaign.
- [34] When a person arrived at the nomination meeting, the Liberal Party staff would check their ID and make sure they were on the membership list and eligible to vote. The scrutineers for each candidate could watch and object to decisions made by the person checking the list.
- [35] When members entered the voting area, there were several voting stations organized by last name. The campaign was not permitted to have volunteers inside directing members. The party had been asked to provide a translator inside the voting area to direct people.

- [36] Mr. Lojko identified only one irregularity with the nomination meeting. Mr. Dong's campaign thought that the candidates' names would appear in alphabetical order on the ballot, such that Mr. Dong would appear first ("D") and Bang-Gu Jiang would be appear second ("G"). As a result, the campaign told voters in advance and as they entered the voting area that Mr. Dong would be first on the ballot.
- [37] Mr. Lojko explained that it was common practice to tell voters where their candidate would be listed on the ballot. This was especially important in ridings where voters may have trouble reading the names on the ballot. Often, campaigns print a "mock ballot" showing what the ballot will look like and where their candidate will be listed.¹ Mr. Dong's campaign told people to vote for the first candidate on the ballot. While it was not "formally" printed because of the abridged nomination period, there would likely have been photocopied material from Mr. Dong's campaign with the date, time, and location of the nomination meeting and likely a "mock ballot," showing Mr. Dong as the first candidate on the ballot. About halfway through the nomination vote, seniors who could read the ballot advised Mr. Lojko that Mr. Dong was listed second on the ballot, not first. Mr. Lojko then entered the voting room and confirmed with party officials that the candidates were in the incorrect order.
- [38] Voting lasted for three to four hours. Several hundred people voted. Once voting ended, Mr. Lojko believed that Mr. Dong had likely lost the nomination contest because of the mix up with the order of the names on the ballot and because it seemed like more Chinese voters had come out to support Ms. Jiang. (This latter conclusion was based on seeing Ms. Jiang's volunteers marshaling people into the voting area). To his surprise, Mr. Dong won the nomination. Mr. Lojko did not know how close the vote was.
- [39] Mr. Lojko stated he did not notice anything unusual at the nomination meeting that would have caused concern. The meeting was chaotic, as these events usually are. He did not notice anyone in the voting area who should not have been there. Mr. Lojko stated that there was nothing irregular about the busses that transported people to the nomination and that the nomination meeting was like any other he had been involved in.

¹ See examples of Election Day ("mock ballots") Get Out the Vote cards provided by Mr. Lojko, DocID#TLO00000001 and DocID#TLO00000002.

He does not understand how the nomination could have been impacted by foreign interference, nor does he believe there was any foreign interference. He knew how all the members that were submitted to the party were signed up and they were only recruited and signed up by Han Dong and his campaign team. The only irregularity was that the candidates were listed out of order on the ballot. There were issues with people showing up who were not on the Liberal Party list, but this is a common occurrence for a nomination meeting.

[40] Mr. Lojko also explained that this nomination was heavily scrutinized by the Liberal Party. Several of the “party brass” from Ottawa were at the nomination vote, watching it unfold. Mr. Lojko could not remember the names of those who was present. They were there because whoever won would be a new candidate nominated after the writ had dropped. They wanted to know whether there was anything the media could pick up on to tarnish the campaign. To Mr. Lojko’s knowledge, this was also the only open nomination in Toronto in 2019, since the rest of the ridings were filled with incumbents. He also described the nomination race as heavily contested and explained that there had been other potential candidates who were not “green lit” to run by the Liberal Party.

2019 General Election

[41] Some international students did volunteer with Mr. Dong’s general election campaign. The campaign office was in the north part of the riding near three international schools. The students would come and assist with delivering literature and then eat and hang out at the campaign office. The students came on their own and were never directed to volunteer or accompanied by adults. Mr. Lojko could not differentiate between international students and students who were Canadian citizens.

[42] In most campaigns, there are no background checks for volunteers. Generally, if there is a suspicious individual—for instance someone who wants access to a database—the campaign will “move them out the door”.

[43] When asked about Mr. Chan’s involvement in the campaign, Mr. Lojko recalled that Mr. Chan may have given one speech at Mr. Dong’s campaign launch. Mr. Chan did not canvass for Mr. Dong, nor did he send any volunteers.

[44] Mr. Lojko did not notice anything suspicious during the election campaign. Most of the funding for the campaign came from friends, family and individuals who had supported Mr. Dong when he was an MPP. All financial contributions are recorded and verified by the Liberal Party of Canada. When asked about the United Front Work Department, Mr. Lojko stated he had heard of them but was unsure how they could possibly influence an election. When asked about communication with consular officials, Mr. Lojko was not aware of any contact that Mr. Dong had with PRC consular officials, especially during the election period as all of Mr. Dong's time was carefully scheduled to ensure a focus on canvassing for support within Don Valley North. Overall, he did not notice nor does he believe that there was any undue influence on the campaign.

4. The 2021 Election in Don Valley North

[45] Mr. Lojko was Mr. Dong's campaign manager for the 2021 general election. He did not notice any irregularities in this election.

[46] The campaign office was in a different area in 2021, further away from the colleges. This meant there were no international student volunteers. There were still plenty of young people at the campaign office, as parents would drop off their children for the day.

[47] The campaign was much more prepared in 2021 and had fundraised in advance. Unlike 2019, they had a volunteer base and infrastructure in place.