

# Canadian Press Newswire

## Criticism welcome but don't call me Iggy, Ignatieff says

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VANCOUVER (CP) \_ Liberal leadership hopeful Michael Ignatieff says a complaint about misuse of party membership lists is not intended to silence his critics.

``People should say whatever they want about Iggy," the presumed frontrunner told reporters Thursday during the last of a three-day Liberal caucus retreat.

``I wish they wouldn't call me Iggy though."

Ignatieff said he hasn't been called Iggy since he was 16, ``not to my face" at any rate.

Ignatieff's campaign has complained to the party about possible abuse of party membership lists, which have been given to all 10 leadership camps under strict orders that they be kept confidential.

Ignatieff's team believes the lists have been leaked to anonymous critics, who have been mailing ``stop Iggy" literature to Liberal rank and file.

All of the missives point members to a stopiggy website, which provides detailed \_ and Ignatieff's camp says misleading and untrue \_ information about the candidate's stands on various issues.

The website derides Ignatieff, an acclaimed academic who spent almost 30 years out of the country before running for Parliament last fall, as a latecomer to the Liberal party and a right-winger who is more in tune with the policies of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

``This campaign isn't going to be decided by dirty tricks," Ignatieff said.

``I want to make it very clear my campaign would never attempt to suppress freedom of speech and freedom of opinion. So we're not trying to shut this thing down," he added.

``Our problem is that they've been using party membership lists and that's a more serious business because there was a pretty clear agreement that that wouldn't be done."

Ignatieff said he has no evidence that one of the other leadership camps is behind the smear campaign.

And he dismissed suggestions he's become the target of an orchestrated effort to block him from winning the contest, denying he's in the frontrunner position.

Ignatieff stressed that he has no problem with criticism.

``People should be free in this campaign to say

anything they want. If they tell lies, I will rebut them . . . I take responsibility for everything I've ever said or done. I've made a ton of mistakes. They can all be disclosed. They can all be discussed."

He started the rebuttals immediately, noting that he's been a member of the party since the mid-1960s, when he campaigned for former leader and Liberal icon Pierre Trudeau.

``I'm no tourist in this party, never have been, never will be."

Suggesting he's ``Harper-lite is an absurdity," he added.

``I'm in this race because I passionately believe that Harper's social agenda for our country is divisive. I passionately oppose a great portion of his foreign policy."

Scott Brison, the sole Atlantic candidate, said none of the camps should be involved in ``stealth campaigns" to malign one another.

But he suggested Ignatieff's team is over-reacting.

``This is not spy versus spy. For goodness sakes, grow up," Brison said.

``I've been in politics for nine years so if his camp are paranoid or if other camps are doing (things), I don't really care. This is just crap. I mean, let's win."

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