

Volpe says donations from children did not violate rules

Juliet O'Neill

CanWest News Service

Thursday, June 01, 2006

OTTAWA — Liberal leadership candidate Joe Volpe denies he contravened a ban on corporate donations by accepting 20 contributions worth \$108,000 from former and current Apotex pharmaceutical company executives, their wives and children — two of them 11-year-old twins — but he's returning \$27,000 from five children.

"After a review it was determined that five contributions from persons under the age 18 will be returned, totalling \$27,000," Volpe said in a statement.

"All the donations for our campaign have been in compliance with the law. We wanted to clear the air and public perception."

Volpe's announcement came after several days in which he and Steve MacKinnon, the national Liberal party director, rejected allegations by NDP MP Pat Martin that the donations from a group of 20 Apotex-related adults and children violate the leadership financing rules of the Elections Act.

MacKinnon welcomed Volpe's decision to refund the five donations, each at the maximum of \$5,400, saying it's "in the best interests of his own candidacy and obviously that of the Liberal party."

At the same time, MacKinnon emphasized the minimum age for Liberal party membership and for voting in the leadership election is 14.

"Affluent families often have children who possess that kind of resource" to contribute large sums to political parties, he told reporters.

Volpe spokesman Corey Hobbs said the MP would not divulge the names of the young people whose donations were being returned.

Martin said he was not satisfied with the refunds.

"I'd be disappointed if our Elections Act rules are so feckless that all you have to do when caught contravening them is give the money back," he said in an interview.

"This is a very serious contravention of the rules in our view. It doesn't answer the larger question: was there a conspiracy, as it were, to circumvent the donation limits of the act by either Apotex or the Volpe campaign?"

"Corporations aren't allowed to give anything."

© CanWest News Service 2006



CREDIT: Canadian Press/Jonathan Hayward

Joe Volpe.

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2006 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.