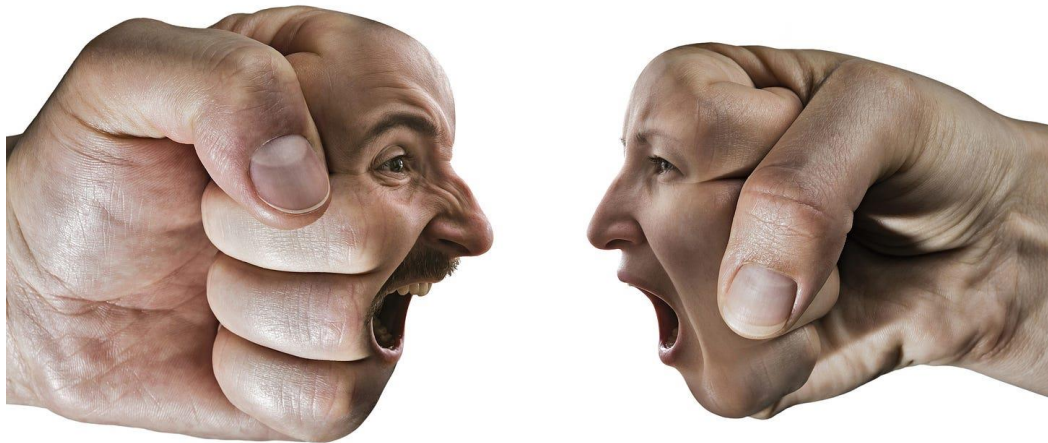


# Conflict and Confrontation

Leo Oja, April 19, 2024

The Purple Wave – Issue 127



In the intricate tapestry of human interaction, the threads of conflict and confrontation weave complex patterns, often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Traditionally, educators, including those of us from the diverse landscapes of Ontario, have drawn a distinct line between these two concepts. This differentiation is not merely semantic; it underpins a crucial understanding of how individuals and societies evolve, innovate, and sometimes, unfortunately, devolve into less productive states. As a retired educator with a deep involvement in both the academic sphere and martial arts, my journey has offered me a unique perspective on the roles that conflict and confrontation play in our lives, especially in the context of teaching and political activism within the People's Party of Canada (PPC).

I like the phrase; *Conflict is the Crucible of Growth*. To explore this, we must realize that all conflict, in its essence, is an integral aspect of human development and societal progress. It arises from the diversity of thought, belief, and aspiration that characterizes our species. In the realm of academics and politics, conflict is the engine of innovation. It challenges us to confront our assumptions, defend our positions thoughtfully, and, when necessary, revise our stances. Though fraught with the risk of being proven incorrect, this process is invaluable. It cultivates a maturity in discourse, fostering an environment where ideas can be debated, refined, and transformed.

Within the context of the PPC, embracing conflict means engaging in rigorous debate over the future direction of Canada, its democracy, and the principles that should guide its governance. It is about leveraging its members' wealth of knowledge and experience, drawn from various disciplines to craft policies that reflect a deep understanding of our nation's complex issues. The willingness to engage in this form of conflict—rooted in mutual respect (one of the four

foundations to the PPC if you recall), evidence-based argumentation, and a shared commitment to the public good—is indicative of a healthy political culture, one that is capable of addressing the nuanced challenges of our time.

HEALTHY CONFLICT	UNHEALTHY CONFLICT
1. Parties respect each other's viewpoint.	1. Lack of respect for other party's goals.
2. Calm, non-defensive.	2. Explosive, angry, defensive, reactionary.
3. Readiness to move past the issue / conflict towards resolution.	3. Focus on winning the conflict itself, not the potential resolution.
4. Desire to seek compromise.	4. Refusal to seek compromise, bullying.
5. Belief that confronting the conflict will benefit the individuals and the team.	5. Fear of conflict or expectation of bad results.

Confrontation, however, diverges significantly from the constructive nature of conflict. It is marked not by a clash of ideas but by a clash of egos, not by the pursuit of truth but by the pursuit of victory at any cost. In my experience as a martial artist and self-defence instructor, confrontation is akin to the physical confrontations we prepare for—ones based on aggression, domination, and, often, a failure to communicate or understand. When transferred to the realm of political dialogue or personal interaction, this form of confrontation becomes counterproductive. It degenerates into bullying character attacks, undermining productive discourse's foundations.

In the vast and interconnected realms of social media, bullying has morphed into a pervasive and multifaceted menace, exploiting the anonymity and reach of online platforms to inflict harm. Cyberbullying, as it has come to be known, manifests in a plethora of insidious forms, each tailored to exploit the digital vulnerabilities of its victims. With its ubiquitous presence in our lives, social media offers a fertile ground for such behaviour, where bullies can launch attacks ranging from posting humiliating content, such as embarrassing photos or videos, to relentless trolling, which involves posting inflammatory and derogatory comments to provoke or distress.

These actions are not confined by the physical boundaries that once limited traditional bullying; instead, they invade the personal sanctuaries of individuals, turning spaces of digital connection into arenas of fear and anxiety.

**CONFLICT VS BULLYING**  
Understand the difference

**Conflict:**  
A Disagreement or Difference of Opinion  
An Inevitable Part of Group Dynamics  
Equal Power Between Those Involved  
Usually an Isolated Incident/Occasional  
All Involved Make An Effort to Resolve the Situation

**Bullying:**  
Based on an Imbalance of Power  
The Intent to Harm – On Purpose  
Happens Repeatedly  
Serious – Causes Physical or Emotional Harm  
Does Not Stop When Asked  
**Should Always Be Reported**

facebook.com/BulliesOut  
@BulliesOut

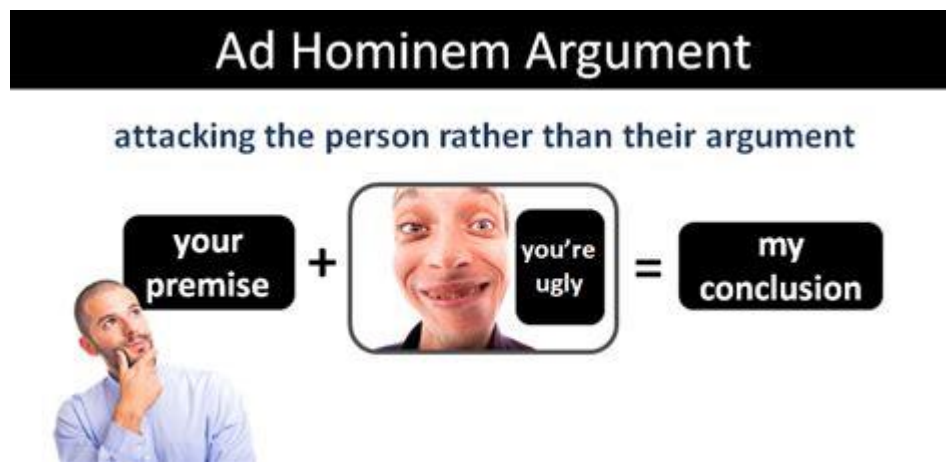
**BulliesOut**  
www.bulliesout.com  
Registered Charity Number. 123070

Moreover, the impersonal nature of online interaction amplifies the impact of bullying, with the use of fake profiles and anonymous accounts making it difficult for victims to identify their aggressors or seek help. Cyberbullies often employ tactics such as doxxing, revealing private information without consent to the public, or cyberstalking, which involves persistent and unwanted attention that can escalate to real-world harassment. The echo chambers of social media also exacerbate the situation, as harmful content can be rapidly amplified and shared by individuals beyond the initial circle of acquaintances, inflicting widespread psychological distress. This digital form of bullying not only has immediate emotional impacts, leading to anxiety, depression, and isolation among victims, but it also poses long-term repercussions for their mental health and well-being, challenging societal norms around safety and respect in the digital age.

This is particularly relevant in today's political climate, where polarization and the vilification of opposing views often overshadow the genuine exchange of ideas. For movements like the PPC, the challenge is to navigate these waters carefully, ensuring that the passion for one's convictions does not cross over into confrontational aggression that stifles dialogue and alienates potential allies.

The distinction between conflict and confrontation is not merely academic; it is profoundly practical. It informs how we engage with one another, forge alliances, and advance our collective goals. As educators, politicians, and citizens, our task is to cultivate an environment where conflict is embraced as a pathway to growth and innovation while confrontation is recognized for what it often is—a barrier to understanding and progress.

Being unable to deal with confrontation successfully is an important idea to develop within our newsletter, inoculating people so that confrontation has no real power. In some ways, I have quite accidentally done this academically. This began with a thorough understanding of Philosophy but with a particular focus on the philosophy of science and logic. People use many logical fallacies quite often, and while the confrontational rant might sound good, at its core, it is easily recognized as a lack of thinking. I will articulate a few examples just for illustrative purposes.



Example One: The ad hominem attack on former Liberal Party leader Stéphane Dion during the 2008 federal election campaign. Dion, who proposed the "Green Shift" plan, which aimed to cut income taxes and set a price on carbon emissions to combat climate change, found himself at the centre of a series of attacks not on the merits or flaws of his policy but on his personal attributes. The Conservative Party released ads suggesting Dion was not a strong leader, with one infamous ad featuring a puffin defecating on Dion's shoulder. The message was clear: instead of focusing on the substance of Dion's environmental plan, the campaign sought to undermine his credibility and leadership capabilities through ridicule and personal disparagement.

Many criticized these attacks as unfair and irrelevant to the policy debate at hand. They diverted attention from the severe discussion about environmental policy and climate change, focusing instead on personal character assassination. This kind of ad hominem attack illustrates a broader trend in political discourse, where individuals are targeted not for their ideas or policies but for perceived weaknesses in their character or personality, undermining the quality of democratic debate and focusing on sensationalism rather than substantive issues.

I am not suggesting that Dion had the right idea, but how do we know? Looking back at the bulk of any debate or discussion, it was a confrontation. Someone had to win, and it had nothing to do with any environmental concern or solution. We must understand and deal with confrontational attempts, for they are not meant to be constructive or conflict oriented.

## Logical Fallacies

Errors in reasoning that invalidate the argument



Example Two: While a logical fallacy should be obvious, it could be confrontational, but the ideas could be correct. In Canadian politics, "poisoning the well" – a tactic where adverse information about a target is pre-emptively presented to an audience, intending to discredit or undermine the target before they have a chance to speak or act – has been observed on several occasions. A poignant example occurred during the lead-up to the 2015 federal election, involving the then-conservative government's portrayal of Liberal leader Justin Trudeau.

Before Trudeau could fully articulate his platform or policies, the Conservative Party launched a series of ads suggesting that he was "just not ready" for prime ministerial responsibility. These ads focused on his youthful appearance and inexperience, casting doubt on his ability to govern before the political debate could centre on policy specifics or party platforms. The strategy aimed

to frame Trudeau's public perception negatively from the outset, thereby influencing how voters would interpret his statements and proposals. This pre-emptive strike was designed to diminish his credibility in the eyes of the electorate, regardless of the substance of his political positions or the quality of his leadership skills.

The "just not ready" campaign became a notable example of "poisoning the well" in Canadian political discourse, as it sought to define Trudeau negatively in the public mind before he had a chance to define himself or his vision for Canada. While the ultimate effectiveness of this tactic is debatable, given Trudeau's subsequent victory in the 2015 election, it nonetheless illustrates how political actors may attempt to pre-emptively shape public perception to disadvantage their opponents.

Justin Trudeau countered the "just not ready" attacks with a strategic embrace of his youthful image, focusing on positive campaigning and substantive policy proposals. He leveraged his charisma and media savvy to turn perceived weaknesses into strengths, directly engaging voters and promoting an optimistic, detailed platform. This approach, emphasizing change and readiness for a new leadership style, led to the Liberal Party's majority win in the 2015 federal election, demonstrating Trudeau's effective response to the negative campaign against him.

However, here is the problem. We could never deal with the conflict of Trudeau's policy ideas and changes. The Conservatives may not have had an effective strategy but bringing the conflict to confrontation resulted in a Prime Minister being elected not on issues and the quality of his thinking. This was done for non-rational reasons.

Looking back, we can see that there was some truth to the Conservative point, but as it was character assassination and not idea criticism, and so we have a much less than optimal situation now.

In this light, the role of education, particularly in fostering critical thinking, empathy, and effective communication skills, cannot be overstated. These are the tools that will enable the next generation to navigate the complexities of conflict constructively, avoiding the pitfalls of confrontation. For political movements like the PPC, the imperative is to build a foundation on robust debate and the respectful exchange of ideas, steering clear of the temptations of confrontational rhetoric.

Never again should we allow one political party to attack character, not the substance of a political policy. We have reaped what we have allowed to be sown. This example deals explicitly with the problem of splitting the vote. This is another example of the PPC, which is about truth and the development of a democratic government where the issues of Canadians attract the attention of politicians. The conservatives misdirected the conflict with the liberals. That wrongheaded approach has helped put Canada into the economic pickle it is today.

While conflict and confrontation may be inherent to the human condition, our response to each defines the trajectory of our personal growth and our society's evolution. By choosing to engage with conflict constructively and eschew unnecessary confrontation, we open the door to a realm



of possibilities—where ideas flourish, societies advance, and actual progress is made in the quest for a better, more inclusive Canada.



In conclusion, the distinction between conflict and confrontation is not merely a theoretical exercise but a practical blueprint (or purple print) for fostering a healthier, more productive political environment. This understanding is crucial for supporters of the People's Party of Canada (PPC) as we navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing political landscape. By championing conflict as a constructive force, we advocate for a Canada where debate and dissent are tolerated and encouraged as essential components of democratic engagement. Conversely, by recognizing and rejecting the destructiveness of confrontation, we commit to elevating the quality of our national discourse.

As PPC supporters, we must lead by example, demonstrating that it is possible to stand firm in our convictions while remaining open to dialogue and difference. We must harness the robust debate and rigorous scrutiny of ideas to forge policies that reflect our values and are resilient in the face of challenge and change. Our approach should not be to silence opposition but to engage it, transforming potential confrontations into opportunities for growth and understanding.

Let us then commit to nurturing a political culture prioritizing respect, evidence-based argumentation, and the collective good. In doing so, we can ensure that Canada not only meets the challenges of today but is also prepared to embrace tomorrow's opportunities. This path may not be the easiest, but it is undoubtedly the most rewarding—for in the crucible of constructive conflict lies the potential for genuine and lasting progress.

Support the PPC today. Visit [our local page](#) and pledge your financial support. There are tax incentives to be had here, too.