

Paige Ingram

First Prize Winner – 9-12 category

Topic: Jody Wilson-Raybould

Honesty, integrity, accountability: in the face of the greatest power in the nation, Jody Wilson-Raybould embodied these traits despite negative consequences to her career. Her resiliency bore witness to the importance of whistleblowers and made the biggest impact on Canadians in 2019.

Attorney General Wilson-Raybould was pressured to drop prosecution proceedings against SNC-Lavalin, a company that allegedly moved millions of dollars into a brutal and murderous foreign dictatorship. In spite of close governmental ties with SNC-Lavalin, thousands of Quebec jobs at stake, and threats to her own career, Wilson-Raybould claimed it would be a corruption of the justice system.

Her whistle-blowing had far-reaching impacts such as the loss of a Liberal majority government, demonstrating that Canadians care about accountability from their leaders. The Canadian public was riveted by the challenges she faced and her David versus Goliath story—it was one strong-willed woman against the Prime Minister, his top advisors, and a powerful Quebec-based company. Her influence was further validated with her re-election as the sole Independent in the House of Commons.

The Canadian press and public were struck by Wilson-Raybould's character. She was steadfast in her mandate, never altering her moral compass. She gave a cautionary tale to the corporate world, reminding them that even large, powerful companies are not above the law. As a strong woman in politics, she inspired me to join the Lieutenant Governor's Youth Advisory Council, a provincial advisory where I was selected to collaborate with eleven other youth to create solutions for social issues in BC.

Electing people with integrity into positions of power preserves our country's values. Politicians like Wilson-Raybould whose actions are dictated by honesty and accountability rather than self-interest or political party affiliation, serve the best interests of Canadians. She modelled the moral courage to hold others accountable for their actions.