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Exiled Oligarch Khodorkovsky Opens School for Moscow Opposition Officials

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Abaca Press / TASS

Exiled oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky has opened a school for potential opposition candidates to run in Moscow's 2017 municipal elections.

The school will train 400 election hopefuls to take on the role of a Moscow deputy, the RBC news outlet reported Tuesday. One hundred candidates are expected to make the final cut and take part in next September's vote, according to Khodorkovsky's advocacy group, Open Russia.

Students will take classes in campaign techniques, the foundations of Moscow city legislation, and public speaking. Both serving municipal deputies and political consultants are set to lead courses for potential candidates, who must share Open Russia's "values," and advocate for an independent judiciary, a competitive economy and free elections, RBC reported.

The group is also ready to work with other opposition parties, such as the Russian Communist party and the liberal opposition party Yabloko, RBC reported.

Khodorkovsky will not fund candidates' election campaigns, but is set to spend between $6,000 and $7,000 on the school each month.

Open Russia hopes that the school will boost their plans to run a candidate against Moscow mayor Sergey Sobyanin in 2018.

Candidates who wish to run as mayor need the backing of 110 municipal deputies.

Khodorkovsky announced in September that he was searching for a candidate to face Russian President Vladimir Putin in Russia's 2018 presidential elections. The former head of the Yukos oil company confirmed that he would not be taking part in the race himself.

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