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Concerns mount over alleged PMO interference in criminal prosecution

by DAVID TILSON

More than a week has now passed since media reports surfaced that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office attempted to pressure Jody Wilson-Raybould, when she was justice minister, to intervene in the corruption and fraud prosecution of Montreal engineering and construction giant, SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. This alleged interference is incredibly disturbing and even more shocking is that the Prime Minister himself appears to have fired his Attorney General for refusing to bow to his demands. As each day passes, concerns continue to mount about what the Prime Minister knew about this case, when he knew it, and that a cover up is now underway.

The allegations levelled against Prime Minister Trudeau and his office are grievous and strike at the very heart of our rule of law. We, the Conservative Official Opposition, have been the voice of concerned Canadians from coast to coast to coast since the Globe and Mail reports emerged of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) alleged interference in the criminal prosecution of SNC-Lavalin Group Inc. On February 10, 2019, our leader, Andrew Scheer, sent a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau calling on him to immediately waive solicitor-client privilege and any and all rights to confidentiality in respect of communications to or from himself or any other member of his staff (previous or current) in relation to the prosecution of SNC-Lavalin. We also called for an emergency meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights to question Justin Trudeau's PMO and other government officials over their potential interference in an ongoing criminal prosecution. On February 11, 2019, the Ethics Commissioner confirmed that he will also investigate the allegations.

On February 12, 2019 (right before the Justice Committee was scheduled to meet), Minister Wilson-Raybould resigned from Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet. If it wasn't obvious before, Ms. Wilson-Raybould's resignation makes it crystal clear that the Prime Minister is trying to hide the truth with regards to the SNC-Lavalin affair. Earlier that week, he tried to reassure Canadians that nothing unethical took place. He said that Ms. Wilson-Raybould's presence in cabinet should speak for itself. Given how that has now changed, we can only conclude otherwise.

On Feb. 13, 2019, the five Liberal members used their majority to block our Conservative, as well as the NDP's motions, to bring transparency and accountability to the SNC-Lavalin affair. Instead, they offered up a watered-down motion that excluded key witnesses to what transpired between the PMO and Ms. Wilson-Raybould. Their motion also called for a closed-door meeting with no media present or transcripts provided. After taking this action in the Justice committee to block all attempts at accountability, it's clear that Prime Minister Trudeau's cover up is underway. Liberal MPs on the committee helped the Prime Minister cover up the truth on what happened between the PMO and the Attorney General. Opposition MPs worked together to come up with a reasonable witness list with three key individuals Canadians must hear from: Jody Wilson-Raybould, the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Gerald Butts, and his senior Quebec advisor Mathieu Bouchard. The Liberals defeated this motion. As Ms. Wilson-Raybould has once again been denied an opportunity to speak, we urge Prime Minister to waive solicitor-client privilege in this case to allow her to tell Canadians what happened.

It is clear that the Liberals have no interest in finding the truth and are only interested in helping the Prime Minister cover up the SNC-Lavalin affair. We, Conservatives, will now explore legal and law enforcement options to hold Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accountable for this cover up and find the answers Canadians rightly deserve.