

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Cash for access smokescreen

Media reports suggest that the Trudeau government will bring in legislation to make their cash-for-access fundraisers more transparent.

It is expected that this new legislation will require that all fundraisers be conducted in publicly accessible spaces rather than in private homes; they must be publicly advertised in advance; and a public report must be issued on each event after the fact, detailing the number of attendees and the amount raised.

I have a few thoughts on this mess. Firstly, a new law will not make Justin Trudeau's cash-for-access fundraisers ethical. It is still selling access to the most powerful politician in the land for money. Changing the rules so the Prime Minister can continue to charge \$1,500 for wealthy individuals to meet him to discuss government business is still wrong.

The rules are clear. Indeed, when this government took office, there was a clear statement put out by the Prime Minister's Office regarding ministerial conduct on this very subject. Not only were they to not give preferential access to those contributing to the Liberal Party of Canada, they were to avoid even the appearance of doing so. Well, I guess the Prime Minister has decided that his party's coffers are more important than integrity and ethical behaviour. Both he and his ministers seem incapable of resisting the siren call of \$1,500-a-head private soirées where government business is front and centre.

If the Prime Minister wants to end cash-for-access, all he has to do is just stop doing them. It does not require legislation. All it requires is adherence to his own rules. It is incredible to me that he cannot see this. Hanging out with Chinese business people in private homes, for example, when those same people have an application into the federal government to open a bank in Canada should be a clear-enough breach that even the bright minds in the PMO should have known would not pass the smell test.

Some of us still remember the adscam scandal of the 1990s, when the Chretien government funneled public money into Liberal coffers. It was part of their culture of entitlement. It appears things don't change all that much. Cash-for-access fundraisers are another example of the Liberals selling influence to the highest bidder. They seem incapable of understanding what the word 'ethical' means.

It's all very simple. If the Prime Minister wants to clean up his image, he does not need to pass a law to do so. All he has to do is stop the influence peddling behaviour that seems endemic to him and the Liberal Party.

Prime Minister, just say no.

