

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Liberal hypocrisy on full display

Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau are in full retreat.

The revelations that have emerged regarding Morneau's vast assets and his failure to properly disclose, divest or place them in a blind trust as required by the Conflict of Interest Act are a staggering display of Liberal hypocrisy.

The Finance Minister is the most important financial decision-maker in Canada. People deserve to know what personal financial interests may affect his decisions. At the same time he is trying to slap sharp tax hikes on what he calls tax cheats ? namely hard-working small business people and farmers ? it has come to light that those same tax changes stand to benefit the Minister personally.

It is now known that Morneau owns about \$40 million worth of shares in his family company, Morneau Shepell. Rather than place them into a blind trust, as recommended by the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner and which is normal practice, he put them into two numbered companies in which he is the sole shareholder. It is estimated those companies earn about \$135,000 per month in dividends.

Conservatives believe that all members of the Trudeau government must follow the rules and fully and completely disclose their private interests to Canadians in accordance with federal law.

The Finance Minister has authority over regulations, taxation, subsidies, contracts, tariffs, government bonds and countless other levers that help or hinder corporate interests. These vast powers give the Minister the ability to advance a company (in this case, Morneau Shepell) in which he is invested and to make investment buy-sell decisions with privileged information.

Experts have said that the Finance Minister's family business, Morneau Shepell, stands to benefit from the changes outlined in his tax hike on local businesses. However, the Minister has given multiple indications that he does not understand his responsibilities under the law as described by the Conflict of Interest Act.

The Finance Minister promised Canadians that he would abstain from decisions and discussions that relate to Morneau Shepell, but he has actively bragged that ?not only did I not abstain but I actively engaged? in the discussions and promotion of the policy that experts say benefits his family owned company.

Additionally, Morneau failed to disclose a private corporation which owns his villa in the south of France to the Ethics Commissioner.

If the Minister has nothing to hide, he should share all documents and information he provided to the Ethics Commissioner, so as to be open and transparent with Canadians.

Conservatives will continue to fight Justin Trudeau's tax hike on local business every step of the way. We will also keep up the pressure on the Finance Minister to come clean with Canadians on his business holdings and dealings and ensure he fully complies with the Conflict of Interest Act.

