

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Trudeau breaks sections of the Conflict of Interest Act



It was almost one year ago when my colleague, Blaine Calkins (Red Deer-Lacombe), wrote Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson regarding serious concerns raised by Canadians about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Christmas 2016 vacation to a private island in the Bahamas.

The Commissioner released her report on this vacation Dec. 20, and sadly, it confirmed those concerns. It is yet another example of the current Liberal government's arrogance and disrespect for rules.

Canadians remember the Prime Minister's widely covered Christmas 2016 holiday vacation he took with Seamus O'Regan, M.P. (St. John's South-Mount Pearl) and the President of the Liberal Party of Canada to the private island of the Aga Khan in the Bahamas.

Canadians remember this trip not only for ethical concerns, but also for the cost to the taxpayer. Last September, we learned the trip cost Canadian taxpayers more than \$215,000, 70 per cent higher than the \$127,187 tab first tabled in Parliament. Then in December, the Ethics Commissioner released her report on the ethical concerns of this same vacation.

Commissioner Dawson found that Prime Minister Trudeau broke four sections of the Conflict of Interest Act, which include accepting gifts that could influence decision-making; not recusing himself from discussions that could further private interests; failing to arrange his private affairs to avoid this opportunity; and accepting travel on a non-commercial aircraft. These are considerable breaches of the Act and Canadians are rightfully concerned by the Prime Minister's questionable ethical behaviour. Following the release of the Commissioner's report Dec. 20, Prime Minister Trudeau apologized during a press conference. We, the Conservative Official Opposition, accept his apology for breaking the law, but it's unfortunate that this issue dragged out for a year, and the Prime Minister misled Canadians and continually dodged questions about his behaviour. It seems Justin Trudeau believes that the rules shouldn't apply to people like him. He must start recognizing that it is the Prime Minister's job ? nobody else's ? to ensure he is following the law.

If the last year has taught us anything, it is that Prime Minister Trudeau and his Liberal government have continued to make questionable ethical decisions and that they are looking more and more like the Liberal governments of old. Canadians deserve better than a Prime Minister who believes there is one set of rules for Liberals and their friends and another set of rules for everybody else.

Conversely, the Conservative Official Opposition spent the last year standing up for hardworking Canadians who pay their taxes and play by the rules. We've held Prime Minister Trudeau and his government accountable for unethical behaviour. We will continue to stay focused on holding them accountable when they fail to play by the rules or deliver results for Canadians.