

Penalty for Interference — in Justice

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What is the penalty for interference in hockey? Just two minutes in “the box”. The penalty for interfering in Canada’s legal process must be more serious!

So who has to be charged with interference, and for what?

It all began on the eve¹ of the federal election of 2015; the Conservative Government granted a contract to retrofit a ship to Quebec-based shipbuilder Chantier Davie Canada Inc. The deal was subsequently approved by the incoming Liberal Government.

Things got interesting (and nasty) when information was leaked from a Liberal cabinet meeting about this process a month later. Who leaked the confidential information? Vice Admiral Mark Norman was officially charged with breach of trust and suspended from his job, but he pled not guilty. He also got himself a good lawyer, and she got to work!²

The case dragged on through 2017 and 2018 with the defence trying—unsuccessfully—to obtain documents to make their case, a costly process when you’re being stonewalled.³ This does not in itself constitute the ultimate “interference penalty” (which would be obstruction of justice) but it does call into question a government that would destroy a man’s reputation on a... whim? Anthony Furey wrote: “On a personal level, Norman could file a lawsuit against the government for this prolonged abuse-by-process.”⁴

As with many legal battles, the process is the punishment. But suddenly, the process ended last Wednesday. The charges were stayed, and the case is over.

But that is not the whole story. What might easily be forgotten is that a man who honourably served his country for over 30 years in the military was suddenly thrust into the media limelight because of accusations by the government. Accusations that have overshadowed the Vice Admiral and his family for 2 years.

It was the Privy Council⁵, which is the department that “helps the government in implementing its vision, goals and decisions in a timely manner”, that referred the charges against Vice-Admiral Norman to the RCMP in the first place⁶. What followed was an abrupt shift in the life and career of this man and his family. He actually did crowdfunding to help with mounting legal expenses!

So now it is over and he would like things to go back to normal. But he is owed an apology. So far the government has realized that enough of a mistake was made that it is covering his legal costs, but a formal apology should be in order to restore his reputation.

Then there should be some serious internal scrutiny as to why this happened in the first place and, in Conrad Black’s opinion, “heads should roll”.⁷

In the meantime, the Conservatives and NDP are calling for an emergency meeting⁸ of the national defence committee because—and this is particularly serious—the Prime Minister had said last year that the case would go to trial⁹ signalling that he had inside information; he was meddling with an open investigation! For this he must be called to account!

One event that could easily be overlooked is that Retired General Andrew Leslie, a first-time MP for the Liberal Party, offered to testify in support of Vice Admiral Mark Norman, a former colleague. Had the trial continued and gone to court, as it was scheduled to in August, the government would have been in the awkward position¹⁰ of having one of its own testifying against itself. It is now a moot point, but it shows again that even some Liberals are not

comfortable with the government of which they are part! In case you were wondering, Andrew Leslie is not seeking another term as MP... actions speak louder than words.

If you're keeping tabs on Liberal MPs not seeking re-election, there are currently 13, plus 5 who now sit as independents. Of them, Andrew Leslie is not the first nor even the most high-profile. Three women, Jody Wilson-Raybould, Jane Philpott, and Celina Caesar-Chavannes have been more outspoken about their departures, and have called Trudeau's feminist credentials into question.

For someone labelling himself a feminist, this Prime Minister has certainly racked up quite a number of female critics. The latest one didn't attack him directly, or mention him by name, but, 'flayed'¹¹ him regardless. Mark Norman's defence lawyer, Marie Henien pointed out that her team consisted entirely of women, and that none had been fired by Vice-Admiral Mark Norman. There was no direct reference to Lavscam, but the comment must have caused the Prime Minister a certain amount of discomfort...

This whole event is bad for the integrity of the government and the rule of law, but for the Trudeau Liberals, it is actually not the worst news; it would have been worse if it had continued to drag on and went to trial this August, just before and possibly during an election¹² campaign.

So, who will issue the 'penalty for interference'? This October will Canadians give the Liberals the major 'interference penalty' they richly deserve? Will Canadians demand a party with policies and politics that prioritize honesty over power and pragmatism?

Now is the time to return honour and respect for the rule of law to our government! Now is the time to support the policies of CHP Canada.

Go to CHP.ca and become a member. If you are a member already, thank-you, and please consider a generous donation in this election year.

Footnotes

¹ www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mark-norman-case-explainer-1.5127752

² nationalpost.com/opinion/christie-blatchford-the-state-is-a-powerful-foe-and-it-almost-crushed-mark-norman

³ nationalpost.com/news/canada/charge-being-dropped-against-mark-norman-would-be-major-victory-for-senior-naval-officer

⁴ www.capebretonpost.com/opinion/columnists/anthony-furey-vice-admiral-mark-norman-is-owed-an-apology-309443/

⁵ www.canada.ca/en/privy-council.html

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=FJ6Q337NUWg

⁷ www.theguardian.pe.ca/opinion/columnists/conrad-black-on-mark-norman-case-heads-should-roll-and-not-the-junior-ones-310905/

⁸ www.cbc.ca/news/politics/conservatives-ndp-call-for-emergency-committee-meeting-on-mark-norman-case-1.5133084

⁹ nationalpost.com/news/canada/top-generals-communications-with-trudeau-media-to-come-under-spotlight-as-mark-norman-case-proceeds

¹⁰ www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2019/05/03/liberal-mp-andrew-leslie-offers-to-testify-for-vice-admiral-mark-norman-in-upcoming-criminal-trial.html

¹¹ nationalpost.com/news/canada/in-an-inspired-performance-henein-did-incalculable-damage-to-the-trudeau-brand

¹² nationalpost.com/opinion/rex-murphy-the-liberals-may-be-ticked-but-they-should-be-relieved

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