

## In defence of democracy

Our democracy

continues to be shaken as we have once again witnessed Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government's attempt to tip the scales of justice and work to destroy people who have stood for what's right and in defence of the rule of law.

Mark Norman served as

Canada's Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. He was charged with one count of breach of trust for allegedly leaking sensitive documents related to the procurement of a supply ship for the Royal Canadian Navy.

The Crown recently

stayed its charge against Vice-Admiral Norman, citing that there was "no reasonable prospect of conviction." However, from the beginning of the trial, Norman's defence team has clearly stated that the Prime Minister's Office was attempting to direct the prosecution.

There is overwhelming

evidence that Justin Trudeau and the Liberal government politically interfered in this case to defame Vice Admiral Norman, who served honourably for 38 years in the Canadian Navy.

The Prime Minister

interfered when he refused to turn over critical documents to Norman's lawyers. He interfered when he refused to waive Cabinet confidence and provided heavily redacted, unreadable court-ordered documents. He interfered when the Minister of National Defence refused to pay Norman's legal fees stating he was guilty before his case had been heard in court. The Prime Minister interfered by counselling key witnesses on what to say during Norman's trial.

As the

prosecution made clear: the documents that Justin Trudeau and the Liberals were fighting to keep secret were the very documents that resulted in Vice-Admiral Norman's charges being dropped.

In accordance

with the National Defence Act, Members of the Canadian Armed Forces must be free from real or perceived partisanship and political engagement. So as Canadians we must ask why then, did the Minister of National Defence and the Prime Minister make public statements presuming Norman to be guilty in 2017 before having his day in court. Why were two unelected, partisan staffers ? Katie Telford and Gerald Butts ? from the Prime Minister's Office, who are not in the military chain of command, briefed by the Chief of Defence Staff on the RCMP's (claimed independent) investigation into Norman on January 9, 2017?

I asked these

questions to the Minister directly during a Committee of the Whole on May 14,

2019. In his reply, he takes no responsibility for these politically charged actions. Our democracy is based on the fact that a standing army is accountable to the elected official (the Minister of National Defence) so that Canadians can trust our military is completely accountable to the will of the citizens. The Minister's actions call into question his understanding of his sworn obligation and jeopardizing the democratic governance of our military.

As the Vice-Admiral said, "the alarming and protracted bias of perceived guilt across the senior levels of government has been quite damaging and the emotional and financial impacts of this entire ordeal have taken a toll" on himself, his career, his family and our country.

So why does this matter to Canadians?

Democracy is fragile. When a government attempts to politically interfere to tip the scales of justice, then it brings not only dishonour to the sacred responsibility entrusted to those who hold federal elected office, but also of those who served and those who have served "and have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to Canada.

Like the SNC-Lavalin scandal, the rule of law for both our military and civil laws must prevail above all else. At the foundation of our democracy, individuals must remain innocent until proven guilty, and all must remain equal under the law as its core principles. The government repeatedly politically interfered to punish Vice-Admiral Norman for standing with honour and integrity. This calls into question our entire democratic system, the very institution of government itself, and the confidence that Canadians have in their government officials, who are entrusted by them to act with the highest ethical standards and integrity.

The members of our Canadian Armed Forces are willing to give their lives in service to country and to die for the values for which our nation stands "individual liberty, order and good government. Those who are responsible for the mistreatment of a respected and honourable colleague must be held to account, to ensure that those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces are never again prosecuted for partisan, political purposes.

We have watched the Prime Minister attempt to destroy people who have stood in defence of the rule of law "and the price to those individuals has been high. If the Prime Minister behaves this way towards Ministers and to a distinguished and honourable Admiral of the Canadian Navy, then no one is safe.

So, the next time where we need an individual in Canada - from a Cabinet Minister to a

highly decorated officer - to a junior public servant to an intern on a co-op program in a private corporation - will they be willing to stand and be counted to do what is right not what is easy? Or will they think twice because they know the price is too high?

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