

Duffy facing 31 charges, so why no consequences for others?

While the RCMP laid 31 criminal charges against former Conservative Senator Mike Duffy, his prosecution is far from the end of the ethics scandal at the heart of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's office.

Duffy fell from grace a long time ago. Yet the most important questions about the scandal remain unanswered and there are far too many people who were involved in questionable activities who have not faced any consequences.

This entire affair is the result of Mr. Harper's poor judgement. He was the one who put Mike Duffy in the Senate, despite not having lived in PEI for decades. He was the one who fostered a culture in the PMO where his inner circle thought it was okay to write a \$90,000 cheque to Mr. Duffy.

Despite the Conservatives' claims that one man?former PMO Chief of Staff Nigel Wright?is solely responsible for the entire mess, RCMP documents allege that a dozen senior Conservatives were heavily involved. Many knew about the \$90,000 cheque, but did nothing to alert the proper authorities; indeed, the documents attest that some helped facilitate the payment and its terms.

The RCMP's evidence suggests that some were allegedly involved in interfering with the independent audit, changing an independent Senate report and engaging in a cover-up of the entire affair. None have been disciplined or demoted.

A year ago, Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson suspended her study of the scandal so as to not interfere with the RCMP's criminal investigation. Now that charges have been laid, Liberals are calling on Ms. Dawson to resume her investigation into all those over whom she has jurisdiction. An ethics investigation is essential to help repair the damage this scandal has done to the dignity and integrity of our public institutions.

The bar for what is acceptable conduct in the Government of Canada should not be whether or not the RCMP has laid criminal charges against you.

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