

Charlie Angus

Member of Parliament / député
Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-baie James

Ottawa

900 Édifice La Promenade Building
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel/Tél: 613-992-2919
Fax/Télé: 613-995-0747

Constituency / Circonscription

202 - 60 ave Wilson Ave Timmins, Ontario P4N 2S7 Tel/Tél : 705-268-6464 Fax/Télé : 705-266-9125	201 - 30 rue Second St Kirkland Lake, Ontario P2N 1R1 Tel/Tél. : 705-567-2747 Fax/Télé. : 705-567-5232
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HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Bob Paulson
RCMP Commissioner
RCMP National Headquarters
Headquarters Building
73 Leikin Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0R2

April 24th 2014

RE: RCMP Investigation into Nigel Wright

Dear Commissioner Paulson,

I am writing on behalf of the Official Opposition seeking clarification into the RCMP decision to drop its investigation into the secret payment of \$90,000 by Nigel Wright to Senator Mike Duffy. As you recently wrote in an op-ed, this was “a widely watched, intensely scrutinized, significant and highly sensitive criminal investigation of the government.”

It is unprecedented for the Prime Minister’s office to be investigated for a secret payment by the Prime Minister’s then Chief of Staff to a sitting senator who is being investigated for defrauding the Canadian public. For this reason I wrote the RCMP on May 20, 2013 urging you to investigate the legality of this secret pay-out.

I want to congratulate the RCMP for undertaking a thorough and highly professional investigation. I commend, as you yourself say, the “dedicated, decent, honest, diligent, and professional investigators surrendered the better part of the last year in pursuit of the truth in this case. They have meticulously unpacked and sewn together an incredibly complex set of actions and behaviors into an authoritative account of what happened.”

However, rather than reassuring Canadians that clear ethical standards are in place in Ottawa, the allegations contained in the RCMP’s Information to Obtain (ITO) filing in Court has raised many disturbing questions. The fact the RCMP has decided not to follow

through on the allegations with charges will certainly raise even more concerns, hence my decision to write to you.

Thanks to the RCMP's investigation, Canadians have been given an unprecedented look into the operating culture found within the Prime Minister's Office. RCMP officer Greg Horton's ITO paints a picture of numerous players – senior Senators, PMO Staffers and operatives in the Conservative Party– who may have been involved in a deal to exchange money to make the political problems of Mike Duffy disappear.

The fact that Conservatives acted to keep this deal secret, through the false claim that the money was obtained through a mortgage, certainly raised concerns over breaches of Parliamentary and Conflict of Interest statutes.

From the evidence presented in the ITO, it appeared Mr. Wright had potentially breached Section 16 of the Parliament of Canada Act, which states that it is an indictable offense to offer compensation to a sitting senator in regard to "*any claim, controversy, arrest, or other matter before the Senate*".

No one has denied this act took place, nor is there dispute as to why this cheque was written (eg. to make a political problem disappear.) The ITO clearly casts doubts on early claims that Mr. Wright was simply attempting to help Mr. Duffy due to a misplaced sense of friendship – instead the deal appears to have been struck to save Mr. Duffy, the prime minister and the Conservatives from further political embarrassment.

Like many Canadians, I do not understand how it can be that writing a secret personal payment out of the Prime Minister's Office to a sitting senator doesn't contravene the law. If Mr. Wright's actions did not cross this line, the average Canadian is justifiably left wondering where exactly the legal and ethical line is in Ottawa today.

There is no prohibition on police, or prosecutors, providing fuller explanation than provided so far, even if it is not your regular practice.

I believe the current circumstances are unique, and with so many unanswered questions we risk substantial negative impact on the public's trust in both our justice and political systems. Therefore, I ask you to clarify the following questions:

- 1) Can you make public the written analysis of whether criminal charges should be brought against Nigel Wright?
- 2) Can you clarify the meaning of Section 16 of the Parliament of Canada Act and what actions would breach it?
- 3) Was the decision to drop the charges against Mr. Wright discussed with the Department of Public Prosecutions or the office of the Attorney General?
- 4) Was the decision to drop the charges based on a reasonable belief that a prosecution under the Parliament of Canada Act would not succeed in court?
- 5) Was the decision to end the investigation into the actions of Mr. Wright and other players in the Prime Minister's office taken in exchange for a promise to secure a prosecution against Mike Duffy? If so, did the RCMP believe that its case against

Mr. Duffy wasn't sufficiently solid to succeed without the witness statements of Mr. Wright?

I note that you wrote: "As the broader investigation remains unresolved and out of respect for the process, I ask Canadians for patience and understanding while we finish our work. You will have your say - I just ask you to do it on the evidence." So I ask you to answer these questions so Canadians, who want to have their say, can do so based on the evidence.

We all must ensure that Canadians are not left with the impression that it is okay for the office of the Prime Minister to operate in an undefined ethical grey zone. And if there are no sanctions or consequences for such behavior, it will leave Canadians thinking that Ottawa is indeed a very broken place in 2014.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "C Angus". The signature is written in dark ink and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay