

Supply

Often the perception we have of the work of members of Parliament is based on certain assumptions. People assume or wonder about the relationship between so-and-so and a member of Parliament or a minister. The seeds of doubts are sown and people often forget there are a number of very strict and very clear-cut laws that apply to everyone, including members of Parliament, and that there is also a code of conduct.

As far as the code of conduct is concerned, I will report on this later on, because the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said in his motion that so far nothing had been done. I will show that something has been done. Often people fail to make a distinction between criminal offences and offences related to the performance of one's duties. The committee on conflict of interest has been concerned with the code of ethics. Our purpose was to help politicians avoid any potential conflict of interest, either apparent or real, in the course of their daily work.

In committee we all agreed we must ensure that no member, whether he is a senator, minister or parliamentary secretary, is above the law because of any legislation that may be passed subsequently. He is a citizen like any other, and by drawing up a conflict of interest code, by drawing up a code of ethics, we demand that his behaviour shall be as irreproachable as that of anyone else. The general public should be able to look at his record and say that the hon. member for *x* has performed his task with honour and dedication.

We were unanimous. Fortunately in committee—and I want to stress this today—we have always been very careful not to mention specific cases not to name names because just as in society at large people do make mistakes, even serious ones. I think that the courts have ruled in some cases. In other cases the code of ethics or the conflict of interest code was brought out. In other cases there was no prosecution at any level for lack of evidence. Our legal system is based on evidence and the presumption of innocence.

We never mentioned names because when a member of any party is suspected of doing something unethical unbecoming of our profession, all members suffer and all members of this group bear the consequences. In the conflict of interest committee we wanted to find the

essential points for legislation that would give members the leeway they needed to work with peace of mind, knowing that there are rules to protect them but which they must obey in order to keep an image intact and serve their constituents with dedication.

My colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell says in his motion which I will quote: condemns the government for its continued failure to establish. He refers to a code of ethics. In 1985 the government and my Prime Minister put in place a code of ethics instead of guidelines. Now a code of ethics is much stricter and must be obeyed. A document from the registrar's office says that the conflict of interest and post-employment code for public office holders requires them to comply with nine principles.

According to the speeches this afternoon and the terms of the motion of the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the government has not brought forward clear and strict guidelines for public office holders. The code which has existed since 1985 stipulates nine points, which I will take the time to quote, first of all for members of this House, but especially for the Canadians who are listening to us and have the impression that there are no rules. The code says that any public office holder, be it a member of Parliament, a parliamentary secretary, a minister or a senator.

Mr. Boudria: Not a member of Parliament.

Mr. Champagne (Champlain): My colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell says “not a member of Parliament”. He is right. We want to include it in the recommendation that was submitted whereby this code would henceforth apply to all members of Parliament without distinction. Of course this would include parliamentary secretaries, ministers and senators.

I will continue my quotation: “They shall perform their official duties and arrange their private affairs in such a manner that public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of government are conserved and enhanced. They have an obligation to act in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that is not fully discharged by simply acting within the law. They shall not have private interests, other than those permitted pursuant to this code, that would be affected particularly or significantly by government actions in which they participate. On appointment to office, and thereafter, they shall arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest from arising, but if such a conflict does arise between their private interests and