

Supply

is the Prime Minister's bill—fulfilled his promise to establish a code of ethics which would be much more precise and more closely followed by all politicians in this House.

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River): Madam Speaker, before I get into my remarks I want to take note of the subject of the debate tonight. This is an opposition motion which states:

That this House condemns the government for its continued failure to establish and to adhere to a clear and high standard of public sector ethics, for its incessant inability to function within the framework of existing legislation, guidelines and standards and for its reluctance to bring forward strict new codes and legislation with regard to conflicts and other public ethics matters.

That is a mouthful. I am going to try to touch on each of the areas referred to in the motion.

This grouping of topics is not the first choice on everyone's list. Some of these issues are sometimes difficult to talk about in the House. Usually they are raised by opposition. I sit in opposition. We now embark on an exercise where the opposition has to raise certain matters. It really is our duty to because often government members are not prone to dealing with them. I want to divide my remarks into four categories.

The first one is public ethics matters. When I came to the House in 1988 in my first or second week here I asked a question during Question Period about a conviction of a previous member of Parliament in a breach of trust situation.

Frankly, I was surprised at the non-answer. The government was virtually unable to reply in any reasonable fashion to the questions: What was the government going to do? What kind of a standard was it holding out, how did it propose to account to the public for that kind of situation, that kind of an offence where a member of Parliament had seriously transgressed. I must admit to my naivety at that time?

Since that year the list has grown to two and a half pages. I have to read the list so the public has a sense of what we are trying to grapple with. There is one issue involving an MP for fraud, conspiracy and breach of

trust. That MP was acquitted. There is a second MP convicted for charges of corruption. There is another MP guilty of fraud and breach of trust. There is another MP charged with fraud and breach of trust. That process is not completed. Another MP was convicted of conversion of \$7,000 or \$8,000 in cash. Another MP was charged with fraud, breach of trust and forgery. That MP was acquitted. With another MP it was fraud, breach of trust and conspiracy. For another MP it was investigation for fraud and conspiracy. Another MP was guilty of tax evasion. Another MP faced three charges of fraud and related charges. Two assistants to MPs were charged with fraud and influence peddling.

There are several charges involving matters of personal failings which I do not refer to here. I am thinking more in terms of failures in the realm of drinking and driving, which are very serious but that is not the kind of charge I am talking about here. This list looks more like a rap sheet in a police station than it does a list of MPs. I am concerned about that.

Right off the bat I have to say I am very familiar with the biblical exhortation that he who is without sin should cast the first stone. I am not going to comment on my own situation. I do not believe I have committed a criminal offence yet and I hope that I never will.

However, what is happening here is the government is failing, and the Prime Minister perhaps is failing, to set a standard that Canadians can see prevails within the House of Commons. I think their failure to do that has been conspicuous throughout the four years I have been here. I do not recall him standing in this House and dealing with these kinds of issues and setting a standard.

It seems to me the standard which is held out and was referred to by the member opposite who spoke prior to me is the Criminal Code. Now surely the standards in this House and in the other place are higher than the standards of the Criminal Code. When government members speak in this debate they have from time to time simply pulled out the Criminal Code and said: "This type of activity happens to be a breach of the Criminal Code. There it is in section x, y, z. Go ahead and charge them and convict them". I think the issue is more serious than that and we can do better than that. I am urging the