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the cooling off periods required of former Ministers. As Members of the Opposition should know, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Governor in Council appointees, public servants, and exempt staff members may not accord preferential treatment in relation to any official matter to relatives or friends or to organizations in which their relatives or friends have an interest. In addition, in any official dealings with former office holders, Ministers must ensure that they do not provide grounds or the appearance of grounds for allegations of improper influence, privileged access or preferential treatment.

I would like to remind all Members that the guidelines do refer to official dealings with former office holders. They do not, as many of the Opposition spokesmen have continually tried to imply, prohibit contact with former office holders. The guidelines applying to employment and commercial activities of former Ministers were established pursuant to the principles set out in the conflict of interest guidelines and were to be applied in accordance with those principles and with the aim of protecting the individual liberty of former Ministers to the fullest extent possible.

The question of post-employment guidelines is a complex area, as I am sure other Members now realize, and involves the questions of judgment by both Ministers and Members. The prime requirement of Ministers, either former Ministers or those still in office, is that they must at all times ensure that they act and provide the appearance of acting in an impartial and objective manner. These principles are of vital importance in a parliamentary democracy, and I believe that all Ministers including, I sincerely hope, former Ministers of Conservative Governments, do take them seriously. However, what saddens me about the latest controversy is the low regard in which Members seem to hold the integrity of their fellow Members.

The guidelines prepared by the Government require interpretation by the individual involved and the ultimate onus is on the individual. It is an individual judgment, and it should be an individual judgment. The integrity of the individual, and particularly of the Member of Parliament, is the cornerstone of our present democracy. I do not believe that a parliamentary committee should be the forum of further unfounded attacks on the most fundamental principle of our system of Government.

I would contend that it is obvious that the Opposition has run out of steam and would like to establish a review of the conflict of interest guidelines by the parliamentary committee solely to engage in a scandalous and unproductive witch hunt. The Government has nothing to fear and nothing to hide but it can see no useful purpose in such a review. It is also well aware of the adverse impact that a review would have on the image of all Parliamentarians, but most important the attention of Members and of all the Canadian public would be diverted from our most vital problems, the economy and the unemployed. I and my colleagues do not feel that Canada deserves or can afford further diversions of the minds of its elected Parliament from the pressing problems of the day.

History will record this passage in the time of the House of Commons as an irresponsible and expensive waste of the taxpayers' money and of the opportunity to develop responsible programs and policies for all Canadians. There have been no improprieties, only unfounded, partisan and slanderous allegations.

All discussions were conducted openly. No pressure of any kind was ever exerted on officials, and most important, at no time were any former Ministers, whether Mr. Gillespie, Mr. Andras or Mr. Cafik, their partners or colleagues, treated any differently from the way any other citizens would have been.

I would also remind Members that in two of the recent allegations, those with respect to Mr. Gillespie and the late Bob Andras, provincial Governments were intimately involved in all the dealings, yet not once has the Opposition suggested preferential treatment on the part of the Provinces. I submit that in both these cases it was an Opposition tactic to take precious time from the House to tarnish reputations—

Mr. Lewis: You cannot tarnish Gillespie's reputation. It is impossible. He has done it himself.

Mr. Ethier: —while being protected by parliamentary immunity, and above all to draw the attention of the public in the hope of bolstering the image of one candidate in the leadership of the Tory Party, namely, the past Leader, the choice of the Hon. Member for the Yukon (Mr. Nielsen). The Opposition is engaging in political vaudeville. I would laugh, if I could, but when I think of my former colleague, the late Hon. Robert Andras, being deliberately defamed, I can feel only shame. What has this House come to? Members of Parliament attacking a former respected, honest and hard working colleague, strictly for political gains.

Mr. Nielsen: That was the media.

Mr. Ethier: I urge my fellow Members to stop this unnecessary scandalmongering and return to the country's business. We must restore the integrity of the House, which has been so long under attack, and confirm Canadian's longstanding support of their democratic institutions.

The Opposition has alleged over the last month that former Ministers have contravened the guidelines with respect to lobbying within the two-year time period. I would like to stress that the intent of the guidelines was that wrongdoing should be prevented, not that former Ministers should never receive information from their former Departments.

If the intent of the guidelines was "no contact" then that is what the guidelines would have said. In fact, the guidelines specifically refer to the line of conduct Ministers must observe "in any official dealings" with former office holders. Members should remember that the responsibility for policing the guidelines is solely individual conscience. There is no enforcement mechanism, nor should there be. It is not incumbent upon Ministers or Members of Parliament to question the moral integrity of their former colleagues. The integrity of the conscience of every individual Member of Parliament is the cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy, and I cannot