

## *"Politically Speaking"*

*Martha Hall Findlay, former MP for Willowdale*

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### *BROKEN PROMISES ARE BAD ENOUGH, BUT LIES AND HYPOCRISY ARE WORSE*

It is tough, as a former politician, to hear just how disenchanted people have become with politicians. I can assure you that there are politicians, of all political stripes, in all parties, who are principled, honest people. The problem is that there just aren't enough of them – and it's the other ones who make the news.

And whereas most people expect politicians to break promises once in a while (I'm not saying it's OK – it isn't – I'm merely pointing out what people think), there is something far more sinister about lies, and worse, hypocrisy. We're seeing more and more of that, and the public is getting angry.

As they should.

It seems the more politicians talk about "Accountability", "Transparency", the less accountable and transparent they are. This is not a partisan issue. These comments have nothing to do with political parties. It's just that the most recent, most glaring examples of hypocrisy for all Canadians today come from the current government. In 2006 the Harper Conservatives ran their entire election campaign on the issue of accountability and transparency. Many people believe that this is what won that election. After all, it came off the heels of the Liberal sponsorship scandal, which itself followed a number of scandals in the Conservative Mulroney era. I, as a Liberal, did not vote for Stephen Harper – but I was ready to welcome greater accountability and transparency in government.

Unfortunately, for all the criticism of past government secrecy; for all the campaigning on the need for accountability and transparency, the Harper government has taken secrecy, opacity and obfuscation to limits never before seen in Canada. The ongoing Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy affair; the Afghan detainee coverup; forcing more and more House of Commons Standing Committees to hold their meetings behind closed doors; the repeated refusal to provide documents relating to a variety of issues – everything from infrastructure spending, government advertising contracts, hidden cutting of environmental legislation to hidden background information on the exorbitant F 35 fighter jet procurement fiasco.

But what's interesting here, and the point of this commentary – is that it's not just the lack of accountability and transparency that is upsetting to so many Canadians (as upsetting as it should be on its own) – ***it's the hypocrisy***. These are the very issues that the Harper Conservatives campaigned on! To see them now doing the opposite, and indeed behaving worse than everyone they criticized, is a slap in the face to all those who elected them on that basis.

Another example of hypocrisy: Stephen Harper and many of his colleagues spent years criticising the Senate, the abuse of control of the Senate for partisan legislation, and the patronage used in appointing Senators. They campaigned for years on Senate reform. Harper vowed never to appoint unelected Senators.

Yet... Since achieving power, and without any apparent compunction, Stephen Harper has done the opposite. He has appointed a large number of un-elected Senators -- including, as we have seen, some doozies. And for all the criticisms of past patronage, and a vow to "clean things up", the recent level of patronage renders all past governments – Liberal and Conservative – pale in comparison. Failed Conservative candidates. Conservative donors. Fundraisers.

Friends. It's all exactly what this gang was so critical of in others. Now they're even worse.

But here again – it's not just the pattern of Senate appointments and the patronage involved, although these are bad enough on their own. ***It's the hypocrisy.***

If we allow hypocrisy to go unchecked, we only encourage it. In the end, we get the government we deserve – or at least the one we vote for. We should demand better.

If you have any questions or comments on this, or any other issue, please write to me at [info@marthahallfindlay.ca](mailto:info@marthahallfindlay.ca), or to PO Box 69522, 5845 Yonge St., Willowdale, ON, M2M 4K3.

All best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MHF', with a small flourish at the end.

Martha Hall Findlay