

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

OFFICE OF THE INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER



REPORT

OF

**THE HONOURABLE J. DAVID WAKE
INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER**

**RE: MARIE-FRANCE LALONDE, MEMBER FOR OTTAWA-
ORLÉANS**

TORONTO, ONTARIO

July 8, 2016

RE: MARIE-FRANCE LALONDE, MEMBER FOR OTTAWA-ORLÉANS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report relates to a complaint made by Jagmeet Singh, the Member of Provincial Parliament for Bramalea-Gore-Malton under section 30 of the *Members' Integrity Act, 1994* (the “Act”) against Marie-France Lalonde, the Member of Provincial Parliament for Ottawa-Orléans and Chief Government Whip.

The complaint alleges that Ms. Lalonde contravened Ontario parliamentary convention against using government resources for partisan purposes when on May 27, 2016, the Liberal Caucus Services Bureau issued a news release containing partisan messaging about an upcoming provincial by-election. There is insufficient connection between Ms. Lalonde or any other member and the conduct being complained about for me to conduct an inquiry into whether there has been a breach of the Act or parliamentary convention.

II. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

[1] Under section 30(1) of the Act, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that another member has contravened the Act or Ontario parliamentary convention may request that I give an opinion on the matter.

[2] When a matter is referred to me I may then conduct an inquiry and report my opinion to the Speaker in accordance with section 31 of the Act. Alternatively, I may refuse to conduct an inquiry if I am of the opinion that the referral was frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith or that there are either no or insufficient grounds for an inquiry as set out in section 31(5) of the Act.

III. THE COMPLAINT

- [3] On May 30, 2016, I received an Affidavit via email from Mr. Singh with proof that it had been served on the Speaker of the Assembly in accordance with the procedures established by this Office for requesting an opinion under section 30 of the Act.
- [4] Mr. Singh’s affidavit suggests Ms. Lalonde contravened the parliamentary convention against using government resources for partisan purposes, stating that she has responsibility over the Liberal Caucus Services Bureau (the “Bureau”), which issued a news release on May 27, 2016 containing partisan messaging about an upcoming by-election.
- [5] Mr. Singh identified Ms. Lalonde as being responsible for the actions of the Bureau based on the manner in which the Bureau appears under her name on INFO-GO – the Government of Ontario Employee and Organization Directory (“Info- Go”) set out below.



- [6] On June 1, 2016, my Office wrote to Ms. Lalonde seeking her input into the substance of Mr. Singh’s complaint, and in particular seeking information that would help me decide if an inquiry was to be conducted.
- [7] On June 3, 2016, I received a letter from Adam de Caire, Acting Executive Director of the Bureau, stating that Ms. Lalonde does not exercise any oversight over the Bureau and

is not involved in the day-to-day functioning of that office. Mr. de Caire's letter stated that Ms. Lalonde had thus been inappropriately named in the complaint made by Mr. Singh. Mr. de Caire, however, agreed that the subject matter of the news release was inappropriate and that the Bureau was taking steps to provide appropriate direction to staff in order to ensure the error would not be repeated.

[8] On June 8, 2016, Ms. Lalonde wrote to my Office and confirmed that she does not exercise any oversight over the Bureau or its communications staff. She indicated that neither she nor her staff was involved in the creation or approval of the news release and that she first became aware of the release when it was provided to her by my Office. She clarified that as Chief Government Whip she is responsible for the coordination and communication of the daily proceedings of the Legislative Assembly for members affiliated with the Liberal party. She indicated that her responsibilities include the following:

- approving absences;
- coordinating Question Period questions and members' statements;
- approving and coordinating substitutions on standing committees;
- coordinating members to speak to bills during debate;
- deferral of votes upon the conclusion of debate on a bill; and
- making arrangements for representatives of the Liberal caucus to participate in/on special occasions such as tributes or inter-parliamentary programs.

[9] On June 9, 2016, Mr. Singh was given an opportunity to comment on Ms. Lalonde's letter. On June 29, 2016, Mr. Singh confirmed that he was satisfied with Ms. Lalonde's response but was also still requesting that I conduct an inquiry.

IV. OPINION

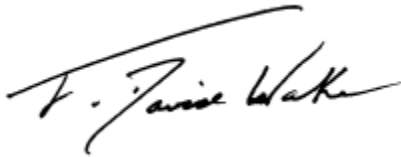
[10] The conduct being complained about is a news release prepared by the Bureau. There is insufficient connection between this conduct and Ms. Lalonde or any other member for me to conduct an inquiry into whether there has been a breach of the Act or parliamentary convention.

[11] The basis for concluding that Ms. Lalonde has responsibility for the Bureau appears to be based on the manner in which the Bureau is referenced on Info-Go. Given that Ms. Lalonde and Mr. de Caire have both confirmed that she has no oversight over the Bureau, which is undisputed, it is therefore unnecessary for me to devote the resources of my Office to conduct an inquiry into this matter.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is my opinion that there are insufficient grounds for an inquiry into this matter.

DATED at Toronto this 8th day of July 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. David Wake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Honourable J. David Wake
Integrity Commissioner