



Minister Raitt must step aside

OTTAWA – Natural Resources Minister Lisa Raitt must step aside from her cabinet post until the ethics commissioner has completed the investigation into the partisan fundraiser organized for her out of the Toronto Port Authority (TPA), Liberal MPs said today.

“Given the cloud of ethical lapses surrounding Minister Raitt, it is inappropriate for her to sit as a Minister of the Crown while she is under investigation,” said Liberal MP Paul Szabo. “She must step aside at least until this investigation is complete.”

Ethics Commissioner Mary Dawson yesterday agreed that a probe into Minister Raitt’s use of taxpayer-funded resources at the TPA for partisan gain is warranted.

On September 15, 2009, a \$250-per-person fundraiser for Minister Raitt and the Conservative party was promoted through the office of the President of the TPA. The event was organized by Michael McSweeney, the Vice-President for the Cement Association of Canada (CAC) and a lobbyist registered federally to lobby Ms. Raitt’s department. Mr. McSweeney even used the fax line at the CAC to confirm reservations to the event.

Minister Raitt is the former head of the TPA, a taxpayer-funded, federal Crown corporation. The email soliciting funds on her behalf was sent out by her former executive assistant, Janet MacDonald.

Mr. Szabo asked four different Commissioners – Privacy, Elections Canada, Lobbying,

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and Conflict of Interest and Ethics – to investigate the matter.

In light of allegations that the Minister signed off on her own expenses during her tenure as President of the TPA – racking up almost \$130,000 in expenses, including a \$9,000 lunch for 50 people at a Toronto steakhouse - Mr. Szabo has also asked Auditor General Sheila Fraser to conduct a special audit of Ms. Raitt’s expenses during her tenure.

“Minister Raitt has left a trail of scandal in her wake, and any other government would have relieved her of her cabinet position a long time ago,” said Liberal MP Geoff Regan. “Since Prime Minister Stephen Harper refuses to enforce ethical standards in his cabinet, Minister Raitt should do the honourable thing and step aside while she is under investigation.”