



Larry Spencer
Member of Parliament
Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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As the nation now knows, my Conservative caucus voted to reject my request to be re-instated as a member in good standing of my caucus. I temporarily withdrew from the Canadian Alliance caucus understanding that I would be allowed back in after I was provided sufficient time to clarify my comments. The comments in question were those that were so extremely misrepresented by Peter O'Neil of the Vancouver Sun resulting from my informal conversation with him on November 25, 2003.

As a result of my ill-fated conversation with Peter O'Neil and my trusting nature, every form of media put their own exaggerated spin on what they thought were my comments. The media and the talk shows went to every extreme to paint me as a bigot and a fool. Many headlines were highly sensationalized and were in fact directly opposite to some of my quotes actually contained in the articles. The few factual points I intended to make were completely lost in the media feeding frenzy.

Things became worse. Stephen Harper fired me from my position as Family Issues Critic, after asking if I had considered resigning. I was made to sign an apology, which was not one of clarity. I was ordered to accept a communications strategy that included my staff. In short, I was muzzled and unable to make any comments to refute the media headlines and talk shows that had begun to take on a life of their own without fair consideration of the facts. I now know a forced gag order is the worst thing a politician must endure. I was allowed no defence.

I want to express my remorse and regret for all that has transpired since my conversation with Peter O'Neil. Free Speech, Freedom of Religion and the Right of an elected Member of Parliament to freely express his views and the views of many of his constituents have lost out to political correctness. Since I was elected I have never failed to tolerate every extreme view or comment that was expressed to me. It is apparent that this luxury is not available to elected officials in the name of power, money and political correctness.

It has always been my belief that I was only answerable to my constituents. I learned today that I must first answer to a leader, a caucus and a political party. It is sad that the leader, Stephen Harper or the Conservative Party, never considered my constituent's expressions of support and were denied all the facts.

On January 27, 2004, I met with senior caucus officials to discuss re-entry into caucus. The documentation I provided at this meeting is attached for your reference.

I am a Canadian by choice and have lived in this riding for nearly 29 years. I intend to continue to serve this country as I have since I first arrived so many years ago. **"I am Canadian."**

For more information, please call the Office of Larry Spencer, M.P. at 306-791-0707

Ottawa Office:
Room 511, Justice Bldg.
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6
Tel: 613-992-4573
Fax: 613-996-6885



Constituency Office:
6244 Rochdale Blvd
Regina, SK
S4X 4K8
Tel: 306-791-0707
Fax: 306-791-0701
E-mail: mpoffice@sasktel.net

Visit: www.lspencer.ca