

Bahamas Vacation: PM Violated Ethics Law

OTTAWA: Justin Trudeau, who came into office vowing to set the gold standard for transparency and ethical behaviour, became Wednesday the first prime minister found to have violated federal conflict of interest rules.

Federal ethics commissioner Mary Dawson concluded Trudeau violated the rules when he vacationed last Christmas at the private Bahamian island owned by the Aga Khan and when his wife and children vacationed on the same island months earlier in March 2016.

Dawson found the Trudeaus' visit to the island - and the prime minister hopping aboard the Aga Khan's private helicopter to get there - broke sections of the Conflict of Interest Act that prohibits a minister or any member of their family from accept-

ing gifts or "advantages" that could reasonably be seen as influencing government decisions.

Moreover, she found Trudeau didn't properly recuse himself on two occasions in May 2016 from private meetings about the Aga Khan and a \$15-million grant to the billionaire philanthropist's endowment fund of the Global Centre for Pluralism.

The outgoing ethics commissioner's long-awaited report suggested Trudeau could have avoided this outcome had he come to her before going on the trip that began on Dec. 26, 2016. She concluded he failed to follow his own ethics rules for cabinet ministers and that he should have recognized that going on the trip would be seen as a real or apparent conflict of interest. Trudeau publicly apolo-

gized Wednesday for not asking Dawson for her clearance. During a hastily-called news conference, Trudeau took responsibility for the ethical lapse and said, in future, he'll ask the ethics commissioner in advance to clear all his personal vacations.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh said he wants the ethics commissioner to be empowered to apply sanctions or reprimands in cases like this one.

"Right now, the ethics commissioner does not have the power to do anything. There's actually no consequences to this finding. That to me is extremely unacceptable," Singh said in Toronto.

Trudeau may have avoided Dawson's finding had she agreed that Trudeau and the Aga Khan were friends, since ethics rules make an exception for gifts given by

a friend. But Dawson said that exception didn't apply because Trudeau and the Aga Khan's friendship blossomed only after the prime minister became Liberal leader in 2013. Before that, the two hadn't spoken for 30 years.

It was Trudeau's wife, Sophie Gregoire Trudeau, who contacted the Aga Khan's daughter about vacationing on the island in March 2016 and then over Christmas last year.

Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said it wasn't enough for the prime minister to comply with the law - he must go above and beyond the law, neither of which Trudeau did. "It is a serious lapse in judgement for the prime minister not to realize that there was a conflict in the first place," Scheer said. - The Canadian Press

Benjamin, Olivia Most Popular Baby Names In Ontario

Benjamin and Olivia are the most popular names for boys and girls born in Ontario. Liam slipped to second place after holding the top spot for boys' names for five years running, while Olivia remains the most popular baby girls' name in Ontario since 2008.

Top girls names are:

1. Olivia
2. Emma
3. Charlotte
4. Ava
5. Sophia

Top boys names are:

1. Benjamin
2. Liam
3. Noah
4. Ethan
5. Lucas

After naming their newborns, parents have up to 30 days to register their child's birth.

ServiceOntario's easy-to-use online 4-in-1 Newborn Bundle tops the list of best ways to register a birth. In a few easy clicks, parents can register their child's birth and apply for their

birth certificate, social insurance number and child benefits.

Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Government and Consumer Services, said: "Life as a new parent can be overwhelming. ServiceOntario is making it easier for new parents to access the services they need, through the 4-in-1 Bundle. Parents can register their newborns quickly, securely and easily so that they can get back to what's important - caring for their newborns."

Delivering real benefits that

will help people in their everyday lives is part of Ontario's plan to create fairness and opportunity during this period of rapid economic change. The plan includes a higher minimum wage and better working conditions, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students, easier access to affordable child care, and free prescription drugs for everyone under 25 through the biggest expansion of medicare in a generation.

• Lincoln makes it in the top

20 for the first time in history of Ontario baby names.

• Since the television series "The Crown" launched, Ontario top baby names have seen a royal increase, with an increase in Elizabeths, Margarets and Winstons.

• ServiceOntario's 4-in-1 Newborn Bundle was the first of its kind in Canada when it launched in 2007. Since then, more than 1.2 million newborns have been registered in Ontario using the service.

Foreign Buyers Not Big Players In Housing Market

But They own More Expensive And Newer Homes Than Canadians Says Survey

OTTAWA Foreign buyers make up a minuscule portion of the overall housing market in this country, new research shows, but what they own is more expensive and newer than the average Canadian homeowner.

And there are indications foreign buyers are moving out of the traditional bases of Toronto and Vancouver and into new cities.

Non-residents owned 3.4 per cent of all residential properties in Toronto and 4.8 per cent of residential properties in Vancouver, according to new housing statistics by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and Statistics Canada.

Largely what foreign buyers scoop up are newer, more expensive homes. In Vancouver, non-resident owners, as they're known, had homes valued on average at \$2.3 million compared to \$1.6 million for the owners whose primary residence was in Canada. In Toronto, the average



detached home owned by a non-resident was valued at \$944,100 compared to \$840,600 for residents, a difference of \$103,500 or 12.3 per cent.

Foreign owners are stepping into the big-city condo market where, again, what they own is more expensive than the what residents own. In and around To-

ronto, the average assessed value for a condo owned by a non-resident was \$420,500, compared to \$385,900 for a resident. In Vancouver, the figures are \$691,500 and \$526,700, respectively.

CMHC says that overall, foreign buyers owned less than one per cent of the condo stock in 17 metropolitan areas across the

country. The figures mark the first time that CMHC and Statistics Canada have measured foreign ownership in the country's hot housing market to see how much influence foreign buyers have over skyrocketing prices.

Ontario and B.C. have rules in place to dampen foreign interest in buying properties as investments. The data from CMHC suggests that the foreign buyer tax in both provinces has shifted foreign ownership to other parts of the country.

The CMHC survey found that downtown Montreal and the city's Nun's Island had the largest increases in the share of non-resident owners over the last year. On Nun's Island, the rate went from 4.3 per cent in 2016 to 7.6 per cent this year; on the island of Montreal, the rate went from 0.9 per cent to 1.5 per cent.

"The lack of growth in Toronto and Vancouver, combined with the increases in Montreal, indi-

cate the possibility of a shift from these centres after the introduction of foreign buyers' taxes in Ontario and British Columbia," CMHC chief economist Bob Dugan said in a release accompanying the data. "Other factors attracting demand to Montreal include lower housing prices and a relatively strong economy."

The head of CMHC has publicly argued that foreign ownership is not the main driver for increasing housing prices. Evan Siddall has previously said that foreign ownership makes up less than five per cent of the housing market.

"Foreign ownership is a thing; it's not the thing," Siddall said in an interview earlier this year.

"The sources of demand that are pushing prices higher are many-fold and the sources of investment speculation...in the real estate part of our economy are many-fold and more domestic than foreign."

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