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### Liberals Demand Investigation into By-election April 22, 2009

The Liberals say Chief Electoral Officer Paul Reynolds' refusal to further investigate allegations concerning a 2001 by-election, is an absolute failure to perform his duty. The Chief Electoral Officer says no formal investigation is required. Paul Reynolds says he first became aware of possible unreported election expenditures in the 2001 St. Barbe by-election after media reports following the release of the Agreed Statement of Facts in former cabinet minister Ed Byrne's guilty plea on charges of fraud and frauds against the government. The Agreed Statement of Facts shows Byrne paid a campaign worker in the by-election 3-thousand dollars from his constituency allowance for which he was fraudulently reimbursed. Reynolds says when he spoke with the PC Party they indicated that at the time the related finance reports for the by-election were filed, they were of the understanding that all legitimate expenses relating to the by-election had been disclosed. Reynolds concludes that any impropriety involved in the 2001 St. Barbe by-election was related to the actions of Ed Byrne, for which he has been convicted, and are not attributed to other persons involved in the by election . Reynolds says there is no evidence presently available to support the contention that the outcome of the by-election was affected by those actions, and no formal investigation is required.

Former Premier Roger Grimes told VOCM Nightline with Ryan Cleary the Chief Electoral Officer has an obligation in this case to deal with a violation. Grimes says otherwise there is a precedent being set for the next time a party does something that's in clear violation of the Act.

Liberal MHA Kelvin Parsons, the Opposition House Leader, says government must instruct Reynolds or a third party to conduct a probe into the incident. Parsons says it further adds to concerns raised when the former PC president was appointed to the post.

A professor at Memorial University believes the issue will continue to generate public frustration until action is taken. Political scientist Alex Marland says since the constituency allowance scandal, the public is not so quick to give the benefit of the doubt.



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