

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024033418476 OTTAWA—Allegations of political interference in the criminal prosecution of a major Canadian corporation have swamped national politics. Over the past week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his Liberals have been consumed by an escalating controversy, after a bombshell newspaper report alleged officials in the PMO pushed the former justice minister to put an end to a fraud and corruption trial and mediate a solution with the accused company, SNC-Lavalin. The opposition NDP decry the situation as more evidence Trudeau's Liberals are beholden to big business, while the Conservatives are accusing the government of trying to cover up a major scandal. Some say the situation harkens back to Liberal debacles of old, such as the corruption of the "sponsorship scandal." And Indigenous leaders, among others, contend the situation undercuts Trudeau's lofty rhetoric on reconciliation and feminism — key aspects of the image Trudeau's Liberals like to project. From the pinnacle of political power to the boardroom of a multinational corporation, the SNC-Lavalin scandal involves a lot of people. Here are the main players in the story so far: Jody Wilson-Raybould Canada's first Indigenous justice minister and attorney general is at the heart of the controversy. But so far, Wilson-Raybould has been silent on allegations that the Prime Minister's Office pressured her to halt criminal proceedings in the fraud and corruption case against SNC-Lavalin and offer the company a mediation deal. Apparently bound from speaking because of solicitor-client privilege, the Vancouver MP resigned from cabinet and has retained a former Supreme Court justice to determine how she can tell her side of the story. Justin Trudeau The prime minister at first would only say that Wilson-Raybould was never "directed" to mediate with SNC-Lavalin — a denial that Liberal MPs later expanded to say there was no "pressure" on her to do so either. Later, he said her continued presence in cabinet, as veterans' affairs minister, should speak for itself. Only she resigned the next day. Trudeau was "surprised and disappointed" by the move, and continues to insist his office never broke any rules in discussions with the former attorney general about SNC-Lavalin's criminal case. SNC-Lavalin Based in Montreal, the engineering and construction giant has 50,000 employees around the world, about 8,700 of them in Canada. Since it was charged with fraud and corruption for its activities in Libya — one of several instances of corporate criminal activity in recent years — SNC-Lavalin has lobbied the prime minister's office, senior federal bureaucrats and at least six cabinet ministers on the subject of "justice and law enforcement." Company CEO Neil Bruce did much of the lobbying, according to the federal registry. Bill Pristanksi, executive assistant to former prime minister Brian Mulroney, and Bruce Hartley, who was executive assistant to Jean Chrétien, are also registered lobbyists for the company. Kathleen Roussel The federal director of public prosecutions is a former Queens University graduate in religious studies, and University of Ottawa law grad. She once told a committee she didn't particularly enjoy law school but enjoyed the work when she joined the federal justice department. As director of public prosecutions, she is supposed to be at arms' length from the attorney-general, formerly Jody Wilson-Raybould now David Lametti, when it comes to most prosecution decisions. But the attorney-general can overrule her in certain cases, but only if the reasons are delivered in writing and published by the federal government. Roussel received many submissions by SNC-Lavalin, but turned down its request to meet in person, and rejected the company's plea to negotiate a deal. Michael Wernick As Clerk of the Privy Council, Canada's top bureaucrat, Wernick likely has insight into the SNC-Lavalin situation. He was lobbied by the company about justice and law enforcement last September, and the opposition wants him to testify about the affair at the House of Commons justice committee. In a meeting Dec. 5, the prime minister's top adviser told Wilson-Raybould to discuss SNC-Lavalin's criminal case with Wernick, according to Trudeau's spokesperson. Gerald Butts The opposition parties also want to hear from Butts, Trudeau's principal secretary in the PMO. He has been at Trudeau's side since before he was prime minister, and is often cast by the government's critics as the chief orchestrator of Liberals' political strategy. Butts was lobbied by SNC-Lavalin on justice and law enforcement once, in 2017, though other staff in the PMO have had more interactions with the company on that subject. They include senior advisers Mathieu Bouchard and Elder Marques, and Cyrus Reporter, a former adviser who has since left the PMO. Mario Dion Canada's Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion has launched an investigation into the SNC-Lavalin allegations. In a letter to NDP MPs that asked him to look into it, Dion said he has "reason to believe" section nine of Parliament's conflict of interest law may have been broken. That section prohibits a public office holder from trying to influence a decision to improperly advance another

person's private interests. Anthony Housefather The chair of the House of Commons justice committee, a backbench Liberal MP from Montreal, was thrust into a position of moderating the acrimonious debate over who to call to answer questions in a public hearing about the affair. In the end, he was among the Liberal members to block attempts by the opposition to call the major players who could shed light on what happened: including Butts, Wilson-Raybould and others. The committee will meet again on Tuesday, behind closed doors, to discuss how to move forward. David Lametti The MP for Lasalle-Emard-Verdun made the leap from parliamentary secretary into cabinet and into the justice hot seat in the Jan. 14 cabinet shuffle. A McGill law prof on leave from his job teaching intellectual property law, Lametti stumbled early on when he defended the prime minister publicly in the Commons. He said neither Trudeau nor his officials applied any pressure to his predecessor, Wilson-Raybould on the SNC-Lavalin file. Lametti later admitted that he did not speak to Ms. Wilson-Raybould to hear her version of events, but had taken the prime minister's word for it. He also suggested that the option of negotiating a remediation agreement with SNC-Lavalin was not completely off the table, even as the issue is currently before a Federal Court judge.