

Davidson's new job leads to conflict claims

Edinburgh Central MSP Ruth Davidson has been openly criticised for taking a third job while still serving as a member of the Scottish Parliament.

She was appointed by Tulchan Communications to a £50,000 a year advisory position alongside former Conservative Party chair Lord Feldman.

Scottish Labour MSP Neil Findlay is putting forward a Member's Bill at the Scottish Parliament aiming to stop MSPs like Ruth Davidson from having a second job.

Neil Findlay MSP said :“Ruth Davidson's actions bring the Scottish Parliament into disrepute.

“Instead of standing up for her constituents in parliament she will be standing up for the firms that her bosses are paid to lobby for.

“You cannot be a parliamentarian and a highly paid lobbyist at the same time.

“If she wants to continue pocketing tens of thousands of pounds from this lobbying firm she should resign as an MSP.

“The people of Edinburgh deserve an MSP that will represent them, not private corporations.”

Scottish Green MSP for Lothian Alison Johnstone said: “The people of Edinburgh Central elected Ruth Davidson to represent them, not use her position to earn £50,000 from lobbyists.

“This is clearly a conflict of interest. Davidson needs to resign from the corporate body and as an MSP so Edinburgh Central can elect a committed representative.

“Most folk who take second jobs do so through pressing necessity. It’s time for a by-election in Edinburgh Central, not to mention a change in the law. Neil Findlay’s bill on second jobs for MSPs should be fast tracked to stop this happening again.”

SNP MSP Gordon MacDonald has today raised fresh questions over the scale of outside interests represented by Ms Davidson’s new employers – and how this will be reconciled with strict parliamentary rules on paid advocacy and the MSPs code of conduct, which bans sitting MSPs from being paid to advise on parliamentary affairs.

MSPs are barred from accepting payment or benefit in kind for advocating on behalf of an outside interest during their parliamentary duties. Breach of these rules could see MSPs facing expulsion from parliament and an unlimited fine.

Macdonald says Tulchan’s declared client list covers an enormous range of sectors – including aviation, car, food and alcohol, property developers, financial services, tourism, oil and gas and the water industry.

The Scottish Parliament’s code of conduct states that MSPs “should not accept any paid work to provide services as a Parliamentary strategist, adviser or consultant”.

Commenting, Mr MacDonald said: “The questions over this saga are only growing.

“MSPs are bound by strict rules on accepting cash to raise issues on behalf of outside groups – and are banned from being paid to advise on parliamentary affairs.

“People will wonder how Ruth Davidson can stay within the

letter and the spirit of these rules if raising matters related to any of her employer's clients – of which there are many.

“In fact, the scale of Tulchan's client list is so large it's hard to see how Ruth Davidson can raise almost any issue in parliament without facing a potential conflict of interest.

“If Ruth Davidson isn't willing to focus on her role as an MSP she should allow the people of Edinburgh Central to pick a representative who is. ”

The Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) condemned the decision by Tulchan Communications to hire the politician. Francis Ingham MPRCA, Director General, PRCA said: “It is simply wrong for lobbying agencies to employ legislators. The possible conflict of interest in doing so is clear, and damages the reputation of both our industry, and of the political process.

“PRCA members are prohibited from employing parliamentarians – and with good reason. Unlike the vast majority of its competitors, Tulchan is not a PRCA member. But in the public interest, we would nonetheless urge them to reconsider this appointment.”

Ms Davidson was recently [appointed](#) by broadcaster STV as a mental health adviser.



Ruth Davidson MSP announcing that she was stepping down as party leader in August 2019.