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## MSP faces ban from Holyrood for leaking fingerprint report

ROBBIE DINWOODIE, Chief Scottish Political Correspondent

September 21 2006

A Liberal Democrat MSP is set to receive the first ban ever handed down at Holyrood for leaking information to a newspaper.

Mike Pringle was ruled to have broken the code of conduct for MSPs when he passed on details related to the Shirley McKie fingerprint case.

He was not present at the Standards Committee meeting which laid down that he should be banned from committee and full parliament meetings for a week. Only deliberate protests in the parliament chamber have produced longer bans but, in a hearing yesterday reminiscent of a court martial, MSPs of all parties spoke against him.

The result was a recommendation that Mr Pringle, MSP for Edinburgh South, be banned from attending either the committee meetings or full sessions of the parliament, although he can continue working in the Holyrood building. The committee's proposal has still to be approved by the full parliament.

Members also recommended that Mr Pringle should consider quitting the Justice 1 Committee, given that his latest leak was a second offence.

Labour back bencher Karen Whitefield told fellow MSPs that Mr Pringle had previously leaked other information relating to a report on antisocial behaviour to the same newspaper, Scotland on Sunday, in 2004 when he was on the Justice 2 Committee. Brian Adam, convener of the Standards Committee, said the committee accepted the findings and agreed with the conclusion.

"This committee wishes to state that it views very seriously indeed the leaking of parliamentary material," he said.

Mr Pringle stressed afterwards that he had always acted in a spirit of openness and owned up to individual leaks if he was involved.

He said: "I was shocked because I didn't think it was perhaps as serious as the committee has taken it. I've apologised, I accept exactly what the committee says." The complaint against the MSP was made by Robert Mackenzie, deputy head of the Glasgow bureau of the Scottish Fingerprint Service.

It was the first code of conduct complaint by a member of the public to result in a sanction being recommended.

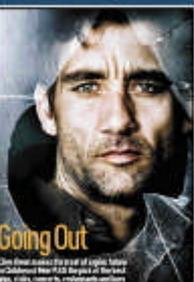
**MELANIE REID**



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