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# **Government Response to the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology**

Transparency in the Information Age:  
the *Lobbyists Registration Act* in the 21st Century

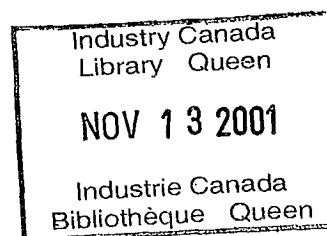
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# **Government Response to the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology**

Transparency in the Information Age:  
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November 2001



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For additional copies of this publication, please contact:

Lobbyists Registration Branch  
Office of the Ethics Counsellor  
Industry Canada  
22nd Floor  
66 Slater Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0C9

Tel.: (613) 957-2760  
Fax: (613) 957-3078  
E-mail: [lobbyists.reg@ic.gc.ca](mailto:lobbyists.reg@ic.gc.ca)

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Minister of Industry



Ministre de l'Industrie

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H5

Ms. Susan Whelan, M.P.  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology  
Room 231, Confederation Building  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Whelan:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, and on behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to enclose the Government's response to the recommendations contained in the Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, *Transparency in the Information Age: The Lobbyists Registration Act in the 21st Century*, which was tabled in the House of Commons on June 12, 2001.

I would like to thank the Committee once again for providing us with its views on how the lobbyist registration system, established under the *Lobbyists Registration Act* (the Act), has been working and its recommendations as to how it can be made even more effective and efficient while ensuring that the right balance is achieved with the four key principles set out in the Act's preamble; that is:

- free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest;
- lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity;
- it is desirable that public office holders and the public be able to know who is attempting to influence government;
- a system for the registration of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to government.

Sincerely,

Brian Tobin  
Minister of Industry

c.c.: Mr. Normand Radford, Clerk of the Standing Committee on  
Industry, Science and Technology

Canada

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## **Part I: Introduction**

Parliament originally enacted the *Lobbyists Registration Act* (the Act) in 1989. In the years that followed, however, Canadians remained concerned and distrustful about the role of lobbyists. During the 1993 election campaign, the current Government promised improvements in the regime governing lobbying.

It also pledged that the Ethics Counsellor would be:

... mandated to develop a corresponding code of conduct for lobbyists and to examine and recommend responses to the ethical and business practice issues that arise from time to time in government relations. The Ethics Counsellor will be able to offer guidance both to lobbyists and their clients, if necessary, so that they can judge in advance the acceptability of any proposed contract or activity.

*Creating Opportunity: The Liberal Plan for Canada* (Red Book)

In 1995, the current Government followed through on the commitment it made to Canadians in the 1993 election and proposed extensive revisions to the Act. Parliament agreed to those changes and an amended Act came into force in 1996.

The revised legislation called for a Parliamentary review of the Act after four years. This review was delayed from its original time frame by the November 2000 election. Between March and May 2001, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology conducted a comprehensive review. It heard from a range of witnesses and weighed their comments and perspectives carefully. The Committee took into account issues that the Minister of Industry had asked it to consider and produced a report that represents an important assessment of the experience to date with the Act and government oversight of the lobbying process.

As a result, the Government intends to respond positively to the recommendations made by the Committee. The Government is proposing a series of specific actions that will address key points raised during the hearings as well as the Committee's recommendations to study compliance and enforcement.

### **The Current Lobbyists Registration Regime**

It is worth summarizing some key points. The Act is based on four key principles:

- free and open access to Government is an important matter of public interest;
- lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity;
- it is desirable that public office holders and the public be able to know who is attempting to influence Government;
- a system for the registration of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to Government.

The Act identifies three types of lobbyists:

- Consultant Lobbyists — individuals who are paid to lobby for clients;
- In-House Lobbyists (Corporate) — employees who, as a significant part of their duties, lobby for an employer that carries out commercial activities for financial gain; and
- In-House Lobbyists (Organizations) — not-for-profit organizations in which one or more employees lobby, and the collective time devoted to lobbying amounts to a significant part of one employee's duties.

The Act also sets out requirements on who must register as a lobbyist. It establishes the information that lobbyists must provide about the clients, businesses or organizations they represent and their activities.

The *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* (the Code) was developed to support the Act. It sets standards of conduct that lobbyists are to meet in their dealings with federal public office holders.

### ***The Lobbyists Registration Act Works Well Now***

The Standing Committee came to the clear conclusion that the Act is effective. As the Chair pointed out in her Foreward:

The Act was conceived as an antidote to the conflict of interest and influence-peddling scandals that beset previous governments. The solution was not to regulate lobbying — which remains a valuable and legitimate activity — but rather to make the system transparent by requiring people or groups to disclose their lobbying activities. The general consensus is that the Act has succeeded in this — it provides precisely the kind of transparency for which it was created: lobbyists do, in fact, register. Today, by examining the registry, we can find out who is lobbying what department and exactly what they are discussing.

This overall sense that the system works well mirrors the Government's view of the experience since 1996 with the lobbyist registration regime. The registration and updating process is almost completely automated, thanks to an easily accessible Web site. Moreover, the registry is accessed often by Canadians through the Internet, as demonstrated by extensive use of the site. A point to highlight is that within the Office of the Ethics Counsellor, only two individuals, the Registrar and another official, manage the lobbyist registration system.

### ***The Lobbyists' Code of Conduct***

The Committee has recommended that the Act be amended to remove responsibility from the Ethics Counsellor for the Code and to create a new office that "shall have the exclusive responsibility of investigating and reporting to Parliament on alleged violations" of this Code. The Government does not agree.

The Code, which was developed by the Ethics Counsellor, has also worked well from the Government's perspective since it came into effect in 1997. Several complaints have been registered with the Ethics Counsellor and decisions on those complaints are available on the Web site of the Office (<http://strategis.gc.ca/ethics>). Additionally, the Ethics Counsellor has an important advisory role, which is meant to provide guidance on the Code and related issues to the lobbying community, their clients and the public. In the course of this work, the Ethics Counsellor has been able to identify issues of concern to the wider lobbying community and those interested in more transparent government. By drawing attention to these issues and his advice, he has been able to further support the aims of the Act.

But this is not the work of an individual: it draws upon the resources of the whole Office, those who are specifically assigned to lobbyist registration as well as other staff who have assisted in the review of complaints. If a new, separate office were to be created to deal with complaints under the Code much, if not most, of the synergy gained from working on lobbying issues generally would be lost with no assurance that a new office would be effective. As well, there would be new costs associated with the establishment of a separate office.

### **Assessing Compliance with the Act**

Do people and organizations comply with the Act? On the whole, the Committee believed that compliance levels were high. However, since several witnesses said this might not be the case, the Committee recommended that the Government carry out a study to assess the degree of compliance.

The Government has already acted on this recommendation. The Office of the Ethics Counsellor contracted with KPMG Consulting to do a study to shed more light on this question.

The study focussed on three issues identified by the Committee:

- to provide objective information on the rate of compliance with the registration requirements of the Act;
- to determine key reasons for non-compliance, such as ignorance of the requirements, or conscious avoidance of the requirements due to ambiguity in the definition of lobbying or to preserve confidentiality; and
- to determine whether the Act's exemption for lobbying contacts initiated by public office holders was being used to avoid registration.

The study also involved a fourth element that reflected an issue raised by the Government with which the Committee did not recommend change:

- to ask corporate counsel (i.e. in-house legal staff of corporations) whether the approach used for non-profit organizations (that is, a single registration for the organization) should be extended to for-profit corporations.



The study involved random telephone surveys of lobbyists registered under the Act as well as interviews with counsel from a sampling of major Canadian corporations to get their perceptions on registration issues. The key overall findings of the survey are the following:

- In general, all three groups of lobbyists covered under the Act believe that registration compliance among their peers is relatively high.
- There is belief that some non-registration takes place, either in general or in relation to specific lobbying activities.
- The main reasons suggested for non-registration are:
  - lack of awareness of registration requirements; and
  - conscious avoidance (e.g. ambiguity, confidentiality).

Those findings are relatively consistent with the experience of government officials charged with monitoring application of the Act. In particular, some wording in the legislation may be unclear and could represent a barrier to effective enforcement of the Act.

The survey also analysed views on other policy and administrative issues related to the Act that were of interest to the Government. This information is included with the larger discussion of these issues below. The complete KPMG survey is available on the Web site of the Ethics Counsellor.

### **Strengthening the Lobbyist Registration System**

Apart from a need to improve the enforcement provisions of the Act, the clear evidence is that there is no need to make substantial changes to the Act. However, the Committee's recommendations and the Government's views point to a number of specific improvements that the Government could undertake.

#### ***Improvement of Enforcement Provisions***

The Committee concurred with the view of the Government that the enforcement issue is genuine but did not have sufficient information to be able to fully assess the legislative alternatives available. The Government has carefully considered these alternatives and believes that a clearer statement of what constitutes lobbying and the need to register would improve the situation. Effective enforcement provisions are essential.

#### ***Simplification of Registration Updating and Deregistration Requirements***

The overall registration system that has been created under the Act works effectively. Some 98 percent of registration activity takes place on-line through Industry Canada's *Strategis* Web site. Still, the Committee and the Government recognized opportunities to improve the system further, which could include establishing a new registration regime in which all lobbyists would be required to update or renew their filings at least every six months. Further, the deregistration

requirements for consultant lobbyists could also be incorporated into the new general update/renewal process.

This would not change the current requirement that lobbyists must notify the Lobbyists Registration Branch of changes to their filings listed on the Public Registry within 30 days of the change. The result of these proposed changes and the maintenance of key existing requirements would be a more current, accurate and factual Registry.

### ***Harmonization of Registration Process for In-House Lobbyists (Corporate) and In-House Lobbyists (Organizations)***

At present, the registration process for officers and employees of businesses is different from that for officers and employees of non-profit organizations. Employees of corporations who spend 20 percent or more of their time lobbying for their employer are required to register. Conversely, the senior officer of a non-profit organization must register when one or more employees lobby as part of their jobs and the total amount of time spent lobbying by all employees is equivalent to 20 percent of the time of one employee.

While witnesses before the Standing Committee did not support change to the status quo, the KPMG findings indicate a majority supporting a consistent approach across all organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit. While the primary concern raised about a more consistent approach was the potential for administrative burden, the Government believes that, on the contrary, a single filing system for corporations by the Chief Executive Officer would eliminate the current situation in which many corporations have several people registered. This approach would also underline the reality that responsibility for lobbying Government rests at the highest corporate level. The Government will consider implementing such a system of single registration.

### **Opening Doors to Consultation with Canadians**

The Standing Committee recognized that the environment surrounding lobbying is evolving rapidly. In particular, it saw that the scope of the process is expanding, thanks to more open and extensive policy consultation approaches, combined with the impact of new information and communications technologies.

The Government of Canada has already placed a great deal of information about its activities on the Internet and access has been improved through a redesigned Canada site (<http://www.canada.gc.ca>). Canadians are using tools such as e-mail to communicate with parliamentarians, ministers and government departments on issues of concern to them.

While it is beyond the scope of the Act, the Government agrees with the Committee's view that applying new technologies to improve public awareness and involvement in consultations is valuable. As part of its ongoing effort to engage citizens, the Government continues to improve Canadians' access to consultation processes using the Web.

## **Conclusion**

Government decisions and actions affect all Canadians. It is quite legitimate that people, organizations and business would lobby governments in order to provide information on the perceived impacts of policy, program, legislative, regulatory and administrative decisions and options. The key is that this activity take place as transparently as possible to citizens, without creating unreasonable administrative burdens for either those lobbying or the Government.

The evidence before the Standing Committee mirrored the Government's own sense of the experience since 1996 with the Act — the process works well. Canadians have achieved a system that offers a high level of transparency, and yet is not difficult, costly or onerous to administer. The Government would like to thank the Committee for its excellent report.

The Government is keenly aware of the importance of public engagement in the activities of government. Canadians have among the highest degree of access to computers of any people in the world. Our citizens are well positioned to use the tools of the new economy to make their views known to Government. Our democratic system can only benefit from the continued work to strengthen an already effective lobbyist registration system and to fully engage citizens in decisions that affect them.

## Part II: Detailed Government Response

**1. The Committee recommends that the Government undertake a study to determine rates of compliance under the Act and the reasons for non-compliance where it exists.**

- The Government of Canada retained the services of KPMG Consulting in August 2001 to determine the rates of compliance under the *Lobbyists Registration Act* (the Act). KPMG Consulting designed and carried out telephone surveys of random samples from the three categories of registered lobbyists during August and early September 2001.
- The study focussed on the following issues:
  - to provide objective information on the rate of compliance with the registration requirements of the Act;
  - to determine key reasons for non-compliance;
  - to determine whether the Act's exemption for lobbying contacts initiated by public office holders found at paragraph 4(2)(c) was being used to avoid registration.
- A fourth survey was also conducted which consisted of interviews with the corporate counsel of major Canadian firms with respect to the single filing approach for In-House Lobbyists (Corporate). This is addressed under Recommendation 5.
- The key overall findings of the survey are the following: all three categories of lobbyists believe that registration compliance among their peers is high; that some non-registration takes place; and that the principal reasons for non-registration are lack of awareness of registration requirements and conscious avoidance (e.g. ambiguity, confidentiality).
- Those findings are relatively consistent with the experience of government officials charged with monitoring the application of the Act. In particular, some wording in the legislation may be unclear and could represent a barrier to effective enforcement of the Act. The Government will undertake to consider potential amendments, where necessary, in order to address issues of this nature.

**2. The Committee recommends that the Act be amended to create a new office, which shall have the exclusive responsibility of investigating and reporting to Parliament on alleged violations of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*.**

- The Government of Canada does not agree with the Committee's recommendation. The Government is of the view that the role of the Ethics

Counsellor has been a valuable part of the overall success of the lobbyist registration system since its inception in 1994. He developed the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* (the Code) which, from the Government's perspective, has worked well since it came into effect in 1997. Several complaints about perceived breaches of the Code have been registered with the Ethics Counsellor. Decisions on those complaints are available on the Office's Web site (<http://strategis.gc.ca/ethics>). He has played an important advisory role, providing guidance on the Code and related issues to the lobbying community, their clients and the public. In the course of this work, the Ethics Counsellor has been able to identify issues of concern to the wider lobbying community and those interested in more transparent Government. By drawing attention to these issues and his advice, he has been able to further support the aims of the Act.

- It is to be noted that this is not the work of only one individual, as it draws upon the resources of the whole Office of the Ethics Counsellor, those who are specifically assigned to lobbyist registration as well as other staff who have assisted in the review of complaints. If a new, separate office were to be created to deal with complaints under the Code much, if not most, of the synergy gained from working on lobbying issues generally would be lost with no assurance that a new office would be effective. As well, there would be new costs associated with the establishment of a separate office.

**3. The Committee recommends that the Registrar of Lobbyists, the Office of the Ethics Counsellor and the Department of Justice undertake further consultations with a view to determining the most appropriate legislative response to the enforcement issues arising from the use of the phrase "in an attempt to influence" in the Act.**

- The Office of the Ethics Counsellor, including the Registrar, and the Department of Justice have consulted.
- The Government of Canada agrees, in principle, that the effect of this wording in the Act may be to form a barrier to its enforcement in certain cases. The Government will consider the possibility of changes that could be made to address this issue.

**4. The Committee is of the view that the current two-year limitation period for the commencement of summary conviction proceedings under the Act is adequate and therefore does not recommend any change to the Act in this regard.**

- The Government of Canada concurs with this recommendation.

**5. Owing to the lack of support for the proposition among witnesses appearing before it, the Committee does not recommend that the Act be amended to apply an In-House (Organizations) registration approach to In-House (Corporate) lobbyists.**

- At present the registration process for officers and employees of businesses is different from that for officers and employees of non-profit organizations. Employees of corporations who spend 20 percent or more of their time lobbying for their employer are required to register. Conversely, the senior officer of a non-profit organization must register when one or more employees lobby as part of their jobs and the total amount of time spent lobbying by all employees is the equivalent to 20 percent of the time of one employee.
- While witnesses before the Standing Committee did not support change to the status quo, the study by KPMG, referred to in the response to Recommendation 1, found that a majority of corporations support a consistent approach across all organizations, whether for-profit or not-for-profit. While the primary concern raised about a more consistent approach was the potential for administrative burden, the Government of Canada believes that, on the contrary, a single filing system for corporations would eliminate the current situation in which many corporations have several people registered.
- This approach would underline the reality that responsibility for lobbying Government rests at the highest corporate level.
- The Government will consider the implementation of such a system of single registration.

**6. Owing to the considerable conceptual difficulties presented by the proposal, the Committee does not recommend that the Act be amended to create a so-called "qualitative" approach to registering lobbying activities.**

- The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's conclusion.

**7. The Committee recommends that section 4(2)(c) of the Act be deleted in order to require lobbyists to register even when the lobbying contact was initiated by the public office holder.**

- The Government of Canada agrees that this provision may create a potential loophole and its deletion could address this issue. Registration is a simple process that will not create an administrative burden. In considering moving to a system whereby this exemption would no longer apply, it is important to understand that the registration requirement applies only to paid lobbyists. Furthermore, for

organizations or corporations it would apply only when their employees spend 20 percent or more of their time making representations to public office holders.

8. **The Committee is of the view that the *Lobbyists Registration Act* is an act of great public importance, and, as such, it demands of registrants the utmost good faith in complying with the spirit of the law, even where doing so may require more than mere compliance with the letter of the law. The Committee recommends that this fundamental principle be emphasized by the inclusion in the Act of a general anti-avoidance provision.**
- Although the Government of Canada appreciates the concerns expressed by the Committee in this regard, this matter was considered by the Sub-Committee on Bill C-43 during 1995. It was concluded at that time that such a provision would be difficult to enforce.
  - A general anti-avoidance provision would lack precision and clarity and could lead to arbitrariness in the Act's enforcement. Moreover, acts of non-compliance and false and misleading statements are already offences under the Act, which render such a provision unnecessary.
  - An anti-avoidance provision is by nature subject to significant uncertainty. It is often subject to extensive discretion in its application. It is really designed for situations where the enforcement of an Act cannot otherwise be handled in a more efficient manner by other existing enforcement provisions of an Act.
  - In the case of the Act, it is believed that there is no need for such a provision.
9. **For the purposes of simplifying the current deregistration requirements and promoting greater consistency of application of the Act, the Committee recommends that the same deregistration requirements should apply to all lobbyists.**
- The Government of Canada concurs with this recommendation.
10. **The Committee recommends that, in order to ensure that registrants update their filings in a timely fashion, the Registrar of Lobbyists provide an e-mail "update reminder" to all registrants at least 30 days in advance of the date upon which their registrations must be updated.**
- The Government of Canada concurs with this recommendation. Although the Lobbyists Registration Branch already has in place an electronic system that generates renewal reminder notices 60 days before the due date in the case of In-House Lobbyists (Corporate) and 30 days before the due date for In-House Lobbyists (Organizations), the current system does not automatically send these

notices electronically to the lobbyists. The office therefore sends these notices manually via e-mail. The Lobbyists Registration Branch is currently examining alternative models to upgrade the lobbyist registration system, which would include as a key feature an e-mail reminder option.

**11. In order to ensure that information in the lobbyists registry is kept up to date, the Committee recommends that all lobbyists should be required to update their filings semi-annually; however, the 30-day deregistration requirement currently set out in section 5(4) of the Act should be removed from the Act to the Lobbyists Code in order to remove it from the sanctions prescribed by the Act for failing to deregister within the 30-day time frame currently prescribed.**

- The Government of Canada concurs, in principle, with this recommendation. Acting on this recommendation would, in part, establish a new regime that could easily be accommodated in the context of the current scheme whereby all lobbyists, including Consultant Lobbyists, would be required to update/renew their filings on a semi-annual basis.
- The Government agrees, in principle, that the elimination of the deregistration requirement of Consultant Lobbyists should be considered, thereby eliminating what can be a considerable sanction for the failure to deregister.
- The Government does not believe that the solution is to move the deregistration requirement into the Code. Sanctions for breaches to the Code are themselves very severe as they potentially entail the tabling of a Report in Parliament.

**12. The Committee also recommends that the Registrar draft a notice, to be displayed clearly on the lobbyists registry Web site, to the effect that because lobbyists are required to update their filings semi-annually, certain client relationships may no longer be active; and accordingly, persons are encouraged to verify with the lobbyist which of the lobbyists' current client listings remain active.**

- The Government of Canada does not believe that the incorporation of a notice on the lobbyists' Web site would have the desired effect. The Web site has always been used as a means to communicate with Lobbyists Registration Branch clients (e.g. for consultation purposes) to provide findings following a review of a particular matter, and to perform statistical analysis. A notice appearing with the recommended message would not conform with the raison d'être of the registry, which is meant to be dynamic, factual and current.
- Posting such a notice could be used by lobbyists to justify efforts to circumvent the need to maintain and ensure their filings are up to date. Furthermore, requiring



individuals who are conducting research on the registry to communicate and contact lobbyists themselves may not always be practical.

13. **For greater certainty, the Committee recommends that the 30-day period should be removed from the Act *only* insofar as it applies to the obligation to deregister. Because timely updating of client information is important, the Committee recommends that provisions that require the lobbyist to provide notification within 30 days of any changes to existing filings should remain in the Act.**
  - The Government of Canada concurs. To ensure that the Public Registry is kept both current and factual, lobbyists must notify the Lobbyists Registration Branch within 30 days of any changes to any filings.
14. **The Committee is satisfied that the current penalty regime prescribed by the Act is appropriate and does not recommend any changes in this regard.**
  - The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
15. **The Committee is of the view that the creation of a dual-disclosure i.e. a system that would require public office holders to report having been contacted by a lobbyist, would result in significantly increased compliance cost with little, if any, improvement in transparency; for that reason, the Committee does not recommend that the Act be amended to create a dual-disclosure system.**
  - The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
16. **The Committee does not recommend that the Act be amended in order to create a requirement that the names of individuals who have been lobbied be disclosed in the lobbyists registry.**
  - The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
17. **The Committee is satisfied that the current disclosure requirements for In-House (Organization) lobbyists is sufficient and, for that reason does not recommend any changes to the current disclosure requirements in this respect.**
  - The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
18. **Although the evidence presented to the Committee was mixed, it is possible that requiring lobbyists to disclose the amounts that they spend on lobbying campaigns could lead to greater transparency. For that reason, the Committee recommends that the proposal be made the subject of further study by the Department in consultation with stakeholders.**

- This is an issue that was raised and rejected by the Sub-Committee on Bill C-43 in 1995. Since that time, the Office of the Ethics Counsellor has reviewed the American legislation, which does require disclosure of lobbying expenses, but only in very broad bands. Moreover, all the American reporting regime requires is a good faith estimate without providing any audit or investigatory authority. As well, serious methodological problems, such as how to determine which expenses should be captured as a lobbying expenditure would be an issue.
  - For these reasons, the Government of Canada does not believe that expanding the disclosure requirements to include disclosure of lobbying expenses would enhance transparency.
- 19. The Committee is satisfied that the current disclosure requirements are satisfactory and, for that reason, does not recommend that the Act be amended in order to require that lobbyists disclose their fees.**
- The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
- 20. The Committee is of the view that the current disclosure requirements are appropriate and adequate and, for that reason, does not recommend that the Act be amended with respect to contingency fees.**
- The Government of Canada concurs with the Committee's recommendation.
- 21. The Committee does not view the issue of the tax deductibility of lobbying expenses to be within its current mandate and, for that reason, makes no recommendation on the issue.**
- The Government of Canada has no comment on this point.
- 22. The Committee is of the view that, while the requirement to disclose a client's identity could, in rare cases, cause some hardship to a litigant in a court proceeding, maintaining the integrity of the lobbyists registry is a more pressing policy objective and, on that basis, the Committee does not propose to amend the Act to create an exception based on solicitor-client privilege to the general registration requirements.**
- The Government of Canada concurs with this recommendation.
- 23. The Committee recommends that the role of private sector consultants in developing government policy is a subject that Parliament should study further, with a view to promoting transparency and ensuring that conflicts of interest do not arise.**
- This recommendation is addressed to Parliament.

**24. The Committee recommends that the Department of Industry, in consultation with other departments of government, devote the necessary resources and proceed with all deliberateness to design and implement an Internet architecture, to be incorporated into the Government of Canada Web site (<http://www.canada.gc.ca>) and to include the following features:**

- **An easy-to-find "Consultations" portal to take visitors to a central registry containing information about all consultations currently going on in the Government, with links to the departments undertaking the consultations;**
- **Additional links to background information prepared or received by Government in relation to a consultation;**
- **Links to persons or departments to contact and where to send submissions;**
- **Information about which consultations are open and which have just closed; and, for those that have closed and for which the Government has rendered a decision, a summary of who appeared, what was said, what the Government's decision was and the reasons for it;**
- **An e-mail notice subscription list to permit Canadians to be informed of upcoming consultations on subjects of concern to them;**
- **A "contact your MP" button to permit Canadians to copy their MPs with their submissions to Government.**
- The Government of Canada is continually exploring ways to improve public awareness of, and access to federal information, services and policies, including consultation processes. In this regard, new and innovative approaches and pilot projects are being implemented by departments on a regular basis. The use of portals to help organize information and facilitate interaction between Government and citizens is an approach currently used by the Office of the Chief Information Officer and Public Works and Government Services Canada, along with their partners, in reaching out and engaging citizens.

**25. As well, once the consultations portal is available, the Committee recommends that the Government undertake to advertise and publicize the site in order to make Canadians aware of its existence and of the opportunity to become involved in the public policy-making process.**

- Public awareness of an issue or services is the first step to participation, and the Government of Canada is committed to keeping Canadians informed using a variety of media and technologies based on operational capacity.