

Taxpayer-Funded Lobbyists Banned In Ontario Public Sector

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Legislation proposed today would, if passed, prohibit broader public sector organizations from using public funds to hire external lobbyists - ensuring that taxpayer money is used to deliver public services and programs instead of being wasted on outside lobbyists.

Under the proposed legislation, a lobbyist is an individual who is paid to lobby on behalf of a client. A lobbyist may be a government relations practitioner, lawyer or other professional who provides lobbying services to clients for a fee. However, it does not include someone who works "in-house" and performs government relations tasks as part of his/her job.

The proposed legislation would apply to classified agencies, such as the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, hydro entities, large broader public sector organizations such as hospitals, school boards and universities and every other publicly funded organization that receives more than \$10 million in government funding.

The restrictions outlined in the proposed legislation complement several initiatives the Ontario Public Service has in place.

LOBBYING:

The *Lobbyists Registration Act* requires lobbyists who wish to lobby public office holders to register with the Lobbyist Registrar, who is the Integrity Commissioner. All lobbyist registrations are available to the public on the Integrity Commissioner's web site (www.oico.on.ca). Failure to file required information in accordance with the Act, or making false or misleading statements, is an offence. Upon conviction, an individual is liable to a fine of up to \$25,000.

The government also has regulations in place under the *Public Service of Ontario Act* that restrict post-service lobbying activities by former public servants, including those employed in designated senior positions in a minister's office. For one year after leaving the public service, these former public servants are prohibited from lobbying any minister's office or ministry with which they worked in the 12 months prior to leaving the public service.

The government also has strong conflict of interest rules for vendors involved in lobbying activities. Firms that bid on government work in areas such as public relations, media relations and commissioned research services, must disclose the subject matter of their lobbyist activities over the past 12 months, which ministries they have lobbied, and on behalf of whom.

CONSULTING SERVICES:

Government of Ontario policies on the procurement of consulting services require all ministries and agencies to use competitive procurement processes when they acquire consulting services, and restricts the payment of hospitality, incidental and food expenses for consultants.

Since 2003, 1,519 positions in the Ontario Public Service have been approved for conversion to replace work previously done by consultants. This has resulted in ongoing annual savings of approximately \$64 million.

EXPENSES:

The proposed legislation increases transparency and accountability by setting clear rules for the public posting of expense claim information by designated broader public sector organizations. The proposed legislation requires Local Health Integration Networks and hospitals to post information about expense claims onto their public web sites.

The payment of expenses to consultants who work in the Ontario Public Service is restricted.

The public has access to [online listings of expenses](#) for the Premier, Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentary Assistants, political staff and senior management in the Ontario Public Service and a link to the expenses of the Chairs, appointees, Chief Executive Officers, Presidents and Vice-Presidents or equivalent levels (direct reports to CEOs) and the top 5 claimants at 22 of Ontario's largest agencies.

In November 2009, the [Public Sector Expenses Review Act](#), gave the Integrity Commissioner the authority to review expense claims of senior officials, appointees and the top 5 expense claimants in 22 of the province's largest agencies. This act requires these officials to abide by the same rigorous accountability and oversight provisions that apply to Cabinet Ministers and political staff who fall under the *Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act*.

The government revised the [Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive](#) to provide stronger and simpler expense rules for employees at ministries, employees and appointees at classified agencies, consultants and contractors to ministries or classified agencies, and designated persons in all organizations prescribed by regulation under the *Public Sector Expenses Review Act, 2009*.

These initiatives protect the interests of taxpayers and strengthen the government's accountability for its agencies by raising the standard of oversight and by requiring all agencies to adhere to the same rules.

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