



30 November 2021

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future
 c/o Committee Clerk
 3rd floor
 9870-107 street
 Edmonton, AB T5K 1E7

RE: Comprehensive Review of the *Lobbyist Act*

Dear Committee Clerk,

The Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta (IPPSA) represents Alberta's power supply. Our members own and operate gas, wind, coal, hydro and solar generation and compete to serve Alberta's power consumers. We are also registered lobbyists and appreciate the opportunity to provide our one recommendation for a change to the Lobbyist Act. We recommend that:

Complimentary registration and accommodation provided to public office holders who speak at conferences should no longer be construed as a gift.

By way of background, IPPSA has been hosting its annual conference in Banff for twenty seven years. It has grown to become one of the best attended annual electricity industry conferences in Canada. As a courtesy – and consistent with all professional conferences – we provide complimentary registration for all of our speakers. IPPSA has also always provided complimentary accommodation for all of our speakers as an added courtesy. This is not exclusive to public office holders. It is extended to any and all of our speakers. We pride ourselves on running a first-rate conference.

In 2019, on the eve of the provincial election, we invited representatives of all parties - the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, the New Democratic Party and the United Conservative Party – to address our members and to discuss their platforms. And they agreed. We reflexively extended them complimentary registrations and accommodations; as we did with all of our speakers. One MLA noted this would constitute a gift. Upon review, we then reached out to each party representative to rescind the offer of complimentary registration and accommodation. Each party representative then attended our event only for the time they were invited to speak. None were provided with complimentary registration or accommodation. IPPSA was ultimately fined by the Office of the Ethics Commissioner because we did not first disclose the offense of the offer; even though no gift was actually provided. Ever since, we have been careful not to offer complimentary registration or accommodation to public office holders.

We see three principal reasons to amend the legislation:

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- 1) As noted above, we do not believe that extending complimentary registration and complimentary accommodation to public office holders to speak to our conference is a gift, given that we provide this for all our speakers. It is simply what a first-rate conference does.
- 2) Asking public office holders to pay for accommodation and registration is an unnecessary cost placed on taxpayers or ratepayers when the conference host could and should offer it complimentary.
- 3) We are concerned that this language in legislation will become a deterrent to the participation of public office holders in future events. Not only could this restriction become a deterrent for elected officials, but also for agency officials. Conferences are important opportunities for MLAs and agency officials to explain their policies, rules and guidelines to their stakeholders. Not only does this occur formally via the program but also informally in discussions with delegates.

We thank you for considering our request to amend the legislation exempting complimentary registration and accommodation from consideration as a gift when it comes to public office holders attending a conference.

Should you have any questions about our recommendation, do not hesitate to contact me,

Sincerely,



Evan Bahry
Executive Director