

From: [IMPACT Consulting](#)
To: [ResourceStewardship Committee](#)
Subject: Lobbyists Act Review Submission
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Attachments: [IMPACT Consulting Lobbyists Act Review Submission.pdf](#)

To the Committee,

Attached is IMPACT Consulting's submission on the review of the Lobbyists Act. Thank you for the invitation to offer input.

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President, IMPACT Consulting

Lobbyists Act Review

A Submission by IMPACT Consulting
to
the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Thank you for inviting IMPACT Consulting to offer input during this review.

IMPACT is an Alberta-based consulting firm built on the values of hard work and integrity. We provide government relations, political, management, and strategic communications consulting services to a wide variety of Alberta businesses, associations, and individuals in the private, non-profit, and civil society sectors. Lobbying is a small but crucial part of what we do, and what we teach our clients to do on their own behalf.

IMPACT is a member of the [Government Relations Institute of Canada](#), and as such abides by ethical standards and a professional code of conduct that seeks to strengthen the practice of government relations across our country.

We are encouraged that this review process acknowledges lobbying activities as a legitimate, critical aspect of Alberta's government, which must be founded on the principle of transparency. We hope our comments will be of value.

Situational Overview

The act of lobbying government is essential to a functioning democracy. Lobbying contributes to good government. It, and any organized advocacy efforts by another name, are effective mechanisms by which the public (including industry, associations, non-profits, employers, and workers) can communicate its wishes to public office holders, and by which these office holders can glean the necessary information that informs the development of sound public policy.

Access to lobbying services is important for all government stakeholders, but most especially to those who fall outside of the traditional pool of policy influencers who often have government relations specialists on staff. Many small enterprises – be they private or non-profit – have neither the capacity nor the need to employ such specialists full time. When that need arises however, such groups are often unaware of how government makes decisions and who makes them, or how to navigate the paths by which impactful regulations or legislation is made. This is the common domain of the consultant lobbyist.

Considerations

Transparency

The public and public office holders must be able to determine who is engaged in lobbying, and to what end. This notion of transparency is identified in the legislation under review, but the language lacks specific reference to the degree of transparency – that is to say – the ease by which this information can be sought and understood via the online Lobbyist Registry.

In its current form, and in almost all functions, the online Lobbyist Registry is in need of updating, and we understand this work is underway. Its interface does not meet usability standards for accessible internet, and its search functions are generally poor. Such shortcomings present obstacles that could deter more active participation in, and use of, the registry.

IMPACT recommends the Committee consider making any or all of the following enhancements to the online Lobbyist Registry:

- more responsive design
- mobile app access for registered lobbyists
- improvements to registration process forms
- more up-to-date record keeping of lobbying activities
- improved database search

By comparison we note that the office of the Lobbyist Registrar maintains a well-deserved reputation for responsiveness and helpfulness to consultants who seek clarity and guidance on adhering to the Lobbyists Act.

Engagement & Consultation

Although the *Lobbyists Act* is reviewed every five years, an annual discussion with registered lobbyists would allow for ongoing interaction, and present opportunities for continued improvements to services such as the online registry.

IMPACT recommends the Committee consider encouraging the Lobbyist Registrar to host an annual stakeholder forum, to provide registrants and the Registrar a regular opportunity to engage, and keep apprised of developments in the industry.

Conclusion

IMPACT Consulting is an ethical small business. We abide by a professional code of conduct and we believe in the value of transparency, and the value of the *Lobbyists Act*. We support the efforts of this Committee. We are available to offer any further assistance should the Committee require.

IMPACT respectfully requests a further opportunity to offer feedback to this Committee following the release of the Lobbyists Registrar's report, and its submission to this Committee later this fall.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. We look forward to doing so again once the new registry is released and amendments to the *Lobbyists Act* are drafted.