

REPORT

Legislative Services

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: March 3, 2025

From: Hanieh Berg
Corporate Officer
File: 05.1035.10

Item #: 2025-74

Subject: Response to Notice of Motion: Lobbyist Registration

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the proposed resolution titled “Lobbyist Registration” included as Attachment 1 to the staff report titled “Response to Notice of Motion: Lobbyist Registration” from the Corporate Officer, dated March 3, 2025, be endorsed for submission to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association.

PURPOSE

To report back on a proposed resolution for submission to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association on lobbyist registration.

BACKGROUND

At the Regular Council meeting on September 9, 2024, Council adopted the following resolution:

THAT staff prepare a resolution for submission to the Lower Mainland Local Government Association requesting that the Province:

- i. amend the Lobbyist Registration Act to cover the City of New Westminster and other similar mid-to-large-sized cities and administer the regulation of lobbying in the City; or*
- ii. amend the Community Charter to allow the City to establish a lobbyist registry and give the City the legal authority to register lobbyists, create rules for lobbyists’ conduct in their interactions with elected officials and public servants, as well as the power to enforce those rules. In addition, the Province further empower the Provincial Registrar of Lobbyists to work with the City to share information so as to reduce duplication and costs for both orders of government.*

DISCUSSION

The [Lobbyist Transparency Act](#) came into force in October 2002 to provide for openness and transparency in lobbying.¹ When it was introduced in the Legislature, the Attorney General stated:

Bill 20 is another step in implementing this government's commitment to open, accessible and accountable government. The bill implements a throne speech commitment made at the outset of the current legislative session. Lobbying is a fact of political life, and lobbyists can have considerable effect on government policy. This bill will create a new act and a new process that will require lobbyists who are paid to lobby government to register and to have their actions and intentions open for public scrutiny.²

The Office of the Registrar of Lobbyist for BC (ORL) is an independent office of the legislature. The ORL's mandate is to oversee, monitor, and enforce the [Lobbyist Transparency Act](#) (the "Act"). The Act requires individuals or organizations engaged in lobbying activities to register with the ORL and file monthly reports detailing their lobby efforts, including who they contacted and the topics discussed; moreover, lobbyists are prohibited from giving gifts to public office holders. Pursuant to the Act, a [public office holder](#) is generally defined as an elected or appointed, officer or employee of the Government of BC. All registered lobbyist information, including monthly reports, are accessible to the public through an online registry. The Act enables the ORL to investigate potential violations and impose penalties to those that commit an offence.

Municipal Lobbyist Registration

In BC, there are currently only two municipalities that have established policies on lobbyist registration. In 2008, Surrey City Council approved the [Lobbyist Registration Policy](#); the Policy is limited in scope in that registration is only required for lobby activities related to land use matters, i.e., official community plan, rezoning, development permit applications. Kelowna's [Lobbyist Registry Policy](#) came into effect in September 2023 and requires that a lobbyist – an individual or organization that is attempting to influence a Council member regarding a development application or other matter within the City's jurisdiction – register with the City. In both instances, the municipalities have introduced policies as opposed to bylaws as a municipal council does not have the authority to regulate lobbyists at the local level.

The Union of BC Municipalities endorsed resolutions regarding municipal lobbyist registration at its [2017](#) and [2019](#) Annual Convention. The Government of BC has acknowledged the importance of the initiative as a registry would increase local government accountability and promote the principles of openness and transparency. However, a lobbying regulation system for municipal government has not been established as the Province's response has generally been that a clearer understanding of what local governments are hoping to achieve is needed.

¹ The statute was initially titled *Lobbyists Registration Act* but was changed to *Lobbyists Transparency Act* in May 2020.

² Hansard, Monday, August 20, 2001, Afternoon Sitting, Vol. 2, No. 21, p. 619.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

NEXT STEPS

Subject to Council-approval, the proposed resolution, included as Attachment 1, will be submitted to the LMLGA in accordance with their resolution submission deadline and criteria. Should the proposed resolution be endorsed, LMLGA will submit it to the Union of BC Municipalities for consideration at its annual convention scheduled for September 22nd to 26th.

CONCLUSION

This report responds to Council's referral to submit a resolution to the LMLGA regarding the need for legislative reform to establish a lobbying regulation system for municipal government, similar to the provincial mechanism under the *Lobbyist Transparency Act*.

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 – Proposed Resolution to LMLGA: Lobbyist Registration

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Hanieh Berg, Corporate Officer

This report was reviewed by:
Craig MacFarlane, City Solicitor

This report was approved by:
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer