

GUIDANCE FOR LOBBYISTS

Gifts & Benefits

As a lobbyist in Ontario, you should be cautious about offering a gift to or paying for a meal for a public office holder. Offering a gift or benefit may lead to the individual being placed in a real or potential conflict of interest, either at the time or in the future. If that happens, you could be found to be non-compliant with the *Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998*.

Examples of gifts that would be considered problematic include:

- ✘ tickets to sporting, cultural or speaking events
- ✘ meals
- ✘ flowers
- ✘ gift baskets

Members of Provincial Parliament and employees working in ministers' offices are provided with information and resources from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner about their obligations with regards to gifts, including the requirements to disclose certain gifts if they are accepted.

It is possible for a lobbyist to be found to have breached the conflict of interest rule even if the public office holder refuses the gift or benefit.

Lobbyists who knowingly put a public office holder in a position of real or potential conflict of interest are not in compliance with the *Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998*.^{*} A finding of non-compliance could result in a public report or a prohibition from lobbying in Ontario for up to two years. It could also result in being found guilty of an offence and fined up to \$25,000.

^{*}The conflict of interest provision is in section 3.4 of the *Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998*.

Contact the OIC for Advice

The OIC can advise you on the appropriateness of offering specific gifts or benefits as well as other issues related to conflict of interest. If your client or your organization is planning an event at Queen's Park, you should contact the OIC to seek advice.

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