



# Annual Report

Office of the Ethics  
Commissioner of Alberta

April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016



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## COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



I am pleased to submit the annual report for the Office of the Ethics Commissioner for 2015-16. It is my third report since I became Ethics Commissioner. During the reporting period the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was mandated to review the Conflicts of Interest Act. The review could also impact parts of the Public Service Act and the codes of conduct for Deputy Ministers and Political Staff. Our office made a presentation to the Committee suggesting 31 important changes.

In March of 2016, we embarked on a project to replace our existing badly outdated lobbyists' registry. We anticipate the new registry will be online in November of 2016.

We are looking forward to the upcoming review of the *Lobbyists Act* by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. We will be making a presentation asking for significant changes that will be a vast improvement and will make Alberta a leader in this area.

Our workload increased considerably this year. We now have over 220 MLAs, Designated Office Holders and Political Staff providing financial disclosure and meeting annually with us. This number is an increase from 129 in the past. This past year 16 MLAs, 2 Designated Office Holders and 13 Political Staff failed to comply with the deadline for filing their financial disclosure. Each was sent a letter imposing an administrative penalty if the disclosure was not filed within a fixed period of time. All complied once the letter was received and no penalties were incurred.

Requests for advice increased from 320 queries to 540. We try to give advice whenever possible within 24 hours. Requests for information increased to 30 requests from 23.

Requests for an investigation increased to 80 from 26. Most requests were for matters outside the jurisdiction given to me in the *Conflicts of Interest Act*. However, one investigation was carried out. The investigation involved Premier Notley and rules regarding political fundraising events.

We look forward to the upcoming review of the Lobbyists Act by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and the completion of the work of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee on the *Conflicts of Interest Act*.

Marguerite Trussler, Q.C.  
Ethics Commissioner of Alberta

## LOBBYIST REGISTRAR MESSAGE



In April of 2016 I completed my first year as the Lobbyist Registrar and General Counsel at the Office of the Ethics Commissioner. I've had the opportunity to speak with many lobbyists over the phone and by email this past year, and it has been a pleasure to get to know the lobbying community as I've settled into my role.

This past year we continued to receive numerous phone and email requests for information on filing requirements under the *Lobbyists Act*, inquiries relating to interpretation of the Act and requests for technical assistance with the registry. We always welcome the opportunity to provide assistance and we do our best to respond to all inquiries promptly.

We know that many registry users have continued to experience technical issues with our registry system, which was first implemented in 2009. In December of 2015, we posted a Request for Proposals, and in March of 2016, selected FCI Accelerated Solutions Inc. as the successful vendor to develop our new registry. We welcome everyone to visit the new website and registry at [www.albertalobbyistregistry.ca](http://www.albertalobbyistregistry.ca) when it goes live on October 31, 2016.

I wish to thank our dedicated staff for their assistance this past year, and am also excited to welcome a new member to our team, Effi Kaoukis, as the Executive Assistant to the Lobbyist Registrar. We look forward to another busy year ahead as the new Lobbyist Registry goes live and the legislative review of the *Lobbyists Act* progresses.

Lana S. Robins  
Lobbyist Registrar and General Counsel

## MANDATE

The *Conflicts of Interest Act* was passed in 1991, Chapter C.22.1 (now Revised Statutes of Alberta, Chapter C-23), and created the Office of the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta. The Office is also responsible for the administration of the *Lobbyists Act*, Statutes of Alberta 2007, Chapter L-20.5 (“*Lobbyists Act*”). The Ethics Commissioner is an Officer of the Legislature and is appointed by Order-in-Council following passage of a motion in the Legislative Assembly approving the appointment.

The Ethics Commissioner reports to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker and files annual reports, and investigation reports with the Speaker for tabling in the Legislature. The Ethics Commissioner presents budgetary estimates through the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. The Legislative Assembly approves the budget for the Office of the Ethics Commissioner.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ACT

The preamble of the *Conflicts of Interest Act* describes its basic principles as follows:

- Ethical conduct of elected officials is expected in democracies;
- Members of the Legislative Assembly serve Albertans most effectively if they come from a broad spectrum of occupations and continue to participate actively in the community;
- Members of the Legislative Assembly are expected to perform their duties of office and arrange their private affairs in a manner which promotes public confidence and trust in the integrity of each Member, maintains the Assembly’s dignity and justifies the respect in which society holds the Assembly and its Members;
- Members of the Legislative Assembly, in reconciling their duties of office and their private interests, are expected to act with integrity and impartiality; and
- Ministers and their staff must avoid conduct that violates public trust or creates an appearance of impropriety.

Through the *Conflicts of Interest Act*, the Office of the Ethics Commissioner:

- Promotes an understanding of Member, Designated Office Holder and Political Staff obligations under the *Act*;
- Receives financial disclosure statements from all 87 MLAs, all Designated Office Holders as defined in the Public Service Act, and senior Political Staff in the Premier’s and Ministers’ offices;
- Provides advice to MLAs and former Members under the *Act*, either on an individual basis or generally to all or groups of MLAs (including former Members) and to current or former Political Staff and Designated Office Holders;
- Provides advice to individuals governed by post-employment restrictions; and
- Investigates alleged breaches of the *Conflicts of Interest Act* by a Member, Designated Office Holder or Political Staff Member.

Upon receiving an investigation report from the Office of the Ethics Commissioner, the Speaker is required to release the report publicly. If the Legislature is in session, the report is tabled in the Legislature. If the Legislature is not in session, the report is filed as an intersessional tabling. If the Ethics Commissioner recommends a sanction in an investigation report, the Legislative Assembly debates and votes on the investigation report within 15 days after the report is tabled, or at such other time determined by a resolution of the Legislative Assembly.

Under section 29 of the *Conflicts of Interest Act*, the Legislative Assembly may accept or reject the findings of the Office of the Ethics Commissioner or substitute its own findings. If the Legislative Assembly determines there is a breach, it may impose the sanction recommended by the Ethics Commissioner, any other sanction referred to in section 27(2) which it considers appropriate, or the Legislative Assembly may refrain from imposing a sanction. The Legislative Assembly has final authority about disciplinary matters relating to its Members.

## LOBBYISTS ACT

The *Lobbyists Act* is intended to enhance the integrity and accountability of government by fostering openness and transparency about who is influencing decisions made by public office holders. The *Lobbyists Act* establishes two categories of lobbyists: consultant lobbyists and organization lobbyists. The *Lobbyists Act* prohibits a person from lobbying a government department and providing paid advice to another government department on the same subject matter at the same time, unless an exemption is granted.

The *Lobbyists Act* preamble describes its basic principles:

- Free and open access to government is an important matter of public interest;
- Lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity;
- The public and public office holders should know who is engaged in lobbying activities;
- A registration system of paid lobbyists should not impede free and open access to government; and
- The public and public office holders should know who is contracting with the Government of Alberta and provincial entities.

The requirement to register as a lobbyist only comes into effect once a lobbyist performs, or is required to perform, over 100 hours of lobbying annually, either individually or with others in their organization. However, some lobbyists register before they reach the threshold. The Office of the Ethics Commissioner maintains a web-based Lobbyist Registry system and database. It is searchable by the general public. The Registry provides openness and transparency by:

- Recording the identities and activities of people paid to influence decisions made by public office holders;
- Recording the identities of organizations and clients who pay lobbyists to influence the activities of public office holders on their behalf;
- Allowing lobbyists to register, update, renew and terminate their own registrations on the system; and
- Allowing public scrutiny.

The registry allows access 24 hours per day, seven days per week, for both the public and lobbyists.

The Ethics Commissioner may authorize any individual in the Office of the Ethics Commissioner to act as Registrar and to perform any of the powers, duties or functions of the Registrar under the *Lobbyists Act*. The Ethics Commissioner delegated the administrative and enforcement responsibilities of the Registrar to Lana Robins who is also the General Counsel to the Ethics Commissioner.

Under the *Lobbyists Act*, certain powers and responsibilities are reserved for the Ethics Commissioner and cannot be delegated, including:

- Exemptions from the contracting prohibition (i.e. allowing a person to provide paid advice to government while at the same time lobbying the government), with or without conditions;
- Issuing Advisory Opinions and Interpretation Bulletins; and
- Banning serious offenders from lobbying.

The Ethics Commissioner reports to the Legislative Assembly through the Speaker on investigations under the *Lobbyists Act*. If the House is sitting, the report is tabled. If the House is not sitting, the report is distributed to MLAs after which the Ethics Commissioner may make the report public. A report provided when the House is not sitting is tabled when the House next sits.

## DISCLOSURE PROCESS

This year, all MLAs, Designated Office Holders, and Political Staff complied with their obligation to file disclosure statements, although several were late in filing and had to be reminded they were late and would be subject to an administrative penalty if the disclosure was not filed within a set period of time.

Disclosure statements include information about:

- The Member, Designated Office Holder, or Political Staff, their spouse or adult interdependent partner and minor children. It requires disclosing all assets, liabilities and financial interests of any private corporation in their control;
- Any legal proceedings brought against them;
- Taxes owing; and
- Ownership of publicly-traded securities.

The Office of the Ethics Commissioner received private disclosures from 87 Members and met with each Member personally to discuss their disclosure. Previously, MLA public disclosure statements were released through the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. However, as a result of the changes to the *Conflicts of Interest Act* in December 2014, public disclosure statements are now posted on the Office of the Ethics Commissioner website shortly after the Member's meeting with the Ethics Commissioner.

Designated Office Holders are required to submit disclosure statements under the *Public Service Act*. Disclosure meetings were conducted with all Designated Office Holders. When reviewing disclosures by Designated Office Holders of agencies, boards and commissions, compliance with their internal conflict of interest policies, where possible or appropriate, is considered. There are no public disclosure statements for Designated Office Holders.

Certain senior Political Staff, Chiefs of Staff, Press Secretaries and Ministerial Assistants are also required to provide financial disclosure to the Office of the Ethics Commissioner as a result of the changes to the scope of the Act in December 2014. There are no public disclosure statements for Political Staff.

*Percentage of individuals who submitted all required disclosure information by the deadline*

<b>Category of Filer:</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
<b>Members of the Legislative Assembly (87 MLAs)</b>	82%
<b>Senior Officials (fluctuated – approx. 45)</b>	96%
<b>Political Staff (fluctuated – approx. 95)</b>	87%

## REQUESTS FOR ADVICE

If Members, Designated Office Holders or Political Staff seek and follow advice from the Ethics Commissioner, they are protected from investigations under the *Conflicts of Interest Act*, or a prosecution for a breach of the *Conflicts of Interest Act*. Advice is given in writing.

A confidential and searchable database of all requests and both verbal and written advice is maintained by the Office of the Ethics Commissioner for future reference to ensure consistent responses under similar circumstances to similar requests for advice. This database is only accessible by staff working in the Office of the Ethics Commissioner.

Some facts pertaining to requests for advice are:

- The number of requests from 2014/15 to 2015/16 increased 68%.
- Requests are usually handled within 24 hours.
- 69% of advice requests pertain to either gifts or post-employment.



*Total Requests for Advice under Conflicts of Interest Act*



*Breakdown of Requests for Advice*

Types of Advice	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Gifts	25	58	80	110	267
Post-Employment	38	37	36	95	105
Outside Activities	23	27	26	19	17
Investments	19	17	22	13	24
Family	5	15	10	18	12
Constituency Issues	5	12	20	8	13
Codes of Conduct	14	12	3	5	26
Contracts with the Crown	4	9	10	9	10
Taking Part in Decisions	1	9	4	6	6
Conflicts of Interest/Other	n/a	n/a	9	27	57
Reviewing SO Appointments	n/a	n/a	14	10	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>540</b>

### *Gifts*

Questions are raised about accepting tickets to sporting events, invitations to fundraisers, invitations to conferences and non-commercial flights. Members are required to track all gifts over \$100, including event tickets, to ensure they have accurate records for yearly disclosure and are mindful of both the value of cumulative gifts they receive from one source in a reporting year and any connection between a source and the Member's public responsibilities.

### *Post-Employment*

Post-employment questions arise from departing Ministers, Designated Office Holders and Political Staff.

### *Outside Activities*

Questions regarding outside activities almost exclusively deal with volunteer board activities in community organizations and clarification on external business activities.

### *Investments*

Investment requests relate to blind trusts and personal investments of the individual or their family. Where potential conflicts existed, appropriate steps were taken by the parties to remove themselves from the situation prior to a conflict arising.

### *Family*

Questions involving family members involve either the employment or activities of a spouse or child.

### *Constituency Issues*

Questions relate to assisting constituents, using the constituency allowance for social obligations within the constituency. Where questions about the Member's constituency allowance fall more within the mandate of the Office of the Speaker, the Member is referred to Legislative Assembly Office.

### *Codes of Conduct*

Several agencies, boards and commissions, seek informal confidential advice on conflict of interest matters relating to their agency's code of conduct.

### *Contracts*

Contract questions are often raised by new individuals about their dealings with Alberta Treasury Branch Financial or other Crown contracts.

### *Taking Part in Decisions*

Generally, individuals consider their personal holdings and those of close family members and ask whether it is appropriate to participate in a decision before the Legislative Assembly or one of its committees, or before Executive Council or one of its committees. The Office of the Ethics Commissioner advises whether a private interest is involved or whether the matter is a general application which affects the Member only as a broad class of the public, thereby allowing the Member to participate and vote.

### *Conflicts of Interest/Other*

This is a new general category where requests for advice do not fall within the other categories but do fall within the general scope of the Conflicts of Interest Act.

*Reviewing Senior Official Appointments and Vetting of Potential Board Member Appointments*

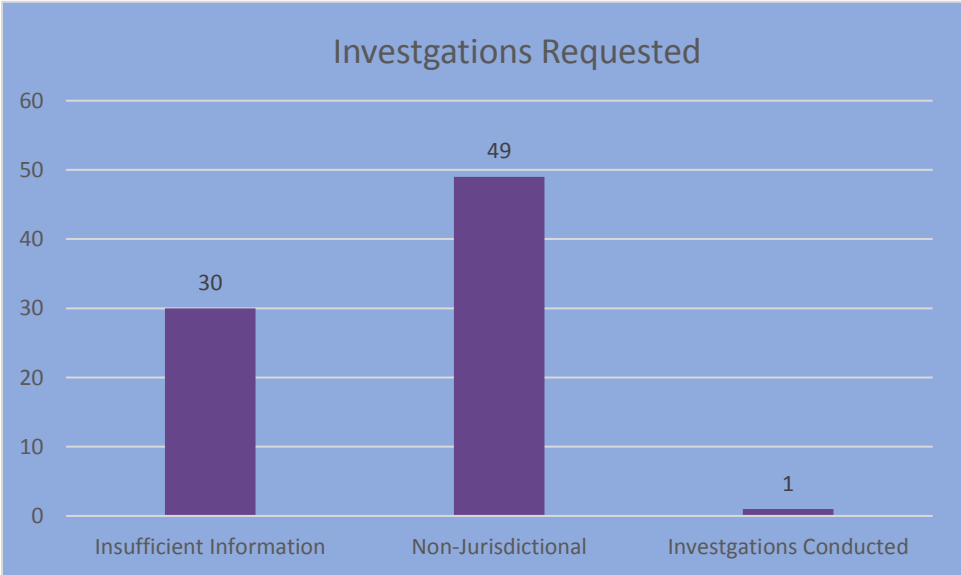
Sometimes, as part of the screening and hiring process, potential conflicts of interest issues arise with certain candidates for certain senior government or board positions. In these cases, or in cases where it is prudent to ensure there are no underlying conflict of interest issues, the Office of the Ethics Commissioner may review selected candidate’s backgrounds and investment holdings to ensure there are no issues and provide related advice.

## REQUESTS FOR INVESTIGATIONS

Investigation requests, once received, are considered and then acted upon accordingly. If sufficient evidence and grounds are provided, and the issue is within the jurisdiction of the Office of the Ethics Commissioner, an investigation is conducted. If the request is vague or frivolous or contains overly broad allegations, and further relevant information is not provided upon request, the request is categorized as “insufficient information”. If sufficient information is provided, but the request is determined to pertain to someone other than an MLA, Designated Office Holder or Political Staffer, or is a complaint that does not fall within the scope of the Conflicts of interest Act, it is classified as “non-jurisdictional”.

The majority of requests for investigation involved matters that are outside the jurisdiction of the office.

Request for Investigations by Category (Total: 80)



Below is a summary of the investigation completed in 2015/16 pertaining to Premier Rachel Notley. The full investigation report that was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on the matter can be found at: <http://www.ethicscommissioner.ab.ca/publications/investigation-reports/commissioner-trussler/>

### **Investigation concerning Premier Rachel Notley**

The Office of the Ethics Commissioner investigated whether Premier Notley contravened sections 2 and 3 of the *Conflicts of Interest Act* in connection with her involvement in two political fundraising events. The first event was an Alberta New Democratic Party (NDP) fundraiser for which tickets were priced at \$1,000 per plate for a dinner with the Premier and NDP MLAs. Tickets to the dinner were only to be offered to persons who had already purchased tickets to a larger Alberta NDP fundraising event where tickets were priced at \$250. The second fundraiser was an Ontario NDP fundraiser for which tickets were sold to twenty corporate attendees for \$9,975 each to attend a dinner with the Ontario NDP and Premier Notley, who was attending as a special guest of the Ontario NDP.

The Commissioner found that the *Conflicts of Interest Act* is narrow in scope as it deals only with the private financial interests of Members. As the Act does not deal with public perception of what is right or wrong, the Commissioner is restricted to determining whether the Premier furthered a private interest pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of the *Act*.

With regard to the Alberta NDP fundraiser, the Commissioner found that the complaint of the Premier selling access was not appropriate. Political fundraising is a legal activity. Such fundraising must be in compliance with the restrictions set out in the *Elections Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act*, which places limits on who can donate to parties as well as the amount donated. There is nothing in Alberta legislation to restrict such events. If there is to be any change to limits on fundraising or how such events are conducted, it must be made by the elected representatives of the Alberta Legislature. However, the perception that only a chosen few are being invited is best avoided. As the Premier did not personally financially benefit from the event, she did not further a private interest and was therefore not in breach of the *Act*.

For the Ontario NDP fundraiser, the Commissioner found that none of the funds raised were paid to the Alberta NDP; all funds went to the Ontario NDP. The Premier was not paid a fee for attending and received no benefit except to have her travel and hotel expenses paid. The Premier did not receive a personal financial benefit and was not in breach of the *Act* by attending.

## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

The Office of the Ethics Commissioner received 30 requests for information this year. The majority of requests were from callers seeking clarification about the Office of the Ethics Commissioner's mandate and the relevant legislation. Information requested concerned employment standards, professional standards and conduct, MLA compensation, post-employment, blind trusts, gift acceptance, public disclosure, conduct in non-profit organizations and legislation surrounding investigations. Callers who could not be assisted were referred to the appropriate office that could answer the inquiry.

## COMPARATIVE SUMMARY STATISTICS

Total Requests Received for:	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Advice	147	204	242	320	540
Investigations	20	11	9	26	79
Information	95	208	140	23	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>649</b>

## BUDGET AND FISCAL UPDATE

	2013/14 Budget	2013/14 Actual	2014/15 Budget	2014/15 Actual	2015/16 Budget	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 Budget	2016/17 Forecast
Salaries	\$638,000	\$649,124	\$638,000	\$642,539	\$703,000	\$619,149	\$697,000	\$714,000
Supplies and Expenses	\$329,000	\$297,464	\$335,000	\$253,408	\$450,500	\$157,637	\$433,000	\$353,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$967,000</b>	<b>\$946,588</b>	<b>\$973,000</b>	<b>\$895,947</b>	<b>\$1,153,500</b>	<b>\$776,786</b>	<b>\$1,130,000</b>	<b>\$1,067,000</b>
<b>Surplus or (Deficit)</b>		<b>\$20,412</b>		<b>\$77,053</b>		<b>\$376,214</b>		<b>\$63,000</b>

Last year, the Office of the Ethics Commissioner came in under budget by \$376,214 (approximately 32%). This figure is misleading as \$200,000 was earmarked in the budget year for the development of the new Lobbyist Registry. Due to a change of strategy for procurement, the bulk of the costs for the Lobbyist Registry, which were to be spent in 2015-2016, will now be spent in 2016-2017. A more accurate surplus figure would be \$176,786, which still means the Office of the Ethics Commissioner came in 19% under budget. Last year, the Office of the Ethics Commissioner came in 8% (\$85,376) under budget. The office continually strives to ensure the best and most prudent expenditure of public funds and prefers to find internal efficiencies and savings wherever possible and reasonable.

Full copies of the 2014-2015 audited financial statements are located on the Office of the Ethics Commissioner website: <http://www.ethicscommissioner.ab.ca/publications/annual-reports/>.

## EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

In 2015-16, the Office of the Ethics Commissioner attended the annual Canadian Conflicts of Interest Network Conference in Quebec City, and the Lobbyist Registrars Conference in Winnipeg. Participating in annual conferences is very beneficial to further the work of the office. Conferences provide the Office of the Ethics Commissioner the opportunity to exchange information with peers on issues of common interest and review legislative and regulatory differences and trends.

## PUBLICATIONS

A routine review of brochures and guides is undertaken each year to ensure they are current. Educational information is reviewed to ensure it is as user-friendly as possible. All brochures were reviewed following the amendments made to the *Conflicts of Interest Act*, and *Public Service Act*, in December of 2014.

The following brochures are available at [www.ethicscommissioner.ab.ca](http://www.ethicscommissioner.ab.ca)

- Conflicts of Interest
- Background and Role
- Quick Guide to Determining a “Private Interest”
- Disclosure Statements
- Gift Acceptance and Disclosure
- Investigations / Inquiries
- Members of Executive Council
- Post-employment regulation
- Post-employment Obligations for Former Political Staff Members
- Candidates Seeking Federal Election
- Officers of the Legislature
- Ethics (school presentation)
- Candidates Seeking Election Provincial Election

Under the *Lobbyists Act*:

- Guideline to Completing Your Registration Form
- Lobbyists Act Backgrounder
- Am I a Lobbyist?
- Are You a Lobbyist?
- What is Lobbying?
- Contracting Prohibitions

# LOBBYISTS ACT AND REGISTRY UPDATE

Lana Robins assumed the role of Lobbyist Registrar on April 7, 2015.

## *REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION*

The past year has seen the Registrar continue to review registrations submitted by lobbyists for posting to the Registry, respond to inquiries and address technical issues in a timely and effective manner. The Lobbyist Registrar continued to receive requests for information and advice from consultant and organization lobbyists and other interested parties about the obligations and requirements under the *Act*. Consistent with the trend from previous years, requests have stayed approximately the same from previous years. Communications have concerned:

- New account requests;
- Profile change requests;
- Procedural issues with regard to notices of change;
- Advice with regard to the requirement to register;
- General advice with regard to interpretation of the *Act*;
- Terminating registrations of lobbying activities which were concluded;
- Advice and assistance on completing a new registration;
- Advice and assistance on completing semi-annual renewals;
- Requests from the Lobbyist Registrar for additional information;
- Communication with users regarding account status; and
- Support for technical issues.

Communications about the *Act* and Registry were conducted via email and by phone, and were consistently effected in a timely manner.

## *OUTREACH*

In March of 2016 the Lobbyist Registrar was requested to provide a presentation regarding the requirements of the *Lobbyists Act* to the Canadian Society of Association Executives, which was provided in June and well received by attendees. As the *Lobbyists Act* has been in force since 2009, the majority of those affected by the *Lobbyists Act* are aware of it and its requirements and after reaching a pinnacle in 2010, there has been a slow decline in requests for presentations.

## *LEGISLATIVE REVIEW*

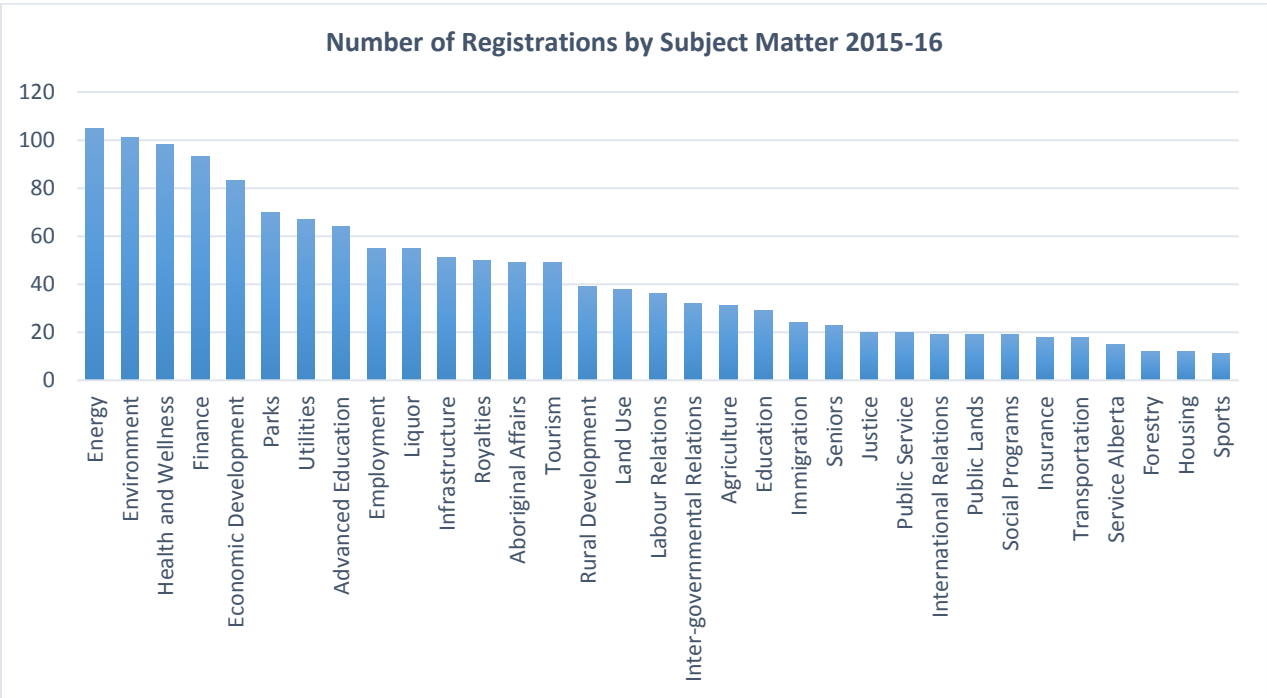
On June 2, 2016 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship was deemed as a special committee for the purpose of conducting a review of *Lobbyists Act*. The committee is required to submit to the Legislative Assembly, within one year of beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the Committee. The Office of the Ethics Commissioner is involved in this review process, and we will be making recommendations to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship Committee with regard to amendments to the *Act*. For more information please go to [www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/resourcestewardship/](http://www.assembly.ab.ca/committees/resourcestewardship/).

STATISTICAL YEAR IN REVIEW

Registered Users as of March 31, 2016

	Consultant Lobbyists	Organization Lobbyists	Total
Registered Users	217	353	570

Registrations by Subject Matter for period from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016



\*Subject matters with less than 10 registrations not shown

Registrations filed from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016

	Initial Returns	Notices of Change	Notices of Termination	Semi-annual Renewals
Consultant Lobbyists	307	248	121	N/A
Organization Lobbyists	85	266	9	259

Registry Website Activity from April 1, 2015 – March 31, 2016

	2014/15 Average/Month	2015/16 Average/Month
Unique Visitors	1059	1682
Number of Visits	2605	3290
Pages Viewed	24,471	42,188
Hits	52,943	98,995



## INFORMATION ON FILING REGISTRATIONS

As part of the continuing improvement of the Lobbyist registry, registrations are being reviewed to ensure that enough detail has been provided with regard to the particulars of lobbying. In particular, for every subject matter listed, a sentence or two describing the particulars of the lobbying activity clearly relating to that subject matter is now required. One or two words to describe a general area of interests is not detailed enough, and does not provide enough particulars as to what the lobbying is specifically about. If a lobbyist has not provided enough information for their lobbying particulars, the Lobbyist Registrar will contact the lobbyist and require them to correct and re-submit the registration.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

*Section 15* of the *Lobbyists Act* sets out when the Registrar shall conduct an investigation and when the Registrar can exercise discretion to decline an investigation. There were no requests for an investigation under the *Lobbyists Act* received from April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

Working with lobbyists to assist them in understanding their obligations under the *Act* and the functions and processes of the Registry are key elements in a proactive approach to achieving compliance with the *Act* and reducing the amount of enforcement required. However, as the *Lobbyists Act* was enacted in 2009, and is no longer new legislation, lobbyists should now be familiar with the legislation and their obligations under the *Act*. In future, a greater emphasis will be placed on enforcement of the provisions of the *Lobbyists Act*, including the designated time periods to complete required filings and the requirement to register.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The Alberta Lobbyist Registry is an online registry system that has been active since September 28, 2009. The system is based on Lotus Notes technology and is in need of update to reduce the number of technical issues encountered. In December of 2015 a Request for Proposals was posted to select a vendor to develop the new registry. In March of 2016 a Vendor was selected and the new lobbyist's website and registry went live on October 31, 2016. All currently registered lobbyists will be required to register in the new registry on a staggered basis. The new registry will improve ease of use of the registry for all users, particularly lobbyists.

The Office of the Ethics Commissioner is looking forward to participating in the review of the *Lobbyists Act*, which has now commenced.