Nature of the Information to be Disclosed

While your Committee heard a great deal of discussion on what the proper definition of lobbying should be and who should be considered to be a lobbyist, the area where there was the widest amount of disagreement amongst witnesses was on the subject of the amount of information which should be disclosed if a system of registration was to be adopted.

Some argued that initially a registration system should only require the name of the lobbyist or lobbying firm. They contend that when we become more familiar with the operation of the system it may be desirable to include the names of clients, the subject-matter of the lobbying activity and the amount of money both received and disbursed by the lobbyist with respect to the registered lobbying activity. A great number of lobbyist witnesses stated their opposition to any form of financial disclosure while some indicated that they would consider divulging a scale of fees.

We ascertained that if financial disclosure is required it is important to be specific as to the time when disclosure is to begin, the nature of the information requested and the items to which it is attributable.

At the other end of the spectrum were witnesses, mostly with the experience of lobbying in the United States who felt that all matters concerning lobbying activity should be disclosed. Full disclosure was not regarded as either intrusive or difficult to accomplish provided simple forms were made available for the use of lobbyists and their employers. Disclosure was also not regarded as being in conflict with confidentiality in dealings between a lobbyist and a client. This is because public information or public policy is the subject matter upon which lobbying is taking place and it is in the public interest that these matters not be subject to confidentiality.

No registration system should require any information to be made public concerning what a client tells a lobbyist and therefore confidentiality is maintained in this important area.