

*Government Orders*

Second, under the existing legislation lobbyists need not disclose to whom they will be talking. Under the new bill they will have to disclose what departments and governmental agencies they will contact.

Third, under the existing law lobbyists need not disclose how they intend to lobby. Under the new bill they will.

Fourth, under the existing law lobbyists who are employed by organizations such as associations and by companies need only provide their name and business address. Under the new law these in-house lobbyists would disclose the broad subject matter of the lobbying and detailed subject matter of their lobbying efforts, including the name of the legislative proposal, bill or resolution, policy, regulation, grant, contribution or other financial benefit and they would register the name of the departments or governmental agencies to be contacted.

[Translation]

The government has decided to maintain the distinction between consultant lobbyists and in-house lobbyists who work either for an organization or a corporation. We believe there is a major difference between these two types of lobbyists, both in terms of the nature of their activities and their status.

Consultant lobbyists work somewhat independently under contract on behalf of a client. Unless they file detailed returns on the nature of their client's interests, it is impossible to say that their activities are transparent.

[English]

Organization lobbyists, on the other hand, work for associations that are formed by their members to pursue their common objectives. The objectives of the associations are generally well publicized and in a similar way corporate lobbyists clearly and legitimately pursue their own company's interests. Most important, all lobbyists will be required to disclose both more information and information that is more meaningful than is now the case.

This legislation has gone a great distance to shed more light on the activities of all lobbyists so that Canadians can assure themselves the system is not being abused.

In this regard several proposed changes have been introduced to improve the administration and enforcement of the provisions of the act. The limitation period for laying charges in summary proceedings will be increased from the current six month period to two years to strengthen the RCMP's ability to enforce the act.

[Translation]

At the registrar's request, lobbyists will be required to clarify the information contained in the returns that they have filed. Lobbyists will also be allowed to file their returns electronically to avoid an unnecessary paper trail and to accelerate the disclosure process.

[English]

The first of our two principles, I would remind the House, is that all Canadians have a right to approach their government. They do not require lobbyists.

[Translation]

I hope that in the coming weeks, we will all benefit from the advice and counsel of Canadians who will be asked to present their views on this bill to the committee.

[English]

I look forward to hearing new ideas that the committee may propose and we are willing to amend this bill if it means providing a piece of legislation that will do more to earn the trust and confidence of Canadians in the decision making process.

• (1015)

[Translation]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-43 comes within the comprehensive plan unveiled yesterday morning to restore the trust of the public in their institutions.

The bill focuses on lobbyists and thus, does not address issues pertaining to the code of conduct governing ministers and senior officials as well as parliamentarians. In that regard however, the Prime Minister indicated yesterday in his presentation that these issues will be dealt with in a subsequent bill.

The main elements of the bill are the following: first, lobbyists are required to disclose the specific subject-matter of their activities, the name of the government departments or institutions they will be lobbying, the communication techniques that will be used and, in certain cases, information about the true beneficiary of the lobbying.

Second, consultant lobbyists, that is to say those who work for lobbying firms, commonly referred to as professional lobbyists, are required to report this information for each new undertaking or contract, while in-house corporate and organizational lobbyists, those who work for large companies or interest groups, are required to report annually. Both tiers of lobbyists are required to report changes in this information within thirty days.

Third, the enactment allows lobbyists to file their returns electronically, sets the limitation period for enforcement proceedings at two years and provides for a Parliamentary review of the act in four years. The prescription period was extended to two years—from six months—with respect to proceedings before the counsellor, but this will be discussed later.

Finally, the enactment provides for the designation of an ethics counsellor who establishes a lobbyists' code of conduct and investigates alleged breaches of it.