

Supply

I asked a question of our friend from Nickel Belt. I noted his remarks about Gothic residence and the name Earncliffe. I am not going to ask him what that means because I am not sure anyone could define it, other than it sounds like it comes from a grand place with a pointed ceiling. I wonder if the member could perhaps give us his opinion on certain aspects of the lobbyist legislation because it is that sector which after all he has referred to.

• (1900)

I am one of those who believe that contingency fees should be disallowed. In Ontario lawyers cannot charge contingency fees. My learned colleague from Kingston and the Islands is here immediately beside me. He knows that that is the case, although perhaps that will change shortly. In any case, I think that these fees should be banned.

I also think that the fees and disbursements of lobbyists as well as the exact subject matter should be made public. It should be the exact subject matter because if someone is lobbying for a helicopter, it is important for the competing interest to know that they are not lobbying about snow removal contracts or something. The competing interest has a right to know that someone is trying to convince the government to buy a helicopter or to buy some other product or to repeal Bill C-91 or to enact Bill C-91, whatever.

It is important that we have the precise information and in addition that we know how much is spent in the process of achieving that goal.

I want to ask our colleague if he would be so kind as to react to those suggestions. I think I know already how he feels about them, but I would like him to put it on the record for us.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. I have no problem, first of all, with the specificity of the issue. That is absolutely paramount. It is not enough to know that the lobbyist was up here talking about the environment and not knowing what the specific item is and that it had to do with meeting the minister. I think it is important to know what the specific issue is. We recommended that.

Second, we also recommended that there be no contingency fees allowed. I agree with my colleague there should be no contingency fees whatsoever. I think

it offers the greatest enticement to walk the line very closely.

Third, the hon. member asked about disbursements and fees. That is absolutely essential. There is no little cushy deal like one of the witnesses said today. They do not want to disperse that. They do not want to put that on the record. They do not want to disclose it because they do not want their competitors to know what it is they are going after or whatever. I think that is the whole purpose of the lobbyist registry, so that there is a transparency that is not just apparent but is in fact real.

I may also say to my colleague, and I will share it with him, that the lobbyist registry ought to be taken out from under the auspices of a minister of the Crown and put under someone who has reporting abilities to the House, possibly the Chief Elector Officer, the Auditor General or the Clerk of the House of Commons. That I think is also important. It must not be seen to be under the control of a politically elected minister of the Crown.

There were other issues. I think, and I am sure my colleague agrees, that the most important one is to have a rule that forbids close relationships in terms of the political parties and at the same time coming back and lobbying the government. I think we have that for public servants. They have to be out of the Public Service for a period of time before they can actually come back and lobby their departments.

I think we should make it off-side for any person who is coming to see public officer holders on the Hill to hold any active political office. If we are talking about creating an environment where nothing less than the highest standards are expected, then in fact we can go down that path and it does not matter.

I outlined some of the family connections that are going on here. I did the family business. I think Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman* is the best model for this lobby activity right now.

In *Death of a Salesman*, Willy keeps talking about how great a salesman he is. When his son asks him how he does it, Willy says he has connections. That is the motto of the lobbyists: I have connections. Hire me and I will get you the fishing licence, I will get you the airbus sale, I will get you whatever, whatever, whatever.

Mr. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell): Madam Speaker, I will just ask one last question of our colleague. On the last point that he made about whether or not lobbyists should have a legal right to be involved in