

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, June 17, 1994

The House met at 10 a.m.

---

Prayers

---

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION ACT

—Minister of Industry—Second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Industry of Bill C-43, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act and to make related amendments to other acts.

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Industry):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Bill C-43, an act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act and to make related amendments to other acts be referred forthwith to the Standing Committee on Industry.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the motion today is very simple and straightforward. The government wants to provide members of this House with a greater role in preparing legislation through House of Commons committees.

That was a commitment we made in the red book. We honour the commitment to give MPs a greater role today as part of the process of honouring another red book commitment, that of restoring public trust and confidence in the government's decision making process.

[Translation]

Yesterday, the Prime Minister presented a comprehensive reform program, one component of which is the bill now before us today. The proposed amendments to the Lobbyists Registration Act are based on two fundamental principles, principles which are shared by my colleagues in this House.

[English]

The first is that all Canadians have a right to approach their government without employing lobbyists. The second belief that forms the basis for the legislation before us is that lobbying must be transparent so that Canadians can have confidence that decisions are based upon merit.

It is with these principles in mind that the Prime Minister announced yesterday the creation of the position of ethics counsellor.

[Translation]

In the red book, we pledged that a Liberal government would appoint an ethics counsellor who would be available to advise lobbyists and their clients on how to do business with the federal government.

The ethics counsellor would also have the task of drafting a code of ethics for lobbyists which would define behaviour standards in the industry.

[English]

This bill gives the ethics counsellor the powers necessary to investigate lobbying activities contrary to the code. The counsellor will be able to report publicly on breaches of the code and will have the power to disclose publicly the fees charged by lobbyists in pursuit of government contracts where it is in the public interest to do so. This will provide a strong incentive for lobbying firms to abide by the spirit of openness and transparency that is at the heart of the reforms before us today.

The other reforms in the bill before us build upon the requirements in the Lobbyists Registration Act which came into effect in 1989.

● (1010)

[Translation]

I would like to remind the House that last year, the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations studied the lobbying issue.

In June of 1993, committee members released a report entitled "A Blueprint for Transparency: Review of the Lobbyists Registration Act".

[English]

The committee's report concluded that the Lobbyists Registration Act did not reveal enough about the activities of lobbyists. The report made the case for the disclosure of additional information about lobbyists and their activities and those are the recommendations that have provided the basis for the amendments before us today.

The legislation provides greater transparency in four ways.

First, under the existing Lobbyists Registration Act lobbyists need to disclose only general subject matter. Under the new bill they will have to be very specific.