

*Government Orders*

are affected by the statements and the actions of all politicians. That is why, in my view, this bill does not go far enough.

Finally, I want to say that, since lobbying is not available to everyone, because there will always be honest citizens who refuse to resort to such influence networks and others who cannot afford such services, it undermines the principle of democracy.

Consequently, the Bloc will co-operate in the effort to improve this bill which does not even come close to the people's expectations or the Liberal promises.

**Mrs. Pierrette Ringuette-Maltais (Madawaska—Victoria):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to participate in the debate on referring this bill, an Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, to committee prior to second reading.

Lobbying is a long-standing part of democracy in this country. It pre-dates Confederation. Ever since the birth of this country, individuals have tried, directly or indirectly, to influence government decisions in their favour.

[English]

This House knows along with the increased activity by lobbyists grew a concern among Canadians. So long as the activities by lobbyists were conducted outside public view, Canadians might question whether government decisions were indeed made for the public good or under undue influence from a particular group.

[Translation]

This concern is nothing new. In 1969, the first private members' bills were tabled to demand that lobbying be opened to public scrutiny. By the time the government announced the establishment of a system for the registration of lobbyists in 1985, about 20 such private bills had been tabled but none had been passed by Parliament.

[English]

In 1985 the Government of Canada took up the cause of lobbying reform and issued a discussion paper which was studied by the Standing Committee on Election, Privileges and Procedure. The ideas presented in that standing committee report became the basis for the original Lobbyists Registration Act. It was given royal assent in September 1988 and came into force a year later.

[Translation]

This Act rests upon the fundamental principle that the registration of lobbyists serves to inform the public about lobbying and to guarantee that government decisions are made on the basis of the issues. In other words, the Act seeks to make lobbying transparent. The public has a right to know who is trying to influence government decisions.

[English]

By opening up the process to public scrutiny registration provides the opportunity for others to initiate their own efforts to present their views to the government.

This government believes that every Canadian has the right to approach government officials without using lobbyists as an intermediary. No one should feel they have to hire a lobbyist to bring matters to the attention of their member of Parliament, the ministers of the crown, public servants or any other institution in our governmental system.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the House that, during the 1993 election, the Liberal Party of Canada promised that we would implement the Standing Committee's recommendation.

[English]

The registry will indicate who is attempting to influence what government department and agency on what specific subject matter, on whose behalf and using what technique. They will also be required to clarify any given information at the request of the registrar.

[Translation]

The amendments also provide for a review of the Act by Parliament after a period of four years.

[English]

These measures in total represent a major step in the evolution of lobbying in Canada.

[Translation]

The sub-committee members may want to make suggestions to enhance this legislation in order to ensure that it adequately guarantees the openness and transparency of lobbying activities. It is therefore proper that members have the opportunity to make their comments before the bill goes to second reading.

[English]

**The Speaker:** It being eleven o'clock, pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), the House will now proceed to statements by members, pursuant to Standing Orders 31.