

Government Orders

do our best to ensure that the views of those constituents are well represented in government decision making.

Moreover, all Canadians have a right to make their own views known to ministers of the crown. Every day ministers receive hundreds of letters from Canadians expressing their opinion on matters within their jurisdiction. Many Canadians make their views known directly to the department or agency of the crown that handles the issue under consideration.

I refer particularly to the farm organizations in the constituency that I represent which deal with matters such as cattle, hogs, chickens, wheat and a number of agricultural commodities that have had representatives here in Ottawa for 20 or 50 years. They have a right to do so.

This government upholds the right of Canadian citizens to deal with public officials but as we know, some Canadians do hire lobbyists. At the same time, government sometimes seeks the advice of groups and organizations in order to find out what impact its actions will have on Canadians. Our challenge is to ensure that lobbying does not discredit the democratic process.

I would like to outline why this legislation does not follow the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Government Operations to eliminate the distinctions between tier one and tier two lobbyists.

The committee had concluded that tier one and tier two lobbyists perform similar functions and recommended one definition and the same reporting and disclosure requirements for all lobbyists. This legislation on the other hand is based on the premise that lobbying performed by consultant lobbyists is different from that done by in-house lobbyists.

It has named three different categories: consultant, corporate in-house and organization in-house lobbyists. I believe that this accurately reflects the kind of lobbying activities that are going on out there and in fact prevents any kind of confusion of the issues in terms of those who are writing reports or consultant reports for individual organizations and non-profit organizations. Those are the so-called big guns, the Canadian Bankers Association for example. Those two types of activities are different.

• (1315)

In other respects the legislation follows the committee's recommendations closely. It implements more detailed disclosure of all lobbyists. The question of whether increased disclosure requires the elimination of two tiers was one that the government had to examine very carefully. All organizations have told us that they agree with the need to make lobbying more transparent. No one is disputing that. They accept the need to provide more specific disclosure. They recognize that informa-

tion filed under the existing Lobbyists Registration Act is not adequate.

When it comes to the question of removing the distinction between the two tiers, representatives of corporations and organizations say that there are significant differences between their work and responsibilities and those of, as I pointed out, the consultant lobbyists in the tier one category. Corporate and organization in house lobbyists are by nature and status very substantively, fundamentally different from consultant lobbyists who operate under contract on behalf of clients.

To begin with, the activities of the in house lobbyists are already well publicized. Further, associations are informed by their members to pursue their common objectives on an ongoing basis. That is why we are requiring the association rather than the individual to file on an annual basis. Non-profit organizations will also have to disclose substantially more information, but this will not create administrative demands beyond their ability to comply.

These organizations recognize the value of greater transparency in their activities. All in house lobbyists will be required to provide annual listings of issues or specific subjects of concern, the departments or agencies they expect to contact, and in addition the communication techniques they plan to use. They will also have to provide updates as changes or new information arises or if the project is terminated. They must also provide annually a description of the organization's goals and objectives or their business activities. Corporate in house lobbyists must give the name of the parent company and any subsidiaries with a direct interest. Organization lobbyists must describe their membership.

The government wants to continue the valuable dialogue and discussions with associations and organizations in order to find out how the government's actions might affect Canadians. At the same time the bill will improve transparency of these processes by requiring again all lobbyists to disclose substantially more information. That is why I support the legislation.

The subcommittee on industry will want to look at these issues once more when it studies the legislation prior to second reading. The government assures us that it will maintain an open mind on the amendments the committee might recommend.

Mrs. Jan Brown (Calgary Southeast): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the motion to refer Bill C-43 to committee prior to second reading. That is significant in that a broader discussion regarding the transparency of the political process and the accountability of politicians to the Canadian public may take place before coming to the House for full debate. Therefore I am pleased to endorse the motion referring the bill to committee prior to second reading. In my support for