

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

1. Requesting the Provincial Government Oversee a City of Vancouver Lobbyist Registry

Submitted by: Councillor Zhou

WHEREAS

1. Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of good governance and help to build public trust in government institutions;
2. The Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists is an independent office of the B.C. legislature. It has a mandate to oversee, monitor, and enforce the *Lobbyists Transparency Act* (LTA);
3. The LTA requires individuals and organizations who lobby public office holders provincially, and meet specific criteria, to register their lobbying activities in an online public registry;
4. Lobbying activities are a legitimate part of the democratic process and can provide valuable input into government decision-making. Individuals and organizations employ lobbyists to ensure that their concerns and/or positions are heard by governments and to have those concerns addressed;
5. There is currently no provincial legislation in B.C. that specifically regulates the lobbying of local governments, nor is there any specific legislation that authorizes municipal councils to establish and enforce lobbyist registries. This has led to a small number of communities to consider establishing a registry of their own in patchwork fashion;
6. Provincial and local governments across the country have approached the creation of municipal lobbyist registries in a variety of ways, including: voluntary registries, registries administered at the local level and those administered at the provincial level;
7. Several municipalities and provinces across Canada, including Toronto, Ontario, and British Columbia, have implemented lobbyist registries to increase transparency around lobbying activities and ensure the public has access to information regarding who is attempting to influence public officials;
8. To date, Surrey and Kelowna are the only local governments in B.C. to have established municipal lobbyist registries on their own. Surrey set up their registry in 2008 and Kelowna's registry was established in September 2023. More recently, in May 2024, Port Moody City Council considered a motion to establish a lobbyist registry but ultimately rejected the idea based on a majority vote at Council;
9. Delegates to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) have twice considered -- and subsequently endorsed -- resolutions calling on the Province to establish some form of Municipal Lobbyist Registry (2017 and 2019);

10. In response to the UBCM resolutions in 2017 and 2019, the Provincial government has expressed a willingness to discuss initiatives like a municipal lobbyist registry to increase local government accountability and promote openness and transparency in interactions between public servants, elected officials, and lobbyists;
11. The Province has specifically stated to the UBCM that it will need "a clearer understanding of what local governments hope to achieve through a municipal lobbyist registry to ensure that an approach is taken that meets those intended outcomes and meets the needs of any local government interested in having a lobbyist registry." Likewise, if local governments, through the Union of BC Municipalities, express an interest in establishing mandatory lobbyist registries, the Province has stated that it is willing to discuss the matter further;
12. A municipal lobbyist registry overseen by the Provincial Government, with uniform application across the Province rather than a patchwork of locally-created registries, would provide the residents of Vancouver, as well as those of other B.C. communities, with a much clearer understanding of who is lobbying their locally elected officials, senior staff, and other decision-makers;
13. The absence of a formal lobbyist registry in the City of Vancouver and across the province is a clear gap in transparency and accountability which could be filled by the creation of a publicly accessible database of lobbyist activities overseen by the Province's Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists under an amended LTA;
14. A municipal lobbyist registry overseen by the Province would help prevent actual or perceived conflicts of interest and ensure that decisions made by the City are in the best interests of the public, rather than the result of undue influence by private interests; and
15. As the Province's Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists aptly notes on its website: "A strong democracy is built on access to a government that conducts its business transparently and is willing to listen to its constituents."

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council request the Mayor write to the Provincial government expressing the City's interest in the establishment of a Municipal Lobbyist Registry overseen by the Province for the purpose of tracking, and making publicly available, information on individuals or organizations that engage in lobbying activities of local governments, senior staff and other key decision-makers.
- B. THAT Council endorse the following resolution for submission to the 2025 UBCM convention for the consideration of the membership:

RESOLUTION

MOTION: Requesting the Provincial Government Oversee a City of Vancouver Lobbyist Registry

WHEREAS the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) has twice considered -- and subsequently endorsed -- resolutions calling on the Province to establish a Municipal Lobbyist Registry (2017 and 2019), there is currently no provincial legislation in BC that specifically regulates the lobbying of local governments, nor is there any specific legislation that authorizes municipal councils to establish and enforce lobbyist registries. The Province has previously indicated a willingness to explore the matter pending a clearer understanding of what local governments hope to achieve to ensure that any approach taken meets the intended outcomes and needs of local governments;

AND WHEREAS the absence of a formal Municipal Lobbyist Registry represents a clear gap in transparency and accountability which could be filled by the creation of a publicly accessible database of lobbyist activities which would provide residents with a much clearer understanding of who is lobbying their locally elected officials, senior staff, and other decision-makers:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UBCM renew its call on the Provincial government to establish a Municipal Lobbyist Registry and that UBCM explore the creation of a working group to develop a clear set of goals for a Municipal Lobbyist Registry.

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