



Office of the Commissioner
of Lobbying of Canada

Commissariat au lobbying
du Canada

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23



This publication is available online and in PDF format at lobbycanada.gc.ca.

Accessible formats are available on request by contacting info@lobbycanada.gc.ca.

Permission to reproduce

Except as otherwise specifically noted, the information in this publication may be reproduced, in part or in whole and by any means, without charge or further permission from the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, provided that due diligence is exercised in ensuring the accuracy of the information reproduced; that the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada is identified as the source institution; and, that the reproduction is not represented as an official version of the information reproduced, nor as having been made in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada.

For permission to reproduce the information in this publication for commercial redistribution, please email: info@lobbycanada.gc.ca.

© His Majesty the King in Right of Canada as represented by the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada, 2023

Catalogue No. Lo1E-PDF
ISSN 1925-9522

Aussi offert en français sous le titre : *Rapport annuel 2022-2023, Commissariat au lobbying du Canada*

Preface

This report is submitted to the Parliament of Canada pursuant to section 11 of the *Lobbying Act* R.S.C., 1985, c. 44 (4th Supp.).

Within three months after the end of each fiscal year, the Commissioner must prepare a report about the administration of the *Lobbying Act* during that fiscal year. The Commissioner is required to submit the report to the Speaker of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Commons. Each Speaker tables the report in the Chamber over which they preside.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commissioner’s message	2
Enabling transparency	4
Spotlight on improving the Registry of Lobbyists	6
Ensuring compliance	15
Spotlight on updating the <i>Lobbyists’ Code of Conduct</i>	18
Expanding awareness and understanding	19
Spotlight on common goals of transparency and accountability	22
Workings of the Office	23
Spotlight on increasing the Office budget and capacity	26
Looking ahead	27

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



As I look back on another fiscal year, I continue to be humbled by and very proud of all that my Office succeeds in accomplishing each and every year. We are a small organization with a broad mandate and extensive reporting requirements similar to large departments. We delivered on our mandate with a small number of employees, which averaged 28 staffed positions.

The number of registrations and registered lobbyists continues to grow each year, and 2022-23 was no exception. The same is true for communication reports filed in the Registry of Lobbyists, which once again set a new record.

We not only maintained the Registry of Lobbyists, we also improved it by enhancing public-facing features and making changes that allow us to more effectively manage the Registry and gather data.

During 2022-23, we also worked tirelessly to update the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*, producing two draft versions, publishing a comprehensive document outlining the rationale for the updates, and beginning work on the version that was ultimately published in the *Canada Gazette* in May 2023.

We continued our efforts to contribute our experience and knowledge both in Canada and internationally. We also began to develop new tools, and engagement strategies that we will implement in fiscal year 2023-24. This will support us in reaching a greater number of individuals.

Key achievements include:

- Finalizing the third edition of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*
- Improving the Registry of lobbyists, including the launch of search alerts
- Contributing to shaping the conference of the Canada-U.S. Council on Government Ethics Laws (COGEL), and
- Being identified in Budget 2023 to receive additional ongoing funding

There is no shortage of innovative ideas at the Office but our strained resources are stretched beyond capacity. We submitted a budget request to receive funding for additional staff to allow the Office to grow and innovate. While we were pleased to be identified in Budget 2023 to receive additional ongoing funding, the amount is only half of what we requested.

We know the year ahead will be an exciting one for our team as the 2023 edition of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* comes into force on July 1. We will focus on ensuring that lobbyists understand the changes. We will also continue to push to strengthen the lobbying regime. We continue to be motivated by opportunities for improving transparency in the lobbying of federal officials and it is with great enthusiasm that we take on these priorities.

It's only fitting that I end this message by thanking each employee of the Office. I hope they can also look back at their accomplishments and be proud of their contributions. I want employees to know that I am grateful for their dedication, professionalism, and excellence in their work to support transparent and ethical lobbying.

Nancy Bélanger
Commissioner of Lobbying

ENABLING TRANSPARENCY

REGISTRY OF LOBBYISTS

The [Registry of Lobbyists](#) is the primary tool for transparency in the lobbying of federal officials. It offers Canadians a wealth of information reporting tools and statistics, as well as a powerful search function that allow the public to review and scrutinize the information lobbyists must file under the *Lobbying Act*.

The Office not only maintains the Registry but also seeks to continuously improve its features and ease of use.

Regulated and registrable lobbying



Communicating with federal officials

directly (in writing, orally) **or indirectly** (appeals to the public)



About a regulated matter

All lobbyists:

legislative proposals, bills or resolutions, regulations

(developing, introducing, defeating, amending)

policies or programs

(developing, amending)

awarding of any grant, contribution or other financial benefit

Only consultant lobbyists:

awarding of contracts

arranging a meeting between an official and any other person



For a client

for money or anything of value

registration by default

– or –

For an employer

in performing work-related duties

registration threshold – 20% collective duties

Who engaged in lobbying



› **3,460** organizations and corporations named in registrations

- **2,165** paid at least one consultant to lobby on their behalf
- **706** filed in-house registrations
- **589** filed in-house registrations and paid at least one consultant to lobby on their behalf



› **8,467** individual lobbyists registered at least once during the fiscal year

- **1,566** consultants
- **6,901** in-house
 - **2,823** employed by corporations
 - **4,078** employed by organizations

Both consultants and the most senior paid officers of organizations and corporations must report certain communications on a monthly basis in the Registry of Lobbyists.

Who was lobbied (oral and arranged communications)

Designated public office holder	Total communication reports
Prime minister only	56
Officials in the Prime Minister's Office including where the prime minister also participated	1,602
Senators	1,421
Ministers	2,130
Members of Parliament	11,511
Deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers	5,960

SPOTLIGHT ON

IMPROVING THE REGISTRY OF LOBBYISTS

Throughout 2022-23, we primarily worked behind the scenes to improve the internal functionality and the review of information in the Registry of Lobbyists.

We expanded our capacity to monitor the state of the Registry in real time by improving the system report analytics and developed an extensive suite of annual statistical reports to make the collection of data significantly faster and more accurate.

A new internal feature was created to simplify some business processes and speed up our ability to make certain changes.

The communication report verification dashboard was upgraded to help prioritize and easily identify items that require action, increasing efficiency. We also improved the Registry's email tool so that we can better preview various template content, reducing potential errors.

While these changes are not public facing, they greatly improve our ability to manage the Registry and its information. We didn't stop there and added an important new public feature.

On March 28, 2023, we launched an external search alert feature for the Registry, which allows users to easily create alerts based on keywords such as names, subject matter, institutions, and other criteria. Whenever information matching the selected criteria is added to the Registry, an email notification is sent to the subscriber.

During a soft-launch period (March 28-May 8, 2023) in which no promotion of the feature was done, 94 search alerts were created by 26 unique external users. The searches were also shared 149 times during the same period. We began to officially [promote](#) the launch of the feature in early May 2023.

In addition, Registry users now have the ability to share and bookmark their search results.

As the Registry of Lobbyists is the primary tool for transparency in the lobbying of federal officials, there is tremendous value in promoting and encouraging its use.

A vast amount of information and data is available in the Registry, and we recognize that it can be overwhelming. We will continue to develop new features and are exploring our capacity to offer tutorials to various stakeholders such as media and government officials to help them easily find information that can be useful to them.



ACTIVE REGISTRATIONS AND ACTIVE LOBBYISTS

Throughout the 2022-23 fiscal year, new records were set for both active registrations and active lobbyists. Each month revealed a new record for the number of active registrations for that particular month, with an all-time high of 5,508 active registrations in February 2023 and an all-time high of 7,707 active lobbyists in January 2023.

Active registrations and active lobbyists



Subject matters in registrations and communication reports



Top-5 subject matters in registrations

1. Economic Development
2. Industry
3. Environment
4. Health
5. Taxation and Finance



Top-5 subject matters in communication reports

1. Environment
2. Economic Development
3. Energy
4. Industry
5. Health

Government institutions in registrations and communication reports

Top-5 government institutions in registrations	
1	House of Commons
2	Prime Minister's Office
3	Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
4	Finance Canada
5	Senate of Canada

Top-5 government institutions in communication reports	
1	House of Commons
2	Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
3	Environment and Climate Change Canada
4	Finance Canada
5	Natural Resources Canada

COMMUNICATION REPORTS

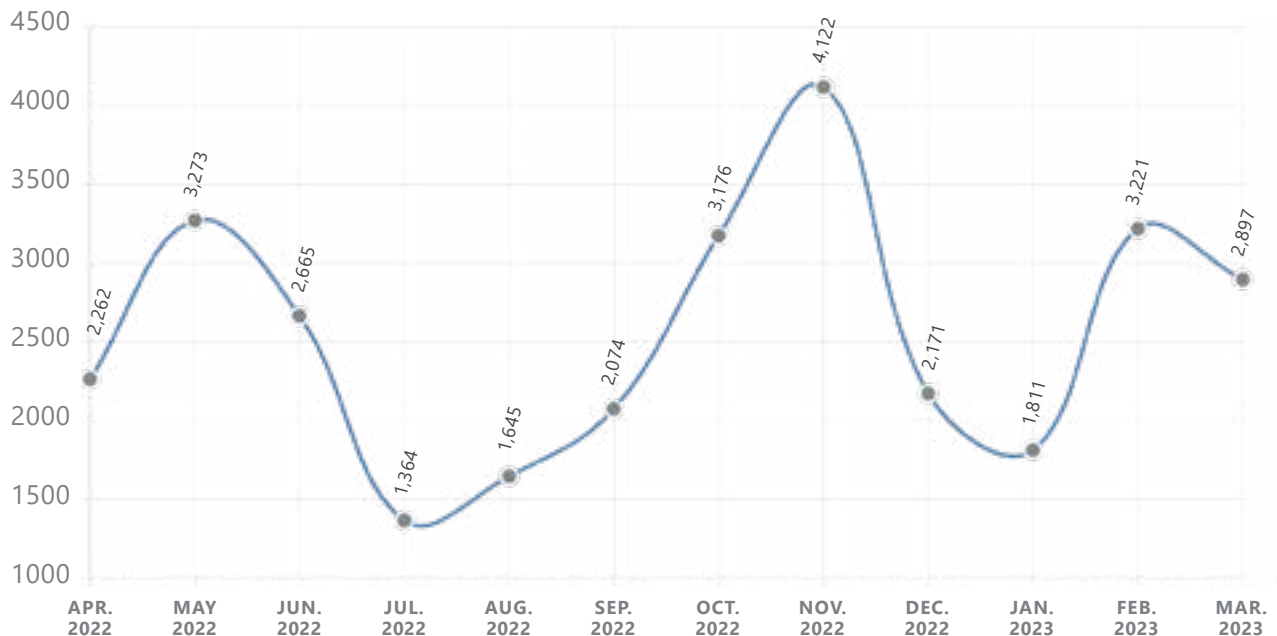
In 2022-23, a new all-time record for the total number of communication reports filed in the Registry of lobbyists was set. A total of 30,681 communication reports were filed, marking a 19% increase from 2021-22 and 5% increase over the previous record established in 2020-21.

The months of May, June, August, November and December 2022 all produced records for the highest total for those particular months. With 4,122 communication reports, November 2022 set a new record for the highest monthly number of communication report recorded since communication reporting began in 2008.

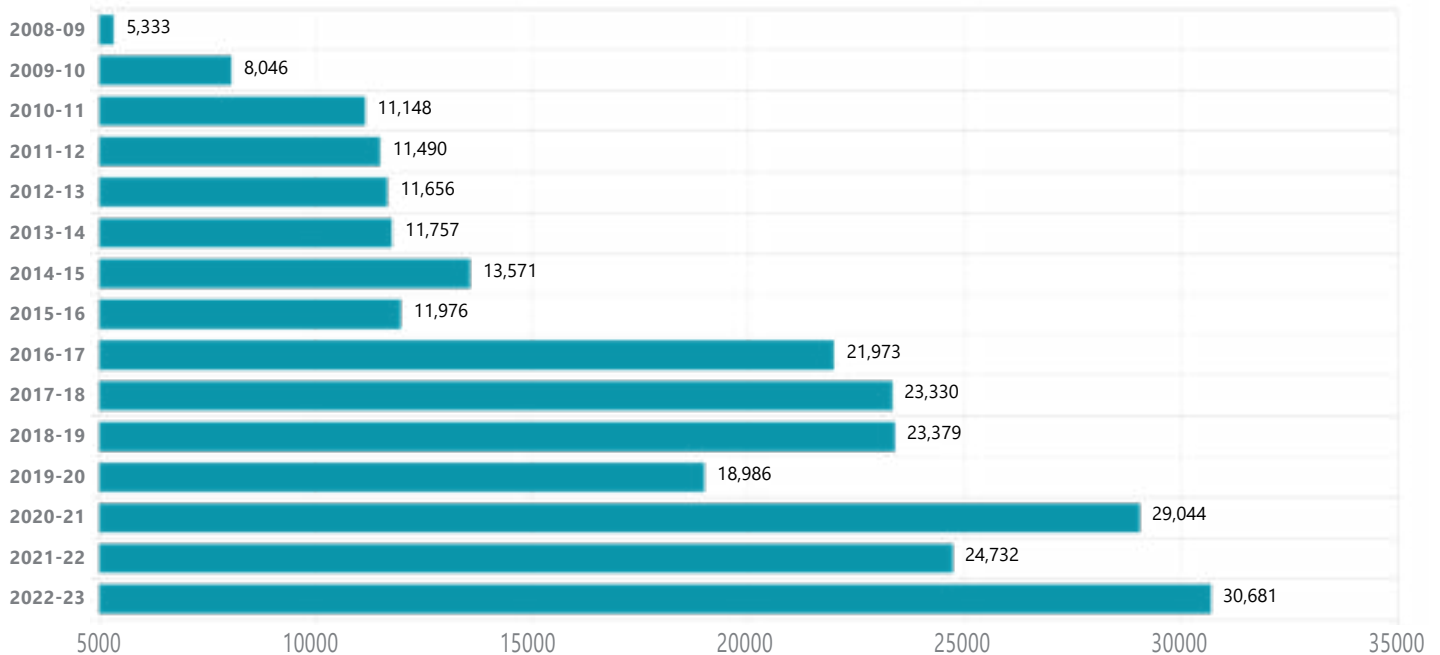
Communication report numbers from the Registry of Lobbyists in this report were gathered on May 1, 2023. This increases the accuracy of the numbers in this report to include the communications of March 2023.



Communication reports



Communication reports by year



* Slight difference over previous reported yearly totals may occur due to late communication reports

Timeliness of communication reports

While the majority of communication reports were filed within the prescribed delay nearly 94% of the time, we've noticed an increase in the number of late communication reports, which is a detriment to transparency.

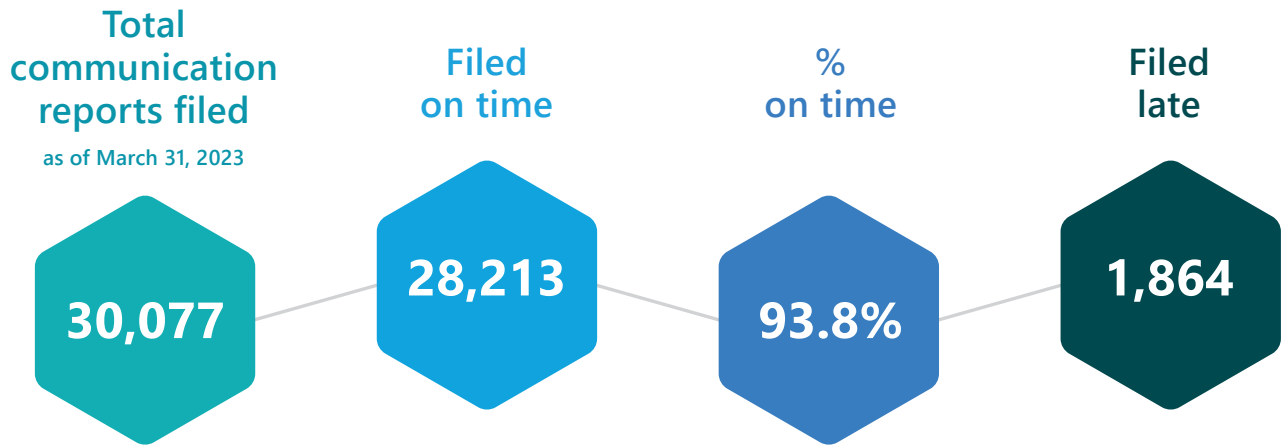
The vast majority of late reports are submitted between 1-15 days late but there are also far too many that were up 180 days late. Some were even submitted more than 180 days late.

Under the *Lobbying Act*, it is an offence to fail to file communication reports no later than 15 days after the end of the month in which the communication occurred.

The Office accepts these late filings to increase transparency in the Registry of Lobbyists and only where it would be necessary to ensure future compliance is an investigation conducted. We educate lobbyists about their reporting obligations and monitor their compliance for one year.

Commissioner Bélanger continues to [recommend](#) amending the *Lobbying Act* to allow a spectrum of sanctions to provide greater flexibility in imposing appropriate and proportionate remedies to address non-compliance with the Act.

Timeliness of communication reports



Late communication reports

Period	Consultant	Organization	Corporation	Totals
1-15 days	322	497	192	1,011
16-30 days	71	138	69	278
31-90 days	59	242	41	342
91-180 days	16	99	16	131
More than 180 days	12	90	0	102
Total late	480	1,066	318	1,864

*Data captured on March 31, 2023

REGISTRATION AND CLIENT SERVICES

To ensure compliance as well as accurate and consistent data in the Registry of Lobbyists, the Registration and Client Services team reviews all new, updated, and reactivated registrations to verify that they meet all the disclosure requirements outlined in the *Lobbying Act*.

In addition to assisting with registrations, the team delivers information sessions to help lobbyists understand their obligations under the *Lobbying Act* and the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*. The team also answers inquiries from stakeholders on a wide range of topics and reaches out to lobbyists to offer advice and support.

Registration and client services contacted more than 50 individuals whose names appeared in media reports after being hired by government relations firms, organizations, and corporations that engage in federal lobbying. This helps potential lobbyists understand the *Lobbying Act's* registration and reporting requirements as well as, when applicable, the post-employment restrictions on lobbying for former designated public office holders.

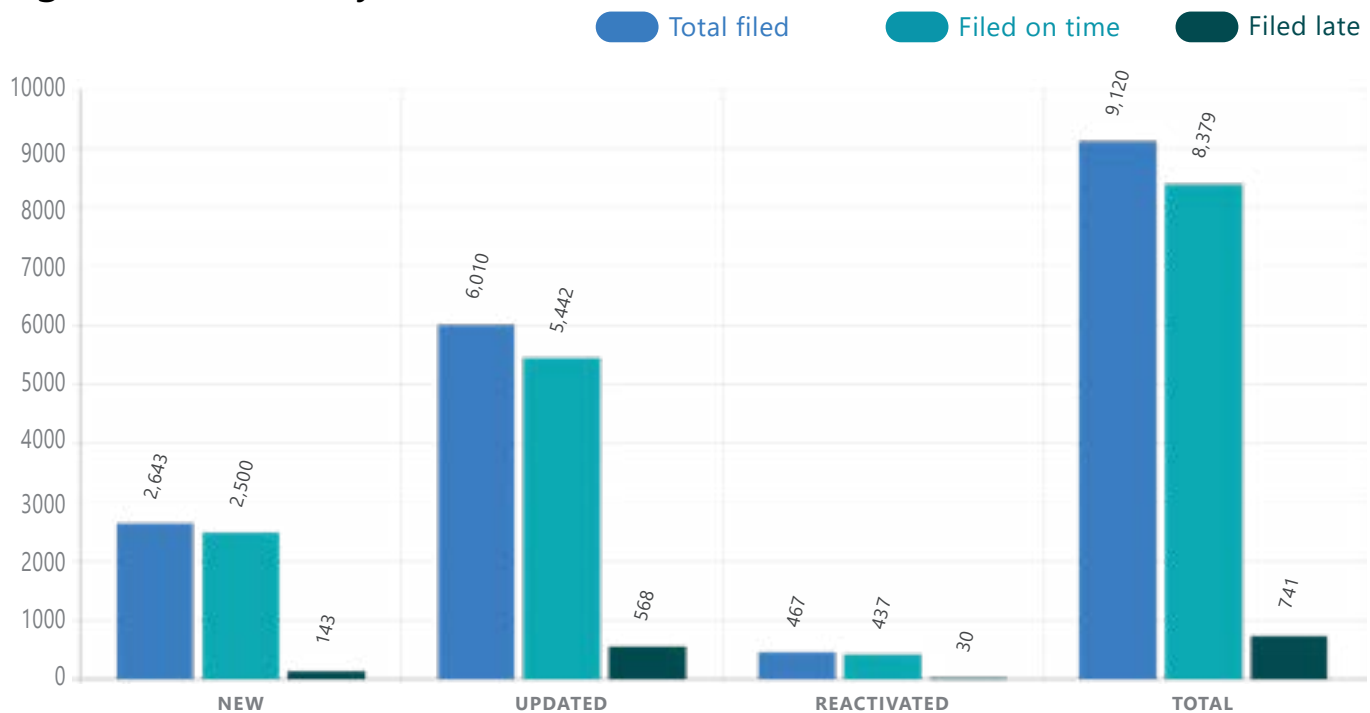
REVIEWING REGISTRATIONS

Between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023, the team reviewed and posted 9,120 registrations, including new, reactivated and updated registrations. This represents an average of 760 per month, a 12% increase over the previous year.

Of these, 1,749, or about 19%, were returned to the registrant only once for corrections following a review by the client services advisors, while another 300, or about 3%, were sent back for correction more than once.

The overall number of new registrations increased by 20% while the number of reactivated registrations increased by 24% in 2022-23.

Registration activity



Inquiries by source



Type	Calls	Emails	Combined	Percent
Lobbyist (incl. representatives)	2,544	1,513	4,057	83.2
Potential lobbyist or client of a lobbyist	71	164	235	4.8
Public office holder (current and former)	69	296	365	7.5
General public	87	84	171	3.5
Other (e.g. academics)	21	30	51	1.0
Total	2,792	2,087	4,879	100

Inquiries by topic



Type	Calls	Emails	Combined	Percent
Registration support and details	2,447	1,490	3,937	67.3
Lobbying Act and regulations	586	759	1,345	23.0
Lobbyists' Code of Conduct	44	158	202	3.5
Other (mandate, allegations, outreach requests)	121	247	368	6.3
Total	3,198	2,654	5,852	100

SERVICE STANDARDS FOR REGISTRATION AND CLIENT SERVICES

In 2022-23, the Registration and Client Services team continued with its excellence in providing services, exceeding all service standards when processing new registrations, responding to inquiries, and answering calls within 30 seconds. They achieved an outstanding 100% result in three out of five service standards, demonstrating their commitment to providing excellent and timely service to stakeholders.

Service standards for Registration and Client Services



2022-23 Service standards	Target	Result
Respond to simple email within 2 business days	90%	100%
Respond to complex emails within 10 business days	85%	98.5%
Respond to incoming telephone calls within 30 seconds	80%	81.6%
Review new registrations within 3 business days	100%	100%
Process voicemails within 1 business day	85%	100%

ENSURING COMPLIANCE

COMPLIANCE DIRECTORATE

The Compliance Directorate ensures that registrants, lobbyists, and former designated public office holders meet their obligations by conducting activities to enforce the *Lobbying Act* and the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*.

The Compliance Directorate began 2022-23 with 31 files at the preliminary assessment stage of an investigation and 1 investigation. Thirty (30) preliminary assessments were initiated during the year, an increase of 27% over 2021-22. A total of 27 files were closed at the preliminary assessment stage while 3 investigations were pursued.

During the year, the Commissioner referred 1 investigation to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as she had reasonable grounds to believe an offense occurred under the *Lobbying Act*.

When the Commissioner refers a file to the RCMP, she must suspend her investigation. If the referral does not result in a charge or conviction, the Commissioner may decide to cease the investigation or continue to investigate and report to Parliament. Following the RCMP's decision not to pursue 6 referrals, the Commissioner ceased 5 of those investigations as there was no compliance rationale to continue them due to changes in circumstances and the amount of time passed since the underlying events took place. As of March 31st, 2023, no decision had been made with respect to the sixth referred investigation returned to the Office. At the end of March 2023, 31 files were at the preliminary assessment stage while 4 were ongoing investigations.

In addition to investigation efforts, the Office conducts compliance assessments to address the late filing of registrations and communication reports. Regular monitoring is conducted for a period of 1 year to ensure continued compliance. In 2022-23, we monitored 44 lobbyists.

Compliance statistics

Investigation activities	Description	Total
Preliminary assessments initiated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 17 from external referrals• 13 from internal monitoring	30
Cases closed at the preliminary assessment stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 16 no evidence of registrable lobbying or reporting required• 6 no evidence that significant part of duties was met• 2 no evidence of a breach under the <i>Lobbyists' Code of Conduct</i>.• 3 no jurisdiction to investigate	27
Investigations ceased		5
Investigations referred to the RCMP in 2022-23		1
Cases as of March 31, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 31 preliminary assessments• 4 investigations	35

Charge laid under the *Lobbying Act*

On September 8, 2022, the RCMP formally charged Andrew Burns under [section 14\(1\) of the Lobbying Act](#) resulting from unregistered lobbying activities he allegedly conducted on behalf of Marine Land Canada Inc., in relation to Bill S-203. This charge follows a referral by the Commissioner of Lobbying in late 2018.

When the Commissioner has reason to believe that an offence has been committed under the *Lobbying Act*, she must suspend her investigation and refer the matter to a peace officer such as the RCMP, which then conducts its own investigation.

EXEMPTION REQUESTS

In 2022-23, the Office received 8 applications for exemptions to the five-year restriction on lobbying from former designated public office holders. Another 2 applications were carried over from the previous year.

Of these 10 requests:

- 0 were granted
- 6 were denied
- 2 were withdrawn
- 2 were carried over to 2023-24

Exemption request service standards

Standard	Performance	Notes
A letter sent by the Commissioner within 60 days of receiving an accurately completed application to either grant or to obtain further representations.	100%	The Commissioner informs the applicant of the decision. In cases where the recommendation by the Directorate is to deny the request, the applicant is offered the opportunity to submit additional information.
Applicant informed of the Commissioner's final decision within 30 days of the applicant's submitting further representations.	100%	The Commissioner sends a letter informing the applicant of the final decision.
Exemptions granted are made publicly available within 48 hours of the effective date of the Commissioner's decision.	100%	All exemptions are published online.

COMMUNICATION REPORT VERIFICATION

To ensure accurate reporting by lobbyists, the Office extracts a sample (5%) of new communication reports filed in the Registry of Lobbyists every month and asks the designated public office holders named in them to confirm whether the information submitted in the reports is complete and accurate.

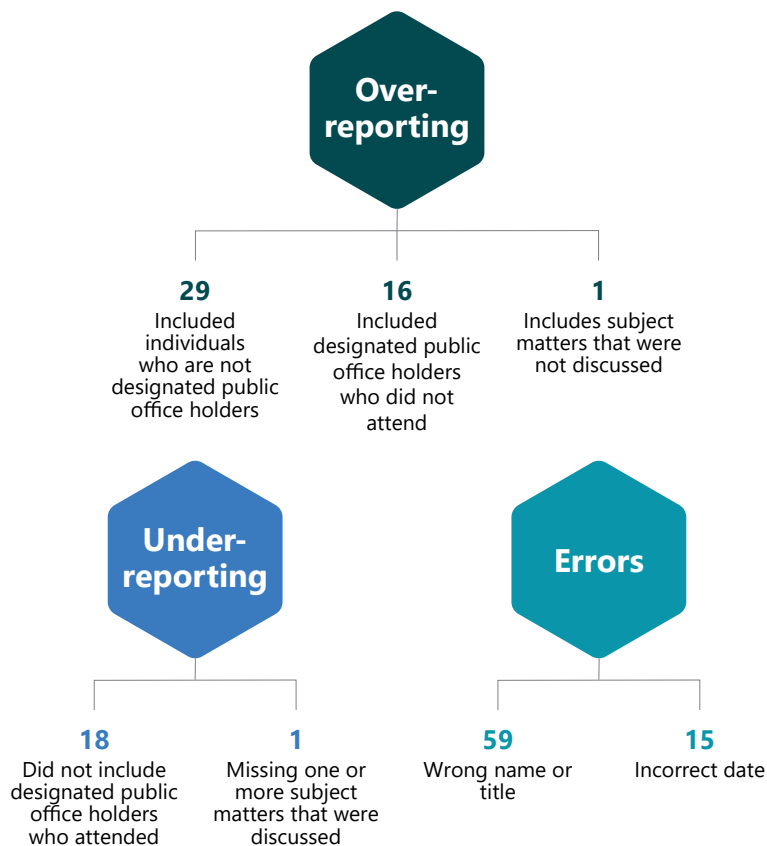
By the end of 2022-23, designated public office holders named in 1,510 communication reports reviewed the information and confirmed that 1,329 reports or 88% were complete and accurate.

The noticeable difference in the total number of verified communication reports between this fiscal year (1,510) and the previous one (1,813) is explained by a 6-month pilot project undertaken in 2021-22 which saw the sampling size increase to 10%. As there was no significant impact on the compliance rate, the pilot was abandoned that same year to focus on other compliance activities.

Communication report verifications



Common inaccuracies in communication reports



SPOTLIGHT ON

UPDATING THE LOBBYISTS' CODE OF CONDUCT

After setting out to update the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* in 2020, three rounds of online consultations were held in developing the new Code between late 2020 and mid-2022.

During the last round of consultation on a revised draft, eight distinct submissions were either provided or supported by 63 stakeholders. These viewpoints informed further revisions to the Code and, in November 2022, Commissioner Bélanger referred a draft of the updated Code to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics (ETHI), along with a thorough rationale for the changes:

- [Renewing the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct – Updated standards for ethical and transparent lobbying](#)

In February 2023, the ETHI Committee undertook a [study on the Code](#). In concluding its study, the Committee shared a letter with the Commissioner in March 2023 outlining [its recommendations](#) for consideration in finalizing the Code.

In the final weeks of 2022-23, the Commissioner carefully reviewed and considered the Committee's recommendations related to the rules on gifts, hospitality and senses of obligation following political work. This led to the publication of the third edition of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct* in the *Canada Gazette*, Part 1 ([volume 157, number 21](#)) in May 2023.

The [2023 edition](#) of the Code takes effect July 1, 2023. Educational materials and information sessions will be available to support lobbyists in complying with the updated rules.

The Code applies to all consultant and in-house lobbyists who must be listed in the Registry of Lobbyists. It defines standards of ethical behaviour required of them and works alongside the various ethical regimes applicable to federal officials.

It also complements the *Lobbying Act's* registration requirements and fosters transparent and ethical lobbying of federal officials.

The need to amend the Lobbying Act

While the 2023 edition of the Code brings clarity and makes it easier to enforce, there are weaknesses that flow from those in the *Lobbying Act*.

Amendments to the Act and its regulations are long overdue. We stand ready to assist in that important work.



EXPANDING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The Office engages with stakeholders to foster awareness and understanding of their obligations under the *Lobbying Act* and the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*. In 2022-23, we met with 709 stakeholders through 78 presentations to lobbyists, public office holders, and other interested parties, such as international organizations.

The Office also began to develop new tools and strategies that we will implement in fiscal year 2023-24 to ensure that lobbyists understand their obligations under the Act and the Code. We will update existing products, develop new awareness and education material, and offer more information sessions.

Interactions with stakeholders



The Office also advised 49 potential lobbyists of the *Lobbying Act's* registration requirements through advisory letters. We also sent 51 letters to former designated office holders outlining the five-year restriction on lobbying.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The Office received 68 media inquiries in 2022-23, almost doubling the number of inquiries received in 2021-22 and bringing it closer to the average of previous years. Unsurprisingly, about 41% were related to the renewal of the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*, while 38% concerned rules and compliance activities. Another 18% inquired about the Registry of Lobbyists.

We also granted 2 interviews to journalists. A further 6 were declined or deferred to 2023-24 while the public consultation process for the updates to the Code and the parliamentary study ran its respective course.

68 media inquiries



2
media interviews

Top-3 subjects of inquiries



Updating the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*
28



Rules and Compliance activities (incl. investigations)
26



Registry of Lobbyists
12

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

The Commissioner of Lobbying reports to Parliament through the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics (ETHI). Throughout 2022-23, Commissioner Bélanger testified before the Committee on two occasions. The Commissioner also wrote to the Committee on several occasions in relation to the development of the Code (see *Spotlight on updating the Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*).

On May 19, 2022, Commissioner Bélanger appeared before the Committee to discuss the Main Estimates and answer members' questions about the federal lobbying regime.

On February 3, 2023, Commissioner Bélanger testified before the Committee as they undertook a study of the Commissioner's updates to the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*.

At the beginning of 2023-24, Commissioner Bélanger once again appeared before the Committee, this time to discuss the Main Estimates. During this appearance, Commissioner Bélanger reiterated the long overdue need to amend the *Lobbying Act* and her readiness to assist in this important work.

LOBBYIST REGISTRARS AND COMMISSIONERS NETWORK

Commissioner Bélanger and a few members of the Office participated in two meetings with the [Lobbyists Registrars and Commissioners Network](#) (LRCN) to share best practices and provide updates related to our respective legislation. The LRCN typically meets twice a year, once in person and once virtually.

The first meeting of the 2022-23 fiscal year took place in October 2023 in Québec City, Québec and was hosted by Lobbyisme Québec.

Members met once more, virtually this time, in March 2023, with the Office hosting the meeting.

SPOTLIGHT ON COMMON GOALS OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

A healthy lobbying regime is one that supports public confidence in the integrity of government decision-making. Canada's long-standing experience in regulating lobbying activities positions the Office well to share its experience and contribute to the discourse around transparency and ethical lobbying of government officials.

Common goals of transparency and accountability in the principles of lobbying registration and compliance support the development of open standards that can strengthen democratic systems. The Office's ongoing collaboration with provincial and international counterparts provides opportunities to share our expertise to help foster effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Council on Governmental Ethics Laws (COGEL)

COGEL is a largely U.S.-Canada-based professional organization for government regulators and others working in ethics, elections, freedom of information, lobbying, and campaign finance.

In December 2022, the annual COGEL conference took place in Montréal, Québec. As this marked the conference's return to Canada, the Office seized the opportunity to play a larger role and joined the planning committee.

In addition to helping shape the content of the conference and identifying speakers, the Office presented in two sessions:

- Commissioner Bélanger provided an update on developments in the Canadian lobbying landscape
- Commissioner Bélanger and senior policy analyst Scott Whamond were panelists in a session on the importance of being clear in developing standards to promote greater compliance. Legal literacy experts congratulated the Office's efforts in using plain language to update the *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

As in previous years, Canada's experience in regulating lobbying and ethical standards expected of lobbyists continues to be of interest on the world stage. The Office continued to engage with the OECD, participating in a few formal and informal discussions during 2022-23.

In late fall 2022, the Office participated and contributed comments during the public consultation on a draft revision of the OECD's Recommendation on Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying.



WORKINGS OF THE OFFICE

Employees returned to work at the office one day per week in the spring of 2022 and two days per week in early fall of the same year. At their discretion, some employees chose to work from the office more often.

This hybrid approach has allowed employees to continue to prioritize work-life balance, while also enabling activities that are better achieved through in-person collaboration.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

This year, the Office modified its information management system to align the structure with the federal government's Information Management Common Core. Several training sessions were held in both official languages ahead of this change to provide employees with information on the functionalities of the information management system.

In addition, a comprehensive learning hub was created. It features learning aids on over 20 topics, a search manual and document naming convention guidelines.

ACCESSIBILITY

In accordance with the *Accessible Canada Act*, the Office implemented its [Accessibility Plan 2023-25](#) that sets out 10 goals over the next 3 years to support accessibility for our employees and stakeholders in the delivery of our activities and mandate.

The 10 goals are set to support accessibility in the areas of employment; design and delivery of programs and services; built environment; information and communication technology (ICT); and communication other than ICT.

This plan was developed after receiving input from employees of the Office, public office holders, registrants and their representatives, as well as the general public.

EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE

The ability of the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying (OCL) to continue fulfilling its mandate and performing excellent work year-after-year relies on its capacity to foster an exceptional work environment to retain the talent it has and attract new talent.

Overall results of the 2022 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) demonstrate the success of these ongoing efforts. As in the last PSES from 2020, the Office continued to score well in a number of areas, including a safe workplace, work-life balance, and employee engagement.

The Office continued to have no employees reporting that they had been the victim of harassment or discrimination.

The Office also delivered a perfect score regarding Official Languages, with all employees responding that they have the tools and resources to work in the language of their choice and feel free to use the language of their choice.

Also notable is that 100% of employees responded that they know how their work contributes to the achievements of the Office. Almost all respondents said that they would recommend the Office as a great place to work and that they like their job.

PSES 2022 results



know how their work contributes to the achievements of the OCL



feel free to use the official language of their choice



reported they have not been a victim of harassment in the workplace



reported they have not been a victim of discrimination in the workplace



reported that the OCL does a good job of raising awareness of mental health in the workplace

MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The Office's first Mental Health Strategy continues to strive for a workplace that supports employee health, safety and well-being through collaboration, inclusiveness, respect and continuous learning.

Efforts from the strategy first launched in 2019-20 are bearing fruit. The 2022 PSES showed that 100% of employees agreed that the Office does a good job of raising awareness of mental health in the workplace.

Throughout 2022-23, the Office's Mental Health Committee promoted several initiatives designed to support the mental health of employees and increase awareness of mental health.

Highlights

- Initiated training of interested individuals in Mental Health First Aid, provided by the Mental Health Commission of Canada
- Coordinated a session on the services available through the Employee Assistance Program and LifeSpeak
- Developed various well-received activities designed to promote individual mental health
- Encouraged staff to attend several workshops and information sessions from the Canadian Innovation Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace and LifeSpeak
- Shared mental health information and resources regularly

SPOTLIGHT ON

INCREASING THE OFFICE BUDGET AND CAPACITY

Budget 2023 brought news of some much-needed relief for the staff at the Office. After submitting a budget request to add new employees, the budget announcement included additional ongoing funding for the Office of approximately \$400,000 per year. If our submission to the government is approved, we should receive these funds in late fall.

With a small complement of 33 employees but averaging 28 staff at any one time, the Office does not currently have adequate depth of capacity. Many employees hold multiple responsibilities, leading to significant gaps caused by typical attrition and high pressure on the team and individuals.

In fact, the 2022 Public Service Employee Survey found that 48% of employees at the Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying felt work-related stress caused by “Not enough employees to do the work”. This result is significantly higher compared to 31% of Public Service employees as a whole and 35% for all micro-organizations combined. While this serves as a warning sign that should not be ignored, it is not the only indicator.

In 2022, a corporate risk profile performed by an external party highlighted the depth of capacity as the primary risk of the Office. As a micro-organization, the Office is always in danger of not having adequate depth of capacity to sustain delivery of the mandate.

There is no shortage of innovative ideas at the Office but our strained resources are stretched beyond capacity. A common frustration for the Office has long been a limited ability to implement innovations to better deliver on our mandate.

The additional budget funding will provide the ability to hire 4 additional indeterminate employees. These hires will allow us to focus on engagement with our stakeholders, foster compliance through awareness and deliver on our ever-increasing corporate responsibilities. More importantly, it will enable a shift to a more proactive approach to set priorities and to provides opportunities that can realistically be achieved.

The Office intends to staff these new positions through the 2023-24 fiscal year.

While we were pleased to be identified in Budget 2023 to receive additional ongoing funding, the amount is only half of what we requested. We will continue to advocate for an appropriate level of resources for the Office and, like other Agents of Parliament, to advocate for budgetary independence.

LOOKING AHEAD

For the first half of 2023-24, efforts will focus on ensuring that lobbyists understand the updated *Lobbyists' Code of Conduct*, which comes into force on July 1, 2023. We will begin by prioritizing communications with those who are currently listed in the Registry of Lobbyists to support their understanding and compliance with the updated standards of ethical behaviour.

More broadly, we are developing ways to expand awareness and understanding of the lobbying regime. We will increase our products and tools, while also improving our use of plain language, so that we can further promote compliance.

Education and engagement activities will not only be aimed at lobbyists but also at other stakeholders, including media, public office holders and designated public office holders. Each stakeholder group has its own information needs and each plays a role in supporting ethical behaviour and transparency for a healthy democracy.

On the compliance front, the team will focus on completing the ongoing files and developing strategies to address late registration and communication reporting.

In the continued absence of a review and changes to the Act, the Commissioner will continue to identify and pursue improvements that could enhance the transparency, fairness, clarity and efficiency of the federal lobbying regime.

Building on the [preliminary recommendations](#) made in 2021, such changes include updating our interpretation materials concerning the application and enforcement of the *Lobbying Act*, improving the Registry of Lobbyists by linking the relevant subject matter to the details, and potentially seeking regulatory updates that would enable the ease and effectiveness of lobbying registration.

As these plans are ambitious for a very capable but small team of employees, we will staff new positions and continue to deliver excellence in our service to Canadians.