

Lobbying and policy

Your article (Ford Says Watchdogs Should Be Sent Packing - Oct. 26) reports, in the context of the dismantling of various oversight offices - integrity commissioner, ombudsman, lobbyist registrar - that if nobody tracked the "influence peddling" of the 1,200 lobbyists registered at City Hall, "transparency" would be lost.

Influence peddling is a criminal offence and in no way involves the legitimate practice of lobbying. In fact, lobbying is strictly regulated at the City of Toronto through a mandatory registration and reporting system, coupled with a lobbyist code of conduct. The rules are designed to ensure that all interactions between lobbyists and councillors are transparent and ethical.

Lobbying is not about manipulation of political decision makers but is about providing City Hall decision makers and policy advisers information critical to the development of sound public policy.

Lobbying adds important perspectives and information to the debate surrounding key decisions affecting the city. Lobbying done responsibly and according to existing rules will work to enhance the public confidence in decisions by ensuring that all perspectives are taken into account in the formation of public policy.

- John Capobianco, president,
Public Affairs Association of Canada