

Session title: After the Elections – An International Roundtable

Moderator/Panelists:

François Casgrain, Lobbyist Commissioner, Québec

Jacques Saint-Laurent, Ethics Commissioner, Québec

Karen Shepherd, Commissioner of Lobbying, Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada

Date and time: Sunday, December 8 2013, 1:30 pm

Rapporteur: Valérie Bouchard

Session summary

Focusing on the establishment of solid governmental mechanisms, ways to promote democracy, and best practices in the field, this round-table meeting made it possible to further explore Quebec and Canadian practices as regards the ethics and conduct of members of the National Assembly, as well as regulating lobbying. The advantages of collaboration and international exchange in the field were also highlighted.

The round table opened with a presentation by Quebec's Ethics Commissioner, Jacques Saint-Laurent. Mr. Saint-Laurent first provided an overview of Quebec's Code of Ethics and Conduct, notably the values and ethical principles that must be observed by Members of the National Assembly, the rules of conduct they must follow, and how the code is to be administered and applied. He then covered the question of inquiries and advisory opinions. He concluded his presentation by providing his view of the role to be played by Members of the National Assembly, by the general public, and by the Commissioner in performing his important duties as guide and supervisor.

The round table continued with a presentation by Karen Shepherd, the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada. Ms. Shepherd first presented the various aspects of her mandate, as well as the objectives of the legislation on lobbying, which is designed to ensure transparency in activities of this nature. The main duties of the Commissioner of Lobbying are to maintain the register of lobbyists, to play a role in education, and to ensure compliance with the law and the code of conduct. Ms. Shepherd also highlighted Canada's unique context in terms of regulating lobbying, notably the independence of the Commissioner, the scope of the information available in the register, the existence of a code of conduct, and the prohibition for public policy makers to engage in lobbying activities until five years after the end of their mandate. She concluded by stressing the interest that this system is raising among various countries that are eager to benefit from the Canadian experience as regards regulating lobbying.

In terms of international cooperation, the round table led participants to conclude that legislation in the area of ethics and transparency must be adapted to the reality of each state. For example, while Canada has particularly well developed legislation in terms of regulating lobbying, it could not be directly transposed to another country. The best approach prioritizes exchange where participants present their best practices and draw inspiration from those of others while adapting them to their own context. The

international exchange of best practices is of particular interest for such a small community as the one working in the area of ethics and transparency since it enables people to learn from their peers.