

Report to Council on the Provision of Gifts by a Consultant Lobbyist Firm

On March 7 and 8, 2013, registered consultant lobbyists with a consultant lobbyist firm delivered a package containing a congratulatory letter and a cookie to each of 57 female councillors and senior public office holders with the City. The letter was signed by three registered lobbyists and stated in part:

International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition and celebration. The theme was expanded by the United Nations in 1975 with the International Women's Year. By 1977, the United Nations had adopted a resolution designating March 8 as International Women's Day.

Each year, March 8 provides an opportunity to take stock of our progress towards gender equality and to honour the contributions women have made and are making – both in Canada and around the world.

On behalf of our partners, . . . the municipal affairs team at The Capital Hill Group celebrates your contribution to politics.

The Capital Hill Group had a number of active subject matter registrations when the firm sent this package to public office holders.

Several public office holders who received the package containing the letter and cookie were concerned that this gift might violate the Lobbying By-law and delivered the package to the Lobbyist Registrar with a request that the matter be followed up. Some of them told the Lobbyist Registrar that the receipt of this package made them feel uncomfortable. The Lobbyist Registrar also received a package.

The Lobbyist Registrar wrote to the firm to advise them that the provision of the package containing a cookie and a letter to City public office holders was an apparent breach of the Lobbying By-law.

Paragraph 140-42A of the Lobbying By-law provides:

- *Lobbyists shall not undertake to lobby in a form or manner that includes offering, providing or bestowing entertainment, gifts, meals, trips or favours of any kind.*

Madam Justice Bellamy, Commissioner recommended in the *Report on the Toronto Computer Leasing Inquiry* (2005), at volume 2, page 86:

109. Outside of City procurement processes, ethically appropriate lobbying is permitted. However, at no time should lobbying take the form of entertainment or bestowing of gifts, meals, trips, entertainment, or favours of any kind on staff or councillors.

A member of the public would reasonably infer that the purpose of sending cookies to senior female public office holders at the City, coupled with a congratulatory letter celebrating the public office holder's contributions on the occasion of International Women's Day, was to create goodwill and raise the profile of the Capital Hill Group among these public office holders, to Capital Hill's special advantage as a lobbyist at the City. The gift appeared to be related to Capital Hill's undertakings to lobby at the City.

The Capital Hill Group apologized for sending the package and provided a list of those who received it. They attended a training session provided by OLR staff to ensure that they have an understanding of the City's Lobbying By-law. The OLR gave the cookies to a local charity. In the circumstances, no further action was required.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda L. Gehrke
Lobbyist Registrar, City of Toronto