



PRESENTATIONS & SPEECHES

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Opening remarks before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics

**Honourable Konrad W. von Finckenstein, C.M., K.C. –
Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner**
Ottawa, Ontario, April 16, 2024

Mr. Chair and honourable members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to speak with you about the Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's budgetary submission for 2024-2025.

With me are Sandy Tremblay, Director of Corporate Management and Melanie Rushworth, Director of Communications, Outreach and Planning.

First, I would like to thank you and all your fellow Members for having voted in favour of my permanent appointment.

The Commissioner's Office consists of around 50 professionals who are doing everything possible to ensure some 3,200 people subject to either the *Conflict of Interest Act* or the *Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons* avoid conflicts of interest.

I see the Office as having a two-fold purpose. One, to help public officials avoid and manage conflicts of interest. And two, to facilitate the movement of qualified people in and out of public service.

These principles reflect my approach to the role of Commissioner. Ultimately, the goal is to safeguard public confidence in the integrity of elected and appointed public officials.

All experienced and competent people will, over time, be exposed to potential conflicts of interest. To me, this means the credibility of the advice and guidance provided needs to be both helpful, innovative and timely.

Accordingly, you will see a change to our educational offerings throughout this year. Reflected in the Main Estimates request is an alignment of funding to ensure the continued growth of the educational and outreach functions of the Office. This will allow us to develop more tailored or subject-specific opportunities to meet the needs of those subject to either regime. These approaches will be online, in-person, and on-demand. In the near future, an online course specifically tailored to meet the needs of elected Members under the Code will be launched.

Reflecting our efficient approach, the Office budget for this year reflects an increase of just under 3%, which will mainly be used to offset some cost increases.

Melanie, Sandy and I would be happy to answer the Committee's questions about the Office, its finances and operations.