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Opening remarks before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry and Technology / SDTC

Honourable Konrad W. von Finckenstein, C.M., K.C. –
Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner
Ottawa, Ontario, September 15, 2025

Good morning.

With me at the table are Lyne Robinson-Dalpe, Director of Advisory and Compliance, and Melanie Rushworth, Director of Communications, Outreach and Planning.

I'm pleased to review the role and mandate of our Office.

We administer the *Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons* and the *Conflict of Interest Act* for appointed federal officials. Given the Committee's mandate, my remarks will focus on the Act.

Individuals subject to the Act are called "public office holders." They fall into two categories:

- Those appointed to full-time positions are called **reporting public office holders**. They must follow the Act's general conflict of interest rules, plus its reporting and public disclosure provisions.

This means they must give the Commissioner's Office detailed personal and financial information about themselves and, in some cases, their family. The Office keeps most of that information private. As required by the Act, specific information must be made public, in a reductive form. It is posted in the public registry.

- Those appointed to part-time positions are referred to simply as **public office holders**. They only have to follow the Act's general rules, and do not have reporting obligations.

Confidentiality and transparency are both key to our work.

Confidentiality encourages public officials to communicate freely and openly with us, and to ask us for advice when faced with a situation that may put them in a conflict of interest.

Transparency means we are as open as possible with Parliament and Canadians. This helps ensure the credibility of the Act and its administration.

Our work supports three key objectives:

- Foster public confidence that the actions of elected and appointed federal officials are free from conflicts of interest.
- Enable the most competent and qualified people to move in and out of public service without any problems, by helping them manage their conflicts of interest.
- Examine and report on allegations of conflicts of interest that involve elected or appointed federal officials.

Our tools include one-on-one interface with public officials, live educational sessions, online training and investigations.

A lot of the Office's work is outlined in our latest annual reports that were tabled in Parliament in June. The report under the Act identifies six legislative changes that could help it function more effectively, and administer the Act more efficiently.

First, let the Lobbying Commissioner step in temporarily if there is no Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

Second, add "apparent" conflicts to public office holders' general duty to arrange their private affairs in a way that prevents conflicts of interest.

Third, allow some assets to be designated as exempt assets if they pose no risk of conflict of interest.

Fourth, allow public office holders to participate in matters affecting the private interests of their friends or relatives if those interests are the same as those of other members of the broad class they are part of. This would make the Act more consistent with the Code.

Fifth, let the Commissioner approve outside activities that don't conflict with a public office holder's official duties.

Sixth, raise the maximum administrative monetary penalties to stress the importance of meeting the Act's reporting requirements.

I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have for me today.