



PRESENTATIONS & SPEECHES

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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. –
Interim Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner**
Ottawa, Ontario, September 18, 2023

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and Members. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

Let me begin by acknowledging that our meeting space is on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people.

I feel privileged to have been asked by the Governor in Council to take on this role on an interim basis while a new Ethics Commissioner is sought. With me today is Lyne Robinson-Dalpe, Director of Advisory and Compliance.

I would like to thank the employees of the Office for continuing their work over the last six months in the absence of a Commissioner.

Transparency, integrity, and accountability are essential to the democratic process. The public needs to have faith in how decisions are made and implemented. For this reason, we have the *Conflict of Interest Act* and the *Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons*. It is my intention to administer these regimes in an open and transparent manner, in a climate of collaboration and mutual respect.

I look forward to engaging in thoughtful, constructive dialogue given the critical role this committee plays in the overall process. I am committed to fostering an environment of openness and communication, as the exchange of ideas produces the best results.

The need for an Ethics Commissioner is multifaceted. It extends beyond ensuring compliance and providing numbers. It also encompasses consideration of individual responsibility and ethical issues for individuals subject to the Act and the Code. The Ethics Commissioner acts as a moral compass, by providing guidance on decisions that challenge ethics or integrity, to ensure alignment with legal and societal standards.

In today's interconnected world, the actions of a public official have far-reaching consequences. Ethical missteps can lead to reputational damage, financial losses, and legal repercussions. Regulatees can seek guidance from the Commissioner on personal conflict of interest matters, to prevent compromising objectivity when personal and professional interests intersect. Hopefully by seeking counsel, public officials can make informed, ethical choices that foster trust, public transparency, and long-term success.

I will draw upon the expertise and the insights of my provincial and territorial counterparts who are already on the ground and who will certainly have useful insights and ideas. In fact, just after my appointment, I spent a couple of days at the annual meeting of the Canadian Conflict of Interest Network which allowed me to build valuable relationships and gain an insight into our common challenges.

In closing, I am eager to embark on this journey with all of you to serve Canadians and strengthen the foundations of our democracy. I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce myself today, and I look forward to further dialogue with you.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be pleased to answer your questions.