



## Unacceptable Gifts to Members of Parliament

I was recently asked by a Member whether it is permissible under the [\*Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons\*](#) to seek support from Enbridge Inc. in the form of barbecue services for an upcoming community event hosted by the Member in their riding.

In accordance with subsection 26(4) of the Code, I have decided to publish the opinion provided in this instance so that all Members can benefit from clear and consistent direction in support of the purposes and principles of the Code, which seeks to maintain and enhance public confidence and trust in the integrity of each Member and in the House of Commons.

I am of the view that the services Enbridge Inc. makes available free of charge through its Community Event Services program are benefits as defined in the Code, which include services or the use of property provided without charge or at less than their commercial value. They are therefore subject to the acceptability test set out in subsection 14(1) of the Code, which prohibits Members and their family members from accepting, directly or indirectly, any gift or other benefit that might reasonably be seen to have been given to influence the Members in the exercise of a duty or function of their office.

Since Enbridge Inc. is registered to lobby the House of Commons, and is frequently engaged in doing so, I am of the opinion that even if a particular Member has not personally been lobbied by Enbridge Inc., this benefit from Enbridge Inc. would not pass the Code's acceptability test, as it could be seen by a reasonable person to have been given to influence the Member in the exercise of their official duties. Therefore, Members should not accept barbecue services offered by Enbridge Inc.

While there is a general exception to the acceptability test for gifts or other benefits received as a normal expression of courtesy or protocol, or that are within the customary standards of hospitality that normally accompany a Member's position, gifts or other benefits offered by individuals or organizations that have or may have an interest in a matter that is before the House or one of its Committees will almost never be covered by this exception. Trinkets or favours of relatively little value, such as pens, notepads or key chains, would generally not reasonably be seen to have been given to influence a Member's decision-making.

I note that this opinion is not limited to Enbridge Inc. but would also apply to gifts or other benefits offered by any organization that is registered to lobby the House of Commons.

I encourage you to contact your advisor in my Office to obtain advice on any matter related to your compliance with the Code.

Mario Dion  
Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner

*Ce document est également disponible en français.*

<http://ciec-ccie.parl.gc.ca/>