

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Corporate Services
Date	Wednesday, March 4, 2026
Subject	Lobbyist Registry One Year Review

Recommendation

1. That the Lobbyist Registry One Year Review report, dated March 4, 2026, be received.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

On July 23, 2024, City Council approved a Lobbyist Registry By-law for the City of Guelph. The implementation of the by-law took place in two stages. Stage one, October 2024 to December 2024, was the implementation of the by-law without Section 7 penalties. The goal of stage one was to promote and provide education regarding the bylaw. Stage two, which began in January 2025, was the full implementation of the by-law with penalties. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the City of Guelph's Lobbyist Registry (the Registry) after its first year in effect.

Key Findings

As of January 20, 2026, 79 lobbyists have been registered, and 62 instances of lobbying have been submitted. Staff in the City Clerk's Office conducted a survey of all registered lobbyists, as well as public office holders (members of City Council and City staff), to seek their feedback and ideas for improvement. The Lobbyist Registrar, Suzanne Craig, was also consulted. Respondents had few suggestions and generally held positive views of interacting with the Registry.

Staff do not recommend any changes or updates to the Registry. Future reviews of the Registry will take place as part of the twice-per-term governance reviews conducted by the City Clerk's Office. The next governance review will be presented to City Council in the first half of 2027.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The establishment of a Registry in Guelph increases the accountability of elected officials and senior City staff, in keeping with the lead with accountability objective of the Future Guelph Strategic Plan.

Future Guelph Theme

Foundations

Future Guelph Objectives

Foundations: Lead with accountability

Financial Implications

None.

Report

The City of Guelph Registry has been in place since October 1, 2024 and is enforced by the Lobbyist Registrar, an independent officer of City Council. Suzanne Craig was appointed by City Council on July 23, 2024 as the Lobbyist Registrar.

The Registry is an important tool for strengthening transparency and trust in local government, complementing existing accountability measures. It creates a public record of individuals engaged in lobbying; detailing who they represent, who they meet with, and the issues they seek to influence. By making this information publicly available, the Registry helps residents better understand the connections between lobbyists and policymakers.

Much like the financial disclosures required of election candidates, the Registry offers insight into the interests and relationships shaping local decision-making. It compliments other municipal accountability initiatives, including conflict of interest disclosures and gift registries for elected officials. Together, these measures provide a more complete picture of the influences at play in local government and how individuals and organizations engage with those who hold public office.

Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the one-year review of the Registry, staff in the City Clerk's Office conducted a survey of lobbyist registry stakeholders. This included all registered lobbyists, City Council and staff from the City's Leadership Team, which includes the Executive Team and General Managers across the corporation. The survey was open for four weeks, from December 12, 2025, to January 9, 2026. 22 individuals responded to the survey. Of the 22 survey respondents, 86 per cent of respondents held favourable or neutral views regarding the Registry, with the majority indicating they find the Registry easy and fast to use, the information on the Registry website helpful and informative, and few changes were suggested. A few comments stood out:

- One comment related to allowing Lobbyists to register lobbying activity that occurs over a short period of time instead of on specific days; if multiple meetings on the same topic were occurring over a few days or a week, for example. This would make the process easier for lobbyists (they could meet with a public office holder several times in the same week and only enter it in the Registry once) but it would reduce transparency for the public. The City Clerk's Office will consider this feedback and examine ways to balance ease of use with transparency to the public. No change to the Lobbyist Registry By-law is needed

to action this request. The City Clerk has authority to modify Registry submission forms, as long as those changes comply with the by-law.

- A few comments indicated that more frequent updates and reminders relating to the Registry for members of Council and staff would be helpful. The City Clerk's Office will consider this feedback and examine ways to reach out to Council and staff regarding the Registry on a more frequent and proactive basis, including reminders and expanded information and training opportunities.

In addition to the stakeholders noted above, the Lobbyist Registrar was also consulted. The Registrar confirmed there have been no complaints regarding the Registry or the activities of lobbyists over the Registry's first year that would merit any changes to the by-law.

No Changes Recommended

Based on feedback from stakeholders and the Lobbyist Registrar, in addition to the professional opinion of staff, there are no changes recommended to the Lobbyist Registry By-law. The City Clerk's Office will continue to prioritize ease of registration and use to reduce the burden of engagement with the Registry for lobbyists, members of Council, staff and the wider community. Future reviews of the Registry will be completed as part of the regular twice-per-term governance reviews.

Financial Implications

The cost of administering the Registry is captured within existing departmental resources. The Registry has been built and maintained in-house, and no additional resources are required.

Consultations and Engagement

The City Clerk's Office conducted a survey of all registered lobbyists, members of City Council, and members of the City's Leadership Team, which includes the Executive Team and General Managers across the organization. Suzanne Craig, Lobbyist Registrar for the City of Guelph, was also consulted as part of the review.

Attachments

None.

Departmental Approval

None.

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