



O.R.L.

office of the
registrar
of lobbyists

BRITISH COLUMBIA

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

COALITIONS

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PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Notice

This document is for information purposes only and does not constitute a decision or finding by the Registrar of Lobbyists for British Columbia or their delegates. This guidance does not affect the powers, duties or functions of the Registrar of Lobbyists, or their delegates, regarding any investigation or other matter under the Lobbyists Transparency Act, respecting which the Registrar and their delegates will keep an open mind. Responsibility for compliance with the *Lobbyists Transparency Act* remains with each lobbyist.

This guidance document outlines the reporting requirements under the *Lobbyists Transparency Act* (LTA) for organizations that are coalitions and organizations that are members of coalitions. It deals primarily with the reporting requirements for organizations that are **members** of coalitions, because the reporting requirements for coalitions that carry on lobbying activities in BC are basically the same as the rules for any other organization that is lobbying in BC.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS FOR COALITIONS ENGAGED IN LOBBYING

The definition of “organization” in the LTA includes a coalition. Coalitions carrying out lobbying activities are subject to the same basic rules under the LTA as any other organization lobbying at the provincial government level in BC.

If an organization is a coalition and it is carrying on lobbying activities in BC, it must register and report its lobbying activities as required by the LTA.

Coalitions will need to submit a Registration Return and the Monthly Returns required to report lobbying activities under the LTA if they have employees, officers or directors who receive payment for their functions and lobby on behalf of the coalition at the provincial government level in BC, and if no exclusions apply¹.

For more information about registration requirements for organizations that are lobbying, please see the ORL’s guidance on [Organizations](#).

¹ For more information on exclusions that apply to all organizations, see Guidance for not-for-profit organizations on the *Lobbyists Transparency Act*
<https://www.lobbyistsregistrar.bc.ca/handlers/DocumentHandler.ashx?DocumentID=397>

If a coalition hires a consultant lobbyist to lobby on its behalf, the consultant lobbyist will need to submit a Registration Return and the Monthly Returns required to register those lobbying activities, as they would for any client.

Example
<p>Members of our business sector have formed a working group/coalition to lobby for initiatives that will help us through challenges posed by COVID-19. Some of our member organizations have their own registrations in the Lobbyists Registry. Do we need a separate registration as a coalition?</p> <p>Yes, if the working group/coalition has an “in-house lobbyist”: an employee, officer or director of the coalition who receives payment for their work and who lobbies at the provincial government level on behalf of the group. Payment does not need to come directly from the coalition. For example, an executive officer of a member organization who carries out lobbying activities on behalf of the group, in addition to their duties with their base employer, is considered an in-house lobbyist for the coalition.</p>

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE MEMBERS OF COALITIONS

The LTA has separate reporting requirements for organizations that are members of coalitions, where the organizations are also engaged in lobbying activities of their own.

What are the reporting requirements for organizations that are members of coalitions?

The LTA requires organizations that are lobbying at the provincial level in BC, and are also members of a coalition that is lobbying about related matters, to include the name and business address of each member of the coalition in their Registration Return.

The same requirement applies to registrations by consultant lobbyists, if their client is a member of a coalition that is lobbying about related matters. The consultant lobbyist must include the name and business address of each member of the coalition in their Registration Return.

For the purposes of the reporting requirement in section 4(1)(h) of the LTA, a coalition may be an informal, ad-hoc or temporary alliance formed to lobby about one or a few related issues.

Here are two common questions about what constitutes a coalition for the purposes of the reporting requirement in section 4(1)(h):

1. How is a coalition different from a network?

Groups such as networks that merely share values and information and do not engage in lobbying activities at the provincial government level in BC are not considered coalitions for the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA.

Note: This changes if an information-sharing network starts to lobby in BC. At that point, the member organizations that are themselves lobbying must include the name and business address of each member of the coalition in their own Registration Returns.

2. How is a coalition different from an association?

Associations may be incorporated or unincorporated. An organization that is incorporated (including a registered society, incorporated co-operative and any other incorporated organization) is not considered a coalition for the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA.

An organization that is unincorporated but has characteristics such as an elected or appointed board of directors, membership fees and structure, a regular meeting schedule, offers its members other benefits in addition to lobbying in BC, and is organized with a view to a longer-term existence, is a membership-based association that would not be considered a coalition for the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA.

In contrast, an organization that is more of an ad-hoc or temporary alliance formed to lobby about one or a few related issues, without an effort to move toward the structure of a member-based association, would be considered a “coalition” for the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA.

Note: Like any other organization, an association that is engaged in lobbying activities in BC must submit a Registration Return and Monthly Returns to report its own lobbying activities.

Summary: The following are **not** considered coalitions for the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA. If they are lobbying, they need to register their own lobbying activities. However, member organizations do not need to list them in their own Registration Returns.

Network only	The organization is a network whose members share values and information, but the organization is not carrying on its own “lobbying activity,” as defined in the LTA, at the provincial government level in BC.
Incorporated	The organization is incorporated in BC or incorporated under legislation in another jurisdiction. (Note: If an incorporated organization is lobbying in BC, it will be required to register its own lobbying activities under the LTA. However, members of an incorporated organization that are carrying on their own lobbying activities are not required to identify the organization as a coalition in their own registrations.)
Unincorporated membership-based associations	The organization is unincorporated but has characteristics of a member-based association, such as: an elected or appointed board of directors; membership fees and structure; a regular meeting schedule; it is organized with a view to a longer-term existence; and offers its members other benefits in addition to lobbying in BC. (Note: If an unincorporated organization is lobbying in BC, it must register its own lobbying activities under the LTA. However, members of an unincorporated organization that are carrying on their own lobbying activities are not required to identify the organization as a coalition in their own registrations.)
No “in-house lobbyists”	The coalition has no “in-house lobbyists” as defined in the LTA: it has no employees, officers or directors who lobby on behalf of the organization and who receive payment for the performance of their functions, whether the payment is from the coalition or from another source.

REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE MEMBERS OF COALITIONS

My client or organization is carrying on its own lobbying activities and is a member of a coalition. What information about the coalition am I required to include in my Registration Return?

For the purposes of section 4(1)(h) of the LTA, consultant lobbyists and organizations that are carrying on their own lobbying activities are required to list the name and business address of each member of a coalition to which the client or organization belongs, if the subject matter of the lobbying activities by the coalition is related to the subject matter of the lobbying activities by the member organization.

My client or organization is a member of a coalition. We also carry out our own lobbying activities, so we have our own Registration Return. Are there any circumstances in which we do not need to report coalition membership information in our own Registration Return?

Members of a coalition are not required to report their membership in a coalition if the subject matter of the lobbying activities carried out by the coalition is unrelated to the subject matter of the lobbying activities carried out by the organization or client.

Examples

My organization is a member of a coalition, but my organization does not carry out any lobbying activities of its own through in-house lobbyists or consultant lobbyists. Does my organization need to register?

No. Your organization would only need to register if it was carrying out lobbying activities on its own behalf through its own in-house lobbyists. If your organization hired a consultant lobbyist to lobby on behalf of your organization, the consultant lobbyist would be required to register those lobbying activities.

Our organization is a member of a coalition that is lobbying. In addition, employees, officers and directors of our organization are carrying on separate lobbying activities on behalf of our own organization. Does our organization need to register?

Yes. If your organization is carrying on its own lobbying activities, on its own behalf and through its own in-house lobbyists, it is required to register and report those activities separately. In this scenario, your organization must include the name and business address of each member of the coalition in your Registration Return.

My organization endorsed or signed on to a letter written by another organization that is registered to lobby in BC. The content of the letter qualifies as a lobbying activity. Does my organization need to register this activity?

No. The act of signing or endorsing a letter itself does not need to be registered.

However, if the letter is communicated to a public office holder, the organization that communicates it to a public office holder would report the letter as a lobbying activity in its own Registration Return. This organization must also ensure that its own Registration Return lists the name and business address of all signatories as members of a coalition of which this organization is a member.

If the letter was sent to a senior public office holder, the organization that sent this letter would also need to file a Lobbying Activity Report that this was a coalition activity, and declare all the members of the coalition that participated in the lobbying activity in the Lobbying Activity Report.

Transparency is achieved when the organization that sent the letter reports the lobbying activity and provides the names and business addresses of the members of the coalition.

The public is able to search for member organizations and see both the Registration Returns and the Lobbying Activity Reports associated with them. This also reduces the administrative work for organizations acting in coalition by permitting the coalition activity to be entered once by the organization that communicates the letter instead of by each coalition member.

What if I don't know whether my client or organization is a member of a coalition?

Due diligence is required. If in doubt, Designated Filers need to find out whether the client or organization is a member of a coalition as described in this guidance document. If the subject matter of the lobbying activities by the coalition is related to the subject matter of the lobbying activities by the member organization, the Designated Filer will need to list the names and business addresses of each member of the coalition in the organization's Registration Return.

QUESTIONS ABOUT COALITIONS AND LOBBYING

If you have questions about coalitions and lobbying, or are not sure whether an organization would be considered a coalition for the purposes of the LTA, please email a brief description of the circumstances, together with your question, to the Office of the Registrar of Lobbyists for BC at info@bcorl.ca.