



Office of the Ethics Commissioner

Sponsored Tours offered to MLAs

2017

This bulletin provides information about participating in sponsored tours and is designed to clarify the circumstances in which Members may appropriately accept such offers.

Is a sponsored tour a gift that has to be disclosed?

The Conflicts of Interest Act prohibits Members from accepting a gift given in connection with the performance of their duties of office, unless given as an incident of protocol or social obligations.

An expense-paid tour to which a Member receives an invitation is considered a gift and, if approved, must be reported.

Can an offer to participate in a sponsored tour be accepted?

From time to time Members may receive invitations to take part in a tour for which all, or a substantial portion, of their expenses are paid for by a third party. Members must demonstrate that participating in the tour will allow them to become better informed regarding subject matters closely related to their official duties and that acceptance of the tour is an instance of protocol or of social obligation that normally accompanies the Member's office.

What factors are considered?

Members are encouraged to request the Ethics Commissioner's opinion before accepting an invitation to participate in any tour for which the costs are partially or entirely paid for by a third party. If expenses paid will total \$400 or more, prior permission must be sought from the Ethics Commissioner and the tour, if allowed to be taken, will be noted on the Member's public disclosure statement.

Tours within the province and within Canada are more likely to be approved than tours to other countries.

The onus is on the Member to advise the Ethics Commissioner of the invitation and provide supporting documentation as far in advance as possible with respect to the following:

Rationale for trip

Provide the destination, date of the trip and reason for the trip.

Who is providing the tour?

Provide the name and some background information about the sponsor. Generally, invitations from a governmental, professional or public interest body will more readily be approved than invitations from a corporate or commercial enterprise. Tours offered by foreign governments should be avoided.

Does the tour have an educational purpose?

Provide a copy of the letter of invitation, brochures, etc. and any other information describing the purpose of the tour. The letter of invitation should indicate why the Member was asked specifically to participate. Note if there are any required duties (e.g. speech, presentation).

Is the subject matter of the tour directly linked to Member's duties of office?

Describe how the subject matter of the tour relates to the Member's legislative or caucus committee role, or a particular issue facing the Member's constituency. Indicate how the tour fits into an incident of protocol or social obligation that normally accompanies the duties of a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Details about the tour

Provide a detailed agenda or schedule of events, including (as far as possible) the names of individuals or organizations with whom the Member will be meeting. While some socializing and networking sessions are appropriate, most events and activities should provide a learning opportunity for the Member or the opportunity to promote Alberta.

Cost

What is the total value of the tour being offered (flights, accommodations, extra events, hospitality)?

How is the public interest served?

Describe how the information learned or relationship developed will benefit the Member's constituents or Albertans in general. Note if there are any follow-up activities planned (e.g. report to committee, presentation in constituency).