

## Everybody's lobbying Harper on the budget; From pharmacare to fertilizer, all want some benefit

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Corporate tax breaks, relief on golf fees, support for hydrogen and natural gas vehicles, streamlined pipeline approvals and revamped environmental policies - these are just a handful of the goodies requested of the Conservative government in the lead-up to the March 29 federal budget.

Records from the federal lobbyist registry show the energy, auto, agriculture, aviation and academic sectors - among many others - all have been delivering a long wish list of policies and programs to Prime Minister Stephen Harper in the months heading into what's expected to be an austerity budget.

Combined, Harper and his inner circle have held hundreds of private meetings over the past few months with companies, unions, umbrella lobby groups and many other organizations trying to influence government as it prepares the annual fiscal blueprint. But that's only a small aspect of the lobbying that goes on in federal government circles.

Most meetings initiated by members of Parliament don't need to be reported in the lobbyist registry, nor does written communication, such as letters or emails.

Updated lobbyist registrations shed light on some of the policies, programs and regulations discussed with ministers from various government departments over a series of tête-à-têtes, including those leading up to the budget.

Harper has been lobbied more than a dozen times over the past three months, according to records from the federal registry:

- The Association of Consulting Engineering Companies lobbied Harper on infrastructure. The group is calling for additional spending on capital projects and "a long-term and sustainable level on infrastructure funding,";
- Pharmaceutical company Sanofi-Aventis Canada lobbied Harper on "science and technology" in its most recent meeting and has discussed drug regulations for therapeutic products and the pricing of patented drugs, among other matters;
- The Canadian Fertilizer Institute recently met with Harper and is seeking changes to Canadian environmental protection regulations, "fair and equitable taxation in the manufacturing sector," and a review of the ammonium nitrate code of practice;
- The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has asked Harper and his government to create an advisory committee on small business and entrepreneurship, and to address "the inequity between public and private-sector pensions,";
- The Canadian Auto Workers met recently with Harper and are seeking a national universal pharmacare program, expanding the Canada Health Act and increasing benefits for the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security; and
- Ford Motor Co. of Canada is seeking cash from the \$250-million automotive innovation fund and a program "to promote the production of hydrogen-fuelled vehicles."