



Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators

DIRECTIVE 2024-01

Friendship Groups (section 5 and paragraphs 28(1)(c) and 31(1)(c))

Pursuant to subsection 37(2) of the *Ethics and Conflict of Interest Code for Senators* (the Code), the Standing Committee on Ethics and Conflict of Interest for Senators (the Committee) directs the Senate Ethics Officer (SEO) to interpret, apply and administer the Code in accordance with this directive.

Given by the Committee on Monday, July 8, 2024.

Directive

Participation in a friendship group does not constitute participation in an outside activity for the purposes of section 5 of the Code. A senator is therefore not required to disclose participation in a friendship group to the SEO under paragraph 28(1)(c), nor does that participation need to be disclosed in a senator's public disclosure summary under paragraph 31(1)(c).

For the purposes of this directive, a **friendship group** means a group

- (a) that requires that its Canadian membership consist of a majority of sitting parliamentarians; and
- (b) whose purpose is to engage in parliamentary diplomacy.

It also includes any group listed by the International and Interparliamentary Affairs Directorate (IIA) as a "Friendship Group" on the Parliament of Canada's Parliamentary Diplomacy website, as that website is updated from time to time.

Explanatory Note

Section 5 of the Code states that senators may participate in any outside activities if they comply with the principles of the Code and fulfill their obligations under it. The term "outside activities" is not defined, but it generally refers to activities not falling within a senator's parliamentary functions.

Subsection 28(1) of the Code requires a senator to confidentially disclose information to the SEO, including information in relation to their outside activities, such as "any associations and not-for-profit organizations in which the Senator or the Senator's spouse or common-law partner is a director, officer, or patron, including memberships on advisory boards and any honorary positions" (paragraph 28(1)(c)). This information must then be disclosed publicly as part of the senator's public disclosure summary under paragraph 31(1)(c).

The Committee considers parliamentary diplomacy to be an important part of a senator's parliamentary functions even if it is conducted by or through a group not receiving administrative or financial support from the Parliament of Canada. This directive clarifies that friendship groups do fall within a senator's parliamentary functions; therefore, they do not constitute an outside activity under section 5. As such, a senator is not required to disclose participation in a friendship group to the SEO under paragraph

28(1)(c), nor does that participation need to be disclosed in a senator's public disclosure summary under paragraph 31(1)(c).

While participation in friendship groups does not constitute an outside activity for the purposes of section 5 of the Code, senators remain subject to any other applicable provisions of the Code in relation to their participation in friendship groups, including sections 8, 9, 10, 17 and 18.