



Political Activities and You

Thinking about...

Joining a political party?

Making a donation?

Helping out in a
political campaign?

Your right as a federal public servant to engage in political activities

The new *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) recognizes your right to engage in political activities. However, these activities must not impair, or be perceived as impairing, your ability to perform your duties in a politically impartial manner.

What is a “political activity”?

Under the new PSEA, a political activity includes:

- any activity in support of, within or in opposition to a political party;
- any activity in support of, or in opposition to, a candidate before or during an election period; or
- seeking nomination before or during the election period, or being a candidate.

Here are a few examples of political activities:

- speaking at a political meeting;
- fundraising for a political organization;
- working for a political candidate; or
- wearing a campaign button.

Thinking about engaging in a political activity?

Before deciding whether to engage in a political activity, you should consider the following factors:

- the nature of the activity;
- the nature of your duties (type of decisions you make and how they affect others, your contacts with ministers or their staff); and
- the level and visibility of your position.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) oversees the political impartiality of the public service. Consult its Web site for a guidance document, frequently asked questions and a self-assessment tool. The tool will help you assess whether a particular activity could impair your ability to perform your duties in a politically impartial manner.

For further advice, talk to your manager, your organization’s designated political activities representative, your head of human resources or your union representative.

Thinking about becoming a candidate in an election?

To be a candidate in a federal, provincial, territorial or municipal election, you must first receive permission from the PSC.

You must submit your request for permission to the PSC no later than 30 days before the date you plan to engage in such activities. You can make a public announcement of your intention to be a candidate only after the PSC has granted you permission.

When reviewing your request, the PSC will consider such factors as the nature of the election, the nature of your duties and the level and visibility of your position.

To be a candidate in a federal, provincial or territorial election, you need to request leave without pay (LWOP). In all other cases, the PSC will decide if LWOP is required.

If you are elected in a federal, provincial or territorial election, you will cease to be an employee of the public service. If you are elected municipally, the PSC may authorize you to continue to work, impose LWOP or decide if you must cease to be employed in the public service.

What else should you think about?

Anyone¹ may make an allegation of improper political activity by federal public servants to the PSC for investigation (the form is available on the PSC Web site). Running for office without the PSC’s permission would be an example of an improper political activity.

A founded allegation of improper political activity may lead to corrective action, up to and including dismissal of the employee.

Activities that do not fall under the definition of political activity may be subject to the *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service* (Code) (<http://www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/veo-bve/>) and could, therefore, be a concern for reasons unrelated to the new PSEA. Such activities may violate the Code because of the duty of every public servant to uphold the public service’s integrity, objectivity and impartiality.

Where can you get more information?

If you have questions or need more information, please contact your organization’s designated political activities representative.

Consult the PSC Web site to find out more about:

- the Guidance Document and the Political Activity Self-Assessment Tool;
- how to request permission to be a candidate; or
- how to make an allegation of improper political activity.

Web site: www.psc-cfp.gc.ca

E-mail: pa-ap@psc-cfp.gc.ca

Toll free number: 1 866 707-7152

¹ Only a person who is or was a candidate in an election may make an allegation that a deputy head contravened the new PSEA.