

General Conduct Principles of Public Appointees

Government appointees are expected to meet high standards of conduct which enhance and maintain public confidence in the operation of BC's public agencies, boards and commissions. They must act to instill public confidence in their actions and decisions.

Who is affected?

These guidelines apply to anyone appointed by the provincial government to any agency, board or commission operating in BC, unless they are already subject to ethical guidelines specifically created by government specifically for their particular agency, board or commission, or are appointed to act as a consequence of being a government employee.

How do the guidelines work?

The provincial government respects the independence of its agencies, boards and commissions. It appreciates the efforts and willingness to serve of dedicated individuals.

It also expects all government appointees to agencies, boards and commissions to work within these guidelines.

Specific agencies, boards or commissions may have their own explicit needs, guidelines or standards. If no such standards yet exist, public bodies are encouraged to design their own.

The chair or registrar of an agency, board or commission, or government itself may take action if these guidelines are breached. Such action may include dismissal, suspension, reprimand, warning or other sanction.

When and where possible, appointees or their chair or registrar may seek the opinion of provincial government staff with whom their particular board works, for clarification or resolution of any matter.

Conflict of Interest

Appointees must avoid any conflict of interest that might impair or impugn the independence, integrity or impartiality of their agency, board or commission. There must be no apprehension of bias, based on what a reasonable person might perceive.

Appointees who are in any doubt must disclose their circumstances and consult with their chair or registrar.

In practical terms, appointees should ensure that:

- All personal financial interest, assets and holdings are distinct from and independent of any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by their particular agency, board or commission.
- Activities undertaken as a private citizen are kept separate and distinct from any responsibilities held as a member of an agency, board or commission.
- Activities undertaken as a member of an agency, board or commission are kept separate and distinct from any activities undertaken as a private citizen.
- They remain impartial at all times towards individuals who deal with their agency, board or commission and as a member avoid taking any action that may result in preferential treatment for any individual.
- Personal employment is not dependent on any decision, information or other matter that may be heard by or acted upon by the agency, board or commission.
- Other memberships, directorships, voluntary or paid positions or affiliations remain distinct from work undertaken in the course of performing their duties as public appointees.

- Actions taken in the course of performing duties as public appointees neither cause nor suggest the reality or perception that their ability to perform or exercise those duties has been or could be affected by private gain or interest.

Other Guidelines

While acting as a member of an agency, board or commission, appointees are expected to abide by the following:

- *Integrity*

Appointees are expected to act at all times in good faith and with honesty and due diligence, for the public interest.

- *Participation and Preparation*

Appointees are expected to regularly attend meetings and to adequately prepare for the duties expected of them.

- *Behaviour*

The conduct and language of appointees must be free from any discrimination or harassment prohibited by the *Human Rights Code*.

Appointees' conduct should reflect social standards of courtesy, respect and dignity.

- *Confidentiality*

Appointees must not reveal or divulge confidential information (defined as that which cannot be obtained from other sources) received in the course of their duties.

Confidential information must not be used for any purpose outside that of undertaking the work of the agency, board or commission to which they have been appointed.

- *Public Commentary*

Appointees must comply with the public comment protocols established by their particular agency, board or commission.

If none exist, appointees must refer to the chair for guidance before making public comment on agency, board or commission matters.

- *Private Gain*

Agency, board or commission work should not result in any personal or private financial or other substantive gain for public appointees. (Private gain does not include honouraria for service on an agency, board or commission.).

- *Duty to Inform*

Appointees must inform the chair of their agency, board or commission of any circumstance that may have a negative or harmful effect on their respective abilities to perform the duties required of their appointments.