



**OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR
INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER OF CANADA**

VALUES AND ETHICS CODE

Tell us.
You are protected.

Office of the Public Sector
Integrity Commissioner
of Canada



Commissariat à l'intégrité
du secteur public
du Canada

The Code is available on our Web site at: www.psic-isp.gc.ca

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PREAMBLE

Federal public servants have a fundamental role to play in serving Canadians, their communities and the public interest under the direction of the elected government and in accordance with the law. As professionals whose work is essential to Canada's well-being and the enduring strength of the Canadian democracy, public servants uphold the public trust.

The Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada (the Office) is an independent agent of Parliament, reporting directly to the House of Commons and the Senate. The Office provides a safe and secure place, where public servants and members of the public can make protected disclosures of wrongdoing in the federal public sector and where federal public servants and former federal public servants can bring complaints of reprisal. The Office plays an important role, as an independent body, in fostering trust in public institutions and responding to wrongdoing and reprisal in the federal public sector.

The Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada Values and Ethics Code was developed in consultation with employees of the Office and reflects the unique nature of our work as an independent agent of Parliament. This code encompasses the principles and requirements of the *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector*.

The world pandemic of 2019 caused a dramatic shift in the federal public service with the adoption of wide-scale work from home for the majority of public servants over a prolonged period. The *Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada Values and Ethics Code* serves as a compass for the Office in navigating the transition into a new and continually evolving hybrid working model.

APPLICATION

This Code outlines the values and expected behaviours that guide all employees of the Office in all activities related to their professional duties. By committing to the *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector* and organizational codes, public servants strengthen the ethical culture of the public sector and contribute to public confidence in the integrity of all public institutions. Likewise, by adhering to the values and expected behaviours in our organizational code, we strengthen both the ethical culture and trust in our Office.

Acceptance of these values and adherence to the expected behaviours is a condition of employment for every employee of the Office, regardless of their level or position. A breach of these values or behaviours may result in disciplinary measures being taken, up to and including termination of employment.

Management must ensure that this Code had been provided to and discussed with all new employees of the Office. However, every employee is responsible for familiarizing themselves with this Code.

VALUES AND EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS

These values are a compass to guide us in everything we do, as public servants and employees of the Office. They cannot be considered in isolation from each other as they will often overlap. The *Office of the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner of Canada Values and Ethics Code* is an important source of guidance for us. The Office is expected to take steps to integrate these values into our decisions, actions, policies, processes and systems. Similarly, we can expect to be treated in accordance with these values by our organization.

The values of the Office are based on the federal public sector values of:

- I. Respect for democracy
- II. Respect for people
- III. Integrity
- IV. Stewardship
- V. Excellence

The Office has identified some additional values that are integral to our work:

- VI. Impartiality
- VII. Confidentiality

I. RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY

The system of Canadian parliamentary democracy and its institutions are fundamental to serving the public interest. Public servants recognize that elected officials are accountable to Parliament, and ultimately to the Canadian people, and that a non-partisan public sector is essential to our democratic system.

Public servants shall uphold the Canadian Parliamentary democracy and its institutions by:

1. Respecting the rule of law and carrying out their duties in accordance with legislation, policies and directives in a non-partisan and impartial manner.
2. Loyal carrying out the lawful decisions of their leaders and supporting Ministers in their accountability to Parliament and Canadians.¹
3. Providing decision-makers with all the information, analysis and advice they need, always striving to be open, candid and impartial.

At the Office, this also means:

¹ As an independent agent of Parliament that is accountable directly to Parliament.

4. Playing a key role in enhancing the confidence of Canadians in the integrity of public servants and public institutions, as they form our parliamentary democracy, by providing an independent response to wrongdoing and reprisal in the public sector.
5. Providing the same service to Canadians regardless of which political party or parties form Government.

It is important to be able to recognize what unacceptable behaviours are so that we can avoid these. These behaviours harm the workplace atmosphere and have a direct impact on productivity and employee well-being. Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of respect for democracy** such as: openly demonstrating support for a political party; and using government property for political activities.

II. RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

Treating all people with respect, dignity and fairness is fundamental to our relationship with the Canadian public and colleagues, and it contributes to a safe and healthy work environment that promotes engagement, openness and transparency. The diversity of people and the ideas they generate are the source of our innovation.

Public servants shall respect human dignity and the value of every person by:

1. Treating every person with respect and fairness.
2. Valuing diversity and the benefit of combining the unique qualities and strengths inherent in a diverse workforce.
3. Helping to create and maintain safe and healthy workplaces that are free from harassment and discrimination.
4. Working together in a spirit of openness, honesty and transparency that encourages engagement, collaboration and respectful communication.

At the Office, this also means:

5. Demonstrating respect and empathy toward disclosers, complainants, and all persons involved in our proceedings.
6. Promoting a respectful and accessible work environment.

Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of respect for people** such as: Tolerating abusive behaviour by others; Criticizing colleagues in front of others; showing disrespect for diverse opinions or beliefs; and bullying of any kind.

III. INTEGRITY

Integrity is the cornerstone of good governance and democracy. By upholding the highest ethical standards, public servants conserve and enhance public confidence in the honesty, fairness and impartiality of the federal public sector.

Public servants shall serve the public interest by:

1. Acting at all times with integrity, and in a manner that will bear the closest public scrutiny, an obligation that may not be fully satisfied by simply acting within the law.
2. Never using their official roles to inappropriately obtain an advantage for themselves or to advantage or disadvantage others.
3. Taking all possible steps to prevent and resolve any real, apparent or potential conflicts of interest between their official responsibilities and their private affairs in favour of the public interest.
4. Acting in such a way as to maintain their employer's trust.

At the Office, this also means:

5. Seeking to serve as examples of proper conduct for public servants and model the standard to which the Office holds itself and others, as mandated by the *Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act* (the Act).

Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of integrity**: Showing favouritism, bias or preferential treatment; acting in bad faith; and Intentionally misleading colleagues.

IV. STEWARDSHIP

Federal public servants are entrusted to use and care for public resources responsibly, for both the short term and long term.

Public servants shall use resources responsibly by:

1. Effectively and efficiently using the public money, property and resources managed by them.
2. Considering the present and long-term effects that their actions have on people and the environment.
3. Acquiring, preserving and sharing knowledge and information as appropriate.

At the Office this also means:

4. Our transactions, including purchasing, contracting and travel, can withstand scrutiny at all times.

Below are some examples of behaviours to avoid in demonstrating the value of stewardship such as signing approval without proper delegation; misuse of public funds and fraud.

V. EXCELLENCE

Excellence in the design and delivery of public sector policy, programs and services is beneficial to every aspect of Canadian public life. Engagement, collaboration, effective teamwork and professional development are all essential to a high-performing organization.

Public servants shall demonstrate professional excellence by:

1. Providing fair, timely, efficient and effective services that respect Canada's official languages.
2. Continually improving the quality of policies, programs and services they provide.
3. Fostering a work environment that promotes teamwork, learning and innovation.

At the Office, this also means:

4. Striving to bring rigour and timeliness as we produce high-quality work, and to balance these.
5. Ensuring that each of us develops our skills and abilities, acquires appropriate training, and remains abreast of best practices in our fields of expertise. Similarly, we transfer knowledge and corporate memory to new employees.
6. Demonstrating through our actions the right to procedural fairness and natural justice of all persons involved in our proceedings.
7. Ensuring a high level of quality of materials produced in both official languages.
8. Supporting the Commissioner in his statutory decision-making power and in fulfilling the purpose of the *Act*.

Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of excellence** such as: deliberately causing delays through procrastination; including unprofessional language in written communications; and not practising due diligence.

VI. IMPARTIALITY

The Office is an independent agent of Parliament and, as such reports directly to Parliament. The independence of the Office and our ability to report publicly before a Parliamentary committee is vital to our role. We arrive at impartial and objective conclusions and recommendations through independent investigations and case analysis. An independent office that responds to wrongdoing and reprisals in the federal public sector is integral to the Government of Canada's protected disclosure regime and fosters integrity in the public sector and trust in the federal Public Service.

As employees of the Office, this means:

1. Serving the public interest by providing a response to disclosures of wrongdoing and to complaints of reprisal that is independent, rigorous, forthright, and free from political influence.
2. Providing an objective review of facts through case analyses, investigations, reports to Parliament, and referrals to the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal.
3. Being proactive in identifying situations that could lead to a real, possible, or perceived conflict of interest and taking appropriate action to safeguard the impartiality of our processes.
4. In proceedings before the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Tribunal, we must adopt the position and conduct ourselves in a manner that is always in the public interest having regard to the nature of the complaint.

Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of impartiality**: showing bias or preferential treatment; not disclosing a potential, real or perceived conflict of interest; and representing an interest other than the public interest.

VII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a cornerstone in establishing trust with potential disclosers and fostering cooperation in investigative processes.

We ensure confidentiality by observing the following expected behaviours:

1. Protecting, in accordance with the *Act* and to the extent possible under the law, the confidentiality of any information, that comes to an employee's knowledge in the performance of their duties under the *Act*, particularly the identity of disclosers.
2. Accessing information only if authorized to do so and if it is required for our work.
3. Adhering to strict procedures applicable to employees of the Office to protect sensitive information, including ensuring the security of information networks, electronic information, and documents entrusted to us.
4. Taking reasonable action, particularly with the adoption of a hybrid work model, to protect the confidentiality of our work whether on travel status, in the home or in the office.

Below are some examples of behaviours to **avoid in demonstrating the value of confidentiality**: Discussing confidential, personal, or sensitive information in social or public settings; travelling and/or taking public transportation with unsecured documents; and leaving documents unattended whether at home or in the office.

AVENUES FOR RESOLUTION

The expected behaviours are not intended to respond to every possible ethical issue that might arise in the course of our daily work. When ethical issues arise, employees of the Office are encouraged to discuss and resolve these matters with their immediate supervisor. They can also seek advice and support from other appropriate sources within their organization.

Public servants at all levels are expected to resolve issues in a fair and respectful manner and consider informal processes such as dialogue or mediation.

As provided by sections 12 and 13 of the *Act*, if public servants have information that could indicate a serious breach of this Code, they can bring the matter, in confidence and without fear of reprisal, to the attention of their immediate supervisor, their senior officer for disclosure or, in the case of our Office, to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

Senior officers for disclosure are responsible for supporting the chief executive in meeting the requirements of the *Act*. They help promote a positive environment for disclosing wrongdoing, and deal with disclosures of wrongdoing made by employees of the organization.

APPENDIX: SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This part of the *Code* provides specific guidelines related to expected behaviours for certain circumstances. Although not exhaustive, it addresses many situations we face on a daily basis.

USE OF INFORMATION

See *Access to Information Act* and *Privacy Act*.

As employees of the Office, we must comply with all legislation, directives and procedures relating to record management. Information under the control of the Office may be reviewed for access to information requests and privacy requests.

ELECTRONIC NETWORKS ACCESS AND USE

See the Treasury Board *Policy on the Use of Electronic Networks*.

The Office's electronic network supports a wealth of information and is a cost-effective tool for communications, service to the public, visibility, gathering job-related information and much more. We must use the network in accordance with Office security protocols, and be cautious not to expose the Office or ourselves to potential harm.

Limited personal use of the electronic network is permitted, provided it complies with all related legislation, policies and guidelines. This must not affect our productivity or that of our colleagues or impose a storage burden on computer systems. Examples of acceptable personal use during breaks and lunch time include limited online banking transactions, reading or writing personal emails or surfing the Web on acceptable sites.

Examples of unacceptable activity of the electronic network include use for private business, personal gain or profit, political activity, and sending abusive messages. Employees should remember that activity on the Office's electronic network can always be traced back to the user.

RESPECT AND COURTESY WHEN SERVING AND DEALING WITH CLIENTS

We interact frequently with disclosers, complainants, and stakeholders on behalf of the Office. Throughout our work with others, we must demonstrate professionalism and respect even in difficult situations or in the face of tense relations. Training is available to strengthen conflict management skills.

Similarly, we can expect to be treated with respect by our clients and stakeholders. When this is not the case, and where appropriate, we can request the other party(ies) to remain respectful. In most cases, we can even postpone an interaction to a later time, when tempers have cooled.

OFF-DUTY CONDUCT

Off-duty conduct is usually considered a private matter. However, it could become a work-related matter if it:

- Harms the reputation or operations of the Office;
- Leads others to refuse, be reluctant to, or be unable to work with us.

As public sector employees, we must consider the impact of our actions even outside the hours of our employment. Off-duty activities may sometimes reflect on both the Office and the Government of Canada, and affect the confidence and respect of the public.

SOME AVAILABLE RESOURCES

➤ *Informal Conflict Resolution*

Conflict resolution provides employees and managers with a confidential, neutral forum in which to discuss and resolve workplace conflicts before initiating a formal process, or after putting a formal process on hold to attempt to resolve the conflict informally. The Office has informal conflict resolution services available.

➤ *Senior Officer for Disclosure*

The senior officer for disclosure helps promote a positive environment for disclosing wrongdoing and deals internally with disclosures of wrongdoing made by public servants in their organization. The Office's senior officer for disclosure is responsible for supporting the Commissioner in meeting the requirements of the *Act*, with respect to internal disclosures.

➤ *Employee Assistance Program*

If we find ourselves in a challenging personal situation (i.e. difficulty managing time, health issues, substance abuse, relationship issues, etc.) that could affect our professional relationships or performance at work, it is important to speak to our manager or other advisors.

To help overcome personal challenges, we have access to the Employee Assistance Program. To access confidential counselling services, please call 1-800-268-7708 or 1-800-567-5803 (for persons with a hearing impairment).

➤ *Canada School of Public Service*

The Canada School of Public Service offers training on values and ethics which is mandatory for new employees. In addition, it offers a catalogue of courses available to PSIC employees to support them in their work such as training on dealing with difficult people and training on preventing violence and harassment in the workplace. Training can be accessed through the Canada School of Public Service Web site at the following web address: <https://csps-efpc.gc.ca>