



Political activities and you

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

Part 7 of the *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.

Knowing your legal obligations will help you make an informed decision.

Definition of a “political activity”

Under the 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 as, or being, a candidate in an election before or during the election period.

Here are some examples of political activities:

- speaking at a political meeting;
- fundraising for a political party;
- working for a political candidate;
- seeking nomination as, or being, a candidate in an election;
- wearing a campaign button; or
- using blogs, social networking sites, personal Web sites or video sharing to express personal views in support of, or in opposition to, a political party or candidate.

Engaging in a political activity

To assess whether a particular activity could impair or be perceived as impairing your ability to perform your duties in a politically impartial manner, you should:

- consider factors such as the nature of the activity, the nature of your duties and the level and visibility of your position;
- consult the Public Service Commission (PSC) Web site for a guidance document, frequently asked questions and a self-assessment tool; and
- talk to your manager or your organization’s designated political activities representative.

Political candidacy request

If you are an employee working for an organization subject to Part 7 of the PSEA, you must first receive permission from the PSC to seek nomination as, or be, a candidate before or during the election period.

You can make public your intention to be a candidate and undertake candidacy related activities only after the PSC has granted you permission.

For **federal, provincial or territorial elections**, you also need to request and obtain from the PSC a leave without pay (LWOP) for the election period, to seek nomination as, or be, a candidate. You will cease to be an employee of the public service on the day you are elected.

For **municipal elections**, the PSC may make the permission conditional on you taking a LWOP or ceasing to be an employee. Otherwise, you could continue to work as a public servant while seeking nomination as, or being, a candidate or if elected.

To ensure a timely decision, your request should be submitted to the PSC no later than 30 days before the date on which you require a decision from the Commission. Employees who do not provide complete information or who do not submit their candidacy request, prior to the minimum 30-day period may face the risk of a delay in obtaining a decision or the PSC being unable to grant permission.

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

Improper political activity

An allegation can be made to the PSC for investigation of improper political activity of federal public servants. Running for elected 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.

Activities that do not fall under the definition in political activity in the PSEA are subject to the applicable values and ethics code and code of conduct of your employer.

For more information

Please contact your organization's designated political activities representative.

You can also consult the PSC Political Activities Web site for:

- the list of organizations subject to Part 7 of the PSEA;
- the Guidance Document and the Political Activity Self-Assessment Tool;
- the list of designated political activities representatives;
- how to request permission or, if applicable, a LWOP from the PSC to seek nomination as, or to be, a candidate;
- how to make an allegation of improper political activity; or
- frequently asked questions.

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