



MINISTERS' STAFF GIFT RULE

As a public servant working in a minister's office, you are prohibited from accepting any gifts or benefits from a person, group or entity that has dealings, provides services to, or is seeking to do business with the Crown – that is, the Government of Ontario.*

There are limited exceptions to this rule.

The only allowable gifts are ones that a reasonable person would conclude:

1. are not meant to influence,
2. are nominal,
3. are offered as an expression of courtesy or hospitality, and
4. are reasonable under the circumstances.

Checking with the Office of the Integrity Commissioner is the best way to ensure accepting a gift is allowed under the rules.

Generally, employees working in a minister's office are able to accept the following:

- Complimentary attendance to an event, including meals or refreshments, when accompanying one's minister in his or her official duties
- A nominal gift such as a book, mug or pen given as thanks for participating on a conference panel or speaking at an event
- A nominal gift such as a pin or tote bag when attending an event or announcement at a school or local community organization
- Light refreshments or small samples at a reception or event hosted for all parties at Queen's Park by a government stakeholder
- Informational materials or a branded USB stick containing reports or research

Be wary of accepting gifts, including food and beverages, offered from any government stakeholder, even if they are from a not-for-profit or cultural group. This includes working or meet-and-greet lunches and tickets to speaking events or conferences. If you are attending an event in your minister's place, it is a good idea to get advice about whether you can accept any gifts or benefits that may be offered.

Contact the OIC to get advice when you are offered a gift or benefit.

When in doubt, it may be more appropriate to pay your own way or claim an allowable expense.

Every gift you do accept, subject to the limited exceptions listed above, must be disclosed to the OIC. You can find the gift disclosure form on our website.

** The gift rule can be found in section 4 of Ontario Regulation 382/07 of the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006.*

Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario

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MINISTERS' STAFF GIFT GUIDANCE

Item or Benefit Offered	Can it be Accepted?
Book, mug or pen as thanks for participating in a conference panel	✓
Pin, tote bag or t-shirt from a local school hosting a government announcement	✓
Light refreshments at a Queen's Park event	✓
Dinner at a restaurant with a stakeholder	✗
Small gift from a government official from another country	✓
Gift from an international company while on a trade mission	✗
Ticket to a cultural event from a stakeholder where the minister has an official role	✓
Ticket to a cultural event from a stakeholder - minister is not attending	Check with OIC

Tips when offered gifts

When working with stakeholders, be up front about your responsibilities as a public servant and the rules you must follow.

Plan ahead: when possible, have a short conversation with the stakeholder before an event to establish that gifts for staff members are not necessary and in many cases are not allowed.

When invited to a restaurant by a stakeholder, be clear from the start that you will pay for your meal.

The Office of the Integrity Commissioner is always available to provide direction when you have a question about a particular gift.

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