

# Office of the Integrity Commissioner



## POLITICAL ACTIVITY RULES

The political activity restrictions in Part V of the [Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006](#) strive to balance the neutrality of the public service with an individual's ability to engage in political activity.

### Political activity includes the following activities:

- Doing anything in support of or in opposition to a political party or a candidate;
- Becoming or seeking to become a candidate in a federal, provincial, or municipal election; or,
- Making public comments on any matter dealt with in the position or policy of a political party or candidate if comments are outside the scope of the public servant's duties and the matter is directly related to his/her duties.

### Public servants *cannot*:

- Engage in political activity in the workplace
- Use government premises, equipment or supplies for political activity
- Associate their position with political activity (unless as a candidate and then only to limited extent)
- Engage in political activity while wearing a government uniform

### What can public servants do?

Most public servants can engage in political activity outside of work. However, the following activities can be done only when on unpaid leave of absence:

- Be a federal or provincial candidate
- Comment publicly on matters dealt with in the position or policy of a political party or candidate if comments are outside the scope of the public servant's duties and the matter is directly related to his/her duties
- Solicit funds – leave of absence requirement only applicable if public servant supervises others or deals directly with the public
- Activities that could interfere with the public servant's duties or conflict with the interests of the Crown or public body



## Specially Restricted Public Servants

Under the Act, some public servants are design as Specially Restricted, based on their positions. Specially Restricted public servants can **only**:

- Vote
- Attend an all-candidate meeting
- Be a member of a political party<sup>1</sup>
- Donate money to a party or candidate<sup>1</sup>
- Be a municipal candidate<sup>2</sup>
- Campaign for a municipal candidate<sup>2</sup>

The Integrity Commission may authorize part-time specially restricted public servants to participate in other activities.

## Who are Specially Restricted Public Servants?

### In Ministries:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| • Directors                                   | • Assistant deputy ministers |
| • Deputy directors of a legal services branch | • Associate deputy ministers |
| • Crown attorneys                             | • Deputy ministers           |
| • Commissioned OPP officers and commanders    | • Secretary of the Cabinet   |

### In Public Bodies:

Appointees to the tribunals in [Ontario Regulation 377/07](#) are specially restricted public servants.

## When in doubt, contact your Ethics Executive

### For further information

Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario

[ethics@oico.on.ca](mailto:ethics@oico.on.ca)

416-314-8983

<sup>1</sup> Except deputy ministers and the Secretary of the Cabinet.

<sup>2</sup> Only if authorized by Ethics Executive.

This summary if provided for information only. For the authoritative text, refer to the *Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006* and its regulations.

