

BC Public Service - Ethics Scenarios

Scenario One

Julia is a provincial government employee who works in environmental policy. As a private citizen, Julia is also a member of an organization that lobbies the provincial government on environmental policy issues. She realizes at a monthly meeting that the lobby organization is discussing topics which are directly related to her work.

Prompts / coaching questions

- Why is this an issue?
- Is it appropriate for Julia to serve as a member of the organization? Why or why not?
- Can Julia speak at the meeting if her opinion differs from government policy?
- Who can help Julia make decisions on ethical choices?

Important information and resources

- Julia needs to understand the [Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees](#) in relation to the current situation.
- Under the Standards of Conduct, a conflict of interest occurs when an employee's private affairs or financial interests are in conflict, or could result in a perception of conflict, with the employee's duties or responsibilities.
- In this situation, there is potential for real or perceived conflict of interest between Julia's private interests and the discharge of her BC Public Service duties.
- It may not be appropriate for Julia to serve as an organization member unless expressly authorized to do so by the employer because there is potential for real or perceived conflict.
- It may be problematic for Julia to speak at the meeting if her opinion differs from government policy unless expressly authorized to do so by the employer.
- Employees have a duty of loyalty that requires they put the interests of the employer ahead of their own personal interests, and they must not jeopardize the perception of impartiality by making public comments or entering into public debate regarding ministry policies.
- Julia should review the Standards of Conduct and speak to her supervisor about her role in the organization. The supervisor may be able to help Julia minimize the potential for conflicts of interest.

Scenario Two

Anastasia, a junior financial analyst, notices that the funds allocated to a branch project are being misused on questionable items. She notifies her supervisor who is responsible for overseeing the project budget. Anastasia finds out that her supervisor is using the funds to purchase items for his new condominium. The items include personal computer equipment, a television and some kitchen appliances.

After Anastasia raises her concerns, she is told not to worry and to continue to process the purchases. Anastasia feels uncomfortable and isolated.

Prompts / coaching questions

- What are Anastasia's responsibilities in this situation?
- What is the process to report allegations or concerns?

Important information and resources

- Anastasia needs to understand the [Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees](#) in relation to the current situation.
- Under the Standards of Conduct, Anastasia has a duty to report any situation relevant to the BC Public Service that they believe contravenes the law, misuses public funds or assets, or represents a danger to public health and safety or a significant danger to the environment.
- Anastasia will not be subject to discipline or reprisal for bringing forward to a deputy minister, in good faith, allegations of wrongdoing.
- Anastasia can expect her allegations or concerns to be treated in confidence, unless disclosure of information is authorized or required by law (for example, the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)).
- Where an allegation involves a deputy minister, the employee must forward the allegation to the deputy minister to the Premier.
- Before considering the option of reporting an allegation of wrongdoing to a deputy minister, Anastasia is obliged to bring their concern to the attention of their immediate supervisor.
- In this case, the allegation relates to the supervisor, so Anastasia may make a detailed report on the issue to the next level of excluded management not directly involved in the matter.