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# Code of Conduct

## For appointees to a Property Assessment Review Panel

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It is expected that the Code of Conduct will be understood and adhered to by all appointees to a Property Assessment Review Panel (PARP). Being aware and vigilant of your actions and activities will ensure that you do not breach a principle of the Code of Conduct. Adherence to the Code of Conduct is paramount given the importance of your appointment and the trust, independence and impartiality expected of you in your role on PARP.

➤ **What is the basis for the code?**

An appointment to serve on a Property Assessment Review Panel means that the Minister responsible for PARP has entrusted the appointee with the responsibility to ensure that their actions and decisions instill in the public a high standard of confidence, trust and assurance in the PARP process.

➤ **Who is affected?**

This Code of Conduct applies to any person who is appointed to a Property Assessment Review Panel by the Minister responsible for the *Assessment Act*. Simply speaking, this Code of Conduct applies to all appointed Panel Members no matter whether designated as a Panel Chair, Member or Alternates and is applicable for the term of their appointment and any periods of reappointment.

➤ **How does this code work?**

Panel Members must exercise the degree of skill and diligence reasonably expected from an ordinary person of their knowledge and experience in complying with this Code of Conduct. What this means is that there is a higher expectation on appointees to comply with this Code than would be expected of someone not appointed as a Panel Member.

The PARP Administrator is responsible for ensuring that all Panel Members comply with the Code of Conduct. If an allegation of a breach of the Code is made, the PARP Administrator may take action to address the situation. If the claim of a breach is determined to be legitimate, necessary action may take the form of a reprimand, warning; suspension or dismissal, or other sanction to an individual Panel Member or an entire Panel if necessary.

➤ **Who can report a breach?**

A breach of the Code of Conduct can be reported to the PARP Administrator by one or more of the following:

- Government Agent
- Panel Chair
- Panel Member or Alternate
- BC Assessment Staff
- Member of the Public
- Staff of the PARP Administration Office

The PARP Code of Conduct consists of a number of Principles that appointees are required to adhere to as a Panel Member of an administrative tribunal in British Columbia.

### **Code of Conduct Principles:**

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Panel Members are obliged to avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict that may impair or deny the faithful, honest and impartial performance of their duties on a Panel.

A conflict of interest arises where an interest conflicts (or might conflict, or might be perceived to conflict) with the interests of the Property Assessment Review Panel.

A conflict of interest may take a number of forms:

- It may be financial or non-financial.
- It may be direct or indirect
- It may be professional or family related?

A conflict of interest may arise from: directorships or other employment; interests in business enterprises or professional practices; shared ownership; beneficial interests in trusts; existing professional or personal associations; professional associations or relationships with other organizations; personal associations with other groups or organizations; or family relationships.

The following are some practical points appointees should adhere to:

- Panel Members, and their close relatives and/or business associates, should at no time realize any personal or private financial or other substantive gain from the work of the Panel.
- Activities undertaken as a Panel Member must be kept separate and distinct from other activities undertaken as a citizen.
- Panel Members must not assist anyone in their dealings with their Panel as this could be perceived as providing preferential treatment.

A conflict of interest can be:

- Actual or real
- Perceived or apparent
- Foreseeable or potential

### **Integrity, Impartiality and Independence**

The principle of integrity, impartiality and independence requires that, at all times, an appointees actions reflect honesty, good faith, and due diligence. The concept of integrity, impartiality and independence apply to the Panel, Panel Members and the PARP process.

### **Collegiality (Behaviour)**

In the performance of roles and responsibilities, Panel Members are expected to take on a collegial approach in their conduct before, during and after a hearing. Conduct and language should reflect social standards of courtesy, respect and dignity and comply with the Human Rights Code regarding discrimination or harassment. This applies to interactions of a Panel Member with other Panel Members as well as the parties to a complaint and the general public.

### **Fairness and Objectivity**

By adhering to the principle of fairness, Panel Members will ensure that all parties are treated in a consistent manner day to day and Panel to Panel. Fairness applies to the treatment given to all parties to the hearing.

Panel Members will in good faith and to the best of his/her ability, remain objective and make decisions based on the merits of the evidence presented and the applicable law.

### **Participation and Availability**

By accepting an appointment to a Property Assessment Review Panel, appointees make a commitment to be available for all scheduled sitting days of their Panel. They also commit to completing any training required of Panel Members in accordance with the timelines set and adhere to laws, regulations and policies in place to guide the PARP process.

It is recognized that the schedule of sitting days for PARP is subject to change but all Panels will conduct hearings in February and/or March and be completed by no later than March 15 of any given year. It is also recognized that members get sick and may require an excused absence from one or more sitting days in a given year.

Unapproved absences or a lack of availability for numerous scheduled hearing days may be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct and action may be taken by the PARP Administrator. Such action could take the form of a formal discussion on availability or being moved to alternate status in a subsequent year or a request to resign.

### **Accountability**

Appointees to PARP must be accountable for their actions. Decisions and actions taken by a Panel must be consistent with the laws, regulations and policies that determine and guide the PARP process. Being accountable to all parties to a hearing is reflected in a reasoned decision that results from the evidence provided.

### **Confidentiality (Transparency) and Discretion**

All panel hearings are open to the public as required by the *Assessment Act*. In the course of panel work, appointees will come into contact with personal information of all parties to a complaint and/or others which are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Panel Members will not divulge or share information obtained as a result of their appointment unless legally required to do so, nor can information obtained through involvement on a Panel be used for personal gain or benefit.

### **Duty to Inform**

It is an appointee's responsibility to inform the PARP Administrator of any circumstances which may affect their, or another member of their Panels', ability to perform the duties required during the appointment.

### **Respect**

An appointee's attitude, actions, demeanour, language and overall behaviour should be respectful and attentive at all times.

### **Harassment and Bullying**

Panel members must not engage in any forms of harassment or bullying.

Harassment, according to the Canadian Human Rights Commission includes:

- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendo or taunting about a person's body, attire, age, marital status, gender, ethnic or religious origins;
- verbal abuse or threats;
- jokes or comments that contain racial slurs or biased overtones;
- offensive or derogatory language, gestures or pictures;
- leering or other gestures;
- unnecessary physical contact;
- unwelcome invitations or requests; and
- condescension or paternalism which undermines self-respect.

### **Employment and Affiliation**

The personal employment of a Panel Member must never be the result of a decision, action or activity from their involvement on PARP. Where an apparent, perceived or foreseeable conflict exists between personal employment and involvement on PARP, immediate action must be taken. This may simply mean that the appointee recues themselves (do not participate) from a particular hearing or if the issue is much larger, a request for transfer to a different Panel is made or other actions as determined by the PARP Administrator.

A Panel Member must ensure that other memberships, directorships, voluntary or paid positions, or personal or employment affiliations remain distinct and separate from involvement on PARP.