

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Public servants are naturally entitled to be active participants in community affairs and to fulfill their obligations as Canadian citizens. Given the nature of employment in the federal public service, however, the question of active political participation is inevitably a sensitive issue. Employment in the public service does not preclude political activity in certain circumstances and under prescribed procedures, but the non-partisan role of the Public Service is of fundamental importance, and all employees have a vested interest in keeping it so.

The *Public Service Employment Act* (Section 32, Sub-Section 1) stipulates that no employee shall "engage in work for, on behalf of or against a candidate for election as a member of the House of Commons, a member of the legislature of a province or a member of the Council of the Yukon Territory or the Northwest Territories, or engage in work for, on behalf of or against a political party". In elaboration, the Act adds that an employee does not contravene the above by attending political meetings or contributing funds to candidates or the political party of his/her choice. Under the Act employees should, however, refrain from more active partisan political activity, since such direct support for a candidate or a political party may prevent or appear to prevent an employee from carrying out his/her duties in an objective manner. It is for this reason that leave of absence without pay must be requested by an employee wishing to seek political office.

Similarly, no employee in his capacity of public servant should criticize government policy publicly. The responsibility for the orientation of policy resides with the government of the day and once it has been adopted, employees must be prepared to carry it out without personal public comment and to the best of their ability.

Candidature in Federal, Provincial or Territorial Elections

The *Public Service Employment Act* allows an employee to stand for election to the House of Commons, a provincial legislature or a territorial council, provided his candidacy does not impinge on his