

Title:	Standards of Conduct Policy		
Policy No.:	GPS-004	Responsible Executive:	Vice President, Human Resources
Effective/Version Date:	August 21, 2019	Date approved by Executive Committee:	August 21, 2019

1. REASON FOR POLICY

The purpose of this Code is to define and communicate the standards of conduct expected of all Employees and Commissioners of the Board of BC Housing.

2. WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY

This Code and the standards contained in it apply to all employees and Commissioners, contractors, service providers and volunteers who in the course of their duties would be expected at all times to adhere to the standards of this policy. This Code will be reviewed and acknowledged by all Employees, Commissioners, contractors, service providers, and volunteers every two years to ensure current knowledge and compliance.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Employees and Commissioners of the Board of BC Housing must uphold the highest standards of conduct in order to maintain and enhance the public's trust and confidence in BC Housing. Employees and Commissioners must be focused on positive outcomes for the citizens of British Columbia by delivering effective, cost-efficient public services and programs. Employees and Commissioners of BC Housing have a duty of loyalty to BC Housing. The fairness and the impartiality of Employees and Commissioners in the conduct of their duties must be exemplary and include honest and fair decisions that are consistently in the best interest of BC Housing.

3.1 INTERPRETATION

This Code sets out minimum standards of conduct. It is not possible to foresee every possible situation. The Code provides a framework of basic principles. Although presented separately, all principles and requirements are interconnected. For example, the principle of trustworthiness is fundamental to all activities of Employees and Commissioners in every circumstance even though that may not be expressed in every example in the Code.

This Code is intended to compliment and clarify other policies, guidelines or directives of BC Housing. If there is a conflict between this Code and any other Agreement, Policy, Guideline, or Directive of BC Housing, this Code prevails.

3.2 COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

BC Housing Employees and Commissioners must act at all times in full compliance with both the letter and the spirit of all applicable laws. In their relationship with BC Housing, no Employee or Commissioner shall commit or condone an unethical or illegal act or instruct another Employee or Commissioner to do so. Employees and Commissioners are expected to be sufficiently familiar with any legislation which applies to their work, to recognize potential liabilities and to know when to seek advice. If in doubt, Employees and Commissioners are expected to ask for clarification.

BC Housing is continually under public scrutiny. Therefore, Employees and Commissioners must comply fully with the law and must also avoid any situation which could be perceived as improper or indicate a casual attitude towards compliance.

3.3 WORKPLACE BEHAVIOUR

Employees and Commissioners must carry out their duties and responsibilities in a manner that is courteous, professional, equitable, efficient, and effective. The conduct and language of all Employees and Commissioners in the performance of their duties must contribute to a positive, respectful, and inclusive work environment. An Employee's conduct, both during and outside of work, must not compromise the integrity of BC Housing.

BC Housing Employees and Commissioners must treat each other with dignity and courtesy in the workplace and ensure that all interactions are respectful and aligned with principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. BC Housing will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind, and particularly discrimination or harassment based on any of the prohibited grounds covered by the *Human Rights Code*, namely: race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, and a previous criminal conviction unrelated to employment. For further clarification of workplace conduct standards, consult the Respect in the Workplace Policy, the Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Terms and Conditions of Employment for Excluded Employees, and Article 6 of the Administrative/Clerical Division and Maintenance/Service Division Collective Agreements.

3.4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

(a) Definition and Explanation

Employees and Commissioners of BC Housing will not put themselves in a position in which their private interests might be, or might be perceived to be, in conflict with the interests of BC Housing. Further, Employees and Commissioners must avoid actions or conduct that might, or might be perceived to, undermine, impair or compromise their ability to act in the public interest, the trust that the public places in BC Housing or the ability of BC Housing to accomplish its mandate.

Some conflicts are quite clear, but others are less obvious. BC Housing recognizes that its Employees and Commissioners have legitimate outside interests. However, there may also be situations which could be perceived as a conflict of interest no matter how innocent the intentions of the Employee or Commissioner.

A perceived conflict of interest exists when a reasonably well-informed person could perceive that an Employee or Commissioner's ability to perform a duty or function of the position was or will be affected by the Employee or Commissioner's private interests.

An actual conflict of interest exists when an Employee or Commissioner, in performing a duty or function of the position has the opportunity to further their own private interests. An actual conflict of interest also exists where an Employee or Commissioner's personal interests directly or indirectly interfere or conflict, or appear to interfere or conflict, with that Employee or Commissioner's obligation to act in the best interest of BC Housing.

Employees and Commissioners of BC Housing may not hold a significant financial interest, either directly or through a company, relative or associate, or hold or accept a position as a director or officer in an organization having business dealings with BC Housing, unless that interest has been fully and properly disclosed and a determination has been made that a conflict of interest does not exist, or appropriate steps have been taken to mitigate or remove the circumstances giving rise to the conflict, or perception of conflict. A significant financial interest includes a financial interest or shareholdings that could interfere or conflict, or appear to interfere or conflict, with that individual's obligation to act in the best interests of BC Housing, but would not normally include a holding of less than 1% of shares of a publicly traded company, or of the right to acquire less than 1% of such shares.

If an Employee has a conflict or any doubt about whether they are in a conflict of interest, they must consult with the Vice President, Human Resources. If the Chief Executive Officer or a Commissioner has a conflict or any doubt respecting a Conflict of Interest, they must consult with the Chair who may refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioner. The Ethics Commissioner will be an independent appointment of the Board. An

Employee or Commissioner may be required to submit the circumstances in writing, in which case the Vice President, Chair, or the Ethics Commissioner, as the case may be, will provide a response in writing.

Employees and Commissioners of BC Housing who perceive a conflict between this Code and any professional code of conduct or ethics to which they are subject, should consult with the Vice President, Human Resources, or in the circumstance of the Chief Executive Officer or a Commissioner, with the Chair of the Board.

Some examples of possible conflicts of interest include:

- an Employee or Commissioner taking for oneself an opportunity through the use of information specifically available to BC Housing;
- an Employee or Commissioner using BC Housing property, information, or position for personal benefit, whether direct or indirect;
- an Employee or Commissioner competing with BC Housing;
- an Employee or Commissioner serving as a director, officer, partner or owner of a company that enters into a contract with BC Housing;
- an Employee or Commissioner disclosing confidential information held by BC Housing;
- an Employee or Commissioner participating in a personnel decision concerning a relative or person with whom they reside or are in a relationship with, that the nature of which could cause any reasonable person to question the impartiality of the ensuing decision.
- an Employee or Commissioner or a relative of an Employee or Commissioner receiving a gift from a potential contractor of BC Housing; and
- an Employee or Commissioner purchasing shares in a public company that they are aware is in negotiations with BC Housing for a contract.

- (iv) it could be justified on a BC Housing expense statement if the Employee or Commissioner offers rather than receives and would be seen to be within limits of reciprocation as a normal business expense.

Employees or Commissioners will be required to declare receipt of all gifts, entertainment or benefit to their manager who will determine whether acceptance is acceptable according to the above guidelines. In the instance of an offer of entertainment that is in excess of a value of \$100.00 the manager responsible may make the decision of whether acceptance is appropriate; however, a declaration must be made in writing to the Vice President, Human Resources. Declaration should occur within 30 days of accepting or declining the entertainment and should include the following information:

- estimated value of the benefit;
- date received or offered;
- nature of business relationship;
- is the benefit for an individual or a group/team; and
- a brief description of the benefit.

This can be done by e-mail, personal conversation or a written statement.

Human Resources will monitor declarations to ensure reasonable compliance with the Code.

Where the Employee or Commissioner determines gifts offered and received are inappropriate, they should be declined or returned to the donor and may be accompanied by a copy of this Code. Perishable gifts can be donated to a charity and the donor notified.

In some cultures or business settings the return of a gift or refusal of a favor, benefit or entertainment would be offensive; in these cases, an Employee or Commissioner should refer the circumstances to the Vice President, Human Resources or the Chair of the Board for guidance.

If an Employee or Commissioner has any doubt about whether a gift, entertainment or benefit might breach this Code they must report it; in the case of an Employee, to the Vice President, Human Resources, and in the case of a Commissioner, the Vice President, Human Resources, or the Chief Executive Officer, to the Chair of the Commission. All reports will be accepted as good faith compliance with this Code.

The earning of personal loyalty points is not an accepted practice when making Employer purchases. Utilizing an Employer established discount for personal purchases is also an unacceptable practice at BC Housing.

The use of the Employer's equipment such as tools and materials for personal gain is considered a violation of the Standards of Conduct.

(c) **Restriction on Employee's or Commissioner's use of BC Housing's Affordable Housing**

Due to the public nature of BC Housing, special care and attention must be taken to ensure its integrity. Given public perception and the potential for the appearance of improper dealing, BC Housing Employees and Commissioners may not avail themselves of the directly managed affordable housing provided by BC Housing except where the nature of employment (such as Resident Building Managers) requires an Employee to live on-site or provides guaranteed accommodation such as provisions in the Maintenance Service Division Collective Agreement (Article 8). An exception may be made where BC Housing management is fully satisfied that the Employee or Commissioner is a genuine candidate for directly managed affordable housing according to the criteria set by BC Housing.

(d) **Disclosure**

(i) **Employees and Commissioners**

Full disclosure enables Employees and Commissioners to resolve unclear situations and gives an opportunity to dispose of conflicting interests before any difficulty can arise.

At the time of their employment or appointment, each Employee or Commissioner must disclose to management of BC Housing in writing, all interests and relationships of which the Employee or Commissioner is aware of at the time of employment or appointment which will, or may, give rise to a conflict of interest.

Further, upon becoming aware of a conflict or potential conflict of interest, each Employee or Commissioner must immediately disclose the conflict in writing, in the case of an Employee, to the Vice President, Human Resources, and in the case of a Commissioner, the Vice President, Human Resources or the Chief Executive Officer, to the Chair of the Commission. This requirement exists even if the Employee or Commissioner does not become aware of the conflict until after a transaction is complete.

Written assurance that no conflict of interest or other breach of this Code exists may be required from an Employee or Commissioner from time to time.

Unless an Employee or Commissioner is otherwise directed, they must immediately take steps to resolve any conflict or perceived conflict.

If an Employee or Commissioner is concerned that another Employee or Commissioner is in a conflict of interest, the Employee or Commissioner must immediately request that the other Employee or Commissioner bring the concern, in the case of an Employee, to the attention of the Vice President, Human Resources and in the case of a Commissioner, to the attention of the Chair of the Commission. If the concerned Employee or Commissioner does not feel comfortable raising a concern with a potentially conflicted Employee or Commissioner, or if the potentially conflicted Employee or Commissioner does not declare their conflict, the concerned Employee or Commissioner must immediately bring the concern, in the case of an Employee, to the attention of the Vice President, Human Resources, and in the case of a Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer, to the attention of the Chair of the Board. If there is a concern with the Chair, the issue should be referred to the Minister responsible for BC Housing who may refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioners.

A Commissioner is required to disclose the nature and extent of any conflict at the first opportunity with the Chair of the Board, and thereafter at the first meeting of the Board after which the facts leading to the conflict have come to that Commissioner's attention. After disclosing the conflict, the Commissioner:

- (a) must not take part in the discussion of the matter or vote on any questions in respect of the matter. However, the Commissioner may be counted in the quorum present at the Board meeting;
- (b) may, if the meeting is open to the public, remain in the room, but shall not take part in the portion of the meeting during which the matter giving rise to the conflict is under discussion, and shall leave the room prior to any vote on the matter giving rise to the conflict;
- (c) must, if the meeting is not open to the public, immediately leave the meeting and not return until all discussion and voting with respect to the matter giving rise to the conflict is completed;
- (d) must not attempt, in any way or at any time, to influence the discussion or the voting of the Board on any questions relating to the matter giving rise to the conflict.

3.5 OUTSIDE BUSINESS INTERESTS

Employees and Commissioners are required to limit outside business activities (current or prospective), including ownership, board membership, advising, consulting or interacting with a stakeholder business, to avoid any real or perceived conflict of interest or other breaches of the provisions of the Code. Notwithstanding any outside business activities, Employees and Commissioners are required to act in the best interest of BC Housing.

No Employee or Commissioner should hold a substantial private interest, directly or indirectly, through a relative, friend or associate, or hold or accept a position as an officer or director, in an entity where, by virtue of their position in BC Housing, the Employee or Commissioner could in any way benefit the entity by influencing the decisions of BC Housing.

Employees must disclose in writing annually to the Vice President, Human Resources, any and all outside business interests.

3.6 OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

Employees and Commissioners are required to limit outside employment (current or prospective), to avoid any conflicts of interest or other breaches of the provisions of this Code. Notwithstanding any outside employment, Employees and Commissioners are required to act in the best interest of BC Housing.

Employees and Commissioners may hold outside jobs on their own time, using their own resources, and in a manner not adversely affecting their performance or objectivity for BC Housing. However, no BC Housing Employee or Commissioner may accept work with any entity that could lead to a conflict of interest or situation prejudicial to BC Housing's interests.

Employees must disclose in writing annually to the Vice President, Human Resources, any and all outside employment.

3.7 VOLUNTEER WORK

BC Housing encourages its Employees and Commissioners to contribute to their communities through involvement with charitable, community service, and professional organizations. Employees and Commissioners should only use BC Housing time or resources for such activities with the prior agreement of management.

From time to time, individual Employees and Commissioners reach positions of leadership in non-profit associations, societies or charities where they may be viewed as

spokespersons for those groups. In such situations, the individuals should ensure that they are seen as speaking for their organization or as individuals, and not as Employees, Commissioners or spokespersons of BC Housing.

Employees must disclose in writing annually to the Vice President, Human Resources, any and all volunteer work.

3.8 USE OF BC HOUSING PROPERTY

The property and assets of BC Housing must only be used in the course of carrying out the genuine business purposes of BC Housing. Employees and Commissioners are entrusted with the care, management, and cost-effective use of BC Housing's property and assets, including the use of BC Housing's name and intellectual property, and should not make use of these resources for purposes that are unrelated to BC Housing's business or for their own personal gain.

Employees and Commissioners should ensure that all property and assets of BC Housing assigned to them are maintained in good condition, secured and stored in a safe manner, and should be able to account for such property while assigned to them.

Property and assets, including intellectual property, financial information, contracts, agreements and rights produced or developed during the course of employment, or through the use of BC Housing property or assets, are the property of BC Housing.

3.9 PUBLIC COMMENTS

Employees and Commissioners are free to comment on public issues but must exercise caution to ensure that by doing so they do not jeopardize the perception of impartiality in the performance of their duties. When commenting on public issues, Employees and Commissioners must ensure they make it abundantly clear that they are speaking on their own behalf and not on behalf of BC Housing, and that their comments in no way represent or reflect the opinions or beliefs of BC Housing.

3.10 CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Employees and Commissioners may have access to, or become aware of, confidential or proprietary information of BC Housing, or confidential or proprietary information of a third party (clients, contractors, suppliers) who has disclosed such information to BC Housing. Employees and Commissioners are to maintain the confidentiality of such information in whatever form or however stored or transmitted, and must protect such confidential information from loss, theft, or misuse. This obligation does not end when employment with BC Housing ceases. Employees must continue to protect the confidentiality of confidential, private, or proprietary information after the end of their

employment, and must not disclose this information without prior written approval from BC Housing.

Unless authorized to be made available to the public, by Court Order or by the Chair, plans, strategies, records, reports, papers, internal communications, techniques, programs, software, formulas, developmental or experimental work, processes, and methods are proprietary and confidential, and are not to be disclosed or used by any Employee or Commissioner other than in the ordinary course of the business of BC Housing.

Employees and Commissioners must exercise caution and discretion in handling confidential information and, in particular, care should be taken not to discuss confidential information in social or public contexts.

For further information refer to BC Housing's Privacy Policy.

Employees and Commissioners must not use confidential information obtained as a result of employment with BC Housing for the purpose of furthering any private interest, or as a means of making personal gains.

3.11 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Employees and Commissioners are free to participate in political activities including belonging to a political party, supporting a candidate for elected office or actively seeking elected office. An Employee's or Commissioner's political activities, however, must be clearly separated from activities related to that Employee or Commissioner's duties with BC Housing.

If engaging in political activities, an Employee or Commissioner must be able to retain impartiality and the perception of impartiality in relation to their duties and responsibilities. An Employee or Commissioner must not engage in political activities during working hours or use BC Housing facilities, equipment, or resources in support of these activities.

3.12 ENVIRONMENT AND SAFETY

Environmental protection is a fundamental BC Housing value. Every Employee and Commissioner has a role in ensuring BC Housing's operations comply with environmental legislation and standards.

Management and Commissioners have both a legal and a moral responsibility for safety and the protection of the environment, and every manager has a specific obligation in this respect.

BC Housing is committed to providing all Employees and Commissioners a safe workplace and to ensuring safe and respectful work practices and conditions.

All Employees have the right to expect, and the responsibility to create, a workplace where all Employees are safe. Violence in the workplace is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violence includes any attempted or actual exercise by any person, including another Employee, of any physical force so as to cause injury to an Employee and includes any express threat of violence.

Employees must report any incident of violence directed towards themselves or their co-workers. Any Employee hearing a threat, including a threat to co-worker, must report that threat if they have reasonable cause to believe that the threat is serious. Any incident of threat of violence in the workplace must be addressed immediately.

An Employee or Commissioner shall report any situation they believe represents a danger to public health or safety, or may be a significant danger to the environment, to the Chief Executive Officer or the Chair of the Board.

Further information on Health and Safety policies and procedures can be referenced through the BC Housing Occupational Health and Safety intranet site and Human Resources policies referring to health and safety items.

3.13 FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

BC Housing will fully comply with all applicable laws and regulations regarding its books of account, business records, and financial reporting. Such books of account and records will be properly and accurately maintained.

All assets, liabilities, and transactions of BC Housing must be accurately reflected in BC Housing's financial records and reports and must be supported by appropriate documentation. No Employee or Commissioner shall create or condone the creation of false records, or destroy or condone the destruction of a record, except in accordance with the policies of BC Housing.

No assets, liabilities, or financial transactions will be concealed from management or from BC Housing's auditors.

Appropriate accounting and financial policies, procedures, controls and audit processes must be maintained. Further information on accounting and financial policies can be referenced through the *Financial Administration Act*, internal BC Housing financial policies and applicable government mandates.

All Employees and Commissioners, regardless of their position at BC Housing, are expected to follow internal BC Housing policies and procedures designed to protect the integrity of BC Housing assets, data and financial reports and to foster a culture of cost-consciousness at all levels.

If Employees or Commissioners have concerns about questionable accounting auditing or taxpayer accountability matters, they must promptly report them to the appropriate person. Employees are encouraged to speak to their manager. The manager will promptly contact the Vice President, Corporate Services and Chief Financial Officer who will conduct a preliminary investigation of every concern. If the Employee is uncomfortable with talking to their manager about the matter, or believes the manager has not reported the matter, the Employee may contact the Chair of the Commission directly and, if desired, anonymously. If the Employee or Commissioner has concerns that may involve the Chair of the Commission, or does not feel comfortable talking to the Chair, the Employee or Commissioner may report their concerns directly to the Minister responsible for BC Housing who may refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioners.

Complaints will be handled promptly, professionally, and with as much confidentiality as possible consistent with investigating the complaint.

Further information is available in the BC Housing Fraud Policy.

3.14 EXEMPTIONS

(a) When an Exemption May be Granted

An Employee or Commissioner may request an exemption from a requirement of this Code in accordance with the procedure outlined in this section.

In extraordinary circumstances and where it is clearly in the best interests of BC Housing to do so, the Vice President, Human Resources may grant to an Employee an exemption from the requirements of this Code to allow the continuation of circumstances that would otherwise be considered an actual or apparent conflict of interest under this Code or that would be considered a breach of this Code. Conditions may be attached to an exemption.

In extraordinary circumstances and where it is clearly in the best interests of BC Housing to do so, the Chair of the Commission may exempt a Commissioner or the Chief Executive Officer from a requirement of this Code following full and detailed disclosure by the Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer of all material and relevant circumstances respecting the matter. Conditions may be attached to an exemption.

In extraordinary circumstances and where it is clearly in the best interests of BC Housing, the Chief Executive Officer may exempt a Vice President from a requirement of this Code following full and detailed disclosure by the Vice President of all material and relevant circumstances respecting the matter. Conditions may be attached to an exemption.

If a Commissioner or Employee is exempted from a requirement of this Code for the continuation of circumstances that would otherwise be considered an actual or apparent conflict of interest, the Commissioner or Employee must refrain from participating in any way in any decision-making respecting the subject matter of the conflict of interest, except to the extent specifically authorized in the decision granting the exemption.

Note: The provisions of this Code of Conduct are in addition to, and not in substitution for, any obligation to BC Housing imposed upon a Commissioner or Employee by common law, equity or statute. Compliance with the Code shall not relieve a Commissioner or Employee from any such obligation.

(b) **Procedure for Granting an Exemption**

(i) **Guiding Policies**

Employees and Commissioners are permitted to request an exemption from the provisions of the Code.

It is not possible to provide guidelines to cover all circumstances where an exemption may be requested. Each circumstance must be considered on its own merits. However, the following are some general principles that will guide decision-makers in their evaluation of requests.

As a general proposition, the exemption procedure, although expected to be utilized rarely, provides a means to address situations where to require compliance with a Code requirement may not be in the overall best interest of BC Housing. The exemption procedure is not intended to benefit Employees or Commissioners – it is intended to benefit BC Housing and to provide it with the opportunity to relieve an Employee or Commissioner from complying with the Code in circumstances where it is in the best interest of BC Housing to do so.

Any individual who is requesting an exemption is responsible for making full disclosure of all relevant facts and circumstances – whether or not they appear to support the request being made. Full disclosure permits BC Housing to assess whether its best interests are being served by approving a request for an exemption. Failure to make full disclosure may result in denial of the request or in subsequent withdrawal of an approval given. If a manager is aware that an

Employee is considering requesting an exemption, the manager should provide the Employee with a copy of this Code.

Determining the best interests of BC Housing always requires consideration of specific facts. Consideration of relevant facts addressing the following issues will be included in an assessment of the best interests of BC Housing:

- (a) operational requirements, including hiring and appointing qualified individuals and securing required services and products;
- (b) financial economic considerations;
- (c) legal obligations;
- (d) mission and values; and
- (e) the public interest.

If approving an exemption from the requirements of the Code would better serve BC Housing's interests than requiring compliance with the Code, then it may be appropriate to approve an exemption.

The facts disclosed by an Employee or Commissioner should be assessed taking into account, where applicable, the following considerations:

- (a) Materiality: Is the subject matter of the prohibition material to the applicant and to BC Housing? If it is not material to either party, granting an exemption may be in the best interest of BC Housing. If it is material to one party and not to the other, caution should be exercised before granting an exemption. If it is material to both parties, an exemption is not likely to be in the best interests of BC Housing.
- (b) Proximity: Are the applicant and the subject matter of the prohibition closely related? If yes, an exemption is not likely to be in the best interests of BC Housing. If the relationship is remote, granting an exemption may be in the best interests of BC Housing.
- (c) Conflict of Interest: Did the circumstances that are the subject matter of the prohibition arise or result from the applicant being in a potential conflict of interest? If yes, did the applicant

disclose the potential conflict of interest fully and in a timely manner and take steps to avoid any involvement in the matter? If such disclosure was not made, an exemption is not likely to be in the best interests of BC Housing.

- (d) Cost of Compliance: Are BC Housing's interests adversely affected by requiring compliance? If, for example, BC Housing may lose valued personnel, access to required or scarce services/products, or may incur increased costs by requiring compliance, an exemption may be in the best interests of BC Housing. On the other hand, are the interests of BC Housing adversely affected by not requiring compliance? If, for example, BC Housing may suffer from low morale or public criticism, or incur legal liability by not requiring compliance, an exemption may not be in the best interests of BC Housing.
- (e) Taxpayer Accountability: Is the proposed exemption in alignment with the Taxpayer Accountability Principles? Would the exemption jeopardize the cost efficiency or efficacy of programming or services?
- (f) Timeliness of Disclosure: When and how was the subject matter of the prohibition disclosed to BC Housing? If it was disclosed fully and as soon as practically possible by the applicant, granting an exemption may be in the best interests of BC Housing. If the subject matter of the prohibition was not disclosed fully and as soon as practically possible by the applicant, an exemption may not be in the best interests of BC Housing.
- (g) Fair and Reasonable: Would granting the exemption meet community standards about fair dealing and be considered fair and reasonable in all of the circumstances?

Other considerations may be relevant, depending upon the circumstances.

(ii) **Employees**

Where an Employee deems appropriate and desires an exemption from this Code, the Employee, or a manager on their behalf, may make a request directly to the Vice President, Human Resources. If a manager makes the request on behalf of an Employee, the manager will provide the Employee with a copy of

the request. If the Employee makes the request, the Employee will provide their manager with a copy of the request.

A request should contain, at minimum:

- (a) a statement of the specific nature of the exemption being requested, including the provision of the Code from which the exemption is requested;
- (b) a full and complete statement of all material and relevant circumstances relating to the request being made, including the name of the Employee and the Employee's job description particularly as it may relate to the exemption being sought. This statement must be prepared and signed by the Employee even if the request is made by the Employee's manager;
- (c) the reasons why it may be considered appropriate to give the exemption;
- (d) in the case of an exemption from the conflict of interest provisions, a statement of the steps the Employee will take or has taken to avoid participating in any decision or activity relating to the disclosed circumstances; and
- (e) a statement of whether or not the Employee has discussed the request with their manager.

The Vice President, Human Resources will acknowledge in writing that the request has been received and may request additional information from the Employee or the Employee's manager. Following the review of any requested additional information, if any, the Vice President, Human Resources will advise the Employee and the Employee's manager in writing of the decision on the request. If the exemption request is granted, the Vice President, Human Resources may impose conditions on the exemption granted.

(iii) **Commissioners/CEO**

Where a Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer desires an exemption from the Code of Conduct, they personally, may make a request to the Chair. If the request is by the Chair, the request should be made to the Minister responsible for BC Housing who may refer the matter to the Ethics Commissioner.

Such a request should contain, at minimum:

- (a) a statement of the specific nature of the exemption being requested, including the provision of the Code from which the exemption is requested;
- (b) a full and complete statement of all material and relevant circumstances relating to the request being made;
- (c) the reasons why it may be considered appropriate to give the exemption. The Code requires that exemptions should only be given “in extraordinary circumstances and where it is clearly in the best interests of BC Housing to do so”; and
- (d) in the case of an exemption from the conflict of interest provisions, a statement of the steps the Commissioner/CEO will take or has taken to avoid participating in any way in any decision or other activity relating to the subject matter of the conflict of interest.

The Chair will acknowledge in writing that the request has been received and may request additional information from the Commissioner. Following the review of any requested additional information, if any, the Chair will advise the Commissioner/CEO in writing of the decision on the request. Where the request is made by the Chair, the Minister responsible for BC Housing or the Ethics Commissioner will make a decision and will advise the Chair of the decision, in writing. Conditions may be imposed on any exemption granted.

3.15 BREACH OF THE CODE

(a) What Constitutes a Breach

An Employee or Commissioner will be in breach of this Code in the following circumstances:

- (i) Where they act in a manner that violates or is inconsistent with any standard set out in this Code;
- (ii) Where they, upon becoming aware, fail to report an act of another Employee or Commissioner that violates the standards set out in this Code;
- (iii) Where they, upon becoming aware, fail to report conduct of another Employee or Commissioner inconsistent with the standards set out in this Code;

- (iv) Where they fail to act and that failure violates or is inconsistent with the standards set out in this Code.

A supervisor or manager is in breach of this Code if they direct or condone conduct that violates or is inconsistent with the standards set out in this Code.

(b) Consequences of a Breach

This Code applies to all Employees of BC Housing. Compliance with this Code is a condition of employment. An Employee's breach of this Code could lead to disciplinary action.

This Code applies to all Commissioners of BC Housing. Compliance with this Code is a condition of appointment. A Commissioner's breach of this Code could result in a recommendation for removal from office.

(c) Reporting

If an Employee becomes aware of circumstances that they reasonably believe may be a breach of this Code, they must promptly report the possible breach to their manager. The manager will promptly contact the Vice President, Human Resources who will designate an appropriate person to conduct a preliminary investigation of the possible breach. If the Employee is uncomfortable talking to their manager about the possible breach, or, if their manager is involved in the possible breach, the Employee may promptly contact the Vice President, Human Resources directly and, if desired, anonymously.

If a Commissioner or Chief Executive Officer becomes aware of circumstances that they reasonably believe may be a breach of this Code, they must promptly report the possible breach to the Chair. The Chair will personally or will designate someone to conduct a preliminary investigation of the possible breach. If the Chair is involved in the possible breach, a Commissioner must promptly report the possible breach to the Ethics Commissioner.

If it is alleged that a person(s) has, or may have, breached the Code and these circumstances have been reported, the person(s) in respect of who the allegations have been made will be informed and given the opportunity to respond to them and, where appropriate, to contribute to the discussions on how the breach could be remedied. If disclosure of the complaint would jeopardize the investigation process, such disclosure may be delayed until the investigation, but no investigation will be completed without the person(s) who is/are the subject of the investigation being fully informed and given the reasonable opportunity to provide information respecting any allegation of a breach of this Code.

All complaints will be handled promptly, professionally, and with as much confidentiality as possible consistent with investigating the complaint.

(d) No Retaliation

BC Housing will not retaliate against an Employee or Commissioner who, in good faith, reports a known or suspected breach of this Code. This means that Employees will not be dismissed, demoted, or discriminated against in any way for reporting legitimate concerns about these matters in accordance with this Code, including giving information in relation to an investigation. However, because of the seriousness of a false allegation and the resources which will be expended to investigate complaints, BC Housing reserves the right to discipline anyone who knowingly makes a false accusation, or knowingly provides false information in respect of any alleged breach of this Code.

No Employee or Commissioner will discriminate or retaliate in any way against another person because that person reported or participated in any way in an investigation of a possible breach of this Code. Any such discrimination or retaliation will be treated very seriously and is a violation of this Code that may result in discipline.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

BC Housing is determined to behave, and to be perceived, as an ethical organization. Each Employee and Commissioner must adhere to the standards described in this Code of Conduct, and to the standards set out in all policies, guidelines, legislation and mandates that apply to BC Housing directly or indirectly.

Decisions and actions are to be transparent, ethical and free from conflict of interest and must serve citizens of British Columbia by respecting the shared public trust.

To demonstrate its determination and commitment, BC Housing asks each Employee and Commissioner to review the Code periodically throughout the year. Employees and Commissioners should take the opportunity to discuss with the appropriate individual, any circumstances that may have arisen which could be an actual or potential violation of this Code of Conduct.

5. DEFINITIONS

Not applicable

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Standards of Conduct Policy - Appendix

- [Standards of Conduct Policy Questions and Answers](#)
- [Fraud Policy \(GA-002\)](#)
- [Reporting and Investigating Fraud Procedure \(P-GA-2000\)](#)
- [Information Technology Security Policy \(GIS-001\)](#)
- [Privacy Policy \(GPP-001\)](#)
- [Taxpayer Accountability Principles](#)
- [Records and Information Management Policy \(GRE-001\)](#)
- [Respect in the Workplace Policy \(GPS-001\)](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Policy \(GPS-003\)](#)

7. CONTACTS

Where an Employee or Commissioner is uncertain about anything contained in this Code, BC Housing strongly encourages them to seek clarification from their manager. If a manager is not able to provide the necessary clarification, the Employee should seek clarification from the BC Housing Human Resources Department.

A Commissioner who requires clarification on any matter contained in the Code should first seek it from the BC Housing Vice President, Human Resources. If the Vice President, Human Resources is not able to provide the necessary clarification, the Commissioner should seek clarification from the Chair.

HISTORY

Policy No. and Name	Reason	Date
Standards of Conduct	Non-substantive updates and corrections. Moved to gender neutral language. Clarification around requirements for annual disclosure.	2019-08-21
Standards of Conduct	Updates.	2014-12-16
Standards of Conduct	Full Review – changes to acceptance of entertainment and gifts, loyalty points, employer’s tools or equipment; approved by Board November 2011 and by Executive Committee February 1, 2011.	2012-02-01
Standards of Conduct	Full Review.	2007-06-01
(22.20.20) Standards of Conduct	Revision.	1997-10-01
(06.10.05) Conflict of Interest	Original policy	1988-06-06

APPROVAL

Authorized:



Shayne Ramsay, Chief Executive Officer

Date Approved:

August 21, 2019

In the fall of 2014, BC Housing began the process to review and update our Standards of Conduct Policy. The goals of the review and update were to:

1. embed the government's newly issued BC Taxpayer Accountability Principles into the Standards of Conduct;
2. ensure full compliance with the government mandate, particularly within the Conflict of Interest provisions;
3. incorporate changes and updates to the policy since its last review in 2011.

The result of this review is an updated Standards of Conduct Policy for all BC Housing employees and stakeholders. Consistent with BC Housing's values, this policy is aligned with the highest standards of accountability and transparency.

In addition to a new Standards of Conduct Policy, the following list of Questions and Answers has been prepared and is available to all employees via the Human Resources website. If you have additional questions, please check with your manager and please feel free to contact Human Resources.

Q1. What is the definition of Gifts, Entertainment and Benefits?

A. Gifts, entertainment and benefits are defined as:

Gift A tangible item of value that is of enjoyment or benefit for the recipient (gift cards, clock, gift basket, etc.).

Entertainment An offer to experience or participate in an event that serves the sole purpose of entertainment, unrelated to business (sporting event, concert tickets, golf tournament, weekend fishing trip, movie pass, etc.).

Benefit An offer of services or an event that may or may not serve the purpose of the recipient and the organization, but is of a value either in enjoyment or personal/professional development (complimentary services, conference, etc.).

Q2. Is there a value of a gift received from a supplier or client that would be acceptable? At what value is a gift deemed to be excessive?

A. There is not a set value that would be regarded as acceptable for a gift; each gift received must be assessed on its own merits. For example, a fruit basket received from a regular supplier at

Christmas for the workgroup would likely be reasonable and shared among the staff; however, an expensive watch given to one individual would not be acceptable. Another aspect of the gift would be how and when it was received. If there is any potential perceived "return" expected (i.e. an expectation of favouritism from a supplier bidding on a project), this would not be acceptable and would need to be returned. In all cases, the item(s) must be reviewed with your manager and a reasonable determination will be made based on the criteria outlined in the policy.

Q3. Is there a value of entertainment received from a supplier or client that would be acceptable?

- A. Most entertainment up to about \$100.00 in value is acceptable, so long as it is approved by your supervisor/manager and meets the criteria outlined in the Standards of Conduct policy. Some entertainment, such as hockey or concert tickets, may exceed the \$100.00 mark but would still be acceptable if it meets the criteria outlined in the Standards of Conduct policy, including that the offer of entertainment occurs infrequently and that acceptance of the offer does not create any obligation.

Q4. When do I need to declare gifts and/or entertainment?

- A. All gifts must be verbally declared to your manager/supervisor who will determine if the gift is appropriate and acceptable.

All entertainment must be verbally declared to your manager/supervisor to determine if it is appropriate. The manager/supervisor must declare any entertainment in excess of an estimated \$100.00 value to the Vice President, Human Resources within 30 days of the employee accepting or declining the offer of entertainment.

Q5. Is this audited?

- A. Yes. Human Resources is responsible for monitoring declarations to ensure there is a reasonable and consistent application of the policy.

Q6. I believe I have a right to practice my political beliefs on my own time. Is this correct?

- A. Yes, this is your right; however, your activities must not come into conflict with your employment. For example, writing a signed letter to the editor of a newspaper criticizing BC Housing's policies would not be acceptable for an employee of BC Housing. However, participating in political activities for an opposition party not in office is your right.

Q7. I am on the board of a co-op, and I hold a position at BC Housing related to the Commission's funding of co-ops. Am I in a conflict of interest?

- A. You could potentially be in a conflict of interest; however, there may be safeguards that can be put in place to ensure you can do your job without having to deal with the specific co-op with

which you are involved. You need to disclose this to your manager/supervisor and to Human Resources so that this can be reviewed and addressed.

Q8. My mother is a tenant and I am a housing clerk. What can I do?

- A. As in the situation above, you must disclose this to your manager/supervisor and to Human Resources and they will work with you to assess the situation and ensure that you are not in a conflict of interest position.

Q9. Is there any time when contracting with or hiring a relative is allowed?

- A. There are situations in which this is acceptable, provided there is full disclosure made in advance and no involvement of the employee in the process of hiring or contracting a relative. As well, intervening levels of management and supervision would need to be in place to ensure there is no conflict of interest or favouritism, perceived or actual.

Q10. I have been approached by a supplier (i.e. Shaw, TELUS) asking me to canvas my tenants for interest in signing up. They have offered me a small bonus for anyone who signs up through me, is this OK?

- A. No, it is not acceptable for an employee to accept a personal benefit or a perceived personal benefit. All such issues or requests must be brought to the attention of your supervisor or the Vice President, Human Resources.

Q11. How often do I need to update BC Housing on my second job or on my volunteer activities?

- A. You must declare your status annually and provide updates of any changes as they happen in order to avoid any possible conflicts that could adversely affect BC Housing's interests.

Questions 12 & 13

NOTE

There may be situations in which you purchase something for BC Housing using your own personal credit card and are later reimbursed by BC Housing, although this is not encouraged. If you receive points for this purchase from your credit card company this is seen as a benefit and there is an income tax implication. The Canada Revenue Agency considers this to be a taxable benefit and the value would need to be determined and reported by you as taxable income on your income tax. Information on this is included in the income tax folio located here: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tp/it470r-consolid/it470r-consolid-e.pdf>

Q12. If I purchase items for work at Save-On-Foods, am I violating the Standards of Conduct policy by using my Save-On-More card to get a discount for BC Housing and receiving personal points?

A. Yes. Although this may save BC Housing money, you are receiving a personal benefit. While there may be some savings for the employer, it is in conflict with the Standards of Conduct policy.

Q13. I purchase goods/supplies on behalf of BC Housing and/or stay at hotels on BC Housing business on a regular basis. Many of the places I make purchases or hotels I stay at have points programs (i.e. Air Miles®). Am I able to collect these points?

A. No, this is in conflict with the Standards of Conduct Policy that we have for all employees.

Q14. What are the Taxpayer Accountability Principles?

A. The BC Taxpayer Accountability Principles is a set of guidelines set out by the provincial government for the broader BC public sector. Recognizing and valuing our accountability to the taxpayers of British Columbia, BC Housing acts in accordance with the BC Taxpayer Accountability Principles at all times. This set of principles ensures our organization's decisions and actions reflect the priorities and values of government and the shareholders – the citizens of British Columbia.

The Taxpayer Accountability Principles are:

Cost Consciousness

We provide public services and programs as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Accountability

We manage responsibilities in a way that meets the best interest of the citizens of the province.

Appropriate Compensation

We comply with a standardized approach to performance management and employee compensation, reflecting appropriate compensation across the public sector.

Service

We maintain a clear focus on positive outcomes for the citizens, delivering cost-efficient, effective, public services and programs.

Respect

We proactively communicate and collaborate in a spirit of partnership that respects and informs citizens.

Integrity

We make decisions and take actions that are transparent, ethical and free from conflict of interest.

These principles are integrated with all business and decision-making processes at BC Housing.