

**Report Wrongdoing  
for the Public Interest.  
Your Voice is Protected.**



**PUBLIC INTEREST  
COMMISSIONER**



# Introduction

An effective public service depends on the commitment of everyone working within it to maintain the highest possible standards of honesty, openness and accountability. The *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act* (the Act) creates a safe avenue for public servants to speak out about wrongdoings, and protects them for doing so.

We work to foster a culture where whistleblowing is embraced and where employees and management share a common goal of detecting and remedying wrongdoing.

# 1

## What is the role of the Public Interest Commissioner?

The Public Interest Commissioner is an independent Officer of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, responsible for investigating allegations of wrongdoing and reprisal in the public sector. The Commissioner conducts fair and impartial investigations and makes strong and effective recommendations for corrective measures when wrongdoing is found.

The Commissioner's office serves as a resource for public sector employees who believe wrongdoing is occurring in their organization, and want to receive the confidentiality and protection provisions of the Act.

# 2

## What is the purpose of the Act?

- To protect public sector employees who report wrongdoing
- To facilitate the disclosure and investigation of significant and serious matters in the public sector that an employee believes may be unlawful, dangerous to the public or injurious to the public interest
- To manage, investigate and make recommendations with respect to disclosures of wrongdoing and reprisals
- To provide for the determination of appropriate remedies concerning reprisals
- To promote public confidence in the administration of the public sector

# 3

## What is a wrongdoing?

The Public Interest Commissioner may investigate “wrongdoing” as defined in the Act, which includes:

- Contraventions of an Act or regulation
- An act or omission that creates a substantial and specific danger to the life, health or safety of individuals or to the environment
- Gross mismanagement of public funds, public assets, or the delivery of a public service
- Gross mismanagement of employees by a pattern of behaviour or conduct of a systemic nature that indicates a problem in the culture of the organization relating to bullying, harassment or intimidation
- Knowingly directing or counselling an individual to commit a wrongdoing

# 4

## What is a reprisal?

A “reprisal” is any measure that is taken, directed or counselled that adversely affects the employment or working conditions of an employee. Examples of reprisals include:

- A dismissal, layoff, suspension, demotion or transfer
- A discontinuation or elimination of a job
- A change of job location, reduction in wages, change in hours of work or reprimand

Under the Act, an employee is protected from reprisal as long as they have in good faith:

- Requested advice about making a disclosure
- Made a disclosure under the Act
- Cooperated in an investigation under the Act
- Declined to participate in a wrongdoing, or
- Done anything in accordance with the Act

# 5

## How am I protected?

The Act gives public sector employees a clear process for voicing concerns about significant and serious wrongdoing, and provides a legislated process for reporting and investigating wrongdoing. Protection from reprisal includes confidentiality, anonymity, and the legal ability to disclose confidential and private information. Strict penalties exist for those who commit a reprisal, which is a prosecutable offence. The Act also provides for remedies if an employee is found to have suffered a reprisal.

The Act protects employees of the following:

- Alberta government departments
- Offices of the Legislature
- Provincial agencies, boards and commissions
- School boards
- Accredited private schools that receive public funding
- Post-secondary academic institutions
- Public sector health authorities, including Alberta Health Services
- Members of the Legislative Assembly and their offices
- Ministers and their offices
- The Premier and his/her office
- Prescribed service providers

# 6

## How do I make a disclosure of wrongdoing or report a reprisal?

Employees can generally recognize when something is wrong. Deciding what to do next and whom to go to is sometimes challenging. As a first step, we encourage you to speak with one of our investigators. Our discussions with you are confidential and we can answer your questions, including what kind of information is necessary for a disclosure, under the Act.

Each organization is responsible for establishing policies and procedures including the appointment of a designated officer, responsible for receiving and investigating disclosures of wrongdoing.

If you are considering making a complaint, you may:

- Seek information and advice from your *supervisor, designated or chief officer*
- Report a wrongdoing to the *designated officer* within your organization
- Seek advice, report a wrongdoing or report a reprisal directly to the *Public Interest Commissioner's office*

If you are aware of wrongdoing and you need some advice, contact our office. Your voice is protected.

## Contact Us

**Email:** [info@pic.alberta.ca](mailto:info@pic.alberta.ca)

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