

Guidelines – Accepting Gifts and Favours

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These guidelines are intended to supplement the gifts and favours section of the Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees policy.

Employees must use good judgement before accepting an offer of any gift, favour or hospitality. For example, what is the intent behind the offer? Is it being offered as a gesture of thanks without the expectation of special treatment or could there be, or appear to be, something expected in return?

When an employee is offered a gift, favour, or hospitality, they will discuss the offer with their manager or supervisor. The manager or supervisor will then decide whether the acceptance of the gift, favour, or hospitality places, or appears to place, the employee in a conflict of interest (as defined in the Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees). The manager/supervisor will consider the following guidelines for any decision:

- Whether the employee is involved in, could influence, or be perceived to influence, any purchasing/procurement decisions related to the party offering the gift.
- Whether the gift, favour or hospitality is of nominal value.
- The frequency, or acceptance, of offers of gifts or hospitality.
- Whether the offering or receipt of a gift or hospitality is a matter of cultural or diplomatic protocol i.e. received as a normal expression of courtesy or protocol or is within the customary standards for that situation.
- How would it look if the gift/offering made front page news?
- If the manager/supervisor is unsure, or if the gift seems larger than nominal value, they should ask their Director.

Acceptable Gifts, Favours and Hospitality

The following guidelines describe the circumstances in which gifts, favours or hospitality would normally be deemed as acceptable. An employee may:

- Accept gifts of nominal value.
- Keep a gift/prize/promotional item, e.g. gift basket, t-shirt, if it is offered to attendees at a conference, seminar or trade show.
- Accept plaques or similar recognition awards.
- With Director's approval, accept an invitation from a vendor or potential vendor to attend an educational seminar where the event is open to others and presents educational value to the employee and/or the Municipality. The frequency of such acceptances should be considered to avoid perceived conflict of interest or favouritism. Any non-educational seminar or invitation also requires Director's decision.

Declining Gifts, Favours or Hospitality

- If an employee is offered or receives a gift which falls outside of these guidelines or the Code of Conduct for Municipal Employees, it should be declined or returned in a tactful manner.
- An offer of a gift, favour or hospitality that breeches any other municipal policy should not be accepted e.g. alcohol – accepting cookies or muffins as a thank you from a citizen is OK but accepting a bottle of alcohol is not.
- If the employee is unsure, they should speak to their manager or supervisor who may in turn defer to their Director for decision.

If any gift, favour or hospitality accepted by or offered to an employee is deemed to be of significant value or deemed to be of a sensitive nature, the Director should raise the issue with the CAO.

Please note: Canada Revenue Agency has specific rules regarding gifts/awards that may result in taxable benefits for employees.