



## **The media and federal public service employees**

In addition to the [rights and limitations of unionized employees participating in the Twitter or Facebook campaign](#), it is important for you to have information concerning the rights and limitations that apply to you if you are contacted by members of the traditional (print and electronic) media.

Current cutbacks in the federal public service have increased the likelihood that you will be contacted and asked to comment, in your capacity as a public service employee, on the reduction of services to the public, on spending cuts, or on other changes to the public service or your department or agency.

### **Basic rules**

Here are the basic rules to follow if you are asked to give personal comments in the media on the government's actions. The goal is to entirely dissociate your role as a federal public servant from your right as a citizen to express your opinion:

- You can identify yourself as a federal public service employee, but specify that the opinions you are expressing are strictly personal and, if such is the case, constitute your views as a union representative;
- Never give interviews at your place of work or during working hours;
- Where applicable, do not wear any form of identification (uniform, badge, etc.) that could reveal the name of the department or agency where you are employed. This is particularly important if you are being filmed or photographed during the interview. Remember that you are speaking as a concerned citizen; you are not a spokesperson for your department;
- Do not use a government vehicle or ask to have travel expenses reimbursed when you go to media interviews.

You will inevitably be asked questions about what is happening in your department or agency. If you are asked to give an interview, it is precisely for the purpose of discussing these issues. So it is essential that you state clearly that you are speaking in your capacity as a concerned citizen or a union representative.

To decide whether you should grant an interview, ask yourself the following question: am I being asked to comment on a subject that is directly related to the work I do as a federal public service employee? If the answer is yes, you should avoid putting yourself in such a situation because it could be considered a conflict of interest. If you are asked to comment on a general situation, you can do so, bearing in mind that you must avoid any personal attacks or comments that could be interpreted as being critical of the services you help to provide. If you are uncertain, you should direct the journalist to CAPE's communications office.



Lastly, while you have the right to openly express your views to the media in your capacity as a private citizen, you also have the right to not comment or to refuse to grant an interview. A simple statement, such as “I don’t want to speak to the media,” should suffice.

To learn about your rights and find out what situations might constitute a conflict of interest, you should consult the following documents:

- Treasury Board’s [Policy on Conflict of Interest and Post-Employment](#);
- the [Public Service Employment Act](#); and
- the [Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service](#).

That being said, if you do grant interviews to the media, do so with the same professional manner you bring to the performance of your duties for the employer.

If you have any additional questions concerning the media and your rights as a federal public service employee, please contact CAPE at 613-236-9181 or 1-800-265-9181.