



FORTFRANCES

**DISCONNECTING FROM WORK
HUMAN RESOURCES**

POLICY 3.8

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DISCONNECTING FROM WORK POLICY

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The health and wellbeing of our employees is of the utmost importance to us, and we, The Corporation of the Town of Fort Frances, encourage and support our employees in prioritizing their own wellbeing.
- 1.2 Disconnecting from work is important for an individual's wellbeing, and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. Disconnecting from work means to not engage in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls, or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.
- 1.3 To encourage and support our employees in balancing their working and personal lives, we have implemented this Disconnecting from Work Policy (the "Policy") to encourage employees to disconnect from work where possible.
- 1.4 This Policy should be read alongside the Town's associated policies including Management/Non-Union Benefits, Staff Attendance at Council Meetings, Leave of Absence without Pay, Individual Accommodation Plan, any relevant and applicable legislation, and any other policy that is, or may become, applicable and/or relevant.

2. APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all individuals employed by the Town who meet the definition of "employee" under the Ontario Employment Standards Act, 2000 ("ESA"), including amendments introduced through the Working for Workers Six Act, 2024 and Ontario Regulation 477/24, effective July 1, 2025.

As of July 1, 2025, employers with 25 or more employees are required to:

Maintain a written policy on disconnecting from work.

3. EMPLOYER OBLIGATIONS

The Town is committed to supporting all employees, regardless of their place of work, by ensuring the following:

- a) Employees are clearly informed of their regular working hours, along with the specific conditions under which work-related communication may be required outside those hours. Transparent guidelines will be provided regarding standard hours and expectations for after-hours contact.

- b) Employees are entitled to take meal and rest breaks, as well as uninterrupted time away from work, in accordance with applicable legislation, employment contracts, and collective agreements.
- c) Employees are able to access vacation and other leave entitlements as outlined by law, contract, or collective agreement. The Town will maintain full compliance with the Employment Standards Act (ESA) regarding rest periods, breaks, vacation, and statutory leaves.

4. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Town expects all employees to adhere to the following responsibilities in the course of their work:

- a) Fully cooperate with any systems or tools used to track working hours or update work status (e.g., out-of-office messages), including when working remotely, flexibly, or while mobile.
- b) Be considerate of the working hours of colleagues, clients, vendors, and other third parties, and avoid unnecessary communications outside those hours.
- c) Take ownership of their responsibilities and contribute to meeting the Town's operational needs.
- d) Follow the Town's Management/Non-Union Benefits Policy and/or applicable collective agreement provisions regarding overtime, including obtaining prior approval before performing overtime work.
- e) Inform their supervisor or manager in writing if they are unable to exercise any right or entitlement, explaining the reasons why.

Additionally, employees are encouraged to:

- Use out-of-office notifications and other tools to clearly indicate availability.
- Respect others' working hours and minimize after-hours communication.
- Report any challenges or barriers to disconnecting from work to their supervisor or Human Resources.

5. ABILITY TO DISCONNECT FROM WORK

- 5.1 An employee's ability to disconnect from work depends on the Town's operational needs and the duties and obligations of the employee's position, subject to an employee's

DISCONNECTING FROM WORK POLICY

employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.

- 5.2 Nothing in this Policy precludes the Town or other employees of the Town from contacting colleagues outside of what may be considered normal working hours or standard business hours, subject to any rights or entitlements the receiving colleague or employee may have under their employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA.
- 5.3 This Policy does not afford employees a “right to disconnect” beyond what is within their individual employment contract, applicable collective agreement and/or their minimum statutory entitlements under the ESA, which may include rights or entitlements speaking to: normal hours of work and hours free from work, overtime pay, meal and/or rest periods, public holidays and public holiday pay and vacation.
- 5.4 Nothing in this Policy is intended to amend or supersede any grievance procedure or other aspect of any applicable collective agreement.

6. REPORTING CONCERNS

- 6.1 All employees are expected and required to report any concerns or issues they may have which they feel is impacting their ability to disconnect-from-work.
- 6.2 Employees are encouraged to report such concerns or issues to their immediate supervisor. If that is not appropriate or the matter cannot be resolved by doing so, employees should direct their concerns or issues to Human Resources.
- 6.3 Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above.

7. POSTING, NOTICE, AND RETENTION

- 7.1 The Town shall provide a copy of this Policy to each employee of the Town within 30 calendar days of implementation. Should any changes be made to the Policy after its implementation, the Town shall provide each employee of the Town a copy of the revised Policy within 30 days of the changes being made.
- 7.2 The Town shall provide a copy of this Policy to all new employees upon onboarding and within 30 calendar days of the employee commencing employment with the Town.
- 7.3 The Town shall retain a copy of this and any revised version of this Policy for three years after it ceases to be in effect.

8. LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

HUMAN RESOURCES 3.8

- *Ontario's Employment Standards Act (ESA)*
- *Working for Workers Six Act, 2024*
- *Ontario Regulation 477/24*