

# Employee Code of Conduct

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The Town of Oakville (Town) and its employees are committed to the principles of integrity, accountability and openness, and all endeavor to maintain the highest level of public confidence in all that we do. Through staff commitment and effort, we demonstrate our values, deliver quality public service, and strive to achieve the Town’s vision to make the Town of Oakville a vibrant and livable community for all. We are committed to advancing a culture of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) for both our workforce and our community.

This guide, referred to as the “Code” throughout, explains the expected rules of behaviour required, and support the Town’s core values of:

**Leadership**

We will strive to innovate and set a positive example

**Inclusivity**

We will create a welcoming and inclusive community

**Sustainability**

We will act on environmental sustainability and natural spaces

**Quality of Life**

We will provide vibrant culture, heritage, and community amenities for all stages of life

**Fiscal Responsibility**

We will make decisions driven by economic sustainability

**Excellence**

We will commit to quality in the delivery of public services to residents and businesses

Guiding principles provide a broad philosophy that encompasses the values of the Town of Oakville. They extend beyond the life of the strategic plan and ground strategy design and delivery. These values also serve as a lens through which to evaluate all decisions. They support the development of a culture where everyone understands what is important. In keeping with the Town’s core values, employees in leadership positions, or positions of authority, are held to a higher standard and are expected to lead by example in all aspects of the Code.

**Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility**

We are committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace where all employees feel valued. Our team should reflect the diversity of the community we serve, and we recognize that creating a truly inclusive environment requires balance, awareness, and mutual respect. This means being mindful of how our words and actions affect others, ensuring accessibility for all, and actively working to remove barriers to equity. We expect all staff to communicate and engage in ways that are professional, inclusive, and considerate, whether in formal or informal settings. By working together with respect and understanding, we create a workplace where everyone can contribute and thrive.

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## How does the Code affect me?

It is only through the commitment of our employees that we can deliver quality service and maintain public trust. To keep this confidence and trust, Town employees must be above reproach in their professional dealings. They must demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour. As employees we are accountable to the Town, our Council, and the community of Oakville, and are responsible for the assets entrusted to us. Those in leadership roles are expected to model accountability, guide ethical decision making, and foster a positive, respectful and inclusive environment for all. It is with this in mind that **every** Town employee is expected to comply with the Code of Conduct and other policies and procedures that govern employee behaviour.

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## Ethical Questions

The Employee Code of Conduct Guide does not answer every question that may arise. It is designed to promote inclusive, respectful, and ethical decision making and behaviour, and to make us think about how ethics and integrity must guide us in doing our jobs each and every day. The examples and frequently asked questions (FAQ's) are only a guide and not an exhaustive list. Just because an example is not specific or not provided does not mean no violation would be found.

Ethical behaviour is not about finding all the right answers, it is about asking all the right questions such as:

- Am I putting my own interests before the Town's?
- Would I make the same decision if my managers, the public, or the media were watching me?
- Would I be embarrassed if my decision, comments, or actions were on the front page of the newspaper?
- Would I hesitate to take this action or allow my employees to take this action if this were my own company?
- Will I owe someone a favour if I do this?
- Would I be offered this if I weren't an employee of the Town?
- Could my comments on social media or in a public forum be considered negative, derogatory, or taken as a criticism of the Town, Council, or a fellow employee?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you may have an ethical dilemma. Seek advice. If you are still not sure, ask again and keep asking until you get an answer. A simple rule to follow – "if in doubt, don't".

For advice or guidance related to this Code, speak to any of the supervisors, managers, leaders in the organization or your Human Resources Consultant. Find someone you are comfortable speaking with and get the information you need.

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## **Disclosure**

It is the responsibility of all employees to disclose any real or what may be perceived as a conflict of interest or violation of the Code. A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests – i.e. family, friendships, financial, business ventures, or social factors – could compromise their judgement, decisions, or actions in the workplace.

If an employee thinks there may be a conflict of interest or they may be in violation of the Code, they must address the situation and make full and prompt disclosure to their supervisor immediately upon becoming aware. Any suspected non-compliance by another employee must also be promptly reported. Anyone who knowingly makes a false accusation about non-compliance may be subject to disciplinary action.

Where an employee in good faith reports a violation of the Code, they will not be dismissed, disciplined, or suspended, or threatened with such. They will not be penalized, and intimidation or coercion by another employee will not be tolerated.

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## **Fraud, Theft, and Breach of Trust**

Employees who have care, custody, or oversight of Town processes and information must ensure that controls in place are used and not circumvented. Deviating from protocols to benefit a customer, employee, affiliate, or other, may be considered theft and/or fraud. Employees are required to immediately report suspected fraudulent activities or theft to their manager, or the most appropriate person depending on the circumstances.

Improper utilization of Town of Oakville extended health, dental, short-term disability, long-term disability, or WSIB benefits, may also be considered fraud. Benefits fraud occurs when you intentionally submit false or misleading information to your insurance provider or WSIB for the purposes of financial gain. Knowingly participating in fraud with another party is called collusion and is not only a violation of the Employee Code of Conduct but is a criminal offence (even if a service provider is submitting the claim on your behalf).

### **What does this mean?**

Participating in activities that legally, or by Town policy, are classified as fraud or theft may be considered employee misconduct. All business transactions and utilization of Town benefits must be in adherence with Town expectations and policies. Some examples of fraud and theft are listed below.

- Inappropriately obtaining a benefit or avoiding an obligation by actions such as:
  - Illegally obtaining money or gifts, including acceptance of bribes
  - Receiving early payments or advances and using it for personal gain

- Using Town equipment for personal use that is not trivial without authorization
- Unlawfully avoiding taxes or payments
- Obtaining approvals under false pretenses
- Avoiding contractual obligations
- Theft from mail
- Theft of Town property including materials, supplies, tools, equipment, and ITS devices
- Falsification of records
- Knowingly avoiding or following procedures
- Fraudulent use of sick time
- Fraudulent use of “Town time” such as using paid work time to do things other than work assigned
- Performing employment/activities inconsistent with restrictions while on medical leave of absence
- Submitting fake claims for services or products not received
- Altering or misrepresenting information on benefit claim submissions such as service date, patient name, amount, service type, provider name, facility name and address
- Submitting claims for amounts already paid for by another benefit or government plan
- Submitting an ineligible expense under a covered benefit
- Adding ineligible dependents to a plan
- Sharing benefits reimbursement with a third party for services or products not received

### **Things to do**

- Ensure all safeguards/protocols are followed to protect Town property and contribute positively to fair and equitable processes
- Report suspected fraudulent activity and thefts to management
- Perform audits as required to ensure documentation is consistent with business transactions
- Only claim and submit reimbursements for products or services that are covered under your benefits plan
- Ensure, even in instances where you have authorized third party billing, that all documentation including invoices, receipts, and prescriptions are consistent with the product or service that was received
- If you are unsure regarding eligibility for a particular benefit, contact the benefits provider and ask ahead of submitting the claim

### **Why is this important?**

As a level of government, we must be transparent, fair, and ethically conscious in all we do. It is the responsibility of Town staff to ensure both knowledge and compliance on protocols, procedures and policies impacting your work and the way we do business. Knowingly participating in activities that lead to an employee or customer/supplier gaining a benefit in an unfair way may be classified as fraud. Fraudulent activity on behalf of employees impacts the employment relationship and may amount to breach of trust causing irreparable damages.

## FAQs

**Q: My department has an old printer in the office that never gets used, I was thinking of taking it home and using it to print personal items. Is this allowed?**

A: No. Any equipment or property of the Town should not be taken home without permission even if it appears to not be in use.

**Q: I am on sick leave however I would like to go see a movie with my children. If someone from work notices me, will I get in trouble?**

A: Not necessarily. Depending on the restrictions determined by your medical practitioner, although you may be unable to perform work related activities, everyday activities, such as grocery shopping or a family outing, may be within your restrictions and would not be a violation of the Code of Conduct. All circumstances are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

**Q: I am off work on long-term disability however I continue to work my second job to contribute to my income. Is this acceptable?**

A: Employees who receive other incomes while in receipt of short-term disability, long-term disability, or WSIB benefits, have an obligation to report this information to the appropriate adjudicator to ensure compliance with the policy. Failing to report other sources of income or demonstrating an ability to perform work that is outside of restrictions, may be classified as fraudulent use of sick time.

**Q. A vendor that has a long and successful history working with the Town has asked me for confidential budget information in order to assist them in the bidding process. Given the great partnership and success we have had in the past, am I allowed to provide this information to increase their chances at being awarded the contract?**

A: No. Information that is not included within the original tender document is confidential and cannot be shared. Furthermore, using the Town's past history with the vendor may be perceived as favoritism and is a violation of this policy especially as having knowledge of confidential budget information places the vendor at an advantage.

**Q: When opening mail for my department, I found coupons to a nearby shop. The envelope was addressed to the Town with no name, so can I take them?**

A: No. Any mail addressed to the Town should not be taken and instead should be turned over to your manager to ensure it is addressed appropriately. Taking mail intended for the Town may be classified as theft. Also see the "Gifts and Gratuities" section of the Code.

**Q. My Optometrist has offered me a significant discount on products covered by my Town provided benefits. Am I allowed to accept their offer?**

A: Discounts and promotions are acceptable only if they are publicly advertised and available to all customers. The advertisement must be clear and transparent. In addition, all products or services received must be accurately and clearly documented within a receipt and "explanation of benefits" document. You are responsible for knowing for what and how much you are being billed for, even if the provider is submitting the claim directly to the benefits

insurance provider. Proceed with caution when accepting promotions/discounts and contact the benefits insurance provider ahead of submitting the claim.

**Q: I am set up for direct billing and I noticed my Chiropractor advanced charged the benefits provider on my behalf for future visits, is this allowed? What do I do?**

A: This is not allowed. Products or services can only be charged through your benefits plan once the exchange for those services or products is complete. Contact the service provider (Chiropractor) immediately to have the charges reversed and then contact the benefits provider to explain the situation and seek guidance.

**Q: My Optometrist said that although nonprescription sunglasses are not covered through my plan, there is a way they can do this that is compliant with my policy. They advised they have done this many times before with success. Is this allowed?**

A: No. Only services or products that are medically required and covered under your benefits plan are allowed to be submitted for reimbursement. Accepting products that have been put through the plan illegitimately is considered benefits fraud.

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## Time and Assets

Town time and assets are used only for the performance of Town duties. Employees must safeguard and protect Town work time and assets and must devote themselves exclusively to the performance of their employment duties during paid working hours. Employees will not use any Town asset, including e-mail, internet services, or any other electronic communication devices if such use could be offensive, inappropriate, or fraudulent.

### What does this mean?

Town employees are required to care for Town assets, which includes all property, equipment, software, information, materials, and time. Town assets are only to be used for Town purposes or as approved by management. During working hours and outside of break/relief times, unreasonable or excessive use of time for non-Town related personal activities should be reflective of the hours spent performing the duties of an employee's position. Refer back to the "Fraud, Theft, and Breach of Trust" section of the Code for more information.

The Town, like any organization, should not waste time, money, or resources. The Town serves all the residents and businesses of Oakville and Town work is paid for by their tax dollars. To do our jobs properly, we need to always have all resources available. Whether the asset in question is work time, a Town vehicle, or a computer, it must be ready and available to do the assigned task.

### Things to do

- Respect Town assets and take proper care of them
- Use Town assets only for approved Town work
- Reimburse the Town promptly for any personal costs (long distance calls, photocopying)

- Devote time at work to performing assigned job duties
- Obtain approval for exemptions
- Ensure all Town forms, documentation, and requisitions are completed accurately, including attendance/time keeping records

### **Things not to do**

- Take home any Town assets for personal use without prior approval from management
- Use a Town vehicle for personal business
- Install personal software on Town computers
- Install personal equipment on Town property
- Download software on Town equipment without prior approval
- Store large amounts of non-work-related data on Town computers
- Access, communicate, distribute, or display racial or ethnic slurs, threats, insults, obscenities, abuse, defamation or lewd or sexually explicit material, or any content that is in violation of the Respectful Conduct Policy or the Ontario *Human Rights Code* on Town devices
- E-mail or use of any other electronic communication devices for non-work-related material without permission from your supervisor. Of special note, staff are prohibited from using their Town e-mail address for personal banking matters, inclusive of e-transfers.
- Engage in personal or “non-Town” related business during working hours unless special arrangements have been made through management in advance

### **FAQ’s**

**Q. Can I photocopy my son’s hockey schedule for him and his teammates?**

**A.** One or two copies is not an abuse of Town assets. Multiple copies, or repeated use of Town equipment, require supervisor approval and reimbursement to the Town.

**Q. Can I help myself to things the office is throwing away or declaring surplus?**

**A.** No. Articles in the garbage are still considered Town assets. If you are interested in purchasing an item that has been declared surplus, speak with your supervisor as well as reference the [Purchasing](#) protocol on Disposal of Surplus Assets.

**Q. Can I use the Internet at work to plan my vacation and book my airline tickets?**

**A.** Yes, provided you do it on your own time (i.e. lunch, coffee breaks), there are no costs to the Town and your activity does not place Town computer systems at risk.

**Q. Is it appropriate to sell chocolates or raffle tickets or collect money for charitable associations at my work site during normal working hours?**

**A.** Yes, subject to approval by your supervisor.

**Q. I noticed a colleague of mine has submitted an expense form for a conference she told me she didn’t attend. Should I inform my supervisor?**

**A.** Yes, you must report this as it is considered fraud. You can speak directly with your supervisor or file a report anonymously through the Ethics and Efficiency Hotline. The Ethics and Efficiency Hotline reporting forum can be found here: INSERT

**Q. Can I do personal work at my workstation during lunch hour?**

**A.** Incidental use of your workstation is permissible if you are doing the work on your own time (i.e. lunch, breaks) and there is no impact to the Town.

**Q. What should I do if I receive chain letters or offensive jokes and pictures at my work e-mail address?**

**A.** Delete them immediately and tell the sender to stop sending them to your Town address. You should also consider informing your supervisor depending on the frequency or content of the emails. We are all responsible for ensuring the Town's email and systems are used appropriately.

**Q. What should I do if I see an employee siphoning gas from a Town vehicle?**

**A.** Report the incident to your supervisor.

**Q. Can I borrow a piece of Town equipment to use over the weekend to do a personal job?**

**A.** Personal use of Town resources is prohibited unless authorized by your supervisor.

**Q. I am permanently assigned a Town of Oakville vehicle. Can I use it to run personal errands? Can I transport family members or friends?**

**A.** No. The vehicle can only be used for work related purposes including travel directly from home to and from work sites. Only Town permitted staff may be transported in Town owned vehicles.

**My colleague has asked me to call in sick for my shift this weekend because she needs the overtime. Can I do this?**

**A.** No. This is sick leave fraud and you may be disciplined.

**Q. In addition to my break times, I spent three (3) hours this week doing non-work-related activities however, I am a salaried employee. Do I need to adjust my time sheet?**

**A.** Yes. Timesheets should be accurate and regular time should only be coded for Town-related business. Time spent on non-work-related activities ought to be pre-approved by your manager and coded appropriately (ex. vacation, leave of absence, etc.).

**Related policies and procedures**

- Ethics and Efficiency Hotline Procedure
- General Use of Town Vehicles, Equipment and Facility Resource(s) Procedure
- Information Technology General Use and Practices Procedure
- Banking Services Procedure
- Petty Cash Procedure
- Cash Handling Procedure
- Attendance Policy
- Absence Reporting Procedure
- Purchasing By-law
- Retention By-law

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## Cell Phone Use and Recording Devices

To assist you with your job, the Town may provide you with a corporate cell phone. This cell phone is to be used in accordance with the Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy and Procedure. Employees are responsible for reimbursing the Town for any costs associated with personal use (i.e. roaming charges, data overages, long distance, etc.). In addition, for staff who drive Town vehicles, cellular usage should follow the Driver handbook and Ontario's Distracted Driving laws.

The personal use of cell phones (personal or corporate) on work time should be used in a reasonable and appropriate manner and limited to authorized break times. Using your personal cellphone to engage in non-work-related activities during the workday, including phone calls and text messages, interferes with your ability to do your job and is distracting to others. Conversations that occur with colleagues, even when using personal cell phone devices, must also be appropriate in nature. Comments deemed to be inappropriate using personal devices amongst colleagues may be used in the investigatory process and may lead to discipline.

Staff are not permitted to record conversations with other individuals at work, or take photos or video footage of them, unless they have express prior consent to do so. Recording colleagues or patrons without their awareness and consent is intrusive and may be a breach of privacy and confidentiality and does not uphold the Town's core values. Staff are also not permitted to photograph private, confidential, or proprietary information, or the workplace premises, unless instructed to do so for legitimate work purposes by their manager.

### **What does this mean?**

Both corporate and personal cell phones and recording devices must be used appropriately and in compliance with the above guide as well as existing Information Technology procedures.

### **Why is it important?**

Using electronic devices responsibly and respectfully contributes to a productive and safe working environment. Given the high volume of technologies available, as well as with the widespread use of social media coupled with the Town's function as a level of government, guidelines surrounding cell phone utilization is valuable.

### **Things to do:**

- Ensure you receive express consent from the other party before recording conversations or recording them/taking video footage of them
- Only photograph confidential or proprietary information or the workplace premises for authorized and legitimate business purposes
- Only view information on your corporate cell phone that ought reasonably to be known as appropriate

- Use corporate cellular devices in compliance with the procedures associated with the Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy
- Obtain approval from your manager should you be required to utilize your personal cell phone more than the guidelines outlined in this procedure
- For staff who utilize Town vehicles, ensure cell phones and other electronic devices are only used in accordance with the Driver's Handbook

## FAQs

**Q What if my Supervisor calls me while I am driving a Town vehicle? I do not want to miss their call.**

**A.** You must practice safe driving and if you receive an important call that you need to take then you must pull over and park at a safe location before answering or returning the call unless your vehicle is equipped with hands free accessories. This includes if you are stopped at a red light or in traffic. Explain to your supervisor that you missed their call because you were driving.

**Q. My colleagues and I have a group chat on our personal cell phones and sometimes inappropriate jokes are made regarding the workplace that make me uncomfortable. What should I do?**

**A.** Be mindful that conversations that occur amongst colleagues, even if on personal cell phones, may still be used as an example in a Respectful Conduct complaint. Advise your colleagues that you are not comfortable with the conversation and remove yourself from the chat if required.

**Q. My colleague continues to show up to work late and it is impacting my job. I want to raise this with my manager so can I take photos/video of my colleague along with the time they show up to work to use as evidence to my manager?**

**A.** No. Recording or taking photos of your colleagues without their permission is a violation of this policy. Town policies promote healthy communication between colleagues and if not successful, raise with your manager, without photos or videos.

**Q. It is much easier for me to video/audio record meetings instead of making notes, is this allowed?**

**A.** Unless you have express prior consent from all parties to do so, audio or video recording of meetings is a violation of this policy.

**Q. I use my corporate cell phone as my primary number therefore I do take personal calls on it. Is this allowed?**

**A.** Yes, so long as your usage is within the guidelines under the Information Technology General Use and Practices Policy.

## Gifts and Gratuities

Employees will not accept or provide any gift, benefit, or favour in exchange for special consideration or influence, or where it may be perceived to be in exchange for special treatment.

### **What does this mean?**

Employees must not give or receive gifts if in doing so there could be a reasonable perception that their decisions are being influenced or their integrity appears to be compromised.

### **Why is this important?**

Although most gifts come with no strings attached, there is always the chance that something is expected or perceived to be expected in return.

### **Things to do**

- Decline cash tips or in-kind gifts
- Decline gifts that could be viewed as an exchange for a favour
- Decline gifts from potential vendors or interested parties during, or in anticipation of, the purchasing or tendering process
- If unsure, decline the gift or ask your supervisor

### **FAQ's**

**Q. The Town is in the process of awarding a contract and I am involved in the decision process. One of the bidders has offered to take me to an NHL game. Can I accept the invitation?**

**A.** No. The perception is that the bidder could be given special consideration or favours in return for the ticket(s).

**Q. I'm a transit driver. Some of the regular passengers on my route like to give me a cash tip at Christmas. I don't want to be impolite by rejecting what is a kind and sincere gesture. How should I respond? Can I accept any gifts?**

**A.** Politely explain that you appreciate the gesture, but the Town already compensates you therefore, you cannot accept the gift. It is unacceptable to accept cash, loans, free services, or individual discounts. Town employees may accept:

- Small holiday gifts showing appreciation (cards, cookies, chocolates)
- Advertising material (calendars, scratch pads, disposable pens, t-shirts, caps)
- Protocol items (symbolic or ceremonial gifts)

**Q. The Town paid for me to attend a conference and I won a door prize. Can I accept it? Can I accept an honorarium?**

**A.** You can accept the door prize but if the prize is of significant value, you should advise your supervisor. You are not permitted to accept a cash honorarium.

**Q. A vendor my department uses regularly has invited me to play golf with them. Can I attend?**

**A.** Only if prior approval has been given by your supervisor or manager. If approved, this should be on your time – after work or vacation time.

### **Related policies and procedures**

- Ethics and Efficiency Hotline Procedure (HR-MNG-006-002)

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## Personal Conduct

Employees will perform their duties with honesty, integrity, and in a manner that is helpful, respectful, inclusive, and courteous. Employees will not behave in a manner that could result in a conflict of interest, or that is disrespectful or unwelcoming to other Town employees, members of the public, members of Council, or anyone else that the Town services or does business with.

### **What does this mean?**

Employees will do their jobs to the best of their abilities while treating those they work with and serve with respect and courtesy. Employees will respect the dignity and diversity of Town colleagues and the public.

### **Why is this important?**

It takes the effort of each and every employee to make the Town of Oakville a great place to live, learn, work and play. The best way to maintain good working relationships is for employees to treat every person the way they want to be treated.

This is particularly important for municipal employees because we are often seen as ambassadors of the Town. All employees must work to maintain the public's confidence by acting courteously and responsibly, and by providing the best possible level of service.

### **Things to do**

- Practice common courtesies, such as “please” and “thank-you”
- Treat people as you want to be treated
- Represent the Town in a positive way
- Direct customers to the appropriate work area when you find yourself discussing matters outside the scope or authority of your position
- Be honest with people and in all your dealings with the Town
- Make every person feel important and valued
- Take on a customer-service focus
- Exercise diplomacy and tact when dealing with difficult people
- Respond promptly to requests for information or assistance
- Recognize that we are the public face of the Town so dress and present yourself appropriately

### **FAQ's**

**Q. Do I have to follow the Code of Conduct when I'm off duty but still in my Town uniform?**

**A.** Yes. When you are in uniform, the public identifies you as a Town employee and may assume you are performing Town duties.

**Q. Can I use social media venues such as Instagram, Facebook, X, etc. or my personal blog to voice my opinions about Council decisions, fellow employees, or my**

**workplace?**

**A.** Always adhere to the Town's Social Media Guidelines and policy on personal use of computers at work. If you identify that you are an employee of the Town on a personal site, make it clear that you are expressing personal views, not necessarily those of the Town. You are accountable for your comments and any comments, statements or opinions about Council decisions, fellow employees or your workplace that are or perceived to be negative, derogatory etc. may result in disciplinary action.

**Q. In my job, I'm in regular contact with angry people. How do I deal with abusive and profane language?**

**A.** Pay genuine attention to the person and project a positive, courteous attitude. Be helpful and do what you can to de-escalate and resolve the issue. If the behaviour is abusive or profane language is used, ask the person to stop the behaviour and remind them of the Town's Rzone procedure. If the aggressive behaviour continues despite your best efforts, ask your supervisor for help and report the incident on the Rzone Incident Form. For immediate threats of violence, contacting the police may be appropriate.

**Q. Can I stop for a beer on my way home from work if I'm wearing my Town uniform?**

**A.** No. Uniforms should only be worn for purposes related to your work. Although you are on your own time, your uniform leads people to believe otherwise.

**Related policies and procedures**

- Corporate Vision, Mission and Values
- Respectful Conduct Procedure (HR-MNG- 008-002)
- Accommodation Procedure (HR-MNG-008-003)
- Rzone Procedure (HR-MNG-008-001)
- Occupational Health, Safety and Workplace Violence Policy (HR-MNG-005)
- Workplace Violence Procedure (HR-MNG-005-002)
- General Use of Town Vehicles, Equipment and Facility Resource(s) Procedure (A-BMG-002-001)
- Information Technology General Use and Practices Procedure (A-ISS-001-001)
- Social Media Guidelines (A-ISS-002-002)
- Dress Code Guidelines

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## **Personal Gain, Benefit, or Favouritism**

Employees will not participate in any decision process that may result in real or perceived personal gain or benefit. Employees will remove themselves from situations where there is real or perceived risk of favouritism or conflict of interest. Employees will use information collected by the Town only for purposes consistent with the use for which it was collected. When employees have access to confidential information relating to any competition open to the public, employees are ineligible to compete. Employees will not recommend or endorse products, services, or suppliers.

### **What does this mean?**

Employees must remove themselves from any decision process that may result in actual or perceived personal gain, favouritism or benefit. Awarding of Town tenders, job opportunities, land sales, and disposal of surplus assets will be carried out impartially – without any advantage or favouritism to themselves or others.

### **Why is this important?**

All Town business must be conducted fairly and impartially. Employees are compensated for their service with public dollars. A Town employee should not benefit from his or her job beyond the compensation paid for the job.

### **Things to do**

- Use information only for the purpose for which it was collected
- Remove yourself from any decision process that may result in actual or perceived personal gain, benefit, or favouritism

### **FAQ's**

#### **Q. My sister just bid on a Town contract in my work area. What should I do?**

**A.** You must disclose any existing or prior relationship to your supervisor at the beginning of the process. If you are in a position to evaluate the bid, influence the selection of the successful bidder, or manage the bidder's performance, there is a potential conflict of interest. Your supervisor must ensure you are not involved in the decision-making process and do not have access to information regarding the process which could be used to influence decision makers.

#### **Q. In my job, I drive a Town pickup truck that is being declared surplus. Can I buy it?**

**A.** Yes. Once the Town has properly declared the truck surplus and it is available for sale to the public at large through a third party, you may make an offer to buy it. You will not get any greater consideration in the sale process than any other member of public offering to purchase the vehicle through an open sale process.

#### **Q. My brother-in-law is qualified for a job I directly supervise. Can he be hired for that position?**

**A.** No. Immediate family members may not work in the same department where there is direct or indirect supervision. Furthermore, no one may be hired, transferred, or promoted to a position over which a relative can be perceived to have influence over their promotion or supervision.

#### **Q. I work in Corporate Services and my brother has a consulting agreement with another department. What should I do?**

**A.** Nothing. Since you were not involved in the decision process that awarded his contract and do not have any involvement with that business, there is no conflict.

#### **Q. I have started a romantic relationship with my supervisor. What should I do?**

**A.** It is inappropriate for a supervisor to have a romantic relationship with an employee they directly or indirectly supervise. Furthermore, the Town discourages workplace relationships which can result in conflicts of interest, complaints of favouritism, claims of sexual

harassment, and other employee morale problems. In this situation, you and your supervisor must promptly disclose this relationship to the manager of your work area. The manager must take steps to address the supervisory-subordinate working relationship in order to remove actual or perceived favouritism along with any other potential conflicts. This may include modifying the reporting relationship and/or a change in position for one or both employees involved.

**Q. My daughter wants to work for the summer at the Town. Can I contact the hiring manager and ask them to hire her?**

**A.** No. Town employees may not advocate for the employment of any individual.

**Q. My neighbour has applied to a position at the Town. Can I contact the hiring manager and ask them to look at his resume?**

**A.** No. Town employees may not advocate for the employment of any individual.

**Q. I have been asked to speak at a conference by a software company to share the Town's experience with their product. Can I attend?**

**A.** Yes, with prior approval from your department head. Your presentation must include a statement that you are not endorsing or recommending the product.

#### **Related policies and procedures**

- Recruitment Policy (HR-RCT-001)
- Recruitment Procedure
- Purchasing By-law

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## **Use, Collection, and Disclosure of information**

Employees will use, collect, and disclose information only in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*, Town policies, and for the purposes of carrying out Town duties.

#### **What does this mean?**

Many employees have access to personal information about other employees or access to personal or financial information of members of the public. This information must be kept confidential and secure and must only be used for the purpose for which it was collected.

#### **Why is this important?**

Employees have a responsibility to maintain and to protect business and financial information of the public and personal information about identifiable individuals. MFIPPA governs the way municipalities use, collect, and disclose information. Employees are required to keep all personal information private and not to disclose it. In addition, any business or financial information of the public is confidential and can only be used for the purpose for which it was gathered. Employees are not allowed to use this information for personal gain or benefit of any kind.

## **Things to do**

- Maintain confidentiality
- Keep information secure
- Use information only for the purpose for which it was collected
- Handle sensitive and confidential information with care and disclose only in accordance with MFIPPA.
- Return all Town of Oakville documentation/information when/if departing from your employment with the Town.

## **FAQ's**

### **Q. I have been asked to give a job reference for a former Town employee. Can I share my opinions about this individual?**

**A.** Yes, with the employee's written permission. All reference information must be consistent with documented performance in the employee's file. Direct questions must be answered honestly but information should not be volunteered. If you have any doubts, you should speak with your supervisor or your human resources consultant.

### **Q. Who can access an employee's file?**

**A.** Employee files are accessed for work-related purposes and only if you are authorized to do so (i.e. direct supervisor, manager, or Human Resources). Access to employees' files is restricted to the necessity to fulfill job duties.

### **Q. I am a firefighter who attended a medical call on my friend's street. My friend asked why their neighbour was taken to the hospital. Can I tell them?**

**A.** No. Personal information you obtain regarding a member of the public cannot be disclosed and must be kept confidential.

### **Q. I was called to an accident scene to assist in the clean-up. The car was totaled, and I took a picture with my cell. Can I send it my friends and post it on my Facebook page?**

**A.** No. You should not be taking personal pictures of work events or situations unless specifically authorized by your supervisor. This is personal information regarding a member of the public. It is not to be disclosed and must be kept confidential.

### **Q. I operate a small, home-based business that sells baby clothes. In my job, I have access to personnel files, and I've noticed a few Town employees are on maternity leave. Can I call them at home to let them know I'm in business?**

**A.** No. Employees provide their phone numbers and family information to the Town for work-related purposes. It is a severe breach of conduct to use this information for anything other than Town work.

### **Q. I handle the Human Resources files for my office and discovered my co-worker's 40th birthday is coming up. Can I plan a surprise party?**

**A.** No. If you found out about the birthday through Town records, the information is considered confidential and cannot be shared with colleagues or used to plan a party.

**Q. I have information that suggests a contract was not handled according to Town policy. Should I tell the public or the media?**

**A.** No. This information must be directed to your manager or commissioner, or it can be reported through the Town's Ethics & Efficiency Hotline.

**Q. I have been contacted by the media to comment on a Town project or issue. Should I make a comment or share details?**

**A.** No. Direct the caller to speak with staff in the Communications department who will respond directly to the media or will refer the individual to the appropriate department spokesperson.

**Q. I run a children's program at a Town facility. A parent wants to give out birthday party invitations for their child and has asked me for the addresses of some of the kids in the program. Can I give them to her?**

**A.** No. Personal information you obtain regarding a member of the public cannot be disclosed and must be kept confidential.

#### **Related policies and procedures**

- Municipal Act
- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)
- Records Retention By-law
- Access to Records and Information Policy (G-GEN-004)
- Information Technology General Use and Practices Procedure (A-ISS-001-001)
- Video Surveillance Procedure (A-SCC-001-001)
- Electronic Monitoring Procedure

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## **Other Employment and Activities**

Employees will only engage in other employment and activities that do not conflict with their Town duties.

#### **What does this mean?**

To ensure continued commitments to service levels, employees are expected to avoid other employment or activities that interfere with their Town duties or are contrary to the interests of the Town. This means not engaging in any other employment activities while on Town time.

#### **Why is this important?**

Employees of the Town work hard and are dedicated to ensuring the Town's success. During paid working hours, employees' attention must be devoted to their work at the Town. Employees cannot have other employment or engage in other activities that conflict with or undermines their ability to perform Town duties effectively.

#### **Things to do**

- Refuse work that could be perceived as a conflict of interest

- Advise your supervisor where there is any involvement with an external organization that could be considered a conflict of interest
- Ensure other employment is not adversely affecting your Town responsibilities and working hours

## **FAQ's**

**Q. I'm off work and receiving disability benefits. I can't do the heavy, physical labour my Town job demands but I can run my home-based bookkeeping business. Is this a violation?**

**A.** Possibly. The Town's Disability Management Consultant must be aware of and consider all outside employment while employees are on disability leave. Employees have an obligation to advise the Employer of such paid employment especially while in receipt of disability benefits.

**Q. I work as a mechanic for the Town and would like to get a part-time job as a mechanic elsewhere. Is this permissible?**

**A.** Yes. You can take the job as long as the service is not in conflict with your work at the Town, does not interfere with your Town work schedule, and the service is not performed on Town time or using Town resources.

**Q. Can I hold more than one job with the Town?**

**A.** Typically, if you are already a temporary full-time or permanent full-time employee, then you are not permitted to have another job with the Town. There may be minor exceptions to this rule, which are determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with Human Resources.

**Q. I am a real estate agent. Can I answer a call at work from a client regarding a listing I have?**

**A.** No. Work related to outside employment must not be conducted on Town time or use Town resources.

## **Related policies and procedures**

- Attendance Policy (HR-MNG-001)
- Absence Reporting Procedure (HR-MNG-001-001)
- Collective Agreements

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## **Political Activity**

Employees must not engage in any political activity or electioneering during normal working hours at any Town work location.

### **What does this mean?**

Political activities such as protesting, canvassing, campaigning, or fundraising that aim to advance or promote an individual's or group's political interests will not be permitted in the

workplace during normal working hours. All employees have the right to take part in political activity and electioneering, but only on their own time. Employees cannot:

- Engage in political activity in the workplace that is outside the scope of their position at the Town
- Engage in political activity while wearing a Town uniform or clothing with the Town of Oakville logo
- Use Town of Oakville premises, equipment or supplies while engaging in political activity
- Associate their position/employment with the Town with political activity of any kind

### **Why is this important?**

The fact that the Town is a municipal government presents a unique situation. The Town's workplace is a highly political environment where opinions vary widely and strongly. To respect all beliefs, political activity is not allowed in the workplace. Political views and activities are important to many employees, but the work environment and time should be devoted to Town business.

### **Things to do**

- Get written permission from your direct supervisor before you engage in any non-work activity at your place of work
- Ensure political activity that is personal in nature is distinct and disconnected to your employment with the Town. This means that in the course of your work, you remain impartial to candidates running in an election for a position on Town Council.
- Reference the [Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Period](#) Procedure

### **FAQ's**

#### **Q. Can Town employees run for political office?**

**A.** Yes. If a Town employee is running for Town Council in Oakville, they must first seek a leave of absence for the time period between the day they are nominated to voting day, in accordance with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*. If the employee is elected, it will be understood that the employee has resigned from their employment with the Town immediately before taking their elected seat on Council.

#### **Q. I want to put up some election signs during my lunch hour for the candidate I am supporting. Can I do this?**

**A.** Yes. Such activity must be as a citizen and not as or appear to be as a representative of the Town. You should not be driving a Town vehicle, sporting Town logo wear or a Town uniform.

#### **Q. My spouse is running for political office. Can I accept contributions to the campaign while I'm at work?**

**A.** No. Town employees are not permitted to raise or to contribute funds to political campaigns while at their place of work.

**Q. I am attending a political fundraising event. Can I use my corporate credit card to purchase a ticket?**

**A.** No. Town employees are not permitted to use Town funds to attend political events.

**Related policies and procedures**

- Municipal Elections Act
  - Attendance Policy
  - Absence Reporting Procedure
  - Unpaid Leave of Absence Procedure
  - Use of Corporate Resources during an Election Period
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## **Professional Codes of Conduct**

Employees with professional designations, certifications or licences may be subject to more than one code of conduct. If a situation arises that may cause conflict or confusion between the applicable codes, employees should speak with their manager.

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## **Compliance With the Code of Conduct**

Managers must ensure each employee is informed on the Code of Conduct. The onus is on employees to read and be up to date on the Code which is provided by the Corporation.

Each employee must sign the enclosed declaration form to acknowledge receipt of the Code of Conduct.

Questions concerning the application, interpretation, or disclosure procedures of the Code of Conduct should be directed by employees to their supervisor.

A violation of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

If you think you are or may be in conflict with the Code of Conduct, you must notify your supervisor by submitting the Code of Conduct Notification Form; this also includes if you are in a conflict-of-interest scenario as identified within this manual

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