

# CITY OF VAUGHAN

## CORPORATE POLICY

**POLICY TITLE:** DISCONNECTING FROM WORK POLICY

**POLICY NO.:** 13.A.10

|                                              |                                         |                             |             |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Section:</b>                              | Human Resources                         |                             |             |
| <b>Effective Date:</b>                       | June 1, 2022                            | <b>Date of Last Review:</b> | May 1, 2022 |
| <b>Approval Authority:</b><br>Administration | <b>Policy Owner:</b><br>Human Resources |                             |             |

### POLICY STATEMENT

The health and wellbeing of Employees is important to The Corporation of the City of Vaughan (“City”). Disconnecting from work is a significant part of achieving overall wellbeing, as well as maintaining a good work-life balance.

The City understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or an Employee’s work environment or location, Employees may feel obligated or choose to continue to perform their job duties outside their regular working hours. Work-related pressure and the inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

At the City of Vaughan, you matter. We are committed to supporting your wellbeing. While adhering to the commitments to staff under Wellness@Vaughan, the City is committed to providing Service Excellence to its citizens. We can provide Service Excellence and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

The Disconnecting from Work Policy (the “Policy”) has been established to support Employee wellness and help Employees disconnect from their work outside their regularly scheduled hours, subject to the exceptions set out below.

### PURPOSE

The City of Vaughan is committed to increasing overall Employee health and wellness and providing Employees with a good work–life balance. The purpose of this Policy is to help Employees disconnect from work.

**SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all City of Vaughan Employees while engaging in work for the City.

**LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

The *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (“Act”) requires employers to have a policy setting out when employees may disconnect from work. The Act does not create a right for employees to disconnect from work.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. **City or Employer:** The Corporation of the City of Vaughan.
2. **Disconnecting from Work:** not engaging 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, outside of an Employee’s regular working hours.
3. **Employee:** is a person who performs work for the City for wages or is defined as an employee under the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*.
4. **Senior Management:** is an Employee who is either a department head or holds the title of Director, Chief, Deputy City Manager or City Manager.
5. **Work-related:** work for or on behalf of the City.
6. **Workplace:** any City premises or location in which a City Employee works and includes, but is not limited to, City Hall, the Joint Operations Centre, Recreation Centres and Fire Halls.

**POLICY**

**1. Regular Work Hours and Work Expectations**

- 1.1. An Employee’s regular work hours will vary depending on the nature and demands of the position and Department. Regular work hours may be established under an Employee’s Employment Agreement, Collective Agreement (for unionized employees), existing practice and/or through discussions between the Employee and the City about the expectations of their position and the associated hours of work. If an Employee has questions about their regular hours of work, they should speak to their People Leader, Manager or Supervisor.

1.2. The City will ensure that it is open during core business hours to serve the public. The City will also comply with the hours of work requirements as set out in the Ontario *Employment Standards Act, 2000* and applicable regulations and respective Collective Agreements.

## **2. Disconnecting from Work**

2.1. An Employee is entitled to Disconnect from Work outside of their regular work hours, subject to the exceptions outlined below.

## **3. Exceptions**

3.1. While the City recognizes that an Employee may elect to Disconnect from Work, there will be circumstances where work will need to be performed or the Employee will need to be available outside of the regular work hours. The circumstances which an Employee may need to be available are as follows:

3.1.1. **On Call/Standby:** if an Employee is scheduled to be on-call/on standby outside of their regular work hours, they are expected to be available and to respond if contacted by telephone or email. For unionized Employees, the on-call provisions within their Collective Agreement may apply.

3.1.2. **Emergency or Urgent Circumstances:** an Employee may be required to attend work, either in person, through virtual meetings or telephone calls outside of their regular work hours for urgent circumstances, critical City business or an emergency, and must be available via phone or email if needed or called in.

3.1.3. **Where Advised by Manager or Supervisor:** in other circumstances where business or operational needs dictate, an Employee may be contacted or advised by their Manager or Supervisor of the need to be available outside of regular work hours. This may also include checking an Employee's availability for scheduling purposes.

3.1.4. **Overtime:** at times, overtime may be required for operational needs. In these instances, for unionized Employees, the overtime provisions within the Collective Agreements apply, and for non-unionized Employees, provisions within the Management By-Law and/or their employment contract apply.

3.1.5. **Voluntary Communication:** voluntary communications between Employees outside of regular hours are permitted as long as the

Employee respects others who may wish to Disconnect from Work outside of their regular work hours.

#### **4. Roles & Responsibilities**

##### **4.1. People Leaders, Managers and Supervisors** are required to:

- 4.1.1. Respect an Employee's decision to Disconnect from Work, plan work schedules and avoid, if possible, scheduling meetings or sending work-related communication outside of an Employee's regular work hours.
- 4.1.2. Consider delaying the delivering of e-mails until the regular work day commences. Email messages can be programmed to be time delayed and delivered on the next business day.
- 4.1.3. If communications are sent outside of regular work hours, include a statement in the subject line or in the communication to indicate when a response is required.
- 4.1.4. Ensure Employees take vacation and Disconnect from Work to provide a healthy work-life balance.
- 4.1.5. Respect Alternative Work Arrangements, accommodations or other statutory leaves of absence.
- 4.1.6. Meet with Employees regularly to ensure:
  - 4.1.6.1. Their current workload does not result in the Employee working excess hours or contribute to undue stress and burnout;
  - 4.1.6.2. Normal job duties can be completed during working hours; and
  - 4.1.6.3. Employees can remain productive, meet goals and objectives and provide Service Excellence.

##### **4.2. Human Resources** will:

- 4.2.1. Recognize that the work plays a significant role in physical and mental health and wellness may be affected by excessive pressures at work or at home.
- 4.2.2. Support mental health through its Wellness@Vaughan Program, mental health training, and through the Employee Assistance Program.
- 4.2.3. Help address disputes and conflicts with respect to this Policy.

**4.3. Employees** are required to:

- 4.3.1. Be respectful of others who wish to Disconnect from Work. Employees should not expect their co-workers to respond, communicate, or complete work when outside their regular work hours unless an Exception (above) applies.
- 4.3.2. Avoid frequently working outside their regular hours to complete or catch up on work.
- 4.3.3. Ensure they manage their work and consider work obligations while taking reasonable steps to protect their own and their colleagues' health and safety.
- 4.3.4. Take applicable rest periods, including meal breaks to ensure hours free from work are in accordance with applicable legislation, their Collective Agreement or their Employment Agreement.
- 4.3.5. Obtain approval in advance to work overtime where required.
- 4.3.6. Meet with their People Leader/Manager/Supervisor to address any workload concerns to help maintain a health work-balance.

**5. Remedial Action**

- 5.1. All Employees are expected to comply with this Policy and to report any concerns that may be impacting their ability to Disconnect from Work to their People Leader, Manager or Supervisor. If the concerns are not resolved, the Employee should contact the next level of management above their Manager or Supervisor or Human Resources, should a resolution not be found.
- 5.2. Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above. People Leaders, Managers and Supervisors will abide by and ensure that Employees working under their direction follow this Policy.

**6. Monitoring and Review**

- 6.1. The City's Human Resources shall review this Policy annually before March 1 of the calendar year.
- 6.2. The City shall provide a copy of any revised Policy to Employees by posting it on the City's website 30 days in advance. The City shall provide a copy of this Policy to all new Employees upon hire or onboarding.

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6.3. The City shall retain a copy of this and any revised copy of this Policy for three years after the Policy ceases to be in effect.

**ADMINISTRATION**

*Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.*

|                             |                                                                                                                                                             |                          |                 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Review Schedule:</b>     | Other 1 year (specify)                                                                                                                                      | <b>Next Review Date:</b> | January 2, 2023 |
| <b>Related Policy(ies):</b> | Occupational Health and Safety Policy, Alternative Work Arrangements Policy, Respectful Workplace Policy (Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination/ Harassment) |                          |                 |
| <b>Related By-Law(s):</b>   | Management By-Law                                                                                                                                           |                          |                 |
| <b>Procedural Document:</b> | None                                                                                                                                                        |                          |                 |

**Revision History**

| <b>Date:</b> | <b>Description:</b>     |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Apr. 1, 22   | Establishment of Policy |