

## Disconnecting From Work P-CS-22-002

### 1. Policy

<b>Policy Number</b>	P-CS-22-002
<b>Policy Name</b>	Disconnecting From Work
<b>Effective Date</b>	June 1, 2022
<b>Last Revised:</b>	N/A
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	N/A

### 2. Policy Purpose

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake ("Town") understands that due to work-related pressures, the current landscape of work, or the working environment, employees may feel obligated to perform their job duties outside their normal working hours. Work-related pressure and feeling an inability to disconnect from the job can lead to stress and deterioration of mental and physical health. This policy has been established to support employee wellness, minimize excessive sources of stress, and ensure that employees feel they can disconnect from their work outside their regular working hours.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to all Town employees, volunteers and students at workplaces where the Town has any duties as an employer (together "Employees").

### 4. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
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.
Employees	As defined by the Ontario Employment Standards Act (ESA), whether they are working remotely or in the workplace.
Regular working hours	The time agreed to by an employee, as stated in their employment contract, when they are meant to complete work for The Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

### 5. Policy Statement

An Employee's time outside regular working hours is meant for the Employee to recharge and spend as they wish and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between home and work that makes it difficult for Employees to truly disconnect. Working remotely or from a home office can make Employees feel as though they are "always on" or obligated to continue working or respond to communication, regardless of the time of day.

The Town sees Employee health and well-being as priorities while working and away from work. The Town is committed to increasing overall Employee health and wellness and providing Employees with a positive work-life balance. This policy is intended to promote that ideal by specifically detailing the Corporation's expectations related to disconnecting from work.

## 6. Policy Details

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### 6.1 General

Employees are entitled to disconnect from work outside regular working hours without fear of reprisal. All scheduled breaks should be taken, and time off entitlements for non-work-related activities should be used each year. Employees are encouraged to set clear boundaries between work and their personal lives, regardless of their working arrangement, whether that be onsite, flex work, or hybrid work.

Outside regular working hours and when disconnecting from work, Employees:

- Should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks;
- Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communication outside their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off;
- Will not face repercussion or punishment for not communicating or for ceasing work; and
- Should respect co-workers' time and should not expect them to respond, communicate, or complete work.

### 6.2 Workload and Productivity

The Town understands that Employees may want or need to work outside their regular working hours to meet a time-sensitive deadline or attend to an urgent matter or emergency; however, Employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours to complete or catch up on work.

Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regular working hours should meet with their direct manager to evaluate their workload, priorities, and due dates.

Managers will work with Employees to come up with a solution to ensure:

- The current workload does not result in the Employee working excess hours and does not contribute to additional stress or burnout;
- Normal job duties can be completed during regular working hours; and
- Employees can remain productive and meet corporate goals and objectives.

### 6.3 Communication

While the Town appreciates each Employee's work patterns may differ, where possible, work-related communications (e.g. emails) should be checked and/or sent only during normal working hours. Senders should give consideration to the timing of work-related

communications and understand a recipient is not expected to respond until their return to work.

There may be the occasional communication sent to Employees when they are not working, such as on an Employee's day off or scheduled vacation. Where a manager or supervisor sends work-related communications outside of normal working hours, unless business or operational needs dictate an immediate response is required, Employees are not expected to respond to communications when not at work, apart from unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency.

Employees who do not reply to work-related communications outside regular working hours will not face negative effects on their employment.

#### **6.4 Devices**

Depending on their role, some Employees may be provided with Town-owned devices such as a mobile phone and/or laptop. These devices are provided to Employees to, among other things, provide flexibility regarding the times an Employee can complete their work. The provision of Town-owned devices to an Employee should not imply the Employee will make themselves available to work at all times.

#### **6.5 Reporting Concerns**

**6.5.1** All Employees are expected and required to report any concerns or issues they may have which they feel is impacting on their ability to Disconnect-from-Work.

**6.5.2** Employees are 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 their Director and/or Human Resources.

**6.5.3** Employees will not be subject to reprisal for reporting such concerns as outlined above.

#### **6.6 Exceptions**

On occasion, there may be legitimate situations when it is necessary to contact colleagues, clients, and/or customers outside of normal working hours, including but not limited to:

- Checking availability for shifts;
- Filling in on short notice for a sick colleague;
- When unforeseen circumstances may arise;
- Where business and operational reasons require contact outside of normal working hours.

Although the Town is committed to allowing Employees the right to disconnect, Employees should also be mindful that situations can arise where it is not possible to deal with matters during normal working hours.

### 6.7 Breaks and Time Off

Breaks are provided in accordance with employment standards and are intended to provide Employees with time to recharge and enable them to work productively during regular working hours. Employees should take any scheduled or corporate-provided breaks during their shift and use that time to disconnect from work.

The Town understands the importance for our Employees to have personal time off. Employees are encouraged to use their vacation time in full every year and should take the time for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits. Employees will never be obligated to complete work-related activities during scheduled time off. Knowing that time management is the responsibility of Employees and scheduled time off should not interfere with deadlines. Managers will work with Employees to delegate job-specific duties that must be completed while the Employee is on vacation to maintain workflow and productivity. Employees should not be reluctant to take vacation due to workload unless there are limitations or restrictions because of a due date, project priority, scheduling conflict, or unforeseen circumstance that prevent an employee from taking a vacation at a specific time, in which managers will assist in determining appropriate actions to take to meet deadlines and accommodate time off requests whenever possible.

### 6.8 Overtime

At times, the Town may have a business need that requires Employees to work overtime. Overtime will be approved and, if possible, scheduled in advance. It may be requested by the Employee or required in certain situations to ensure work is completed; however, Employees should not work overtime unless approved by their manager. Please see the overtime policy for guidelines on overtime.

## 7. Related Policies and Information

### Related Policies

- [Flex Time Policy](#)

### Related Information

- Disconnecting from Work FAQ

## 8. Contacts

Please direct any questions regarding this policy to:

OFFICE	PHONE	EMAIL
Human Resources	Ext. 252	sarah.stevens@notl.com

POLICY GOVERNANCE	
Policy Number:	P-CS-22-002
Effective Date:	June 1, 2022

<b>Last Reviewed Date:</b>	N/A
<b>Target Review Date:</b>	June 1, 2024
<b>Approval Authority:</b>	Chief Administrative Officer
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Administration
<b>Responsible Office:</b>	Human Resources
<b>Supplemental Documents:</b>	N/A