



Title: Council - Staff Relations Policy	Classification: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formal Policy of Council <input type="checkbox"/> Operational Procedures <input type="checkbox"/> Service Standard Public Impact: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Signature of Approval: _____ Date: _____
Implementation Date:	
Review Date:	
Issuing Department: Governance and Legislative Services	

Objective

To establish a clear and consistent framework that supports a respectful, collaborative, and effective working relationship between Council and staff. This policy aims to promote mutual respect, clarify roles and responsibilities, encourage appropriate communication, and ensure good governance and efficient municipal service delivery in accordance with applicable legislation and ethical standards.

Purpose and Application

The purpose of this policy is to define the principles and practices that guide interactions between Council and staff, ensuring they are rooted in mutual respect, professionalism, and accountability. The policy outlines expectations regarding communication, conduct, and roles to foster a productive and positive municipal workplace.

This policy applies to all members of Council and all employees of the Town of Gander, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract staff. It is intended to support effective governance by ensuring that all parties understand their roles, responsibilities, and the appropriate protocols for interaction.

Accommodation

Town of Gander is committed to fostering a proactive approach in achieving strategic goals, while simultaneously promoting an inclusive and diverse environment. In response to unique circumstances, the Town’s mission is to rigorously assess both typical and atypical situations and fulfill a Duty to Accommodate, ensuring equitable treatment without imposing undue burdens. Council, under its legislative authority, retains the right to vary guidelines and exercise discretion regarding policy accommodations.

Responsibilities

Authority: Council will be responsible for policy approval.

Accountable: Chief Administrative Office (CAO).

Responsible: Department head to bring forward suggestions, recommendations for edits, modifications or policy developments.

Responsible: Management to review policy for cross-departmental and organizational impacts.

Responsible: Assigned staff to maintain and ensure accurate updates and distribution of policy amendments.

Responsible: All municipal officials and municipal councillors to ensure adherence to policy.

Consulted: Line departmental staff impacted are to be consulted to assess operational impacts.

Consulted: Senior Management Team.

Informed: Applicable staff and public.

Definitions

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) - The senior administrative official appointed by Council, responsible for the overall management of municipal operations and for implementing Council's policies and decisions.

Council - The elected body that governs the Town of Gander, composed of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Councillors, responsible for setting strategic direction and municipal policies.

Staff - Employees of the Town of Gander, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and contract personnel, who report through the administrative structure led by the CAO.

Operational Matters - Day-to-day activities, administrative decisions, service delivery, internal staff management, or resource allocation carried out by staff under the CAO's leadership.

Governance - The system and processes used by Council to set direction, establish policies, and oversee the strategic performance of the municipality, distinct from administrative operations.

Directive - An instruction or request for action related to municipal operations. Council may only issue directives as a collective body through resolutions or bylaws, not as individuals.

Undue Influence - Any behaviour, whether explicit or implied, that seeks to interfere with or override the impartial, professional judgment or responsibilities of municipal staff.

Election Period - The period beginning six months before a scheduled municipal election and ending upon the swearing-in of the new Council, during which heightened neutrality and transparency are expected.

Political Activity - Actions that support or oppose a political party or candidate, including campaigning, partisan messaging, or use of municipal resources for electoral purposes.

Values

Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability – The Town of Gander is committed to prioritizing honesty, openness, and ethical conduct in its interactions and operations. The Town understands the importance of maintaining clear, accurate, and accessible information. Council officials and municipal employees are held accountable for their conduct and performance. In doing this, Town of Gander can build trust with the community and provide demonstrate its commitment to serving the best interests of the public.

Compassion – The Town of Gander recognizes residents and employees all face their own challenges. It is our commitment to demonstrate empathy and understanding where possible. By fostering a sense of solidarity and community care, support can be provided to those in vulnerable situations.

Community Engagement – The Town of Gander is actively engaged with residents to encourage their participation and gather feedback ensuring citizens have a voice in shaping projects, fostering inclusive and responsive governance.

Accessibility and Inclusivity – The Town of Gander is committed to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background and ability, have equal access to opportunities and services. Through the implementation of practices and policies that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, all individuals can be supported.

Quality of Life - The Town of Gander is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for its residents through various initiatives, including, but not limited to, allocating resources to obtain quality healthcare, affordable housing, educational opportunities, developing and maintaining infrastructure, supporting local businesses, ensuring access to essential services, and promoting community safety through municipal enforcement.

Continuous Improvement – Periodic reviews shall take place to ensure policies remain relevant and effective to the Town of Gander’s organizational goals.

Policy Guidelines

The following objectives offer precise guidance for the implementation of this policy and the attainment of targeted goals.

1.0 Respect for Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1** Council is responsible for setting policy direction, establishing strategic goals, and making decisions in the best interest of the municipality.
- 1.2** Staff are responsible for administering policies, managing daily operations, and providing impartial advice based on professional knowledge and experience.
- 1.3** Council members shall not involve themselves in day-to-day administrative or personnel matters.
- 1.4** All operational or service-related concerns, directives, or inquiries shall be routed through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or their designated management representative.
- 1.5** Council shall refrain from issuing instructions or assignments directly to staff members.
- 1.6** Staff must respect the authority of Council as a collective decision-making body and not respond to directives from individual members unless authorized through policy or delegation.

2.0 Professional Conduct

- 2.1** Council and staff must conduct themselves with integrity, professionalism, and respect in all communications and interactions.
- 2.2** Personal attacks, intimidation, sarcasm, or public criticism of staff by Council members, or vice versa, are not acceptable.
- 2.3** Council members must not request that staff undertake politically motivated, partisan, or personal tasks.
- 2.4** Staff shall not engage in political activities during work hours or while representing the municipality.



- 2.5 All parties shall foster an inclusive, harassment-free, and non-discriminatory working environment.
- 2.6 The Town supports a psychologically safe workplace, where individuals feel confident and secure to voice concerns, suggest improvements, or report misconduct without fear of retribution.

3.0 Communication Protocols

- 3.1 Communication between Council and staff must be structured, transparent, and guided by approved channels.
- 3.2 All formal requests for information, reports, or service updates from Council members must be submitted to the CAO for assignment and tracking.
- 3.3 Where Council has authorized individual members to liaise with staff (e.g., through committee appointments), interactions must remain within the defined scope of those duties.
- 3.4 Staff are expected to respond to Council inquiries in a timely, factual, and neutral manner.
- 3.5 Staff may redirect or decline individual requests if:
 - 3.5.1 They fall outside operational mandates;
 - 3.5.2 They duplicate existing work or reporting cycles;
 - 3.5.3 They present a risk to organizational capacity or impartiality.
- 3.6 All Council-staff communications should be documented where necessary to ensure transparency and traceability.
- 3.7 All communications between Council and staff, including digital platforms and informal channels, are subject to this policy and must adhere to professional standards and approved procedures.

4.0 Safeguarding Municipal Boundaries

- 4.1 The CAO is the administrative head of the organization and has the authority to interpret and implement Council's decisions in a manner consistent with municipal strategy and staff capacity.
- 4.2 Council members shall not engage in behaviours that may be perceived as exerting undue influence on administrative decisions or circumventing proper authority.
- 4.3 Staff have the right to carry out their responsibilities without interference, and to elevate concerns when governance boundaries are not observed.
- 4.4 Council members shall not use intermediaries or third parties to bypass administrative protocols or influence staff outside of approved channels.

5.0 Maintaining Neutrality During Elections

- 5.1 In the lead-up to municipal elections, all interactions between Council and staff must be especially mindful of the need for neutrality, continuity, and protection from perceived political influence.
- 5.2 Requests or initiatives during this period must be assessed by the CAO to ensure consistency with existing priorities, impartiality, and protection of staff from undue pressures.



- 5.3** Any concerns related to the politicization of staff activities or the misuse of administrative resources shall be addressed through established reporting channels.
- 5.4** Following a municipal election or staff leadership change, structured transition practices shall be used to support continuity, maintain professionalism, and uphold institutional memory.

6.0 Upholding Administrative Independence

- 6.1** Council acknowledges the authority of the CAO to oversee all operational, logistical, and administrative functions of the municipality.
- 6.2** Council members shall avoid involvement in internal administrative decisions or activities, and shall instead channel feedback, suggestions, or concerns through the appropriate governance structures.
- 6.3** All parties share responsibility for fostering a respectful, collaborative environment that enables staff to carry out their duties without disruption, confusion, or undue influence.

7.0 Confidentiality and Discretion

- 7.1** Council and staff must safeguard sensitive information, particularly matters relating to:
 - 7.1.1** Personnel;
 - 7.1.2** Legal advice;
 - 7.1.3** Procurement processes;
 - 7.1.4** Land negotiations;
 - 7.1.5** Closed sessions;
 - 7.1.6** Any information protected under ATIPPA or applicable privacy legislation.
- 7.2** Breaches of confidentiality may result in disciplinary or legal consequences, as applicable.

8.0 Conflict Resolution

- 8.1** Should disputes or concerns arise between Council members and staff, the following steps shall be taken:
 - 8.1.1** The issue is raised privately with the CAO.
 - 8.1.2** If unresolved, the CAO will engage the Mayor and/or the staff member's supervisor to facilitate resolution.
 - 8.1.3** If the issue persists, the matter may be escalated to a formal review process or mediation facilitated by an external party.
- 8.2** No staff member shall be penalized or retaliated against for reporting inappropriate conduct by a Council member, and vice versa.

9.0 Training and Orientation

- 9.1** Upon election or hiring, all Council members and staff shall receive orientation on:
 - 9.1.1** Roles and responsibilities;
 - 9.1.2** This Council/Staff Relations Policy;
 - 9.1.3** Conflict of interest provisions;



9.1.4 Relevant legislation

9.1.5 Respectful workplace expectations.

9.1.6 Newly elected officials and new staff will receive mandatory orientation that includes this policy.

9.2 Ongoing professional development, workshops, and refresher sessions may be offered upon request to reinforce good governance practices.

10.0 Legislative Compliance

10.1 All interactions, conduct, and communications must comply with the following legislation (including amendments and successor legislation):

10.1.1 *Towns and Local Service Districts Act;*

10.1.2 *Code of Conduct Policies;*

10.1.3 *Municipal Conduct Act;*

10.1.4 *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act;*

10.1.5 *All other relevant legislation.*

10.2 Where conflicts exist between this policy and applicable legislation, the legislation shall take precedence.

11.0 Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 The distinct roles of elected officials and administrative staff are foundational to good governance. As per applicable legislation:

Council (Collective Role):

11.1.1 Sets policy direction through by-laws, resolutions, and plans;

11.1.2 Approves budgets and allocates resources in accordance with strategic priorities;

11.1.3 Represents the interests of residents and ensures decisions reflect the public good;

11.1.4 Oversees the performance of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO);

11.1.5 Adopts long-term planning documents including municipal plans and development regulations.

Individual Councillors:

11.1.6 Bring forward constituent concerns through formal mechanisms;

11.1.7 Participate actively in meetings, committees, and community engagement;

11.1.8 May not exercise executive authority or act independently on behalf of the municipality unless delegated by Council.

Mayor (or Presiding Officer):

11.1.9 Chairs meetings and represents the municipality in official functions;



11.1.10 Works collaboratively with the CAO to ensure effective flow of information between Council and administration.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO):

11.1.11 Is the sole employee directly accountable to Council;

11.1.12 Provides impartial professional advice and ensures implementation of Council's decisions;

11.1.13 Manages all operational, financial, and human resource functions in accordance with Council policy and applicable legislation.

11.2 Role clarity protects the integrity of governance structures and prevents administrative interference. The success of the municipality depends on the cooperative and respectful exercise of these roles within their defined scope.

12.0 Personal Liability and Accountability for Deviations from Role

12.1 Municipal councillors are subject to both collective and individual liability for actions taken outside of their legislative authority. The following risks may arise from interfering in administrative decisions or violating the defined governance framework:

12.2 Legal Liability:

12.2.1 Councillors who direct staff or make unauthorized decisions may be held personally liable for:

- a. Breaches of contract;
- b. Violations of procurement rules;
- c. Improper influence in hiring or disciplinary matters;
- d. Misuse of municipal resources.

12.3 Conflict of Interest & Breach of Trust:

12.3.1 Under the *Municipal Conduct Act*, actions taken for personal gain, political advantage, or to influence outcomes outside the decision-making process may result in:

- a. Censure or suspension;
- b. Repayment of improperly allocated funds or benefits;
- c. Disqualification from office.

12.4 Insurance Limitations:

12.4.1 Municipal liability insurance may not cover individual councillors for actions deemed ultra vires (beyond legal authority), especially where personal involvement in administrative decisions is proven.

12.5 Governance Disruption and Reputational Harm:

12.5.1 Unauthorized involvement in operations can compromise staff morale, delay service delivery, and erode public trust in municipal government.

12.6 Reporting and Correction:

12.6.1 Any staff member who believes a Council member has acted outside their authority may report the matter through the CAO, who shall assess the situation and, if necessary, recommend formal remediation.

12.7 Duty to Self-Regulate:

12.7.1 Council members have an ethical and statutory responsibility to self-monitor, disclose potential breaches, and correct course when governance boundaries are exceeded.

Policy Procedures

1.0 Operational Requests and Communications

1.1 All Council member inquiries, service requests, or operational concerns must be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) in writing (email or formal request).

1.2 The CAO will review, prioritize, and assign the request to appropriate staff based on:

1.2.1 Relevance to approved municipal plans or policies;

1.2.2 Resource capacity and departmental workload;

1.2.3 Alignment with strategic goals and timelines.

1.3 Staff shall not respond directly to operational requests from individual Council members unless explicitly authorized to do so by the CAO.

2.0 Documentation and Tracking

2.1 The CAO will maintain a centralized record of all Council requests for information or action that are operational in nature.

2.2 This record shall include:

2.2.1 The nature and date of the request;

2.2.2 Assigned staff or department;

2.2.3 Estimated timelines and completion dates;

2.2.4 Any delays or follow-up requirements.

2.3 This ensures transparency, consistency, and the ability to report on request volumes and trends.

3.0 Reporting and Escalation of Policy Breaches

3.1 Staff are encouraged to report any perceived breaches of this policy, including inappropriate requests, unprofessional conduct, or unauthorized direction by Council members.

3.2 Reports should be made to:

3.2.1 The staff member's immediate supervisor, or;

3.2.2 Directly to the CAO, in confidence, if appropriate.



3.3 Council members who believe a staff member has not complied with this policy may also report the concern to the CAO.

3.4 The CAO will:

3.4.1 Investigate the concern in a timely and impartial manner;

3.4.2 Document findings and outcomes;

3.4.3 Take corrective action where necessary.

4.0 Role of the CAO in Conflict Management

4.1 The CAO acts as the primary liaison between staff and Council on operational matters.

4.2 In the event of repeated or significant policy violations, the CAO will:

4.2.1 Notify the Mayor and/or Governance & Legislative Services;

4.2.2 Facilitate mediation or conflict resolution, where appropriate;

4.2.3 Recommend further action if necessary, including formal reprimand or referral to external bodies.

5.0 Accountability Measures for Policy Violations

5.1 Council members found to be in violation of this policy may be subject to the following, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct Act for Municipal Officials*:

5.1.1 Verbal or written warning;

5.1.2 Mandatory retraining or participation in mediation;

5.1.3 Censure by Council through a motion or resolution;

5.1.4 Referral to an independent investigator or Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs;

5.1.5 In severe cases, removal from committees or other privileges as permitted under law.

5.2 Staff who violate the policy may be subject to progressive disciplinary measures as outlined in the Town of Gander's personnel policies.

6.0 Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

6.1 Governance & Legislative Services will:

6.1.1 Periodically review the effectiveness of this policy;

6.1.2 Monitor compliance in collaboration with the CAO;

6.1.3 Recommend policy amendments to Council as necessary.

6.2 A formal review shall take place every two (2) years or upon significant changes to relevant legislation or governance structure.

Statement of Jurisdiction

Town of Gander is obligated to comply with all relevant policies, acts, regulations, and legislations that govern municipal operations. It is imperative to note that the Town does not possess the authority to supersede mandates established by higher levels of government. If conflicts arise between Municipal, Provincial or Federal Acts/Regulations, the higher level of jurisdiction will prevail.

Appeals/Review Process

Appeals that are eligible to be heard by the Central Newfoundland Regional Appeal Board may be submitted to URPA.Appeals@gov.nl.ca. For complete information, please visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/mpa/for/appeals/>.

Council may hear requests for internal review and additional appeal methods may be made available through Policy of Council or other judicial processes.

APPENDIX A

POLICY AMENDMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS OF COUNCIL



Amendments and Resolutions

Policy Adopted	Date:	Resolution:
Date:	Date:	
Date:	Date:	

DRAFT - April 9, 2025