



## PURPOSE

The public expects the highest standards of professional conduct from members elected to local government. The purpose of this code is to establish guidelines for the ethical and inter-personal conduct of members of Council (“members”). The Council is answerable to the community through democratic processes and this code will assist in providing for the good government of the Municipality of East Hants.

This Code of Conduct shall apply to elected officials from the time that they are declared elected until:

- a) their resignation;
- b) their disqualification while in office; or
- c) their successor is sworn into office, or, if there is no successor, until the meeting at which the successor would have been sworn into office if there was a successor.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Members shall uphold the law at all times and will:

- Seek to advance the common good of the municipality as a whole, while conscientiously representing the communities they serve;
- Perform the functions of office truly, faithfully and impartially to the best of their knowledge and ability in accordance with the following principles:
  - a) **Collegiality** - members of Council will work together to further the best interests of the municipality in an honest and honourable way.
  - b) **Respect** - members of Council will demonstrate respect towards one another, the democratic decision-making process, and the role of staff.
  - c) **Integrity** - members of Council are expected to act lawfully and adhere to strong ethical principles by giving the municipality interests priority over private individual interests.
  - d) **Professionalism** - members of Council will create and maintain an environment that is respectful and free from all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment and discrimination. They must show consideration for every person’s values, beliefs and contributions, and supporting and encouraging others to participate in council activities.
  - e) **Transparency** - members of Council will be truthful and open regarding their decisions and actions and make every effort to accurately communicate information openly to the public.
  - f) **Responsibility** - members of Council are responsible for the decisions that they make and must be held accountable for their actions and outcomes. They must demonstrate awareness of their own conduct and consider how their words or actions may be perceived as offensive or demeaning.

## COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council (or its designated Committee) will:



- Review the Municipality's Code of Conduct as required and make any amendments considered appropriate; and
- Review, consider or take other action concerning any violation of the Code of Conduct and the requirements of any statute of the provincial or federal government, provincial or federal statutes shall take precedence.

## MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members are agents of the public whose primary objective is to address the needs of the citizens. As such, they are entrusted with upholding and adhering to the policies of the Municipality as well as all applicable provincial and federal laws. As public servants, members must observe a high standard of morality in the conduct of their official duties and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities of their offices, regardless of their personal or financial interests.

### GENERAL CONDUCT

- Members of Council must be truthful and forthright, and not deceive or knowingly mislead Council, the CAO, or the public.
- Members should faithfully work towards developing programs to address the needs of the citizens in the course of their duties. Members should strive to perform at a level which is expected of those who work in the public's interest.
- Members of Council will respect the presiding officers, colleagues, staff and members of the public that present during the Council meeting or other proceedings/meetings of the municipality.
- Members of Council will adhere to procedure and direction of presiding officers in respect to rules of procedure.
- Members of Council must conduct Council business and all of the member's duties in an open and transparent manner, other than for those matters which Council is authorized by law to deal with in private.
- Members of Council must ensure that they are not impaired by alcohol or drugs while attending any meeting of the municipality.

### CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

- No Member of Council will disclose or release by any means to any members of the public, any confidential information acquired by virtue of their office, in either oral or written form, except where required by policy or law or authorized by the Council to do so.
- No member of Council will use confidential information for personal or private gain or for the gain of any person or entity.



- Members of Council should not access or attempt to access confidential information in the custody of the municipality unless the information is necessary for the performance of their duties and its access is not prohibited by legislation or by the by-laws or policies of the Municipality.
- Members of Council must not discuss any matters relating to an active investigation under this Code of Conduct with anyone other than the investigator or their own legal representative, unless required by law.

#### GIFTS AND BENEFITS

- No member of Council shall accept a fee, advance, cash, gift, gift certificate or personal benefit that is connected directly or indirectly with the performance of their duties of office, except for the following:
  1. gifts or benefits that normally accompany the responsibilities of office and are received as an incident or protocol or social obligation;
  2. a suitable memento of a function honouring the member of Council;
  3. sponsorships or donations for community events organized or run by a member of Council or by a third party on behalf of a member of Council;
  4. compensation authorized by the Municipality.
- A fee or advance paid, or a gift or benefit provided, with the Member's knowledge, to a person closely connected to a member is deemed to be a gift to the Member of Council.

#### USE OF MUNICIPAL PROPERTY, EQUIPMENT AND SERVICE

- No member of Council shall use, or request the use of, any municipal property, including surplus material or equipment for personal convenience or profit, unless the property is:
  - a) available for such use by the public generally and the member of Council is receiving no special preference in its use; or,
  - b) made available to the member of Council in the course of carrying out Council activities and duties.
- No member of Council shall use, or request the use of, for personal purpose any municipal property, equipment, services, supplies or other municipally-owned materials, other than for purposes connected with the discharge of municipal duties.
- No member of Council shall obtain, or attempt to obtain, personal financial gain from the use or sale of municipally-developed intellectual property.
- No member of Council shall use information, or attempt to use information, gained in the execution of their duties that is no available to the general public for any purposes other than carrying out their official duties.
- No member of Council, or person closely connected to a member, shall tender on such items such as the sale of older and extra equipment.

#### BUILDING, DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING, OR PROCUREMENT PROPOSALS BEFORE COUNCIL

No member of Council shall solicit or accept support in any form from an individual, group or



corporation, with any building, development, planning, or procurement proposal before Council.

#### OBLIGATIONS TO CITIZENS

No member of Council shall grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any citizen or group of citizens beyond that which is accorded to all citizens.

#### IMPROPER USE OF INFLUENCE

No member of Council shall use the influence of their office for any purpose other than for the exercise of their official duties.

#### BUSINESS RELATIONS

- No member of Council shall allow the prospect of their future employment by a person or entity to affect the performance of their duties to the municipality.
- No member of Council shall borrow money from any person who regularly does business with the municipality, unless such person is an institution or company whose shares are publicly traded and who is regularly in the business of lending money.
- No member of Council shall act as an agent of a person or entity before Council or a committee of Council or any agency, board or committee of the municipality.

#### EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

- No member of Council shall attempt to influence any municipal employee to hire or promote a person closely connected to the member.
- No member of Council shall make any decision or participate in the process to hire, transfer, promote, demote, discipline or terminate any person closely connected to the member.

#### FAIRNESS

- No member of Council shall give special consideration, treatment or advantage to any individual or entity beyond that which is accorded to all.
- No member of Council shall give special consideration, treatment or advantage to an organization or group due to the member or person closely connected to the member being involved with or a member of the organization or group.

#### ADHERENCE TO POLICIES, PROCEDURES, BYLAWS AND OTHER LAWS

- Members of Council will adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- Members of Council will adhere to the applicable national and provincial legislation.
- Members of Council will adhere to the procedures, policies and bylaws of the municipality.
- Members of Council will adhere to the Council Remuneration & Travel Reimbursement Policy and Hospitality Policy of the municipality.

#### RESPECT FOR COUNCIL AS A DECISION-MAKING BODY

- A member of Council must abide by and act in accordance with any decision made by Council,

whether or not the member voted in favour of the decision.

- Members of Council must not encourage non-compliance with a statute, regulation, bylaw, policy or procedure.

#### COMMUNICATING ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL

- A member, other than the Mayor/Warden, must not claim to speak on behalf of Council unless the member has been authorized to do so.
- The Mayor/Warden/designated individual may speak on behalf of Council and must make every effort to convey the intent of Councils' decision accurately.
- Except when dealing with the local MLA or MP on a local District issue or advocating for a constituent with provincial local area staff (clearly indicating they are not representing Council), Council members shall not engage or communicate with members of other levels of government, government departments/agencies, municipal vendors, or other corporations on specific to East Hants municipal matters unless authorized to do so by Council or the Warden. If Council has directed Staff to engage members of other levels of government or an organization on a specific topic, local or otherwise, individual Councillors may not speak on behalf of Council on the issue unless authorized to do so by Council or the Warden. Nothing in this provision shall prohibit a Councillor from communicating with the Councillor's constituents.

#### INTERACTIONS OF COUNCIL WITH STAFF AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Members of Council must respect the role of the CAO as head of the administrative branch of government of the municipality and must not involve themselves directly in the administration of the affairs of the municipality, including, without limitation, the administration of contracts.
- No member of Council shall direct, or attempt to direct, the CAO, other than through a direction provided by the Council as a whole.
- Members of Council shall be respectful of the role of the CAO and municipal employees to advise based on political neutrality and objectivity and without undue influence from any individual member or faction of the Council.
- Members of Council must not direct or influence, or attempt to direct or influence any municipal employees in the exercise of their duties or functions.
- Council cannot direct municipal employees except through the CAO.
- Members of Council are not to issue instructions to any of the contractors, tenderers, consultants or other service providers to the municipality.
- No member of Council shall require or request that a municipal employee undertake personal chores or tasks for the Council member unrelated to municipal business.
- Members of Council shall refrain from making public statements that are critical of specific and/or identifiable municipal employees and/or service providers.



RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS

- A member of Council must not engage in discrimination or harassment on the grounds articulated in the Human Rights Act of Nova Scotia.
- A member of Council must not sexually harass any person.
- A member of Council must not engage in any discriminatory or harassing action or conduct, verbal or non-verbal, directed at one or more individuals or groups that creates a poisoned environment.

REPRISAL

A member of Council must not undertake any act of reprisal or threaten reprisal against a complainant in a matter under this Code of Conduct or any person providing relevant information in relation to a matter under this Code of Conduct.



## APPENDIX A STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ELECTED OFFICIALS CODE OF CONDUCT

Members of Council must acknowledge the important of the principles contained in this Code of Conduct. Councillors shall sign this “Statement of Commitment” within seven (7) days of taking the Councillor’s Oath pursuant to section 147 of the *Municipal Elections Act*.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ declare that as a Councillor of the Municipality of East Hants, I  
(please print full name)

acknowledge and support the Elected Officials Code of Conduct (2024).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Declared this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

Before me:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Ramsay, CPA  
Chief Administrative Officer/Municipal Clerk



## APPENDIX B SANCTIONS FRAMEWORK AND POSSIBLE SANCTIONS TO BE IMPOSED

Persons who have reason to believe that this Code of Conduct has been breached in any way are encouraged to bring their concerns forward. No adverse action shall be taken against any member of Council or Municipal employee who, acting in good faith, brings forward such information.

### SANCTIONS FRAMEWORK:

Council shall consider all of the following criteria prior to imposing a sanction or sanctions:

1. The nature of the code contravention;
2. The length or persistence of the code contravention;
3. If the member intentionally contravened the Code of Conduct;
4. Has the member taken any steps to remedy the contravention;
5. If the member previously contravened the Code of Conduct;
6. Any external factors that exist to the member's contravention (e.g. family situation, mental health); and,
7. The resources the member will need to complete their job.

### SANCTIONS:

1. Member will receive a letter of formal reprimand or warning, as directed by Council.
2. Member will issue a letter to include acknowledgement of breach of the code and an apology within fifteen (15) days.
3. Require the member to attend training, appropriate to the incident, as directed by Council.
4. Censure the member publicly.
5. Limit the member's access to certain local government facilities, equipment and/or property.
6. Suspending or removing the member as Deputy Warden of Council and/or chair of a committee, if applicable.
7. Suspending or removing the member for no longer than six (6) months from some or all committees and/or boards.
8. Impose a limit on the member's participation on behalf of the municipality.
9. Impose a limit on the member's travel and/or expense reimbursement on behalf of the municipality.
10. Impose a fine on the member for up to \$1,000 per occurrence, which is to be paid no later than six (6) months from the decision of Council and to be collected in the same manner as other taxes.
11. Impose an appropriate reduction in remuneration to the member for no longer than six (6) months.
12. Make member repay any direct monetary loss realized by the municipality as a result of the member's action in any amounts determined by the investigator.





13. Make member repay any direct monetary gain they obtained from their actions in any amounts determined by the investigator.



## APPENDIX C COMPLAINT AND INVESTIGATOR PROCESS

1. The Municipality will appoint a person or entity other than a Council member or an employee of the municipality to receive and investigate complaints.
  - a) The person or entity appointed must have experience in conducting investigations and in applying the principles of natural justice and procedural fairness. No conflict of interest can exist between the investigator and the parties involved.
  - b) Municipalities must include the investigator's contact information on their publicly accessible website.
  - c) A complaint form shall be made available on municipal website.
2. A complaint must be submitted to the investigator no later than six (6) months from discoverability.
  - a) Any complaints brought forward during the municipal election period of nomination day until ordinary polling day will not be investigated until the election has concluded.
3. When a complaint is received by the investigator, the investigator shall notify the CAO/Clerk of the fact that a complaint has been received.
4. The investigator will determine if there is validity to the complaint. If no validity, then the complaint can be dismissed.
5. If the investigator finds that the complaint is valid, the investigator shall notify the member who is the subject of the complaint that a complaint has been made about them, and it is proceeding to an investigation.
6. The investigator will begin their investigation and notify Council through a confidential email or in-camera of the fact that a complaint is proceeding to the investigation phase.
7. The investigator shall protect the confidentiality of the complainant, the subject(s) of the complaint, and all persons involved in the investigation, to the greatest extent possible, while still applying the principles of natural justice and ensuring procedural fairness.
8. The investigator shall present a report to Council, no later than six (6) months from the time the complaint is brought forward, on the investigation and include a recommendation regarding the validity of the complaint and, if applicable, a recommendation regarding an appropriate sanction.
  - a) If a complaint is brought forward during the municipal election period of nomination day until ordinary polling day, it will not be investigated until the election has concluded. Investigations already in progress at the time of nomination day will continue;
  - b) Council may grant the investigator an extension on when the report can be brought to Council for extenuating circumstances, including a delay during a municipal election period;
  - c) Council is able to discuss the investigators report in camera; and
  - d) The member who had the complaint lodged against them will have the opportunity to review and respond to the information in the investigator's report, and make submissions to Council, prior to the Council's vote.
9. Council determines if a breach occurred and determines the sanction(s) to impose. If a Councillor is the subject of the complaint or has made the complaint under the Code, the Councillor shall:
  - a) In the case of a closed meeting, leave the room in which the meeting is held;
  - b) In the case of a public meeting, either leave the room or remain in the room in the part of the room for general public; and
  - c) Refrain from voting on any question relating to the matter.



10. Any breach of the code determined by Council shall automatically retrigger the required Code of Conduct training.
11. The section under the Code of Conduct the complaint was lodged and the investigators recommendations are made public.
12. The decision or penalty of Council on a Code of Conduct matter is final and binding on all parties.