

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Resources

Disconnecting From Work Policy

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Disconnecting From Work Policy No. 5.48 be approved as presented in Attachment No. 1 to Report No. HR 2022-02 entitled “Disconnecting From Work Policy”, effective June 2, 2022.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On December 2, 2021, the *Employment Standards Act, 2000* (ESA) was amended to include the requirement for employers with 25 or more employees to have a written policy on disconnecting from work, which must be in place by June 2, 2022.
- The ESA outlines that “disconnecting from work” is defined as not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or sending or reviewing other messages, to be free from the performance of work.
- The proposed policy meets our obligations under the ESA and contributes to a workplace that values employee health and well-being, while outlining exceptions to disconnecting from work to maintain optimal service delivery.

Implementation Points

Upon approval of this policy, Human Resources will ensure that staff is aware of the revised policy through established communication mechanisms.







Financial Impact

The recommendation contained in this report has no financial impact

Communications

The policy will be posted on our employee intranet, highlighted in Connections This Week, and provided to new employees upon hire, in accordance with the ESA.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
					6.i.

DISCUSSION

Background

On December 2, 2021, the *Employment Standards Act*, 2000 (ESA) was amended to include the requirement for employers with 25 or more employees to implement a written policy on disconnecting from work. The ESA stipulates that this policy must be in place by June 2, 2022, and reviewed on an annual basis thereafter.

Comments

The world of work has changed significantly for many positions across organizations, and Oxford County is no exception. The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to rapidly change how many positions work, including the increased frequency of electronic communication. While this has proven to be beneficial, increased electronic communications has also had the potential to infringe on personal or non-work time, as some employees can complete part or all of their work from any location (typically a home office) and during non-traditional work hours. Across many workplaces, this has resulted in blurred lines between personal/non-paid time and scheduled/paid work time.

As an employer, we recognize that flexibility in where and when employees complete their work is beneficial to both staff and the County; however, we also recognize that to maintain work-life balance and optimal overall well-being, employees should have the ability to disconnect from work during their non-working hours.

Exceptions

Oxford County delivers 24/7 essential public services and there can be tight deadlines, emergencies and on-call work that all contribute to our high level of service delivery. For this reason, the proposed policy outlines exceptions to disconnecting from work, such as responding to emergencies and participating in on-call rotations, assuring Council and the public that this policy will have no impact on our current levels of service. The proposed policy also references our current policies and Collective Agreements that outline how employees are compensated if they are required to work outside of their regularly scheduled hours.

Conclusions

Oxford County recognizes the importance of disconnecting from work during non-working hours and maintaining a healthy work-life balance, while also recognizing that there are times that disconnecting from work is not possible and addresses those exceptions.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Amy Smith
Director of Human Resources

Approved for submission:

Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 Disconnecting From Work Policy