

## Disconnecting from Work

Policy Number: **HR-10**

Initial Policy Approval Date: **June 1, 2022**

Last Review/Revision Date: **2024**

Year of Next Review: **2026**

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## Purpose

The Port Colborne Public Library Board recognizes that changes in technology have allowed employees to be constantly connected. The board recognizes the right of an employee to disconnect from work outside of scheduled work hours and this policy demonstrates our commitment to support the work-life balance of our employees.

Work-related pressure and the inability to disconnect from employment can lead to stress and deterioration of mental health. The purpose of this policy is to support staff wellness and minimize excessive sources of work-related stress. The Port Colborne Public Library Board encourages and supports its employees in prioritizing their own well-being, in part by having the capacity to disconnect from work as appropriate.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Port Colborne Public Library, as defined by the Ontario *Employment Standards Act* (ESA), whether they are working remotely or in the workplace.

## Policy Statement

Disconnecting from work is important for an individual's well-being and helps employees achieve a healthy and sustainable work-life balance. The Board supports its employees in balancing their work and personal lives, whether working traditional hours in the workplace, remotely or flexibly. This policy will encourage employees to disconnect from work where both possible and appropriate.

## Definitions

"Disconnecting from work" under this policy means not engaging in work or work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or sending or reviewing other messages such that employees are free from working outside of their normal

working hours in accordance with the *ESA* and this policy, including the exceptions detailed below.

## **Employer, Management and Employee Obligations**

The library, its management and employees must work together to ensure that everyone is able to disconnect from work outside of normal working hours in accordance with this policy.

### **1. Employer Obligations**

- a) To provide new employees with a copy of this policy within 30 days of the employee's start date;
- b) To review and amend this policy as often as may be required;
- c) To provide existing employees with a copy of any amended versions of the policy within 30 days of the amendment;
- d) To provide employees with information regarding their normal hours of work given the nature of their work and any other information required to assist employees with complying with this policy;
- e) To take all reasonable steps to ensure that management and employees are able to disconnect from the workplace at appropriate times as detailed in this policy; and,
- f) To refrain from penalizing or taking any other reprisal action against employees who have questions regarding this policy or request compliance with it. Legitimate employer direction and/or corrective action towards employees is not considered "reprisal action."

### **2. Management Obligations**

- a) To take all reasonable steps to ensure that the employees under their management are able to disconnect from work outside of their normal hours of work in accordance with this policy;
- b) To try to resolve any employee concerns about this policy;
- c) To advise employees of the limited instances in which they may be expected to perform work outside of their normal hours of work; and
- d) To refrain from penalizing or taking any other reprisal action against employees who have questions regarding this policy or request compliance with it. Legitimate management direction and/or corrective action towards

employees is not considered “reprisal action.”

### 3. Employee Obligations

- a) To fully cooperate with any time recording methods which the Library uses to track hours of work;
- b) To take all reasonable steps to ensure that their colleagues are able to disconnect from work in accordance with this policy;
- c) To take and use all their scheduled breaks (including meal breaks) and time-off entitlements (including vacation time) for rest, relaxation, and personal pursuits;
- d) To notify the **CEO** if they feel undue pressure to work or respond to work-related communications outside of their normal working hours, or if they are otherwise unable to comply with this policy.

### Working Hours

While employee working hours may vary, each employee’s hours of work are defined by past practice, their employment contract and/or by agreement with the **CEO**. If employees have any questions regarding their normal hours of work, they should consult the **CEO**.

It is generally expected that all employees are able to complete their work, including reviewing and responding to any work-related communications, during their normal hours of work. The Library has no expectation that employees engage in work or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work, subject to the exceptions detailed below.

If an employee is regularly unable to complete their work or attend to work-related communications within normal hours of work, they must notify the **CEO**.

### Exceptions

There are situations when it is necessary for employees to perform work or communicate with colleagues outside of their normal hours of work, including, but not limited to the following:

- Where an emergency or exigent circumstances arise, with or without notice;
- To assist or fill in at short notice for a colleague;

- Where the nature of the employee's duties requires work and/or work-related communications outside of their normal hours of work;
- To contact employees on sick or other leave for limited information related to their return to work;
- Unforeseeable business or operational reasons;
- An employee's request or agreement to work certain hours or have flexible working hours; and
- Other unusual circumstances as the **CEO** may advise or which are inherent to an employee's position.

## **Meetings, Calls, and Work-Related Communications**

Employees should make all reasonable efforts to book meetings and calls during the attendees' normal hours of work, subject to the exceptions detailed above. Similarly, employees should only review and send work-related communications during their normal working hours, subject to the exceptions detailed above.

Work-related communications should not be sent to or from employees' personal mobile phones, personal e-mail addresses, personal telephone numbers or other personal devices, subject to the exceptions detailed above or an agreement to communicate in this manner.

Some library employees' hours of work may differ. As a result, certain employees may attend to work-related communications outside of other employees' normal hours of work. Where this is the case, the sender should consider the timing of their communications and understand that the recipient will not be expected to respond until their return to work at the earliest. The sender should also consider all appropriate safeguards on other employees' normal hours of work, including but not limited to the following:

- Using the "Delay Delivery" function for e-mail messages in Microsoft Outlook so that their message is sent during regular working hours; and
- Including a line in their e-mail signature as follows: *"I am sending you this email now because it is convenient for me. I do not expect you to respond to it outside of your normal hours of work."*

## **Automatic Replies**

Employees are required to activate an automatic e-mail response whenever taking vacation or a leave from work. The automatic response should be sent automatically in

response to all e-mail communications and advise the sender that the recipient is absent from work. The response should include the start and end date of the recipient's absence and provide an alternative contact's information. The automatic response should be active for at least the duration of the employee's absence from work.

Employees may also be required to activate an automatic e-mail response at the end of their normal working day. If applicable, this automatic response should advise the sender of the recipient's normal hours of work and any other relevant information.

## **Handheld and Remote Work Devices**

The Library may provide some employees with handheld devices, such as a mobile phone, laptop, tablet or other device to assist with working remotely. These devices are provided to employees to encourage flexibility in completing their work. Possession of these devices does not mean that an employee is expected to make themselves available for work or work-related communications outside of their normal working hours.

## **Questions and Concerns**

Employees should consult with the **CEO** if they have any questions or concerns about this policy. If any question or concern regarding this policy cannot be resolved with the **CEO**, the **CEO** may refer the matter to the City Human Resources department for assistance.

## **Related documents:**

- Employment Standards Act (2000)
- Corporation of the City of Port Colborne. Disconnecting from Work Policy (June 2022)



# Port Colborne Public Library

## Employee Acknowledgement

I have read the Disconnecting from Work Policy set forth above. I understand its contents, agree to abide by it and acknowledge that the policy forms part of my contract of employment. I also agree to seek clarification from the **CEO** regarding any aspect of this policy on which I am unclear.

<b>Employee Name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Employee Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	