



County of
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EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

OCTOBER 2014

Chief Administrative
Officer/Clerk



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A MESSAGE FROM THE CAO/CLERK



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The County of Renfrew is a large organization offering a wide range of essential services to the residents of the County. As such, our workforce includes many individuals with the diverse backgrounds and skills required to provide quality services.

All County employees must perform their duties in a manner that maintains and enhances public confidence and our corporate competencies of: honesty and integrity, client service orientation, professionalism, and focus on results. Trust and mutual respect are the cornerstones of any relationship between the public and its government. Furthermore, as an organization entrusted with public funds, the County is obligated to ensure the protection and appropriate use of all its resources and assets.

We are proud of our employees and the services they deliver to ratepayers. It recognizes that it is only through the commitment and effort of each employee that the excellent quality of these services is achieved and public trust is maintained in this level of government. As its most valuable and important asset, County employees therefore are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of behaviour.

All employees are expected to be aware of, and comply with, this Employee Code of Conduct (the “code”) and its corporate and departmental related policies.

This Code clarifies the County’s expectations of its employees, and re-affirms our commitment to caring for all our communities’ needs and maintaining fiscal responsibility on behalf of the public and our employees. It provides a guide for consistent behaviour in delivering services. It brings together the principles contained in various County documents, departmental policies and plans. In short, this Code is simply a formal statement of the policies and principles of conduct the County has always embraced. Contravention of this Code is a serious matter to the County and the public, and will be treated as such.

Public service is a public trust, and as an organization entrusted with public funds, it is critical that every County employee be committed to the highest standards of ethical behaviour. It is in this spirit that this Code of Conduct was developed.

W. James Hutton
Chief Administrative Officer / Clerk

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This Code of Conduct is not intended to replace any current or existing corporate or departmental policies or standard operating procedures; it is intended as a quick reference guide of the County of Renfrew Senior Leadership Team's expectations of your conduct as an employee of the County of Renfrew.

CORPORATE MISSION STATEMENT & CORPORATE VALUES

Our Mission:

The delivery of high quality services to the residents of the County of Renfrew in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Our Values:

- Honesty & Integrity
- Professionalism
- Client Service Orientation
- Focus on Results



EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

Employees of the County must follow the highest standards of ethical behaviour in the course of their work to ensure that public confidence and trust is maintained. The County and all its employees must be above suspicion and beyond reproach, and must be perceived in this manner.

EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR (PROFESSIONALISM)

Employees interact with clients in receipt of County services or programs, community agencies, contractors, suppliers, and the general public on a daily basis. Employees must be professional, courteous and objective in all of these interactions.

The County's employees are its **ambassadors** and are expected to reflect a professional image at all times. Depending on the nature of the work of the employee, certain attire may not be appropriate. Employees are requested to be mindful of their attire and dress professionally for their job. Each employee must also be conscious of the County's public duty and their part in the discharge of that duty. They are expected to conduct themselves with the highest degree of ethical behaviour and integrity.

As with such external relations, employees must also be professional and courteous with their co-workers. They should be aware that improper behaviour in the workplace has a negative effect on others. Examples include bullying behavior, excessive noise, inappropriate office decorations, potentially offensive pictures and jokes, profanity and demonstrating little or no respect for other's personal belongings. Employees are expected to be reasonable and fair in their expectations of each other, and resolve any conflict in a mature and professional manner.

DISCLOSURE

This Code applies to all County employees. As such, each employee is required to be knowledgeable about the Code, all related County by-laws, policies, laws, regulations, government guidelines and internal controls applicable to their jobs. As such, each employee is required to address any situations of actual or potential non-compliance. For example, when an employee believes that they may be in breach of the Code, then that employee must make prompt and full disclosure to their Supervisor (or designate) or delegated official. This disclosure should include a detailed description of the actual or potential breach. An actual or potential breach may arise without any intentional wrongdoing or improper conduct on the part of the employee. In those circumstances, employees will not be treated or disciplined adversely for making prompt and full disclosure. However, all employees are expected to make every effort to avoid such circumstances. Employees are to use sound judgment and apply the Code in a proactive fashion in order to maintain the public's trust in County of Renfrew employees.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

Any suspected fraud, breach of trust or other wrongdoing by another employee must be reported to management. Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of such information.

All employees must co-operate fully during an investigation of suspected wrongdoing in relation to any articles outlined in this Code. Reprisal against someone who is a witness or is involved in such investigations is prohibited.

When in doubt about the interpretation or application of this Code, clarification should be sought from the Supervisor (or designate).

VIOLATION OF CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code's references to guidelines and policies, as well as related expectations, re-affirms the County's commitment to honesty, integrity, and professionalism in delivering services to the public. Maintaining residents' confidence and trust in municipal government and its employees is of the utmost importance. The high standards of conduct expressed in this document are intended to ensure that this public trust is not compromised.

Every employee is expected to be aware of, and act in compliance with, this Code and its related policies. Violation of these principles is a serious matter and will be dealt with as such by the County. Any employee, who has contravened these requirements, including the "reporting allegations" obligation to report any knowledge of wrongdoing, shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action (up to and including dismissal). Any employee under investigation may be suspended with or without pay or may be re-assigned to other duties pending completion of the investigation, depending on the particulars of the case and the best interest of the County.

SELF REGULATED PROFESSIONS

Nothing in this Code is intended to conflict with the County's obligations to its employees under its various collective agreements or employment contracts. As well as this Code, many employees may also be subject to other rules of conduct as part of their professional affiliations.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

As part of effective management, each Department must ensure that its employees are aware of, and act in compliance with, this Code and its related policies.

The management of the County is accountable for protecting the assets of, and the public trust in, the County. Towards this end, management must make every effort to establish and maintain adequate systems, procedures and controls to prevent and detect fraud, theft, breach of trust, conflict of interest, bias and any other form of wrongdoing.

Upon receiving written disclosure of an actual or potential breach of the Code, the departmental Director shall either determine that no breach exists or take reasonable steps to ensure that the matter is addressed in the appropriate manner.

It is the responsibility of management to ensure that each incident of suspected wrongdoing is investigated. Investigations are conducted to prove innocence, not guilt. If a violation of this Code or any policy is confirmed, the County will deal firmly and fairly with all its employees.

HARASSMENT

The County of Renfrew recognizes the right of every employee to work in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment, by the employer, agent of the employer, another employee, or any other person with whom he/she comes into contact in the normal performance of his/her duties. Any such harassment or discrimination will be regarded as a serious offence and is subject to disciplinary action.

All individuals in the County of Renfrew workplace are responsible for reporting harassment or discrimination to a manager or supervisor, in order to enable the County of Renfrew to take appropriate action.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

Employees must abide by applicable laws and regulations governing the possession or use of alcohol or drugs. The illegal use, sale, purchase, transfer or possession of any restricted or controlled drug, narcotic or any other substance while on County premises, or during working hours is prohibited and will result in discipline.

It is never permissible for employees to attend to their job duties and responsibilities having consumed alcohol, be under the influence of drugs or other similar substances, which might adversely affect performance on the job.

Employees shall not consume alcohol during a break or lunch period if they operate County equipment, County owned or leased vehicles, or are required to operate their own vehicle during the execution of their duties.

Similarly, unless it is a County pre-approved event, the County prohibits the sale, purchase, transfer, distribution, and unauthorized possession or consumption of any alcoholic beverages by employees while on County premises or while performing their County functions.

Employees who may be experiencing problems related to alcohol and drug use are encouraged to contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) of the County.

USE OF COUNTY PROPERTY AND ASSETS

Employees will not, except as specifically provided by policy and with Department Head approval, use County property or equipment for activities or purposes not associated with the discharge of official duties.

Employees of the County are responsible for using information resources in an effective secure, ethical and legal manner.

FRAUD/THEFT

In general, fraud is an act committed which, through deceit, falsehood and other such behaviour, either deprives the County of its assets, property or other resources (this includes theft), or causes the County to act to its own detriment or prejudice.

Fraud may include acts committed with the intent to deceive, involving either misappropriation of County assets, property or other resources or misrepresentation of financial or other information to conceal such misappropriation, by such means as:

- Manipulation, falsification or alteration of records or documents,
- Suppression of information, transactions or documents,
- Recording of transactions without substance, or
- Misapplication of accounting principles.

All employees shall work in accordance with both the County controls established to prevent fraudulent misconduct and all applicable laws, regulations and government guidelines. All employees shall exercise honesty, integrity, objectivity and diligence and shall not knowingly be a party to any fraudulent activity, including theft. Each employee is encouraged to report, in writing, any knowledge or suspicion of fraud to their manager, Director, or the CAO.

All County managers are responsible for ensuring that adequate internal controls are in place to prevent and detect fraud. Management is accountable for monitoring employee activity and performance and ensuring all employees are aware of, and in compliance with, controls, policies and procedures.

All confirmed incidents of fraud of theft committed against the County will be viewed as acts of criminal activity and will be treated accordingly.

SECURITY OF COUNTY INFORMATION

It is every employee's responsibility to ensure that all information collected, produced or obtained in the course of their duties, whether in reports, memos, oral communication or electronic format, is as accurate as possible. No employee shall willfully mislead other employees, County Councillors or the public, about any issue of County concern.

Only with proper authority will employees give or release to anyone, confidential information acquired in the course of that person's duties within the County.

The following information must not be used or disclosed, except in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act ("MFIPPA"):

- Information which is personal,
- Information that constitutes the proprietary information of a third party, individual or group,
- Might reasonably be regarded as having been disclosed to the employee in confidence,
- Is of a sensitive nature, or
- Imparts to the person in possession of such information an advantage not available to the public generally.

The following information must not be used or disclosed, except in accordance with the Personal Health Information Protection Act ("PHIPA"):

- Information relating to the physical or mental health of the individual, including information that consists of the health history of the individual's family,
- Information relating to the providing of health care to the individual, including the identification of a person as a provider of health care to the individual,
- Is a plan of service within the meaning of the Home Care and Community Services Act, 1994 for the individual,
- Information relating to payments or eligibility for health care, or eligibility for coverage for health care, in respect of the individual,
- Information relating to the donation by the individual of any body part or bodily substance of the individual or is derived from the testing or examination of any such body part or bodily substance,
- The individual's health number, or
- Identifying an individual's substitute decision-maker.

Staff should consult with the Privacy Coordinator (MFIPPA / PHIPA) if clarification is required.

All employees of the County of Renfrew must take steps that are reasonable in the circumstances to ensure that confidential client information including personal health information is protected against theft, loss, unauthorized use or disclosure and that records of personal health information are protected against unauthorized copying, modification or disposal. The County is committed to upholding the administrative, technical and physical safeguards that are consistent with established industry standards and practices and which are directed at effectively addressing any threats and risks to maintaining the highest standards in privacy and safeguarding personal health information.

Information acquired through employment with the County may not be used or disclosed in any personal external activity.

No employee shall benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the use of information acquired during the course of official duties that is not generally available to the public.

PROTECTION OF INFORMATION

The County records are available to employees on a “need to know” basis, and the security of such information must be maintained.

Personal information controlled by the County must be used or disclosed in compliance with the MFIPPA. The MFIPPA allows employees to use personal information if they require that information to carry out their duties, and if the affected individual reasonably expects that their personal information would be used this way.

These guidelines extend beyond an employee’s current relationship with the County. For example, employees should not divulge to the County any confidential information obtained from their former employer. Similarly, when an employee leaves the employment of the County, they are not to disclose information that could be detrimental to the County, individual or firm owning the information.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Communications with the media and the public will be conducted so that all information originates from an authoritative source within the County. Prior approval from management for any media comments or public relations activities is required.

Similarly, the employee must use caution to ensure that the County’s interests are not compromised in any way, either by use of County letterhead, E-mail addresses or by any other implication.

When participating personally in external or internal social media, employees should do so responsibly as they could be considered to represent the County both inside and outside of work. Employees should consider the potential impact their comments may have on the County’s reputation, and be guided by the values and the standards set out in the Code. Social media is not an appropriate venue to express concerns about the employer, any agent of the employer, another employee, or any other person with whom an employee comes into contact in the normal performance of his/her duties.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest occurs when, in the course of an employee’s duties, the employee is called upon to deal with a matter in which the employee has a direct and indirect personal and/or financial interest. A direct interest can occur when an employee may derive, or be seen to derive, some financial or personal benefit or avoid financial or personal loss. An indirect interest may arise when the potential benefit or loss would be experienced by another person or corporation having a relationship with the employee. These benefits, interests, losses and relationships are generally financial in nature but are not limited to such. In other words, a conflict arises when an employee participates in activities, which could advance a personal interest at the expense of the County’s interests. Any behaviour, which is, or could be perceived as, a conflict is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

Some of the more common areas of potential conflicts include the following:

- An employee may not make a personal bid on the sale of County property or goods, except those disposed of at public auction.

GIFTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

An employee may pay for or accept customary business hospitality, provided:

- The expenses involved are at a reasonable level,
- They are infrequent,
- They can clearly be seen as legitimately serving a definite business purpose, and
- They are appropriately related to the responsibilities of the individual.

By way of example, promotional items of nominal value (e.g. mugs, hats, shirts, pens) are considered acceptable.

Similarly, employees who are asked to speak publicly to an organization or professional association may accept a small honorarium or gift provided it is reasonable under all of the circumstances. In cases where employees are asked to speak or make presentations to share information with colleagues, it may also be permissible to accept the offer of travel and/or accommodations.

POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY

To ensure public trust in the County, employees must be, and appear to be, both personally impartial and free of undue political influence in the exercise of their official duties.

The County encourages employees to take part in community activities. However, it is important to bear in mind that such service may, at times, place the employee in a real or perceived conflict of interest situation. As a member of a community board or external committee, the employee must continually assess their involvement and expected decision-making responsibilities in light of their employment with the County. To ensure the existence and appearance of objectivity, employees should abstain from involvement in those decisions or votes that would create, or be seen to create, a conflict of interest. An employee must notify the County management of such potential or actual conflict of interest situations.

Similarly, employees engaged in political activities must take care to separate those personal activities from their official positions. Employees may participate in political activities at the federal, provincial, municipal levels providing such activity does not take place during work hours or utilize County assets, resources or property. Notices, posters or similar material in support of a particular candidate or political party are not to be displayed or distributed by employees on County work sites or on County property.

OUTSIDE BUSINESS ACTIVITY (MOONLIGHTING)

Employees will not engage in any outside work, private employment, business, or undertaking for any person, group, or organization, which might interfere with the performance of their duties as a County employee, without the prior approval of their Department Head and the Chief Administrative Officer / Clerk.

REVISIONS

The County's Employee Code of Conduct is a dynamic document meant to reflect our changing needs, realities and responsibilities. Therefore, as the County evolves and new issues arise, the Code will be periodically reviewed and modified to reflect the current environment.

This Code does not answer every question that is going to come up. Rather, it is designed to reinforce the employer's expectations, promote ethical decision-making and behavior, and to guide us in doing our jobs consistent with our competencies.

Ethical behavior is not about finding the right answers – it is about asking all of the right questions, like:

Am I putting my own interests before the organization's?

Would I make the same decision if my manager, the public or the media were watching me?

If you have a question or if you are looking for guidance, ask your manager.