

Policy for Respectful Communications and Conduct

1. Purpose

This policy establishes the commitment of the Resort Municipality of Stanley Bridge, Hope River, Bayview, Cavendish and North Rustico (the "Municipality") to providing a safe, respectful, and productive workplace for its staff, while affirming the right of individuals to meaningfully engage with their local municipal government. This policy provides a framework for addressing conduct that disrupts respectful civic engagement or compromises the safety and well-being of staff, members of the Municipality's council ("Council"), and committee members of committees of Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all interactions between members of the public and the following persons in the course of their municipal duties:

- All staff, including the Chief Administrative Officer ("CAO");
- Members of Council;
- Committee members of committees of Council.

In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and any other policy of the Municipality, this policy shall prevail.

3. Guiding Principles

The Municipality recognizes and upholds the following principles:

1. **Right to Participate:** Individuals have a right to communicate with and participate in their local government, and the Municipality is committed to remaining accessible and responsive to the public.
2. **Duty to Provide a Safe Workplace:** The Municipality has a legal obligation to ensure that its staff are not subjected to abuse, harassment, threats, or conduct that unreasonably interferes with their ability to perform their duties.
3. **Proportionality:** Any response to Disrespectful Communication, Abusive Conduct, Harassing Conduct, or Excessive Communication shall be proportionate to the severity and frequency of the conduct and shall be applied in a fair and consistent manner.

4. Definitions

Abusive Conduct means any communication or behavior that includes threats, intimidation, personal insults, profane or degrading language, or any other conduct that a reasonable person would find threatening or demeaning.

Designated Contact means a person designated by the Municipality as the sole point of contact for an individual who is subject to a managed communication protocol under Step 3 of this policy.

Disrespectful Communication means any communication or behavior that, while not rising to the level of Abusive Conduct or Harassing Conduct, is discourteous, rude, or otherwise inconsistent with the standards of respectful civic engagement expected under this policy.

Electronic Communication includes email, social media posts, online comments, messages sent through municipal websites or portals, and any other digital means of communication.

Excessive Communication means a volume or pattern of communications that, regardless of tone, is unreasonably burdensome and disproportionate to the matter at hand, and which materially interferes with the efficient operation of the Municipality.

Harassing Conduct means repeated, unwanted conduct directed at a staff member that causes distress or that interferes with the staff member's ability to carry out their duties, regardless of the medium through which it occurs.

5. Staff Responsibilities and Rights

- Staff are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity in all interactions with members of the public.
- Staff should endeavor to respond to all reasonable public inquiries in a timely and professional manner.
- Staff are encouraged to document all incidents of conduct that may fall within the definitions in Section 4, including the date, nature of the communication, and any relevant context.
- Staff are not required to engage with communications that constitute Abusive Conduct or Harassing Conduct, and may disengage from such interactions in accordance with the graduated response set out in Section 7.

6. Public Communication Standards

The Municipality expects that all communications directed to it, whether in person, by phone, in writing, or by Electronic Communication, shall:

- Be respectful and free from abusive or threatening language;
- Be relevant to a matter within the Municipality's jurisdiction or area of responsibility;
- Not be of a volume or frequency that unreasonably burdens municipal operations.

7. Graduated Response Mechanism

When conduct by a member of the public is identified by staff, a Council member, or a committee member of a committee of Council as Disrespectful Communication, Abusive Conduct, Harassing Conduct, or Excessive Communication, the following graduated response shall apply. Each step shall be applied with reference to the severity and frequency of the conduct.

Step 1 — Informal Notice

Trigger: A single or isolated instance of Disrespectful Communication.

Response:

- Staff shall continue to engage professionally and may acknowledge the issue that prompted the communication.
- If appropriate, the CAO may note, verbally or in writing, that respectful communication is expected, without escalating the matter formally.
- The CAO or the relevant staff member shall log the interaction internally for reference.

Step 2 — Formal Written Notice

Trigger: Repeated or more serious instances of Disrespectful Communication, a first instance of Abusive Conduct, or Excessive Communication.

Response:

- The CAO shall send a formal written notice (by email or letter) to the individual:
 - Referencing this policy;

- Identifying the specific conduct of concern;
- Clearly setting out the conduct expected going forward;
- Advising that further Disrespectful Communication, Abusive Conduct, Harassing Conduct, or Excessive Communication may result in restrictions on how the Municipality communicates with the individual.
- The individual shall be reminded that their right to engage with the Municipality is not being revoked and that substantive matters shall still be addressed.
- The CAO shall retain a copy of the notice on file.

Step 3 — Managed Communication Protocol

Trigger: Continued Disrespectful Communication, Abusive Conduct, Harassing Conduct, or Excessive Communication following a formal written notice, or an escalation in the severity of such conduct.

Response:

- The CAO shall notify the individual in writing that their communications shall be subject to a managed communication protocol, which may include one or more of the following measures:
 - **Designated Contact:** All future communications shall be directed through a Designated Contact.
 - **Response Frequency Limitation:** The Municipality shall respond to communications from the individual no more than once per week (or another reasonable interval) and may consolidate responses to multiple inquiries.
 - **Mailing List Restriction:** The individual may be removed from the Municipality's voluntary newsletter service. The individual shall continue to have access to the Municipality's website for relevant information.
 - **Trespass Notice:** The individual may be trespassed from the Municipality's property if the conduct giving rise to the managed communication protocol includes Abusive Conduct or Harassing Conduct, whether such conduct occurred online or in person.
- The individual shall be informed in writing of the measures imposed and the reasons for them.

8. Emergency Response

Nothing in this policy limits or affects the ability of any staff member, Council member, or committee member of a committee of Council to contact law enforcement or emergency services at any time when they believe it is warranted. This includes, but is not limited to, situations involving threats, harassment, or any conduct that may constitute a criminal offence. In the event of an immediate safety concern, staff members, Council members, and committee members of committees of Council shall remove themselves from the situation if safe to do so and contact emergency services.

9. Documentation and Record-Keeping

All incidents and all actions taken in response under this policy shall be documented and retained in a confidential file. Records shall include:

- Date and description of the incident or communication;
- The step taken under the graduated response mechanism;
- Copies of any written notices issued;

- Any follow-up actions taken.

10. Review of Restrictions

Any individual who has been subject to a managed communication protocol under Step 3 of this policy may submit a written request to the CAO that the measures imposed be reviewed. The CAO shall review the matter and shall provide a written response within 60 days of receipt of the request. In cases where a Designated Contact has been implemented under Step 3, all communications pertaining to the review shall be directed through the Designated Contact. Where a conflict of interest exists, whether because the conduct in question is directed at the CAO personally or for any other reason, the CAO shall refer the matter to Council and to the Municipality's legal counsel.

11. Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed by Council at least once every three years from the date of its adoption to ensure it remains current and effective.

12. Effective Date

This policy was adopted by Council on **May 29, 2026**, pursuant to Resolution No. **27-1**, and shall be effective as of that date.



Mayor, Lee Brammer