



# UNREASONABLE, FRIVOLOUS, VEXATIOUS, AND ABUSIVE CONDUCT

## COUNCIL POLICY

HRM-060

Effective Date:  
June 23, 2026

### POLICY STATEMENT

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (the "Municipality") is committed to serving the community and recognizes the importance of public input. Inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints are welcome and valuable forms of feedback.

Although most members of the public interact with Employees in a respectful, polite, and reasonable manner, Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, and/or Abusive conduct can consume a disproportionate amount of time and resources, impeding Employees from attending to other members of the public or Essential Services. It can also create an unsafe working environment.

This Policy shall be applied in a manner that promotes respectful access to municipal services, protects Employee health and safety, preserves municipal resources, and is consistent with procedural fairness and applicable legislation.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to create a positive, safe, and supportive approach for ensuring that Interactions between the Municipality and the public are acceptable and appropriate. It aims to:

- a. establish processes for the Municipality to follow in response to suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, or Abusive conduct; and
- b. help the Municipality to effectively:
  - i. respond to inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints from the public;
  - ii. protect physical and psychological health and safety of Employees;
  - iii. manage resources; and
  - iv. provide respectful access to municipal services, Employees, and resources.

This policy is intended to deal with Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, and Abusive Conduct. This Policy is not intended to discourage Employees or members of the public from exercising their rights under any applicable legislation. Employees or members of the public who believe that the provisions of this Policy have not been properly applied or followed may file a complaint through the Municipality's Whistleblower process, the Alberta Ombudsman, or any other avenue available under applicable legislation.

## DEFINITIONS

"Abusive Conduct" means conduct that involves Harassment and/or Violence.

"CAO" means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality.

"Director" means an Employee with the title of Director.

"Employees" means all exempt and union regular full-time, part-time, seasonal, contract, and term employees, as well as summer, internship, and cooperative education students on the Municipality payroll.

"Essential Services" means essential services provided by the Municipality, specifically including, but not limited to, fire, police, and emergency medical services.

"Frivolous Conduct" means conduct, or a pattern of conduct, that amounts to an abuse of the right of access, interferes with the operations of the Municipality, and/or is made in bad faith for a purpose other than to obtain access.

"Harassment" means any single incident or repeated incidents of objectionable or unwelcome conduct, comment, bullying, or action by a person that the person knows or ought reasonably to know will or would cause offence or humiliation to an Employee, or adversely affects the health and safety of an Employee, and includes any:

- a. conduct, comment, bullying, or action because of race, religious beliefs, colour, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and
- b. solicitation, or advance, that is sexual in nature,

but does not include any reasonable conduct of an employer or supervisor in respect of the management of an Employee.

"Immediate Supervisor" means the person to whom an Employee reports directly, regardless of that person's job title.

"Interaction" means any contact between a member of the public and an Employee, including, but not limited to, inquiries, comments, requests, and complaints received in person or via hard copy documentation, email, phone, remote means, social media, or otherwise.

"Manager" means an Employee with the title of Manager.

“Peace Officer” means a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or a Peace Officer appointed under *the Peace Officer Act*, SA 2006, c P-3.5, as amended.

“Subject Person” means the individual member of the public involved in a specific Interaction.

“Unreasonable Conduct” means conduct that exceeds the bounds of moderation, fairness, or practicality, and/or causes undue burden, stress, or disruption to the Municipality.

“Vexatious Conduct” means conduct that is malicious, intended to inconvenience, embarrass, or harass the recipient and/or a pattern of conduct that amounts to a misuse of municipal processes and procedures, including repeated attempts to reopen a matter that has been reasonably addressed, without material new information.

“Violence” means the threatened, attempted, or actual conduct of a person that causes or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm, including, but not limited to, domestic and/or sexual violence.

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Interactions, whether or not the Interactions in question are conducted:

- a. within or outside of the regular business hours of the Municipality; or
- b. in person, remotely, online, or otherwise.

For clarity, the scope of this Policy specifically includes, but is not limited to, Interactions which occur in relation to one or more of the following:

- a. activities on municipal premises;
- b. work activities outside of municipal premises, including transit operations, road maintenance, park services, and work-related travel;
- c. social events, whether on or outside of municipal premises, that are sanctioned by the Municipality; and
- d. social media.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The Municipality shall endeavour to respond to all Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, and Abusive Conduct in a consistent, fair, and reasonable manner and in accordance with the law in force in Alberta and with all applicable municipal policies, directives, and procedures.

2. No Employee shall be penalized, reprimanded, or in any way criticized when acting in good faith and in accordance with the procedures in this Policy.
3. The Municipality recognizes that the appropriate responses to incidents of Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, or Abusive Conduct will vary due to the nature of the situation and will therefore consider each incident on a case-by-case basis.
4. In response to an immediate threat to the safety or security of the person or property of an individual and/or a group, the Municipality shall promptly take such steps as may be necessary to protect the physical and psychological safety and security of the person or property of the individual and/or a group, including, but not limited to, contacting 911 and/or a Peace Officer.
5. Any action taken under this Policy must be:
  - a. consistent with the Subject Person's rights under applicable legislation;
  - b. proportionate to the conduct; and
  - c. no more restrictive than reasonably necessary under the circumstances.
6. In no event shall Essential Services be denied to a Subject Person, or to any individual or group, in connection with a restriction applied pursuant to this Policy.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES

7. During Interactions, Employees are expected to:
  - a. treat all individuals with fairness, professionalism, and respect;
  - b. recognize early warning signs, but at the same time, not act prematurely or prejudicially towards an individual;
  - c. focus on specific, observable conduct and behaviours;
  - d. consider each Interaction on its own merits;
  - e. manage expectations by being clear about timelines, scope of authority, and the nature of any potential remedies that may result from a complaint to the Municipality;
  - f. communicate clearly and transparently;
  - g. explain the reasons for actions taken;
  - h. establish clear boundaries;
  - i. create and maintain accurate documentation; and
  - j. prioritize Employee safety and wellbeing when dealing with Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, or Abusive Conduct.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR THE PUBLIC

8. During Interactions, members of the public are expected to:
  - a. conduct themselves in a respectful manner, even when providing criticism;
  - b. refrain from using crude, vulgar, obscene, and/or offensive language or gestures;
  - c. refrain from making defamatory remarks and/or unsubstantiated allegations;
  - d. refrain from making remarks of a racial or discriminatory nature;
  - e. refrain from physical confrontations, including those that are intended to intimidate;
  - f. refrain from making psychological and/or physical threats; and
  - g. refrain from engaging in any other conduct of an Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, or Abusive nature.

## PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED UNREASONABLE, FRIVOLOUS, OR VEXATIOUS CONDUCT

### INITIAL CONCERN

9. If an Employee observes or becomes aware of suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct, the Employee must promptly:
  - a. contact their Immediate Supervisor or Manager; and
  - b. provide their Immediate Supervisor or Manager with all supporting information and materials concerning the suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct, including:
    - i. the nature of the suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct;
    - ii. the history of the applicable Interactions;
    - iii. the length of time that the Employee and/or other Employees have been in contact with the Subject Person, including the time and resources invested in the issue(s);
    - iv. a summary of the correspondence that has been exchanged with the Subject Person; and
    - v. a summary of the steps taken by the Employee and/or other Employees to resolve the issue.

## REVIEW OF SUSPECTED UNREASONABLE, FRIVOLOUS, OR VEXATIOUS CONDUCT

10. If an Immediate Supervisor or Manager is contacted by an Employee in response to suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct, the Immediate Supervisor or Manager shall promptly:
  - a. notify the Subject Person, in writing, that a concern has been raised with respect to an Interaction and that their conduct is being reviewed;
  - b. review all supporting information, materials, and reports;
  - c. complete an assessment to determine whether:
    - i. all available information has been provided;
    - ii. the Interaction has been dealt with properly and in line with all applicable municipal directives, policies, and procedures;
    - iii. communication with the Subject Person regarding the suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct has been adequate;
    - iv. the Employee has made reasonable efforts to satisfy or resolve the Interaction;
    - v. the Subject Person is not presenting new material or information which demonstrates that there remain one or more outstanding issues involving the Subject Person which are within the jurisdiction of the Municipality; and
    - vi. the suspected Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct in question was in fact Unreasonable, Frivolous, or Vexatious Conduct.
  - d. determine what restrictions, if any, are justified under the circumstances, and how long they will last.
11. In completing the assessment and making a decision, the Immediate Supervisor or Manager shall:
  - a. use their best efforts to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency;
  - b. consider the nature, severity, and frequency of the conduct;
  - c. consider whether the conduct is a single incident or part of a repeated pattern of conduct; and
  - d. engage the Director who will take appropriate further action at their discretion.

## NOTIFICATION OF DECISION FOR SUSPECTED UNREASONABLE, FRIVOLOUS, OR VEXATIOUS CONDUCT

12. The Director shall provide the Employee and the Subject Person with written notice of the decision, including:
  - a. the rationale for the decision;
  - b. a description of what restrictions, if any, will be applied;
  - c. a statement indicating how long the restrictions applied, if any, will continue;
  - d. the rationale for why the restrictions applied, if any, are justified under the circumstances;
  - e. an explanation of how the restrictions applied, if any, will impact the Subject Person's contact with the Municipality; and
  - f. details of the appeal process, including key dates.

## PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED ABUSIVE CONDUCT

### INITIAL CONCERN

13. If an Employee observes or becomes aware of one or more instances of suspected Abusive Conduct, the following steps apply:
  - a. The Employee will verbally warn the Subject Person that if the behaviour continues, the interaction will end. An Employee may remove themselves from the situation. The Employee may also call the police for immediate assistance at any time if they feel unsafe.
  - b. If the behaviour continues after a verbal warning, the Employee will end the interaction. When the interaction ends, the Employee must submit a Harassment and Violence Complaint form.
14. If the severity of the behaviour warrants, or there is a pattern of such behaviour, the Immediate Supervisor or Manager will engage the Director who will take appropriate further action at their discretion, which may include:
  - a. written warning;
  - b. 24-hour suspension from some or all of the Municipality's facilities and services; or
  - c. longer than 24-hour suspension from some or all of the Municipality's facilities and services.
15. Following a suspension, access to the Municipality's facilities and services will be restored as agreed upon by the Director and the Subject Person.

## INVESTIGATION OF SUSPECTED ABUSIVE CONDUCT

16. When a Harassment and Violence Form is submitted, the Municipality will promptly carry out an investigation in a confidential and impartial manner.
17. The investigator will:
  - a. notify the Subject Person, in writing, of the investigation and suspected Abusive Conduct;
  - b. gather and review background information, and take steps to ensure relevant information is preserved;
  - c. interview individuals with relevant information; and
  - d. prepare an investigation report outlining the circumstances and any corrective action taken.
18. Investigation reports are confidential to protect participants and the integrity of the process.
19. Investigation reports will be retained in accordance with governing legislation and municipal records retention procedures.
20. The relevant individuals will receive the results of the investigation. For privacy or legal reasons, they may not know the corrective actions taken.

## RESTRICTIONS IN RESPONSE TO UNREASONABLE, FRIVOLOUS, VEXATIOUS, OR ABUSIVE CONDUCT

21. When warranted, the following restrictions may be imposed pursuant to this Policy:
  - a. a letter of warning;
  - b. limiting communication between the Subject Person and the Municipality to a particular:
    - i. point of contact at the Municipality;
    - ii. format (e.g., only in-person in the presence of a third party, or only via written correspondence);
    - iii. time (e.g., only at specific times and days of the week); and/or
    - iv. duration (e.g., conversations may last no longer than 10 minutes);
  - c. requiring that the Subject Person only contact the Municipality through a third-party agent;
  - d. instructing Employees to close the matter in question;

- e. informing the Subject Person that further contact on the matter in question will not be acknowledged or replied to;
- f. implementing technological or electronic limiters, such as mute or block options on municipal social media platforms, email filters, and automatic telephone redirects;
- g. filing a complaint with a Peace Officer;
- h. pursuing legal action; and/or
- i. any other actions that the Municipality deems appropriate under the circumstances.

## APPEAL OF RESTRICTIONS

- 22. A Subject Person shall have thirty (30) days to appeal the decision.
- 23. Any appeal notice pursuant to this Policy shall be in writing, shall be submitted to the CAO via e-mail or by registered mail, and shall include:
  - a. a detailed description of the incident in question;
  - b. an explanation of why the appellant is requesting the review;
  - c. the remedy that the appellant is seeking from the Municipality; and
  - d. the appellant's arguments for why that remedy should be granted.
- 24. The CAO may delegate the authority to review and make a decision on an appeal to one or more Directors not involved in the original decision making.
- 25. The CAO or delegate(s) may confirm, rescind, or amend the restrictions, within ten (10) days of receiving an appeal.
- 26. The CAO or delegate(s) shall notify the Subject Person of the decision in writing.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

- 27. The Municipality shall maintain confidentiality and shall not disclose the circumstances related to Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, or Abusive Conduct or the names of the parties involved, except:
  - a. where necessary to investigate the incident or to take corrective action, or to inform the parties involved in the incident of the results of the investigation and any corrective actions to be taken to address the incident; or
  - b. where necessary to inform Employees of a specific or general potential or actual threat of Harassment and/or Violence; or
  - c. as required by the laws in force in Alberta.

Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, and Abusive Conduct Council Policy HRM-060

28. If the Municipality is required to disclose confidential information, it shall use its best efforts to disclose only the minimum amount of confidential information as may be necessary and sufficient to satisfy the applicable requirements.

APPROVAL

This Council Policy is approved by:



Sandy Bowman, Mayor



Jade Brown, Chief Legislative Officer

June 23, 2026

Date

## DETAILS AND REVISION HISTORY

Date	Action	Description
June 23, 2026	Introduction	New Unreasonable, Frivolous, Vexatious, and Abusive Conduct Council Policy HRM-060