



Council-Staff Relations Policy

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

1. What is the purpose of the Council-Staff Relations Policy?

The Municipal Act, 2001, requires that every municipality in Ontario adopt a policy governing the relationship between Members of Council and municipal officers and employees. The Policy is designed to provide clear guidelines for the interactions between Members of Markham City Council and City staff, ensuring a respectful, productive, and harassment-free working relationship.

2. What are the key components of the proposed Council-Staff Relations Policy?

The Policy includes:

- An overview of the roles of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), and the administration as outlined in the Municipal Act.
- Clear guidelines on the expected behavior of Members of Council and City staff.
- Procedures for Councillors to obtain information from City staff about community or resident concerns.
- A formal process for addressing issues between Councillors and staff.

3. How does this Policy affect existing policies like the Council Code of Conduct?

This Policy complements other key policies, such as:

- Markham's Council Code of Conduct
- Code of Ethics and Conduct for City Staff
- Accountability and Transparency Policy
- Respect in the Workplace Policy

This Policy does not replace other policies but ensures a coordinated approach to governance and accountability. In cases of overlap, the Council Code of Conduct will take precedence. However, the proposed Policy ensures clarity in Council-staff interactions, which may not be fully addressed in existing policies.

4. How will the Council-Staff Relations Policy be enforced?

The City Clerk is responsible for administering and interpreting the Council-Staff Relations Policy and for receiving complaints and/or concerns relating to the Policy. If concerns arise regarding a Member of Council's compliance with the Policy, the City's Integrity Commissioner can investigate. Staff-related concerns will follow the City's administrative process, with possible disciplinary measures if the Policy is violated. In general, parties are encouraged to informally resolve the issue, where appropriate, before making any form of formal complaint.



5. What happens if a Member of Council or City staff violates the Policy?

In general, parties are encouraged to informally resolve issues, where appropriate, before making any form of formal complaint. Violations of the Council-Staff Relations Policy by Members of Council may be referred to the City's Integrity Commissioner for investigation. For City staff, violations will follow the City's standard administrative procedures and could lead to disciplinary action, if necessary.

6. What is the role of the City's Integrity Commissioner under the Policy?

The Integrity Commissioner provides guidance to Council Members on how to interpret and adhere to the Policy. They are also responsible for investigating formal complaints against Council Members concerning Policy compliance.

7. How does the Policy interact with customer complaints?

The Council-Staff Relations Policy ensures Councillors can respond to community complaints effectively and in a fair and consistent manner. Existing policies regarding customer service remain in place, and this Policy complements them by setting clear guidelines for City staff and Council communication. To preserve prosecutorial independence, Council and individual Members of Council may not direct prosecution, litigation, insurance claim resolution or enforcement.

8. Where should Councillors and/or their Offices direct Requests for Information?

Requests for information should be directed to the appropriate Commissioner or Director to be processed in accordance with the City's established routine disclosure practices, the Municipal Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). In accordance with MFIPPA, Councillors are entitled to information that is available to the public or information that they require to carry out their legislated duties.

9. Where should Councillors and/or their Offices direct Requests for Service?

Requests for service should be directed to and processed through the City's Contact Centre. The Centre will direct the request to the appropriate Department for response. Requests for service will be processed in priority sequence and will be tracked to ensure service levels are met. Councillors and their staff are not to send requests directly to staff, or copy staff when generating a work order through the Contact Centre.

10. Is it appropriate for Members of Council to convene spontaneous meetings with City staff?

Drop-in meetings are discouraged. To ensure all parties are available and prepared for the discussion and that other priorities are not disrupted, appointments should be made for meetings between Staff and Councillors. Staff participation in community information meetings must be authorized by Markham City Council. Staff participation in Councillor-constituent and/or ratepayer meetings will be determined by senior executives.



11. Should Members of Council expect City staff to respond to Councillor Inquiries After Hours and on Weekends/Holidays?

The City respects Provincial legislation relating to the “right to disconnect.” City staff are not obligated to respond to non-emergency texts, emails or calls outside of normal business hours.

12. What is the “Chain of Command” at the City?

Staff are directed in their regular duties by the Senior Executive (CAO, Commissioners and Directors), and their designates. Staff may also be directed by a vote of Markham City Council. Individual Councillors are not authorized to direct the activities of Staff. For instance, Councillors may not direct staff to change the content of a staff report or recommendations.

A Councillor’s Staff has no authority other than that delegated by the Councillor. Councillors are responsible for managing their office and the Councillor Staff, ensuring they are aware of and comply with the Council-Staff Relations Policy.

Staff may be directed by the Mayor, as authorized by Ontario’s Strong Mayor legislation.