

Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Respectful Conduct and Employee Protection Policy

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Town Council of Portugal Cove- St. Philip's the Town Council has adopted this policy on the 2nd day of September 2026.

1. Purpose

The Town of Portugal Cove St. Philip's is committed to delivering professional, responsive municipal services to residents, stakeholders, and the broader community. In doing so, the Town also recognizes its responsibility to ensure that employees, volunteers, contractors, and elected officials are able to carry out their duties in a safe, respectful, and harassment-free environment.

While the Town welcomes public engagement, feedback, and constructive disagreement, abusive, threatening, or harassing behaviour directed toward Town representatives will not be tolerated. Every individual interacting with the Town is expected to communicate respectfully and to contribute to a safe environment for those delivering public services.

This policy supports the Town's obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 5/12 (Newfoundland and Labrador) and associated requirements related to the prevention of workplace harassment and violence.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all interactions between members of the public and Town representatives. It includes communications that occur in person at municipal facilities, during telephone calls, through email or written correspondence, and across digital platforms such as social media. The policy also applies to interactions during public meetings, hearings, site visits, and field operations, as well as exchanges involving contractors, service providers, or other individuals engaged in municipal work.

Regardless of where or how the interaction occurs, the same expectation of respectful communication applies.

3. Standards of Conduct

The Town values open dialogue and encourages residents to express concerns, ask questions, and advocate for their interests. Constructive discussion is an important part of community governance. However, disagreement with a decision or frustration with a process does not justify abusive behaviour.

Conduct that is considered unacceptable includes verbal abuse such as yelling, swearing, or aggressive language; personal attacks or name-calling; direct or implied threats; harassment, intimidation, or discriminatory remarks; and repeated hostile communication after a response has already been provided. Physical intimidation, such as blocking movement or using hostile posturing, is also unacceptable. The recording or photographing of staff in a manner intended to harass or intimidate, as well as targeting staff through their personal social media accounts, is similarly prohibited.

Interactions with Town representatives must remain respectful and professional at all times.

4. Authority to Disengage

Town representatives are empowered to take reasonable steps to protect themselves and others from abusive interactions. Where behaviour becomes inappropriate or unsafe, staff may request that communication remain respectful and may pause or end the interaction if the conduct continues.

This may include ending a telephone call, declining to continue an in-person discussion, or requesting that an individual leave a municipal facility. Staff may also escalate the situation to a supervisor or, where necessary, involve law enforcement.

Where behaviour violates this policy, the Town may modify or restrict the manner in which services are provided. Employees who appropriately disengage from abusive interactions in accordance with this policy will not face disciplinary action.

5. Escalation and Enforcement

Where inappropriate behaviour persists or escalates, the Town may implement additional measures to manage the situation and protect staff. These measures may include issuing written warnings, requiring future communication to occur in writing only, placing restrictions on service interactions, or issuing a trespass notice where legally appropriate. In serious situations, the Town may also involve law enforcement or pursue other legal remedies.

All situations will be assessed individually, and any actions taken will be documented and applied in a proportionate and reasonable manner.

Complaints under this policy must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

6. Incident Reporting and Staff Support

Employees who experience or witness harassment, intimidation, or abusive behaviour are encouraged to report the incident to their supervisor. Reported incidents will be reviewed and documented to ensure appropriate follow-up.

Supervisors will assess patterns of behaviour, identify repeat concerns where applicable, and provide support to affected employees. Where necessary, matters may be escalated to senior leadership for further action.

The Town recognizes that psychological safety is an essential component of workplace health and safety and is committed to supporting employees who encounter difficult or aggressive interactions in the course of their duties.

Where a complaint is determined to be unfounded following review, no further action will be taken under this policy. The outcome will be documented and the matter considered closed unless new information becomes available.

7. Communication

To ensure transparency and awareness, this policy will be made available to the public and clearly communicated within municipal operations. It will be posted on the Town's website, displayed in municipal facilities where services are delivered, and referenced within relevant public meeting procedures and protocols.

The policy will also be supported through a public awareness initiative designed to reinforce expectations for respectful engagement with municipal staff.

8. REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every two (2) years or more frequently as necessary.

9. REPEALS

None.

10. AMENDMENTS

None.

11. DATE EFFECTIVE

September 2, 2026, Motion # 2026-319.



Dave Bartlett, Mayor

Claudine Murray, Town Clerk