

Province of Alberta

BEING A BYLAW OF THE TOWN OF WESTLOCK, IN THE PROVINCE OF ALBERTA, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ESTABLISHING A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF COUNCIL, AND OTHER BODIES ESTABLISHED BY COUNCIL, THE CONDUCT OF MEMBERS AND THE CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF OTHER BODIES ESTABLISHED BY COUNCIL.

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 146.1(1) of the *Municipal Government Act*, as amended, a Council must, by Bylaw, establish a code of conduct governing the conduct of Members;

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 146.1(3) of the *Municipal Government Act*, a council may, by bylaw, establish a code of conduct governing the conduct of members of council committees and other bodies established by the council who are not Members;

WHEREAS, pursuant to section 153 of the *Municipal Government Act*, Members have a duty to adhere to the code of conduct established by the council;

WHEREAS, the public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from the members that it elects to council for the Town of Westlock;

WHEREAS, the establishment of a code of conduct for members of council is consistent with the principles of transparent and accountable government;

AND WHEREAS, a code of conduct ensures that members of council share a common understanding of acceptable conduct extending beyond the legislative provisions governing the conduct of Members;

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the Town of Westlock, in the Province of Alberta, duly assembled, enacts as follows:

1. Title

This Bylaw may be referred to as the "Council Code of Conduct Bylaw".

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this Bylaw is to establish standards for the ethical conduct of Members relating to their roles and obligations as representatives of the Municipality and a procedure for the investigation and enforcement of those standards.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 "Act" means the *Municipal Government Act*, *Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000*, Chapter M- 26, and associated regulations, as amended.

Province of Alberta

- 3.2 "Administration" means the administrative and operational arm of the Municipality, comprised of various departments and business units and including all employees who operate under the leadership and supervision of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Administration will also include contractors working for the Town.
- 3.3 "Board Member" means a person appointed to a Council board, commission or committee by Council.
- 3.4 "Censure Motion" means a motion passed by Council prescribing consequences for non-compliance with the Elected Officials' Code of Conduct Bylaw.
- 3.5 "Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)" means the individual appointed by Council to the position of Chief Administrative Officer as per the Municipal Government Act.
- 3.6 "Closed Session" means a portion of the meeting at which only members of Council and other persons designated by Council or the CAO may attend.
- 3.7 "FOIP" means the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.A. 2000, c. F-25, any associated regulations, and any amendments or successor legislation.
- 3.8 "Investigator" means Council, legal firm or the individual or body established by Council to investigate and report on complaints.
- 3.9 "Mayor" means the Chief Elected Official of the Town duly elected.
- 3.10 "Member" means a member of Council, including the Mayor. This also encompasses Board Members who were appointed to a Council board, commission or committee by Council.
- 3.11 "Town" means the municipal corporation of the Town of Westlock or the geographical area within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Westlock, as the context may require.

4. Representing the Municipality

- 4.1 Members shall:
- a) act honestly and, in good faith, serve the welfare and interests of the Municipality as a whole;
 - b) perform their functions and duties in a conscientious and diligent

Province of Alberta

manner with integrity, accountability and transparency;

- c) make every effort to participate diligently in the meetings of Council, committees of Council and other bodies to which they are appointed by Council; and
- d) ensure that conduct in their private affairs does not damage or have the potential to negatively impact the reputation of Council, Administration and the community.

5. Communicating on Behalf of the Municipality

- 5.1 A Member must not claim to speak on behalf of Council unless authorized to do so.
- 5.2 Unless Council directs otherwise, the Mayor is Council's official spokesperson and in the absence of the Mayor it is the Deputy Mayor. All inquiries from the media regarding the official Council position on an issue shall be referred to Council's official spokesperson.
- 5.3 A Member who is authorized to act as Council's official spokesperson must ensure that their comments accurately reflect the official position and will of Council, even if the Member personally disagrees with Council's position.
- 5.4 No Member shall make a statement when they know that statement is false.
- 5.5 No Member shall make a statement with the intent to mislead Council or members of the public.

6. Respecting the Decision-Making Process

- 6.1 Decision making authority lies with Council, and not with any individual Member. Council may only act by bylaw or resolution passed at a Council meeting held in public at which there is a quorum present. No Member shall, unless authorized by Council, attempt to bind the Municipality or give direction to employees in Administration, agents, contractors, consultants or other service providers or prospective vendors to the Municipality.
- 6.2 Members shall conduct and convey Council business and all their duties in an open and transparent manner other than for those matters which by law are authorized to be dealt with in a confidential manner in a closed session, and in so doing, allow the public to view the process and rationale which was used to reach decisions and the reasons for taking

Province of Alberta

certain actions.

- 6.3 Members shall accurately communicate the decisions of Council, even if they disagree with Council's decision, such that respect for the decision-making processes of Council is fostered.

7. Adherence to Policies, Procedures and Bylaws

- 7.1 Members shall uphold the law established by the Parliament of Canada and the Legislature of Alberta and the bylaws, policies and procedures adopted by Council.
- 7.2 Members shall respect the Municipality as an institution, its bylaws, policies and procedures and shall encourage public respect for the Municipality, its bylaws, policies and procedures.
- 7.3 A Member must not encourage disobedience of any bylaw, policy or procedure of the Municipality in responding to a member of the public, as this undermines public confidence in the Municipality and in the rule of law.

8. Respectful Interactions with Council Members, Staff, the Public and Others

- 8.1 Members shall act in a manner that demonstrates fairness, respect for individual differences and opinions, and an intention to work together for the common good and in furtherance of the public interest.
- 8.2 Members shall treat one another, employees of the Municipality and members of the public with courtesy, dignity and respect and without abuse, bullying or intimidation.
- 8.3 No Member shall use indecent, abusive, or insulting words or expressions toward another Member, any employee of the Municipality or any member of the public.
- 8.4 No Member shall speak in a manner that is discriminatory to any individual based on the person's race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status or sexual orientation.
- 8.5 Members shall respect the fact that employees in Administration work for the Municipality as a corporate body and are charged with making recommendations that reflect their professional expertise and a corporate perspective and that employees are required to do so without

Province of Alberta

undue influence from any Member or group of Members.

8.6 Members must not:

- a) involve themselves in matters of Administration, which fall within the jurisdiction of the "CAO", as defined above;
- b) use, or attempt to use, their authority or influence for the purpose of intimidating, threatening, coercing, commanding or influencing any employee of the Municipality with the intent of interfering in the employee's duties; or
- c) maliciously or falsely injure the professional or ethical reputation, or the prospects or practice of employees of the Municipality.

9. Confidential Information

9.1 Members must keep in confidence matters discussed in Closed Session at a Council or Council committee meeting until the matter is discussed at a meeting held in public.

9.2 In the course of their duties, Members may also become privy to confidential information received outside of a closed meeting. Members must not;

- a) disclose or release by any means to any member of the public, including the media, any confidential information acquired by their office, unless the disclosure is required by law or authorized by Council to do so;
- b) access or attempt to gain access to confidential information in the custody or control of the Municipality unless it is necessary for the performance of the Member's duties and is not otherwise prohibited by Council, and only then if the information is acquired through appropriate channels in accordance with applicable Council bylaws and policies;
- c) use confidential information for personal benefit or for the benefit of any other individual or organization.

9.3 No Member shall use confidential information for personal benefit or for the benefit of any other individual organization.

9.4 Confidential information includes information in the possession of, or received in confidence by, the Municipality that the Municipality is prohibited from disclosing pursuant to legislation, court order or by contract, or is

Province of Alberta

required to refuse to disclose under FOIP or any other legislation, or any other information that pertains to the business of the Municipality, and is generally considered to be of a confidential nature, including but not limited to information concerning;

- a) a tender that has or will be issued but has not been awarded;
- b) contract negotiations;
- c) employment and labour relations;
- d) draft documents and legal instruments, including reports, policies, bylaws and resolutions, that have not been the subject matter of deliberation in a meeting open to the public;
- e) law enforcement matters;
- f) litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals; and
- g) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege.

10. Conflicts of Interest

- 10.1 Members have a statutory duty to comply with the pecuniary interest provisions set out in Part 5, Division 6 of the Act and a corresponding duty to vote unless required or permitted to abstain under the Act or another enactment.
- 10.2 Members are to be free from undue influence and not act or appear to act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, family, friends or associates, business or otherwise.
- 10.3 Members shall approach decision-making with an open mind that is capable of persuasion.
- 10.4 It is the individual responsibility of each Member to seek independent legal advice, at the Member's sole expense, with respect to any situation that may result in a pecuniary or other conflict of interest.

11. Improper Use of Influence

- 11.1 No Member shall use the influence of the Member's office for any purpose other than for the exercise of the Member's official duties.
- 11.2 No Member shall act as a paid agent to advocate on behalf of any individual,

Province of Alberta

organization or corporate entity before Council or a committee of Council or any other body established by Council.

11.3 Members shall not attempt to influence members of any adjudicative body regarding any matter before it relating to the Municipality.

11.4 Members shall refrain from using their positions to obtain employment with the Municipality for themselves, family members or close associates. Members are ineligible to apply or be considered for any position with the Municipality while they hold their elected position.

12. Use of Municipal Assets and Services

12.1 Members shall use municipal property, equipment, services, supplies and staff resources only for the performance of their duties as a Member, subject to the following limited exceptions:

- a) municipal property, equipment, service, supplies and staff resources that are available to the general public may be used by a Member for personal use upon the same terms and conditions as members of the general public, including booking and payment of any applicable fees or charges.

13. Orientation and Other Training Attendance

13.1 Every Member must attend mandatory orientation training offered by the Municipality in accordance with the MGA.

13.2 Should an Authority, Board, or Commission require orientation training, the appointed Members attendance is mandatory. Attendance at additional training sessions throughout the Council term is discretionary.

14. Remuneration and Expense Claims

14.1 Members are stewards of public resources and shall avoid waste, abuse and extravagance in the use of public resources.

14.2 Members shall be transparent and accountable with respect to all expenditures and strictly comply with all municipal bylaws, policies and procedures regarding claims for remuneration and expenses.

15. Gifts and Hospitality

15.1 Members shall not accept gifts, hospitality or other benefits that would, to a reasonable member of the public, appear to be in gratitude for influence, to induce influence, or otherwise to go beyond the necessary and appropriate

Province of Alberta

public functions involved.

- 15.2 Members may accept hospitality, gifts or benefits that normally accompany the responsibilities of office and are received as an incident of protocol or social obligation, provided that the value of the hospitality, gift or benefit does not exceed \$500.00. If the value of the hospitality, gift or benefit exceeds \$500.00, it must be reported to Council at the next Council meeting.
- 15.3 Gifts received by a Member on behalf of the Municipality as a matter of official protocol shall be left with the Municipality upon receipt of gift.

16. Election Campaigns

- 16.1 No Member shall use any facilities, equipment, supplies, services, municipal logo or other resources of the Municipality for any election campaign or campaign related activity.
- 16.2 If Members are running for office at Municipal, Provincial or Federal level, they must not campaign at meetings or events which they attend in their capacity as elected official or board members.

17. Informal Complaint Process

- 17.1 Prior to filing a formal complaint:
- a) A member of the public or another Member may speak with the Member and encourage the Member to comply with this Bylaw.
 - b) A member of Administration must notify the CAO and Mayor or Deputy Mayor of the member of Administration's concerns. After learning of the member of Administration's concerns, the CAO and Mayor or Deputy Mayor may:
 - i. Speak with the Member and encourage the Member to comply with this Bylaw; or
 - ii. Request assistance of a facilitator to resolve the issue. The facilitator may be internal or external to the Town.
 - c) All Members shall be open to resolving the matter.
- 17.2 A member of the public or another Member may request the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or CAO to assist in an informal discussion of the conduct with the Member in an attempt to resolve the issue. If the Mayor is the subject of the complaint, the individual may request the assistance of the Deputy Mayor and

Province of Alberta

resolve the issue. The facilitator may be internal or external to the Town.

- 17.3 Individuals are encouraged to pursue the informal complaint procedure to remedy conduct that they believe violates this Bylaw.
- 17.4 A member of the public or another Member is not required to complete this informal complaint procedure before pursuing the formal complaint procedure.
- 17.5 A member of Administration is required to complete this informal complaint procedure before pursuing the formal complaint procedure.

18. Formal Complaint

- 18.1 A complaint must be made in writing, dated and legibly signed.
- 18.2 The complaint shall contain the following information:
 - a) The name of the complainant and the Member who is the subject of the complaint;
 - b) The date of the conduct which is the subject of the complaint;
 - c) The nature of the conduct which is the subject of the complaint;
 - d) Other relevant information to the complaint, which may include the names of witnesses.
- 18.3 If:
 - a) A member of the public or another Member makes a complaint, the member of the public or the other Member must provide a copy of the complaint to any Member and the CAO; and
 - b) A member of Administration makes a complaint, the member of Administration must provide a copy of the complaint to the CAO and Mayor or Deputy Mayor.
- 18.4 Except as provided in s. 18.3(b), if the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor are the subject of the complaint, the complainant shall provide the complaint to another Member.
- 18.5 Except as provided in s. 18.3(b), if both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are the subject of the complaint, the references in this bylaw to the functions of the Deputy Mayor shall be carried out by the Member who received the complaint.

Province of Alberta

- 18.6 Upon receipt of a complaint, the Member or the CAO shall advise Council of the receipt of a complaint at the next Closed Session at a Council meeting.
- 18.7 At the Council meeting at which the complaint is put before Council, Council shall review the complaint and may reject any complaint received:
- a) More than 90 days after the date of conduct which is the subject of the complaint; or
 - b) After the date of a municipal election which occurs between the date of the conduct which is the subject of the complaint and the date of the appointment of the Investigator.
- 18.8 If Council is of the opinion that the complaint is frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith, Council may reject the complaint. Council may obtain a legal opinion or advice in making this determination. If Council rejects the complaint, Council shall provide written notice to the complainant of Council's decision.
- 18.9 If Council determines that the complaint should be investigated, Council shall direct the CAO to appoint an investigator selected from a list of qualified investigators which Council approves, from time to time.
- 18.10 Any legal opinion or advice provided to Council or the Municipality regarding a complaint shall not be made available to the complainant or the Member who is the subject of the complaint.

19. Review of Complaint by Investigator

- 19.1 Within 10 days of the appointment of the Investigator, the Investigator shall determine whether the conduct which is the subject of the complaint is within the Investigator's authority to consider breaches of this Bylaw and whether the information provided by the complainant provides reasonable grounds for believing that the Member has breached this Bylaw.
- 19.2 The Investigator may request further information from the complainant to assist in determining whether there are reasonable grounds for believing that the Member has breached this Bylaw.
- 19.3 The Investigator must reject any complaint received where the conduct is an allegation of criminal conduct under the Criminal Code and advise the complainant to make a complaint to the appropriate police service.
- 19.4 If the Investigator is of the opinion that:

Province of Alberta

- a) the matter is not within the Investigator's authority to investigate;
- b) there are no grounds or insufficient grounds to conduct an investigation;
or

- c) the complaint is frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith,

the Investigator shall not conduct an Investigation. The Investigator shall provide written reasons for the decision to Council.

19.5 The Investigator's decision shall be placed on the closed portion of the next regular Council meeting. Council may discuss the Investigator's decision under section 19.4 during the closed portion and shall notify the complainant and the Member of the conclusion of the Investigator under section 19.4 within 7 days of the Council meeting.

19.6 Despite sections 23.1 and 23.2 of the Bylaw, Council shall provide a summary of the Investigator's reasons under section 19.4 to the complainant after the Council meeting at which the Investigator's decision is considered.

19.7 If the Investigator does not dismiss the complaint, within 10 days from the Investigator's appointment, the Investigator shall:

- a) notify the complainant that there will be an investigation;
- b) notify the Member of the complaint and provide the Member with a copy of the complaint;
- c) commence the investigation into the complaint as the Investigator considers appropriate, but which must include fair process for the Member, including the opportunity to seek legal counsel and for the Member to provide a response to the complaint.

19.8 The Investigator shall complete the investigation as soon as possible in the circumstances and in any event no later than 90 days from the date of the Investigator's appointment.

19.9 At the completion of the investigation, the Investigator shall:

- a) prepare a written report advising whether the complaint is substantiated and the Member's conduct is in breach of this Code of Conduct Bylaw;
- b) include any recommendations the Investigator feels are appropriate in the circumstances, which may include recommendations on sanctions;

Province of Alberta

and

- c) provide a copy of the written report and recommendations, if any, to Council.

20. Informal Resolution of Complaint During Investigation

- 20.1 The Investigator may attempt to resolve the complaint through mediation with the complainant and the Member who is the subject of the complaint, or may request the Mayor, or Deputy Mayor, to assist in an informal discussion of the complaint with the Member in an attempt to resolve the issue. If the Mayor is the subject of a complaint, the Investigator may request the assistance of the Deputy Mayor.
- 20.2 If the mediation resolves the complaint, the Investigator shall prepare a written report summarizing the nature of the complaint and the result of the mediation and provide a copy of the written report to Council.

21. Formal Resolution

- 21.1 If the Investigator concludes that the complaint is not substantiated and the Member's conduct is not in breach of this Code of Conduct Bylaw, during the closed portion of the next regular Council meeting, Council shall consider the report and decide whether to accept the report and take no further action in regard to the complaint.
- 21.2 Despite sections 23.1 and 23.2, if Council decides to take no further action in regard to the complaint, Council shall provide to the complainant a summary of the complaint, the Investigator's findings and Council's determination under section 21.1 after the Council meeting at which the Investigator's determination under section 21.1 is considered.
- 21.3 If a Member's conduct is in breach of this Code of Conduct Bylaw, Council shall:
 - a) provide a copy of the report to the Member;
 - b) allow the Member 30 days to provide to Council a written response to the Investigator's report;
 - c) place the Investigator's report and the Member's written response, if any, on the closed portion of the next regular Council meeting following receipt or a special Council meeting called to consider the item.

Province of Alberta

21.4 During the closed portion of the Council meeting where the item is considered:

- a) the Member who is the subject of the complaint may provide oral comments to Council in addition to any written response provided. The Member is entitled to have legal counsel present during the Council meeting, at the Member's sole expense. Council may ask questions of the Member;
- b) once the Member has completed any oral comments, the Member and legal counsel for the Member, if any, shall leave the meeting;
- c) if the complainant is a Member, the complainant Member shall leave the meeting for the determination required under section 21.4(d);
- d) following the departure of the Member, Council shall determine whether to accept the findings of the Investigator.

21.5 If Council accepts the findings of the Investigator:

- a) Council shall notify the Member of Council's finding and place the consideration of possible sanctions on the closed portion of the next regular Council meeting or a special Council meeting called to consider the item which shall be held no sooner than 7 days after notice is given to the Member;
- b) the Member may submit further written submissions regarding appropriate sanctions. If the Member does wish to make written submissions, the Member must send them to Council no later than 7 days following the notice referenced in section 21.5(a).

21.6 During the closed portion of the Council meeting where sanctions are considered:

- a) the Member who is the subject of the complaint may provide oral comments to Council in addition to any written response provided. The Member is entitled to have legal counsel present during the Council meeting, at the Member's sole expense. Council may ask questions of the Member;
- b) once the Member has completed any oral comments, the Member and legal counsel for the Member, if any, shall leave the meeting;
- c) if the complainant is a Member, the complainant Member shall leave the

Province of Alberta

meeting for the determination required under section 21.6(d) and may not vote on any motion regarding sanctions against the Member whose conduct is the subject of the complaint;

- d) following the departure of the Member, Council shall consider the appropriate sanction having regard for the severity and frequency of the conduct.

21.7 Despite sections 23.1 and 23.2 of the Bylaw, if Council determines that the Member's conduct is in breach of the Code of Conduct, Council shall provide to the Complainant a summary of the complaint, the Investigator's findings and Council's determination under section 21.4(d) and Council's decision under section 21.6(d) after the Council meeting at which the item set out under section 21.6(d) is considered.

21.8 No Member shall take retaliatory action against a complainant with the intention of dissuading or punishing an individual for participating in the complaint process.

22. Sanctions

22.1 Through a motion of Council, Council may impose sanctions that are appropriate to the severity of the breach, including one or more of the following:

- a) a letter of reprimand addressed to the Member;
- b) request for a public apology;
- c) publication of a letter of reprimand or request for apology and the Member's response;
- d) requirement to attend training;
- e) suspension or removal of the Mayor's or Deputy Mayor's presiding duties;
- f) reduction or suspension of remuneration corresponding to a reduction in duties, excluding allowances for attendance at Council meetings;
- g) removal or suspension to a defined date of the Member's appointment to one or more committees or boards to which Council has the right to appoint Members;
- h) suspension or removal of Mayor's presiding duties under Section 154 of

Province of Alberta

the Municipal Government Act;

- i) suspension or removal of the appointment of a Member as the Deputy Mayor or Acting Mayor under Section 152 of the Municipal Government Act;
- j) request for an inquiry under Part 14 of the Municipal Government Act;
- k) initiation of legal action under Part 5 Division 8 of the Municipal Government Act; and
- l) any other sanction Council deems reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances provided that the sanction does not prevent a Member from fulfilling the legislated duties of a councillor and the sanction is not contrary to the Municipal Government Act.

22.2 In imposing sanctions, Council may consider whether the Member whose conduct is the subject of sanctions has been previously sanctioned for the same or similar conduct.

22.3 The Member whose conduct is the subject of the sanction motion should not vote on the sanction motion.

22.4 Regardless of whether the Member's conduct is the subject of a sanction motion, the Member whose conduct is investigated under the Bylaw is responsible for any costs, legal or otherwise, the Member incurs arising from the investigation or any sanction imposed.

23. Confidentiality of Investigation Process

23.1 The Investigator's report to Council is confidential.

23.2 The Investigator's report may be made available to the public only if Council determines it is necessary to discuss the matter in a public Council meeting.

24. Compliance and Enforcement

24.1 Members shall uphold the letter and the spirit and intent of this Bylaw.

24.2 If a Member fails to comply with a sanction imposed under section 22, the failure to comply is a breach of this Bylaw and may be subject to investigation and sanction under this Bylaw.

24.3 Members are expected to co-operate in every way possible in securing compliance with the application and enforcement of this Bylaw.

Province of Alberta

24.4 No Member shall:

- a) undertake any act of reprisal or threaten reprisal against a complainant or any other person for providing relevant information to Council or to any other person;
- b) obstruct Council, or any other person, in carrying out the objectives or requirements of this Bylaw.

25. Review

25.1 This Bylaw shall be brought forward for review at the beginning of each term of Council at the Organizational meeting held in October, when relevant legislation is amended, and at any other time that Council considers appropriate to ensure that it remains current and continues to accurately reflect the standards of ethical conduct expected of Members.

26. Interpretation

26.1 In this Bylaw, the words "shall" and "must" denote a mandatory intention. The word "may" is permissive.

27. Effective Date

27.1 This Bylaw comes into force and effect upon third and final reading.

27.2 Code of Conduct Bylaw 2018-03 is hereby repealed upon this Bylaw coming into force and effect.

READ A FIRST TIME THIS 14th DAY OF APRIL, 2025.

READ A SECOND TIME THIS 28th DAY OF APRIL, 2025.

READ A THIRD TIME THIS 28th DAY OF APRIL, 2025.



Mayor Jon Kramer



CAO, Simone Wiley