

City of Guelph Voluntary Leave Program

In an effort to provide more flexibility in the workplace and opportunities to offer work/life balance outlined in the People Practices Strategy, the City of Guelph is introducing a Voluntary Leave Program. This program gives employees the opportunity to apply for “unpaid leave” without impacting their benefits or current vacation entitlements.

This program is being offered to:

Regular Full-Time: A position which consists of 35 or 40 hours per week on a regular and permanent basis.

Regular Part-Time: Regularly scheduled on-going and consists on a work week which are less hours than full-time hours as described above.

Note: Casual and temporary employees or employees on probation are not eligible for this program.

How the Program Works

To learn more about the program and find out eligibility requirements please review the following factors:

1. Regular full-time employees, regular part-time employees who have completed their probationary period are eligible to participate in the program.
2. Voluntary leaves can only be approved if it is operationally feasible and does not result in additional costs for the department.
3. Leaves are scheduled between January – December.
4. Employees who had more than one week of “carry-over” vacation or banked overtime will **not** be eligible for the Leave Program until a plan is in place to utilize the vacation.
5. All leaves must be taken on a voluntary basis. Arrangements for scheduling any leave are to be made between the employee and their Supervisor. Ideally, applications should be submitted by September 15th for leaves to occur the following year. The intent is to receive all applications in September to give Supervisors/Managers and Directors the opportunity to review all applications and approve accordingly. However, in the event an employee requires a leave they may submit a Voluntary Leave of Absence Application anytime throughout the year. Please note that request submitted after the September 15th intake process, will not be given priority over other approved applications.
6. **Regular Full-time:** Leaves of up to a maximum of 20 days per calendar year should be taken as full or ½ days. Any approved leaves must conclude on or before December 31st (leaves may not extend into the next calendar year).

Regular Part-time: Leaves of up to a maximum of 10 days per calendar year should be taken as full or ½ days. Any approved leaves must conclude on or before December 31st (leaves may not extend into the next calendar year).

Scheduling Leave:

If leave requests make it difficult for an employee to take their regular vacation time it should not be approved as it will likely result in the "carry over" of unused vacation time. This is not the intent of the program, as it may cause operational, scheduling or increased overtime issues for a department in the following year.

Once the request is approved, the employee and their supervisor must create a schedule that ensures leave days are taken by December 31st and vacation days taken by June 30th of the following year. Employees may not call-in an approved leave day. These days must be scheduled and approved in advance.

Seniority during this period:

Eligible Non-Union employees will continue to accumulate full service during the leave. Bargaining unit employees who elect to participate in the Voluntary Leave Program may have their seniority adjusted in accordance with their applicable collective agreement.

Statutory Holidays during the voluntary leave period:

Employees are paid for all statutory holidays that fall during a voluntary leave in accordance with their employment or collective agreement.

Pension and Benefits:

If an employee is enrolled in a pension plan and wishes to contribute to the plan during the leave, the employer will match pension contributions and the employee receives pension credit for the duration of the leave. Participating employees are strongly encouraged to maintain pension contributions to avoid impacts such as "broken service" which can negatively affect an individual's pension in later years. Pension contributions are made at the full salary prior to any reductions in salary for the self-funded leave period.

All benefits will continue as per their employment agreement or collective agreement.

Payment Options:

Full time employee may choose one of the following payment options when taking a voluntary leave:

1. Receive no earnings during the leave period.
2. Have their salary reduced by the number of approved days. This method will spread out the total of unpaid days over the calendar year.

If the employee leaves the City before year end:

1. If the employee took more days than paid for, the difference will be deducted from the last pay.
2. If the employee didn't take any of the leave days but their salary was reduced by the number of approved days, this will be refunded on the last pay.

PLEASE NOTE:

Voluntary Leave days may not be used if the employee is away from work due to illness. Employees must seek prior approval for scheduled time off. Similar to all other pre-approved absences, Voluntary Leave days must be scheduled, so that Managers/Supervisors can plan appropriately for staff coverage and continued operations. In other words, if the employee calls the Supervisor and reports an absence and wishes to record that day as a Voluntary Leave day, the request will be denied.

Director's reserve the right to reverse approved requests when it is no longer operationally feasible (i.e. unforeseen staff compliment reductions) with a minimum of 4 weeks notice, however, if an employee can demonstrate that they have financial commitments for the requested time off, exceptions will be considered.

Submitting an application

Employees wishing to participate in the program, are encouraged to submit a Voluntary Leave of Absence Application by September 15th. Employee can submit after this deadline on an exception basis. Supervisors, Managers and Directors should respond to requests within 10 working days of receiving an application. Any application that is not approved will be returned to the employee with an explanation of the decision. Arrangements for taking leaves are made between departments/divisions and employees.

Employees whose applications are denied, or who are not eligible to participate in the program, may still apply for leave in accordance with the provisions of their collective agreement or terms of employment.