



# The Corporation of the Town of Milton

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Report To:	Council
From:	Carrie Beatty, Director, Strategic Communications
Date:	March 21, 2022
Report No:	CORS-018-22
Subject:	Social Media Policy for Members of Council
Recommendation:	<b>THAT Council approve and adopt the Social Media Policy for Members of Council.</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a draft social media policy for their consideration.
- Council's across Ontario have adopted a policy for Members of Council or have parameters included in their Council Code of Conduct.
- A social media policy serves to assist Council in managing their Member social media accounts effectively and provide terms of engagement.
- This draft policy provides guidance to Members of Council on considerations and practices in the use of social media

## REPORT

### Background

The Town's Integrity Commissioner's Annual Report for 2020/2021, CORS-002-22, was received for information by Council on Jan. 17, 2022. In the report, the Integrity Commissioner recommended that Council consider adopting a social media policy to address newly emerging issues in the municipal sector, supporting best practices in social media.

Through approval of Report CORS-002-22, Council directed staff to draft a social media policy for Council consideration at a future Council meeting.

### Discussion

Use of social media is an effective platform for elected officials to engage with constituents, promote opportunities for civic engagement, and share municipal business and public policy decisions.



## Discussion

Through an environmental scan of municipalities across Ontario, several Councils and Local Boards have adopted a policy or have included parameters directly in Codes of Conducts related to social media use and practices.

While social media can be an excellent tool for communicating quickly with constituents, obtaining input, and being transparent, social media can breed incivility that generally is avoided in face-to-face interactions.

Adopting a policy provides Council with the opportunity to manage their accounts effectively, as well as establish consistent parameters as elected officials participating in social media.

The elements of the draft policy include guidance for:

- Overall principles
- Members accounts
- Third Party Interests, Advertising and Event Participation
- Election campaign period
- Monitoring and engagement principles

The draft policy is included as an appendix to this report.

## Financial Impact

There is no financial impact as a result of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie Beatty  
Director, Strategic Communications

For questions, please contact: Carrie Beatty  
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## Attachments

Appendix A - Draft Policy - Social Media Policy for Members of Council

CAO Approval  
Andrew M. Siltala



Chief Administrative Officer

## Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.

<b>POLICY:</b> Social Media Policy for Members of Council	<b>POLICY NO.</b> 0XX
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> XX, XX, 2022	<b>REVISED:</b> n/a

## POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for Members of Council regarding Members' use of social media.

Members may seek advice from the Integrity Commissioner with respect to specific situations that may arise.

## POLICY PURPOSE

To provide guidance for Members of Council regarding the appropriate use of social media.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Social media provides Members with a valuable and convenient tool to communicate, inform, and engage constituents about Town Council work and Member's activities. Social media allows for efficient and direct engagement between Members and constituents.

When used in accordance with the Code of Conduct, social media enables Members to demonstrate their public service to their constituents and can help improve trust and confidence in Town Council and the Town of Milton.

Members of Council may participate in social media of their own accord. Members are welcome to like/follow official Town of Milton social media accounts, and are encouraged to share content that has already been officially posted to those accounts or through Milton.ca's share function on individual web pages.

As with any other activity, Members must ensure that their use of social media is mindful of, and consistent with, the Code of Conduct and Town policies.

Complaints under this policy shall be made to the Integrity Commissioner to be administered in accordance with the process pursuant to the Code of Conduct for Members of Council.

## DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the following terms have the meanings set out below:

“Member” includes the elected Head of Council and elected members of Council.

“Town” means the Corporation of the Town of Milton

“Social media” refers to web-based communication platforms that enable people to produce, post, and interact with each other by sharing and consuming information, including text, images, video or audio. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn.

“Block users” means that a social media user has been denied access as a result of improper social media engagement outlined in an account’s terms of use or rules of engagement.

“Muting” means that social media users can be edited out of an account feed without unfollowing or unfriending the account. Users remain connected, can still interact, but their activity isn’t visible in your timeline.

“Disinformation” refers to the deliberate creation and/or sharing of false information in order to mislead.

“Spamming” refers to the unsolicited or repetitive posting of unwanted spam content (comments, chat, etc.) often generated through fake accounts.

“Trolling” refers to a social media account/person who deliberately or intentionally tries to instigate conflict, hostility, or arguments in an online social community.

## POLICY REQUIREMENTS

### **Members’ Accounts**

A social media account is identified as a Member’s social media account if it has one or more of the following:

- uses any Milton.ca email address as a point of contact
- identifies the Member as a current member of Milton Town Council in the handle name, the user name, or the profile description
- uses the Town’s logo or any other proprietary mark of the Town of Milton

- contains contact information for the Member at Town Hall or any other official contact information

### **Third Party Interests, Advertising, and Event Participation**

It is acknowledged that as a part of a Member's representative duties, Members regularly participate and engage in local events and activities with constituents, including local businesses, and Members will use social media to publicize these kinds of activities. Members also use social media to inform residents about federal, provincial, and Town programs.

A Member may therefore post the following types of content as long as it is occasional, voluntary, unsolicited and otherwise in accordance with the Code of Conduct:

- Content that raises awareness of local events and activities
- Content that raises awareness of federal and provincial government programs
- Content that publicizes the member's attendance at a ceremony, event or activity that is otherwise permissible under the Code of Conduct
- Content that publicizes the member's interactions with constituents, including local businesses

A Member must not post the following content using a Member's social media account:

- Content that promotes or advertises any third-party interest including events, products, services, or goods; and
- Content that promotes or endorses any candidate or political party in any election at the municipal, federal or provincial level, including leadership campaigns.

### **Election Campaign Period**

To comply with the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996*, the Code of Conduct, and the Town's Corporate Policy on the Use of Corporate Resources during an election, Members must take affirmative steps to clearly distinguish between their use of social media for personal or election candidate purposes and use of social media in their capacity as a Member.

To differentiate such accounts, if a Member uses social media account for campaign purposes:

- Such account may not be created or supported by Town's resources
- Such account shall not contain any reference to:

- the Town, the Town's logo or other visual identity standards including the Town's colour palette or typography, images proprietary to the Town; or
- reference to the Member's title from the account handle name, the user name, or profile description
- For the duration of the campaign, the Member shall include on the home page of such social media account, a clear statement that the account is being used for election campaign purposes
- A Member may only use personal cell phones, tablets and/or computers to manage such accounts
- The Town's official sites will not share political content posted by Members

## MONITORING AND ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

While social media can be an excellent tool for communicating quickly with constituents, obtaining input, and being transparent, social media can breed incivility that generally is avoided in face-to-face interactions. To best guide Members in engaging in social media, the following guidelines should be considered.

### **Monitoring Activity**

Members active on social media should adopt a practice of regularly monitoring their social media accounts. Such a practice might include posting a terms of use or rules of engagement on their accounts. The clear guidelines will ensure the integrity of the account is maintained, accurate and relevant information being posted or shared, and acceptable conduct is occurring among users.

As an example, a Member's posted practice might include:

- The expected standard of behaviour for persons who post on the site
- The frequency with which they undertake to review the account
- The conditions under which:
  - posts will be removed without notice
  - posts will be removed with notice
  - blocking or muting an account or user

### **Management of Offensive Content and Disinformation**

While Members should adopt individual monitoring and engagement practices, the following considerations are widely adopted practices in the social media community to facilitate positive conduct, engagement, and information sharing.

Members have the right to block users who engage in offensive posts, however members should notify participants before blocking them.

Members should not arbitrarily block participants merely because they express a different opinion or perspective.

Members should remove offensive posts promptly. Offensive posts include:

- Messages that are abusive, profane, hateful, homophobic, discriminatory, malicious, aggressive, threatening, violent, sexist, harassing, inflammatory, indecent, tortious, defamatory, knowingly false, misleading, deceptive, vulgar, obscene, offensive, scandalous, or sexually explicit;
- Messages that incite hatred, racism, bigotry, discrimination or physical harm of any kind against any individual or class of individuals based on a protected ground in the Ontario Human Rights Code, including: ancestry, colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, disability, family status, marital status, gender identity, gender expression, sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding) or sexual orientation;
- Comments that contain personal attacks, encourage or incite hatred or violence or reasonably compromise public safety; and
- Messages that are illegal or encourage illegal activities, including defamation, fraud, and breaching privacy.

To maintain the credibility of a Member's account, Members should remove posts that are:

- Repetitive comments unrelated to the post topic
- Disinformation
- Spamming or trolling in nature

## POLICY REVIEW

This policy should be reviewed on an annual basis by Members of Council to ensure the policy supports Members in the continued evolution of social media platforms and engagement practices.