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Sub-section: Social Media	Effective Date: November 19, 2018
Subject: Guidelines and standards for use and management	Revision Date: July 8, 2024
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Municipality of North Perth Social Media Policy

1.0 PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to set guidelines and standards to ensure the appropriate use and management of social media on behalf of the Municipality of North Perth.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT:

The Municipality of North Perth website is the primary source of online information exchange with the public and is the Municipality’s official online presence. The Municipality also uses social media to enhance communication with the public and other audiences on municipal news/notices, programs, and services.

Social media tools offer many benefits, including:

- sharing information on programs, services, and news to a wide audience;
- promote/market the Municipality online to local, regional, and national audiences;
- disseminate time-sensitive information as quickly as possible; and
- increase engagement by providing an additional tool for the public to communicate with the Municipality.

3.0 SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Municipality of North Perth employees and officials who make public statements on Municipal social media sites and social networks that discuss, share or comment on the Municipality of North Perth. This policy also applies to members of the public who use, comment or posts on Municipal social media sites and social networks. The policy applies to all social media channels operated by the Municipality.

4.0 DEFINITIONS:

“Accessibility” or “Accessible” means the degree of ease that something (e.g., device, service, environment) can be used and enjoyed by persons with a disability. The term implies conscious planning, design and/or effort to ensure it is barrier-free to persons with a disability, and by extension, highly usable and practical for the general population as well.

“Chief Administrative Officer” or “CAO” means the Chief Administrative Officer of the Municipality of North Perth.



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“**Corporate Account**” means the Municipality of North Perth’s primary social media account, within each of the selected Social Media channels, that provides communication for all Municipal departments and functions, and is managed, maintained, and populated by the Social Media Account Administrator designated to be responsible for corporate accounts.

“**Council**” or “**Councillor**” means the Council of the Municipality of North Perth and any individual elected member of the Council of the Municipality of North Perth.

“**Department Head**” means the Director or Manager of a Department of the Municipality of North Perth.

“**Employee**” means any person that is employed by the Municipality of North Perth. This includes all classifications of employees (e.g., Permanent Full Time, Permanent Part Time, Seasonal, Temporary Casual, Student, Contract).

“**Information Technology (IT) System**” means all electronic communication devices used by the Municipality of North Perth council, employees, or contractors which include, but are not limited to, all computer and telephone networks, devices and applications as well as mobile devices.

“**Objectionable Material**” means content that contradicts the principles established by the Ontario Human Rights Code or materials of a pornographic, profane or sexually explicit nature, as well as content that may offend based on race, ancestry, place of origin, ethnicity, citizenship, creed, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, family status, religion or disability.

“**Official Record**” means any record of information however recorded, whether in printed form, by electronic means, or otherwise includes: Correspondence, a memorandum, a book, a plan, a map, a drawing, a pictorial or graphic work, a photograph, a film, a microfilm, a sound recording, a videotape, a machine-readable record (or capable of being produced from a machine-readable record), any other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, and any copy thereof.

“**Online Communication**” means the exchange of information using the Internet or mobile communication network for any purpose (e.g., information sharing, marketing, public engagement, etc.).

“**Separate Account**” means a social media account set up by a Municipal department, board, or committee that is in addition to the Corporate Account. Separate accounts are managed, maintained, and populated by the Social Media Account Administrator of the department/board/committee. The Account is owned by the Municipality of North Perth and will remain with the Corporation after employment ends.

“**Social Media**” means the various online, accessible communication channels or technologies that enable individuals to join and/or participate in online communities for the purpose of publicly sharing information, ideas, messages, pictures, etc.



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“**Social Media Account Administrator**” means any employee designated by the Municipality of North Perth to maintain a particular Corporate or Separate Social Media Account.

“**Transitory Record**” means any record that has temporary usefulness and is only required for the completion of a routine action or until superseded.

“**Trolling**” means the activity of making deliberately offensive or provocative online posts with the aim of upsetting someone, eliciting an angry response and/or encouraging negative or unproductive discussion.

5.0 POLICY CONTENT:

The North Perth CAO, in consultation with the Senior Management Team, is responsible for designating the role of Social Media Account Administrator.

Where possible, a single staff person should be designated as the Social Media Account Administrator for each Corporate or Separate account that exists. This person is responsible for posting, monitoring, and maintaining the account on behalf of the Municipality, Department, Board, or Committee. In addition to the regular Social Media Account Administrator, an alternate Administrator should be identified.

5.1 Account Creation & Management

Before creating a corporate social media account on an existing or new social media platform, discussion should occur between the Social Media Account Administrator, CAO, and any other applicable staff on the need for and benefit of a new account and/or platform. Adequate resources, including staff time and material, must be present for the creation of a new account.

Before creating a separate account for a department, board or committee, employees must obtain permission from the CAO or Council, if deemed appropriate.

Any corporate or separate social media account established by the Municipality of North Perth prior to the adoption of this policy will be reviewed by the Social Media Account Administrator(s) for compliance to this policy. Any significant recommendations occurring from this review should be forwarded to the CAO and Senior Management Team for their review and decision.

5.2 Acceptable Use of Social Media by Account Administrators

Social Media Account Administrators are permitted to engage in social media activity for corporate purposes. Social Media Account Administrators should balance the integration of social media within their overall work plans.



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I. Maintenance

Social Media Account Administrators must maintain accounts to ensure they are kept current and relevant to the public. Social media accounts with frequent periods of inactivity (six weeks or more without new information) will be brought to the attention of the Social Media Account Administrator and relative Department Head for discussion on continuation. This does not apply to any seasonal accounts.

Social Media Account Administrators must undertake regular audits of social media comments to ensure inappropriate postings are removed in a timely fashion (e.g., trolling, disparaging remarks).

II. Purpose and Use

Social media should be used by the Municipality for the following purposes:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting Municipal events, programs, and services
- Increasing access to information for specific audiences
- Promoting opportunities for public involvement and comment on the Municipality's online engagement platform, www.yoursaynorthperth.ca
- Where possible, Municipal social media accounts should link back to the Municipal website for the purpose of reviewing/completing forms, documents, and providing specific or additional information.

III. Conduct

Social Media Account Administrators using social media on behalf of the Municipality will conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, including:

- Post accurate, credible, and consistent information and links that are consistent with the Municipality's information, messages, brand identity, and policies (including the Municipal Website Policy). Department Heads are responsible for the accuracy and relevancy of any information forwarded to the Social Media Account Administrator for posting.
- Strive for transparency and openness, including when deemed necessary, identifying their name and position within the Municipality.
- Adhere to the objectives, values, and guidelines established in the North Perth's Customer Service Policy.
- Publicly correct any information in a timely manner that has been communicated and found to be in error, using the same platform it was produced.
- Post content in a manner that is discreet, does not disclose confidential information or release personal or corporate information, without prior consent. Social Media



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content must take the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) into consideration.

- Must not engage in offensive language, respond in a confrontational manner, or post content that is not professional or that contravenes Municipal policies and the North Perth Code of Conduct Policy.
- Must not use corporate accounts to express personal opinions or further personal agendas.
- Ensure proper protocols and permissions are obtained for posting any copyrighted material (including documents, websites, logos, images).
- Ensure security of social media accounts is maintained, including password and login information.

Where possible, each social media account used by the Municipality should contain a disclaimer clearly advising visitors to the site that third party comments are not official communications of the Municipality of North Perth. The disclaimer should also note that the Municipal Website is the official destination for municipal information and that social media accounts are regularly monitored Monday-Friday during regular business hours.

Disclaimer example:

“Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of the Municipality of North Perth and are owned by the contributing commenter. These comments are not reflective of the Municipality’s views, opinions, and/or policies.”

This page is primarily monitored during regular business hours, between 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. The Corporate website at northperth.ca should be used as the official resource for municipal information.”

Additionally, where possible, each social media account used by the Municipality should contain the following excerpt from the Municipality of North Perth Customer Service Policy:

“As per section 7.1 of the Municipality of North Perth Customer Service Policy, in order to ensure that information can be exchanged readily with the customer and the Municipality, customers requesting a response to a non-routine inquiry will be required to provide name, home address, telephone number and email address to municipal staff. Failure to provide the requested contact information will result in the request not being processed.”

IV. Sharing/Re-posting Content

When sharing or re-posting content from a social media account that is not owned by the Municipality of North Perth, Social Media Account Administrators must follow these guidelines:



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Content that includes external links:

- a) Connects the public with information and services provided by upper tier governments or government-funded agencies or boards in Canada.
- b) Provides further information on subject matter found on the Municipality’s website. Such information must be provided by an official and/or accredited source.
- c) A Municipally affiliated organization, service club or registered charity (direct partnership by way of funding, sponsorship, staff resources or in-kind contributions).
- d) A business improvement area operating within the municipality.
- e) A professional association as determined solely by the Municipality of North Perth.
- f) Any organization approved by Council.

Any posts that include links to a personal account/website, individual business account/website (except when part of a Municipal website Business Directory and/or Listowel BIA), political party/candidate account/website, or objectionable material as defined in this policy must not be shared or reposted on a Municipal social media account.

Content promoting events:

- a) Organized or funded by another level of government;
- b) Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
- c) Organized by a Municipality of North Perth affiliated organization/group;
- d) Funded in full, or in part, by the Municipality of North Perth;
- e) Sponsored by the Municipality of North Perth;
- f) Organized by a registered charitable organization operating within the Municipality of North Perth or the County of Perth;
- g) Organized by a service club operating within the Municipality of North Perth performing work that benefits North Perth residents;
- h) Organized by a business improvement area or Chamber of Commerce located in the municipality for general promotional purposes; and/or
- i) Located in a facility owned by the Municipality of North Perth.

Any posts that promote events that are for individual businesses (except members of the Listowel BIA), include objectionable material, do not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation, are political in nature, or promote an individual religion or religious service must not be shared or reposted on a Municipal social media account. To recognize and promote the inclusivity of the Municipality of North Perth, cultural events, or dates, some with historical religious roots, that are relevant to the North Perth community may be promoted or recognized on Municipal social media accounts.



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V. Records Management and Retention

Posts/user content deemed to be Official Records must be retained and purged according to the Municipality's Records and Information Management Policy and comply with appropriate sections of the MFIPPA.

Posts/user content that is considered a Transitory Record of the Municipality is not required to be retained and may be purged from social media sites.

5.3 Personal Use of Social Media by Councillors and Employees

Municipal employees who are not Social Media Account Administrators are not permitted to publish or comment via social media in any way that suggests they are doing so in connection with or as representatives of the Municipality of North Perth.

Incidental or occasional personal use of social media on personal or workplace devices is allowed, providing such limited use will not result in any measurable expense to the Corporation in time, material, or productivity, and is subject to the limitations of this policy.

I. Conduct

The Municipality expects all Employees and Councillors who use social media to do so without breaching their duties to the Municipality and adhere to their respective Codes of Conduct. Employees and Councillors should consider the following:

- Even if you don't explicitly identify yourself as a Municipal employee or councillor, others may identify you as an employee or councillor by your name, your place of work, a photograph, or by the content you post.
- Identifiable Municipal employees should make it clear that their position does not officially represent the Municipality's position. Use phrases such as "in my personal view" or "Personally..." to communicate that you are expressing personal views.
- Do not use visual cues that suggest you represent the Municipality. Do not post Municipally-owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Municipality's authorization.
- Do not circulate any organizational or confidential information, such as internal deliberations about how decisions are made, personal information, such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Municipality of North Perth, Councillors, Employees or residents.
- Do not disparage or embarrass the Municipality, individual Councillors, Employees, and others associated with the Municipality.
- Do not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

Overall, Employees and Councillors are expected to conduct themselves professionally both on-and-off duty. Even when an Employee does not publicly associate themselves with the Municipality



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on social media, all materials associated with their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Municipality.

Further, Employees and Councillors should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities as they pertain to the Municipality of North Perth. The traditional legal view is that posting content on social media sites about an employer is considered a publication and not private activity. Councillors and Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online as it relates to the Municipality.

II. Municipal Councillor and Other Government Accounts

If a Councillor, MP, or MPP representing North Perth, Perth County, or the Perth-Wellington riding has a personal social media account, the Municipality’s social media accounts are permitted to like/follow the account. Accounts belonging to a member of Municipal Council must be created and maintained by the member and not municipal employees.

The Municipality’s social media accounts are permitted to share/re-post content from posts belonging a Member of Council, MP, or MPP representing North Perth, Perth County, or the Perth-Wellington riding if the content does not clearly promote or criticize a political party, candidate, or ideology. Social Media Account Administrators should use their best judgement when sharing/re-posting content belonging to a Member of Council, MP, or MPP.

Effective January 1st of an election year, sharing of content associated with a Member of Council, MP, or MPP site shall cease until the Inaugural Meeting of the newly elected Council or Legislature is complete.

5.4 Security and Monitoring of Corporate Use

I. Information Technology

Municipality of North Perth IT staff may facilitate a request to monitor and oversee social media accounts and may:

- Allow internet access to an authorized user
- Limit or prevent unnecessary functionality within social media sites
- Enable technical risk mitigation controls, including filtering and scanning files exchanged with social media sites

All information created on Corporate and Separate social media accounts using municipal technology is the property of the Municipality of North Perth. Reasonable technological and procedural measures, including auditing and random monitoring of social media accounts, will occur to ensure adherence to corporate policies and standards.



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II. Log-in and Password Management

North Perth’s Corporate and Separate social media accounts are owned by the Municipality. The CAO and Department Heads will have full “Administrator” access privileges to social media accounts managed within their area. All credentials and details for Corporate and Separate accounts must be communicated to the Municipality’s IT staff.

Accounts created to represent the Municipality of North Perth must be associated with a valid Municipal email address (@northperth.ca).

5.5 Public Conduct

Users and visitors to the Municipality’s social media accounts/pages should be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a communication platform and information-sharing tool between the Municipality and the public.

The Municipality reserves the right to remove inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant or unproductive content (i.e. posts and comments) from social media accounts. If the user continues to post inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate or unproductive content, the Municipality may ban/block the user from the site at the discretion of staff.

The Municipality’s social media accounts/pages that the below public conduct criteria applies to are those that fall under the definition of Social Media in Section 4.0 of this policy.

Comments, posts, or articles containing the following content will not be allowed:

- Comments not topically related to the topic and/or issue being commented upon;
- Account spamming, trolling or overposting;
- Posts that are meant to solicit sales, products, or goods and services;
- Discriminatory, profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive or violent language or content;
- Content that includes or includes links to objectionable material, as defined in this policy;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
- Information that may compromise the privacy, safety or security of the Municipality, public, or public systems;
- Comments or posts that includes inaccurate material or misrepresent facts as known by the Corporation;
- Comments or posts that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, Municipal staff or Municipal officials;
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

The Municipality of North Perth is not responsible for any comments or use of material posted by users.



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5.6 Legal

Comments and content uploaded to a social media account may be permanently available for viewing and printing and can be republished in other media without the Municipality’s permission. As a result, Social Media Account Administrators must ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright, and data protection laws are adhered to.

All Corporate and Separate social media accounts must adhere to applicable provincial, federal, and local laws, regulations, and policies, including other applicable Municipal policies.

Depending on the nature of the content, content removed based on the guidelines in section 5.5 may be retained by the Social Media Account Administrator, and have supporting documentation, including the time, date, identity of poster, reason for removal, and any required incident reporting.

6.0 POLICY COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated internally with staff and posted on the North Perth website for public use. The policy will also be hyperlinked onto North Perth’s social media accounts.

This policy will be reviewed with staff on an ongoing basis as part of new employee and new councillor orientation sessions.

7.0 POLICY REVIEW:

This policy will be reviewed once per Council Term or more often as needed.

8.0 COMPLIANCE:

In cases of policy violation, the Municipality may investigate and determine appropriate corrective action.

Employees may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal for violating this policy. Members of Council may be subject to action for violation of the Code of Conduct.

9.0 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Date	Comments
1		Issue Date
2	July 8, 2024	Language on cultural events and minor edits

