



Policy: Social Media Policy and Procedure
Coverage: Corporation of the City of Quinte West
Issuing Department: Office of the CAO
Approved By: Mayor & Council

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Social Media Policy and Procedure

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Quinte West can be considered a progressive municipality in its use of new technology and communication tools such as social media. In order to continue to be leaders in this sector, it is vital to develop a social media policy and procedure to define our goals and guide our actions in a way that will better reach our audiences.

2. PURPOSE

The City of Quinte West encourages the use of social media to further the goals of the City and to offer two-way communication with its citizens, visitors and stakeholders. We are committed to using different social media platforms for the purpose of broadcasting and promoting the City's objectives, initiatives, programs, discussions and news through professional and strategic communications.

This policy serves to:

- 2.1. Enhance the reputation and image of the City through social media to showcase different projects and programs that enhance our City and make it stand out from the crowd. The City's social media accounts are entry points for our citizens as well as potential visitors from around the world. It is important that our social media be professional, well planned, coordinated, timely and visually appealing, as it is often the first impression the world receives of us.



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- 2.2. Increase citizens' access to government through the use of social media to provide real-time information to citizens on issues, programs and services, and news and events that affect them. The City's presence on social media, using various platforms and accounts, provides citizens with different options to connect with the City.
- 2.3. Build relationships with citizens, partners and stakeholders by using social media regularly, the City is able to create relationships with citizens and organizations in the community. The City is able to support and share information from partner organizations and stakeholders which reinforces current bonds and builds stronger ties.
- 2.4. Provide better customer service through different social media platforms to respond to inquiries from the public in a courteous and timely manner.
- 2.5. Create a dialogue with the public by offering the opportunity to engage in real-time, back and forth conversations with the public. This enables stronger two-way communications and displays openness and transparency.
- 2.6. Manage messages by creating content that stands alongside mass media that are inaccurate or need supplemental information. Social media can be an additional tool to promote Media Releases, Public Safety Announcements (PSAs) and Media Advisories, and can also be used to break stories to the media.
- 2.7. Provide additional communications channels in times of emergency to reach citizens quickly and effectively. The City can provide updates to help keep citizens safe, secure and informed.

3. SCOPE

This policy has been developed to allow the City of Quinte West staff to handle issues quickly and efficiently. This policy allows all staff using the City social media platforms to monitor trends and conversations, allowing the City to prepare key messages and be on top of issues before things escalate. Mass media and the public often look to the City's different social platforms for the latest news and information.



The policy addresses how everyone who has access across the organization will interact on social platforms according to the guidelines outlined in the *City of Quinte West Communications Strategy*:

- To provide a framework for the City on how to best exchange information with the public and internal staff.
- To maximize the use of technology including the website, social media, the internet and other digital channels.
- To employ communication tools that the citizens of Quinte West prefer and will use to receive and provide information to the City.

4. DEFINITIONS

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO): The administrative head of the municipality.

Community Engagement Officer (CEO): The individual responsible for creating and maintaining positive community relations and public awareness for the City and the programs and services delivered

Confidentially: In all communications, spokespersons and departments must comply with all legislated requirements regarding access and disclosure of information. The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)* exceeds access and privacy principles.

Content: Any information that is communicated on a social media channel.

Copyright: Departments must comply with the *Copyright Act* to ensure the ownership rights associated with words subject to copyright are fully respected in all communications. Departments must maintain a record of authorizations to use copyright material.

Delegate(s)/Employee(s): A City employee who has the authority to make statements and/or use the City's social media platforms on behalf of the Community Engagement Officer (CEO).

Facebook: A social networking site that makes it easy to connect and share with others online.



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Instagram: A photo and video-sharing social network service.

LinkedIn: A social network that focuses on professional networking and career development.

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Act (MFIPPA): The Act that establishes a general right of access to the information held by local government and institutions. The Act also protects the privacy of individual's personal information that is part of government records.

Official Record: Anything which is created in the regular course of conducting City business and which documents the business of the City, regardless of format. Official records document decisions, policies, procedures, transactions, activities, commitments, obligations, ownership, entitlement, legal rights, etc. of the City and are relied upon by the City or proof of such or to support the City business.

Official Social Media Pages: Audiences should only associate posts published on the verified City of Quinte West social pages or posts which contain the City logo and/or contact information as authentic City posts. Other social media platforms that have the "City of Quinte West" in its page name or reference the City, are NOT official City administered pages. The posts and/or discussions of these pages do not reflect the views or corporate identity of the City of Quinte West. Please see Appendix A for a list of official social media platforms that are managed and owned by the City.

Official Use: When you have delegated the authority to participate on a social media site or blog as a spokesperson for the City of Quinte West. This should be done using a City-owned computer and/or device using a City email address or online account established and administered by the City's Information Technology department.

Personal Use: When you participate in a social media site or blog and comment as yourself about your opinions, interests, family and friends. Personal social media activity should be done outside work hours, using your own personal computer and/or device, from an account or profile associated with your personal email address.

Professional Use: When you participate on a social media site or blog and comment personally as an experienced person in your field of expertise. This should be done using your



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own personal computer and/or device from a profile or account associated with your personal email address.

Public Statement: A declaration made by a City employee or representative in any public forum, which relates to the City of Quinte West, its employees and/or its business. This includes statements made in online forums or discussions, social networking platforms and elsewhere in the public record.

Social Media/Social Media Platform/Social Media Channels: Internet-based websites and applications that enable the creation and sharing of content, or to participate in social networking. Please see Appendix A for a list of official social media platforms that are managed by the City of Quinte West.

Social Media Moderator and Contributors: Employee(s) designated by the Community Engagement Officer (CEO) tasked with posting, updating, monitoring and reviewing the content on the corporate social media platforms.

The City / City: Means the City of Quinte West

Twitter: A microblogging system that allows users to send and receive short posts called tweets.

Visual Identity: A clear and consistent visual identity assists the public in recognizing and accessing the policies, programs, services and initiatives of the City. To present a strong, unified, consistent identity, the Community Engagement Officer will develop and update a *City of Quinte West Visual Identity Manual*. The corporate logo and tagline are to be displayed on all applications, regardless of medium, for external and internal use. The use of the logo outside the corporation must be pre-approved by the Community Engagement Officer and CAO.



5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1. The City's official social media platforms are monitored regularly during business hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. and as needed throughout off-hours;
- 5.2. The City will make every effort to respond to concerns and questions on its social media platforms. City staff aimed to address all appropriate comments within three (3) business days (excluding holidays and weekends). This turnaround time may be impacted by staff availability and resources;
- 5.3. The City has appointed the Community Engagement Officer; an employee from the Office of the Chief Administration Officer (CAO), who will serve as the centralized resource for the oversight of the City's social media platforms. The Community Engagement Officer may delegate City staff as delegates to these platforms. Please see Appendix B for the City's designated employee(s);
- 5.4. Login and passwords are confidential and will be stored with the Community Engagement Officer. Passwords will not be changed without the approval of the Community Engagement Officer or CAO.
- 5.5. It is the responsibility of all City departments to provide content to the Community Engagement Officer or designated delegate(s) on services, events, resources or updates pertaining to their department for posting.

6. PROCEDURE

Prior to social media, the public's main source of information from the City of Quinte West was mass media such as newspapers, radio and occasionally, television. With increased public access to the internet and the rise of social media, the public is now able to stay informed and engage with the City online. This creates a dynamic communications opportunity that is constantly developing and changing. Social media contributes to the overall communications goals for the City which include having a progressive and approachable image as well as keeping citizens informed and engaged. The City's social media channels include platforms,



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such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Please see Appendix A for a list of official social media platforms that are managed by the City of Quinte West.

7. SITE SELECTION/ESTABLISHING NEW PLATFORMS:

The Community Engagement Officer is the only person with the authority to create a new social media platform on behalf of the City. Social Media accounts require substantial time commitments to be effective. The City has a robust and growing following on its main platforms and these platforms will likely be the most beneficial for all content being posted.

Departments wishing to create additional platforms shall suggest the idea to the Community Engagement Officer. For a new platform to be adopted, a proposal must include research that the new platform:

- Demonstrates the need for the specific platform;
- Demonstrates the originality of the specific platform;
- Identifies the appropriate staff resources that would be required to establish and maintain the new platform;

After the proposal has been reviewed, the Community Engagement Officer and CAO will make a final decision, or refer the proposal onto City Council for further discussion. The login and password of any new social media platforms will be provided to the department.

Where possible, all social media platforms shall:

1. Have the City's logo (including tagline) and/or contact information. Please refer to *City of Quinte West Visual Identity Manual* for clarification;
2. Refer to the City's website;

8. SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT:

- 8.1. If you are authorized to use any of the City's social media platforms, you are effectively acting as a spokesperson for the City and must conduct yourself as such.



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- 8.2. The City invites members of the community to post, share and discuss, while treating each other with respect, and, in addition, content posted to the City's corporate social media channels shall be related to the City business.
- 8.3. Delegates of the Community Engagement Officer monitor social media comments related to the City organization and City issues, for the purpose of responding to questions and responding to citizens, and to help our staff in the operations of services, programs and activities.
- 8.4. The City strives to respond to relevant questions and comments in a timely manner, but because we cannot engage in all conversations, we reserve the right to use our judgement in selecting the messages we respond to.
- 8.5. The City will not tolerate inappropriate posts or comments that include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Profane or inappropriate language or content; sarcastic or disrespectful comments;
 - ii. Content that including personal attacks on an individual or a specific group;
 - iii. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, creed gender, marital status, socio-economic status, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation, ancestry, place of origin, colour, citizenship, sex, gender identity, gender expression, a record of offences, family status or disability;
 - iv. Content considered to be in oversight with the municipal Human Resources, Health & Safety and other policies, disrespectful or insulting to City staff or representatives or content that discusses politically charged issues and/or statements, political rants or attacks on the City of Quinte West;
 - v. Content related to any industries or businesses or related to sales, advertising or promotions falling outside the boundaries of the City;
 - vi. Content containing spam;
 - vii. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - viii. Accusations or messages that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, City staff or City officials;
 - ix. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;



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- x. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- xi. Promotion or opposition to a candidate for a municipal, provincial or federal election;
- xii. Information that discloses personal information as protected in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection Act (MFIPPA)*;
- xiii. Plagiarized or copyrighted material;
- xiv. Information about individuals, unless the individual has provided written consent to the City in advance;
- xv. Messages that do not add to the normal flow of conversation, dialogue or debate;
- xvi. Any other content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the City's staff.

Please see Appendix C for the City of Quinte West Social Media Terms of Reference.

- 8.6. The City reserves the right to remove content that is posted for any reason or at any time.
- 8.7. The City reserves the right to use photos and/or videos from any City of Quinte West event on its social media platforms that do not reveal the identity of the person(s) directly or indirectly. Before posting a photo, the City must ensure that the City either owns the copyright, has a licence or written consent to use the image or video. If a person(s) are identifiable in the photo and/or video, *MFIPPA* requirements must be taken into consideration. Photo consents forms of individuals must be managed and retained in the manner that allows for access in the future, and in accordance with the applicable *MFIPPA* retention schedule.
- 8.8. If a member of the public believes a submission of any City social media violates this policy, they are encouraged to report it immediately to the Community Engagement Officer or designated employee(s). Any content that is deemed to be inappropriate will immediately be dealt with and if an issue arises will be brought to the attention of the CAO.



8.9. Members of the public wishing to have content posted to the City's social media platforms must send a request via email to the Community Engagement Officer or designated delegate(s). For the request to be approved for posting, the submission must:

- Occur within the boundaries of the City of Quinte West;
- Be open to the public and receive special approval and follow at least one of the following characteristics:
 - i. Funded in full, in part or sponsored by the City of Quinte West;
 - ii. Organized or funded by another level of government;
 - iii. Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
 - iv. Organized by a City advisory committee;
 - v. Organized by a registered charitable organization operating within the City of Quinte West;
 - vi. Organized by a service club operating within the City of Quinte West;
 - vii. Organized by one of the City's Stakeholders;
 - viii. Not a commercial or for-profit business.

9. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

As a citizen of the City of Quinte West, you are encouraged to use social media to be informed about the City. However, as an employee, council member, or committee member, you are still perceived by members of the public to be a representative of the City are required to meet the following social media standard mandates:

9.1. Communications on the City's behalf should be based on current, accurate, complete and relevant data. The City will take all reasonable steps to assure the validity of the information communicated via any social media, but it is your responsibility to assure accuracy in the first instance;



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- 9.2. Online postings do not reveal any confidential information. If there are questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with their Department Head, Community Engagement Officer or check with the City's Clerk;
- 9.3. Social media and other types of online content sometimes generate media attention or legal questions. All representatives of the City should refer these inquiries to the Community Engagement Officer, City Clerk and/or CAO and not become an official City's spokesperson;
- 9.4. If employees encounter a situation while using the City social media that threaten to become hostile, employees should disengage from the conversation and notify the Community Engagement Officer and CAO;
- 9.5. Ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libellous;
- 9.6. Consistent with the *Code of Conduct*, if it is reasonable that you could be identified as a City staff, Councillor, or Committee Member, you may not voice personal opinions in public about Council decisions, fellow employees, your workplace or City projects and programs, if such opinions could cause harm to the image or reputation of the City or damage the City's relationship with its citizens or other stakeholders in the community;
- 9.7. The Community Engagement Officer and/or designated delegate(s) will respond directly to online comments and inquiries that are generated by the public. If the designated delegate(s) does not know the answer, they will consult with their manager or department to confirm the information for a response;
- 9.8. All employees must uphold any anti-discrimination and anti-harassment principles as set out the *Code of Conduct* and *Ontario Human Rights Code*, while communicating on all social media platforms; including blogs, public forums, or other social media channels that have personal profile containing information that can be used to identify an individual as a City employee. If in any way a representative of the City violates the City's *Code of Conduct* and/or *the Social Media Policy*, the individual may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Elected officials found to be in violation will be referred to the integrity commissioner.



10. SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLAIMER:

- 10.1. A link between the City's social media pages and any other website does not imply an endorsement or sponsorship by the City of that website, or the creator of that website;
- 10.2. The City does not guarantee users' privacy on third party social networking websites, as users are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific application on that website;
- 10.3. The City will not be responsible for losses or damages suffered as a result of using third party social media or websites. Users participate at their own risk, and in doing so accept that they have no right of action against the City related to such use;
- 10.4. The City may monitor online content for factuality and appropriateness and will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the content posted is accurate at the time of posting. However, accuracy and timeliness are not guaranteed and may not be reliable; as such, users acknowledge that the City makes no such guarantees;
- 10.5. The City is not responsible for the authenticity or suitability of content posted to its social media by members of the public. A comment posted by a member of the public on any City social media platform is the opinion of the poster only and does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by the City of Quinte West, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the City of Quinte West;
- 10.6. By using the City's social media pages, users acknowledge and consent that their comments or messages may become part of the public record and used in the official City of Quinte West documentation. It is at the City's sole discretion which comments will be archived or used;
- 10.7. In the event of a discrepancy between the information contained in the City's social media or corporate website, the information contained on the City's corporate website shall be deemed accurate.

Please see Appendix D for General Online Etiquette Guidelines.



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Charlie Murphy
Chief Administrative Officer
City of Quinte West

Date



Appendix A:

The City's official social media platforms are as follows:

Facebook:	www.facebook.com/quintewest
Twitter:	@quintewest
Instagram:	@cityofquintewest
LinkedIn:	linkedin.com/company/cityofquintewest

Appendix B:

The City's designated employees who are responsible for monitoring and maintaining the City's social media platforms are the Community Engagement Officer (CEO) and selected delegates delegated by the CEO.

Appendix C:

City of Quinte West - Social Media Terms of Reference

Please keep your comments clean and respectful. We want to ensure that the conversation remains in good taste and a positive experience for everyone involved. The purpose of the comments is to facilitate a relevant, on-top dialogue between the City of Quinte West and Social Media Users. No personal attacks will be permitted. Trolls and trolling comments will also not be permitted. The comments you leave should be constructive, helpful, or insightful. Violation of these terms of engagement may result in limited or blocked access to Quinte West Social Media.

Any comments of the following will be removed:

- i. Comments not topically related to our site or material being commented on;
- ii. Comments that are offensive to an individual or organization, profane, hateful, insulting, rude, abusive, aggressive or violent;
- iii. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, age, creed, gender, marital status, socio-economic status, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation;



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- iv. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- v. Messages for advertising/marketing purposes;
- vi. Messages that contain spam;
- vii. Messages that conduct or encourage illegal activity;
- viii. Messages that invade personal privacy;
- ix. Messages that contain profanity;
- x. Information that could compromise public safety or security, or operations;
- xi. Content that violates or legal ownership interest of any other party;
- xii. Unintelligible or irrelevant messages;
- xiii. Messages that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures or City officials.

The City of Quinte West is not responsible for any use of material posted by users. The City reserves the right to modify this policy at any given time.

Appendix D:

General Online Etiquette Guidelines:

- i. Consider whether social media is the best way to communicate;
- ii. Do not send information that you would not want to be forwarded to a large audience;
- iii. It is better to offer a humble opinion and write with reason and diplomacy than to preach it;
- iv. Commentary should be expressed in such a way that it cannot be misrepresented or misunderstood. Keep in mind that brief, well-written messages have a greater impact;
- v. Spelling and grammar are important; Write, edit and proofread. Use professional, but easy to understand language;



- vi. Be the first to correct your own mistakes;
- vii. Understand that content contributed to a social media page could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Consider responses carefully and think about how it will reflect on you and/or the City.

Appendix E:

Tips for personal use of social media by City Employees, Elected Officials and Committee Members

Quinte West recognizes there is both value and public interest in participating in social media and does not want to discourage employees from using this medium. It is important that our personal use on social media does not cause harm to the City of Quinte West and its employees.

We feel that we should support staff by stating clear expectations about its use, corporate standards and guiding principles. As employees we have a responsibility to ensure that only designated employees are speaking on behalf of the City on social media.

What is Social Media?

When many people think of social media, they immediately think of Facebook. While Facebook is probably the most popular and recognizable social media application, there are many more examples of social media. The term social media encompasses all web-based applications that allow users to interact, share and publish content such as text, links, photos, audio and video.

Why use social media?

Social media has become extremely popular in recent years. One reason is because there are many benefits for both individuals and corporations such as the City of Quinte West.

Individual benefits:

- Keep connected with family and friend
- Share information, videos and pictures with contacts
- Promote events or business for free or very low cost
- Discuss issues, causes, state personal opinions on various topics
- Games and entertainment



Quinte West and Social Media:

Only designated employees who serve as staff communicators are authorized to speak on behalf of Quinte West on social media sites.

Their responsibilities will include but not be limited to

- Disseminating information to the public
- Increase access to information for targeted audiences
- Public notification during emergencies
- Promoting Quinte West, member municipalities
- Encouraging discussion, civic engagement monitoring trends, issues, reactions to Quinte West news

Personal Use

Access by staff:

- Not during working hours
- Acceptable during lunch, break or after work hours

Acceptable usage of social media:

- Only designated staff communicators will generate or respond to content related to city business, programs or services
- Staff-to-staff conversations about work will happen in person, phone, or City email only not via social media or any online forum
- City logo/crest only to be used by designated staff
- Do not link or post your city email to a personal social media account or on any postings that you make

Acceptable use:

- Quinte West staff must remember that they may be perceived as representing the City of Quinte West when they are on social media sites

They should portray a professional image that:

- Reflects well on Quinte West
- Upholds loyalty, and confidentiality towards their employer
- Is in accordance with the City's policies and procedures
- Conveys accurate information
- Protects copyrighted, confidential, sensitive or private information
- Discloses they are an employee



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- If speaking about the City Quinte West, declares that opinions are personal and do not reflect the view of Quinte West, *particularly when discussing projects, products, political parties or candidates*

Employee, Elected Officials and Committee Members should use the **Traffic Light Model** to help them understand what comments have the potential to harm the City, its stakeholders, fellow employees, or their own interests. This can help them when making a decision on what to post.

Green light activity is considered a low risk. We should feel comfortable posting content in this category without hesitation.

- Non-controversial
- Positive
- Unrelated to the City of Quinte West
- Follows social media terms
- Respects policies, procedures, guidelines

Yellow – may involve some risk and content or activity that meets any of the following criteria should be considered carefully before posting.

- Promotes a particular product, opinion, or cause
- Refers to political party/candidate or elected official
- Refers to an individual/identifiable group
- Refers to media coverage
- Shares or re-posts others' information
- Posts photos of events or individuals
- Relates to the City of Quinte West and its businesses

There are many examples of yellow light content that are fine to post and will cause no harm to Quinte West, fellow employees, or our own interests. However, we need to use our best judgement and think carefully before posting.

These are some questions we may want to ask before posting.

Yellow Light Questions:

- Am I respecting others' privacy?
- Could it be viewed as an attack on others? *Am I confident that this could not be viewed as an attack on an individual or a group?*
- Do I know all that I am sharing? *If sharing something from a third party, have I read through it in its entirety, do I know all I am sharing?*



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- Could it be misinterpreted as coming from the City of Quinte West? *Am I comfortable with the possibility that I could be misinterpreted by some audiences as speaking for the City?*
- Would I say the same thing in a public square? *Would I post it under my own name?*
- If it relates to a Quinte West business? *Am I making it clear I am an employee of the City of Quinte West?*
- Does it have the potential to cause harm to the City? *Am I confident that the post does not have the potential to cause Quinte West, our stakeholders, or any of our employees any harm?*

Red Light = High Risk

High risk means that comments made are unprofessional, and have the potential to cause harm to the City, its stakeholders, fellow employees, and our own interests. As such staff, Elected Officials and Committee Members should refrain from posting such content that:

- Provides personal information without consent
- **Promotes, perpetuates, or fosters discrimination based on race, colour, religion, marital status, creed, age, gender, marital status, status with regards to public assistance, nationality, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation**
- Is a personal attack on an individual or group
- Profane or abusive
- Sexually explicit or links to such
- Conducts or encourages illegal activity
- May tend to Compromises the safety or security of public or public systems
- Violates legal ownership interest of another party
- Responds to online inquiries or comments addressed to any of the City of Quinte West corporate social media accounts or other official communication.