

MUNICIPAL POLICY



Title of Policy: Social Media Policy

Category: Administrative Policy

Policy No.: A-XX Department: Communications

Date of Approval: Date of Revision:

Author: Simon St-Denis, Communications Officer Attachments:

Related Documents and Legislation:

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Township of Alfred and Plantagenet encourages and supports the use of social media to advance the Township's objectives and the mission of its departments, promoting it as a tool to provide effective and accessible communication about municipal news, programs, and services to the community.

The Township is committed to using social media to promote its goals, initiatives, programs, and news through professional and strategic communication.

The Township's official presence on social media includes accounts identified with the Township of Alfred and Plantagenet logo and managed by the Township.

The Township recognizes that social media serves as a gateway to the Township's website, which remains the primary and most comprehensive reference source for taxpayers.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Maintain the Township's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the Township communicates with the public via social media;
- Prevent inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate, or unproductive behavior on its social media platforms, ensuring all interactions remain respectful, relevant, and constructive;
- Ensure that third-party content shared on our social media platforms meets established criteria for relevance, appropriateness, accuracy, and productivity;
- Establish procedures to facilitate the sharing of external content and provide general guidance on how the Township communicates with the public through its corporate social media account(s).

DEFINITIONS:

Administrator: refers to the individual(s) responsible for managing the Township's social media accounts.

Township: refers to the Corporation of the Township of Alfred and Plantagenet.

Employee: refers to an employee of the Corporation of the Township of Alfred and Plantagenet.

Social Media: refers to web platforms and applications that enable user-generated content creation and publishing.

Council Member: refers to a member of the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Alfred and Plantagenet.

Public: refers to individuals who interact with content published on the Township's social media accounts.

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all members of the Township organization, including Council members, full-time, part-time, and contract staff.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION:

The policy will be posted on the Township's website. Staff will be informed of the new policy through internal communication distributed to the municipal management team.

POLICY:

Content published across the Township's social media accounts must adhere to the Township's corporate image standards and meet quality and appropriateness requirements, including language and tone.

Where possible, content must be presented in both official languages.

Every effort must be made to represent services, organizations, and other partners fairly and equally, without favoritism or specific agendas.

1. Moderation and Control

The Township may disable comments on its social media accounts for the following reasons:

- To ensure a respectful and safe environment: by disabling comments, the Township can protect staff and the public from harmful interactions. This measure ensures that our social media platforms remain a safe space for sharing information and engaging in dialogue with the community.
- Focus on primary objectives: The primary purpose of the Township's social media platforms is to inform the public about municipal news, programs, and services. Disabling comments ensures that important announcements and information are

not overshadowed by potentially harmful or irrelevant comments, allowing us to maintain our focus on providing essential information to our residents.

- For legal and ethical reasons: Disabling comments helps avoid potential legal challenges related to freedom of expression while ensuring compliance with Canadian human rights law and other relevant legislation. This measure ensures a safe and respectful environment for all users by preventing harassment and discrimination.
- Promote constructive communication: although comments may be disabled, it is essential to provide the public with other ways to engage and communicate with the Township. Each message will include contact information such as phone numbers, email addresses, or links to the Township's official website, so that citizens can always ask questions and raise concerns in a constructive manner. This approach promotes a more controlled and constructive communication environment.

The Township reserves the right to remove any inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant, or unproductive comments from social media platforms. If a user persists in posting such comments, the Township may ban or block them from the site, at the discretion of the Administrator.

Comments, posts, or articles containing the following may be removed at any time:

- Comments unrelated to the topic and/or question being commented on.
- Spamming, trolling, or excessive posting on an account.
- Comments soliciting sales, products, or goods and services.
- Comments that are harassing, vexatious, malicious, profane, false, misleading, inaccurate, or insulting.
- Any content that encourages or perpetuates discrimination based on race, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, social status, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.
- Any content that contains links to objectionable material.
- Any conduct or encouragement of illegal activities.
- Information that may compromise the confidentiality, security, or safety of the Township, the Public, or public systems.
- Comments or messages that contain inaccurate information or misrepresent facts known to the Township.
- Comments that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, city staff, and/or city officials.
- Content that infringes on another party's legal property rights.

The Township is not responsible for comments or the use of material posted by users. Moderation decisions are not open to discussion. Any content removed in accordance with the guidelines set out in section 5 will be retained by the Administrator and

accompanied by supporting documentation, including the time, date, author's identity, reason for removal, and any required incident reports.

- The Township's social media accounts are not monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Inquiries via comments and messages will be addressed within a reasonable time (excluding holidays and weekends) during normal business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.). This timeframe may be influenced by staff availability.

2. Sharing external content

The Township is committed to sharing events that are relevant and of interest to its residents. Event organizers and community groups are encouraged to contact the appropriate municipal staff to have their events considered for promotion on the Township's social media platforms.

Content promoting events must meet at least two of the following criteria. Events that meet only one of the following criteria may be shared at the discretion of the Administrator.

- Organized or funded by another level of government.
- Organized by a government-funded agency or council.
- Organized by an organization or group affiliated with the Township;
- Funded in whole or in part by the Township;
- Sponsored by the Township;
- Organized by a registered charity operating in the Township or in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell;
- Organized by a philanthropic or community club operating in the Township and performing work for the benefit of its residents;
- Organized by a business or chamber of commerce located in the Township;
- Located in a facility or building owned by the Township; and/or
- An activity organized at no cost to residents.

The Administrator may refuse to share content that does not meet the standards mentioned in section 2 above.

3) Use of social media by elected officials and employees

Accounts belonging to Council members must be created and managed by the Council member and not by municipal employees.

The Township expects all employees and council members who use social media to do so without neglecting their duties to the Township and to adhere to a reasonable code of conduct by ensuring that they:

- Not disseminating organizational or confidential information, such as internal deliberations on how decisions are made, personal information such as customer or employee information, or negative comments about the Township, other Council members, employees, or residents.
- Not engaging in workplace discrimination or harassment, or in activities involving inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

COMPLIANCE:

In the event of a policy violation, the state may investigate and determine appropriate corrective measures.