
POLICY TITLE: Social Media Policy
POLICY #:
CATEGORY: Office of the CAO – Corporate Communications
AUTHORITY:
POLICY APPROVED BY: Report No. ADMIN-2026-007
EFFECTIVE DATE:
APPLICABLE TO: Staff and Elected Officials

1. Purpose

This policy serves to:

- Protect the Town’s reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the Town and its employees communicate about Town business across all online forums and social media platforms.
- Provide employees with a clear understanding of acceptable corporate and personal use of Town owned technology and social media channels, particularly when discussing or interacting with content related to the Town of Halton Hills.
- Support responsible, respectful engagement with residents and stakeholders through digital platforms.
- Ensure that all social media activities comply with Town policies and the expectations of public service professionalism.
- Promote informed, transparent communication that reflects the Town’s values and strengthens community relationships.

2. Policy

This policy applies to all Town staff, elected officials, citizen appointees, contractors, consultants, students, and volunteers, applicable to all corporate social media channels operated by the Communications Division, as well as any personal social media activity that references or affects Town business.

Governance of Corporate Digital Channels

Corporate Communications has governance over all Town corporate social media channels and other digital platforms (e.g. corporate website, engagement platform). Corporate Communications approves the creation, modification and decommissioning of channels; sets standards; assigns and trains content providers; oversees content, moderation and response protocols to ensure accuracy, accessibility, ensures AODA compliance and alignment with Town policies and maintains the account registry.

Roles and Responsibilities

This policy outlines two areas of responsibility: one relating to the administration of the Town's social media and digital communication channels, and the other relating to the personal use of social media by individuals associated with the Town.

For the administration of official Town social media and digital communications:

- Social Media Administrators are responsible for following this policy. Corporate Communications staff ensure that individuals assigned to these roles understand and meet the expectations outlined within them.

For the personal use of social media:

- Town staff are expected to use good judgement on their personal social media accounts in accordance to the Town's Code of Conduct. Department directors shall ensure that staff understand and uphold the expectations set out in the policy.
- All Members of Council are expected to follow the policy. The Clerk ensures that Council members are aware of their responsibilities and adhere to the standards established within the policy.

Elected Officials' Use of Social Media

Members of Council are encouraged to participate in the Town's social media efforts in accordance to the policy, the Guidelines for Social Media and Digital Communications and their Code of Conduct. Members are free to share content that has been officially posted by the Town.

Members of Council:

1. May share official Town posts, but any personal opinions expressed must be clearly identified as their own.
2. Must not use personal social media accounts to release Town information that has not already been publicly shared.

3. Are responsible for managing their own social media channels. Staff cannot create or manage content for these accounts.
4. Must comply with the Town's Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy and Code of Conduct. As such, members may not utilize social media channels used for carrying out their duties/municipal business for political purposes, including subscriber lists.

Usage Standards

Town social media channels adhere to publicly posted commenting guidelines and operate in alignment with the principles outlined in the Public Engagement Charter. These guidelines ensure respectful, constructive, and safe dialogue within the Town's online spaces.

Content that is harmful, hateful, discriminatory, illegal, threatening, off topic, or otherwise unsafe may be removed at the discretion of the Social Media Administrator(s). Individuals who repeatedly violate the commenting guidelines may be restricted or blocked from participating on Town channels to maintain a safe and productive environment for all users, topic, or otherwise unsafe may be removed at the discretion of the Director of Communications. Individuals who repeatedly violate the commenting guidelines may be restricted or blocked from participating on Town channels to maintain a safe and productive environment for all users.

The Town reserves the right to hide, delete, or report content that compromises public safety, violates platform terms of service, or undermines the integrity of municipal communications. Moderation decisions will be made in a manner consistent with the Town's values, legislative requirements, and established engagement standards.

Content Standards

Corporate social media channels are used to share information about Town services, programs, and initiatives. Their purpose is to inform, educate, and engage the community on matters related to municipal operations and priorities.

These channels must remain politically neutral. They are not used to promote personal political views, candidates, or campaigns at any level of government. Content posted on corporate accounts must reflect the Town's mandate, support transparent public communication, and maintain public trust.

Election-Period Restrictions

During election periods, Town social media channels are managed in accordance with the Use of Corporate Resources Policy which recognizes that corporate resources, including staff time, digital platforms, equipment, photography, and social media accounts, must not be used to promote, endorse, or oppose any candidate, political party, or campaign.

All election-related communications will follow applicable legislation, including the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Use of Corporate Resources Policy, and any directives, procedures, or interpretations issued by the Clerk. Staff responsible for social media operations must ensure that posted content remains informational, unbiased, and limited to communications permitted under legislation and Town policy. Where necessary, the Town may suspend or modify certain types of content to avoid any real or perceived advantage to candidates.

No Engagement with Candidate Content

To maintain neutrality, Town social media channels will not engage with content produced by candidates or campaign representatives. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Liking, reacting to, or otherwise acknowledging posts
 - Sharing, reposting, or quoting candidate or campaign content
 - Commenting on or replying to posts made by candidates or their campaigns
- This restriction applies across all Town-operated accounts and platforms.

Any inquiries from candidates or campaign representatives received through Town social media channels will be redirected to the Clerk's Office for appropriate handling.

Issue Escalation & Crisis Response

The Communications team maintains established protocols for identifying, assessing, and responding to issues that may impact public safety, service delivery, or the Town's reputation. These protocols cover a range of scenarios, including safety or security threats, misinformation or disinformation, legal or privacy concerns, and significant service disruptions.

Escalation procedures include defined tiers of response, outlining when an issue can be managed at the moderator level, and when it must be elevated to the Director of Communications, departmental management, and/or the Chief Administrative Officer. Response workflows guide staff through required steps for documentation, approvals, recommended messaging, and ongoing monitoring.

During urgent or high-risk situations, Communications will coordinate with relevant departments to ensure timely, factual, and accessible updates are shared across appropriate channels. The goal of the escalation framework is to support consistent, accurate, and responsible communication while ensuring resident safety and maintaining public trust.

In the event of an emergency and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is operational, communications protocols shall adhere to the Emergency Response Plan.

Administration, Security & Account Management

All new and existing social media tools used for Town business will be set up and overseen by the Social Media Administrator, as designated by the Director of Communications.

The Social Media Administrator will provide training, as needed, for staff.

The Social Media Administrator is responsible for maintaining and managing passwords for all official Town social media accounts.

Communications staff will maintain an up-to-date list of Social Media Administrators and ensure a designated backup is available if the primary Social Media Administrator is unavailable to post timely information.

Records Management & Privacy

All content constituting a record is retained per the Town's Records Retention By-law; MFIPPA-compliant collection notices are required when collecting personal information; deletion follows legislation.

The Town's records retention, privacy, and accessibility rules, in that you do not disclose:

- Personal information about residents, staff, or contractors.
- Confidential, legal, closed-session, or sensitive Town business.

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- Confidential, legal, closed session, or sensitive Town business. session, or sensitive Town business. -session, or sensitive Town business.
- Copyrighted or trademarked material without proper authorization; always respect copyright laws and do not reproduce or borrow logos, images, music, or other protected content without the required permissions.
- Photos of Town employees unless they have signed the appropriate consent waiver found on the intranet; while permission is not required for large group photos at public events or images submitted directly through social networks, any staged photo must include a clear statement that it will be posted on social media and consent must be obtained from all individuals involved.
- Comments or messages collected through social media that form part of the public record without handling them in accordance with MFIPPA requirements, as these communications are treated the same as any other correspondence received by the Town.

Accessibility

All official digital content must comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). This includes, but is not limited to, providing:

- Descriptive alt text for images and graphics
- Captions or transcripts for videos and audio content
- Readable formats, including logical structure and screen reader compatibility
- Sufficient colour contrast between text and background
- Plain language that is clear, concise, and easy to understand

These requirements align with the updated 2026 municipal communications standards, which mandate that all digital content produced or shared by the Town must be accessible to residents of all abilities.

Staff responsible for creating or posting content are expected to incorporate accessibility best practices at every stage—from planning to publication. The Social Media Administrator will provide guidance and training, as needed, to support staff in

meeting accessibility standards and ensuring continuous improvement in accessible digital communications.

Review and Revision

This is a new policy that will be reviewed in five (5) years, or earlier if warranted.

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