

Township of Brock Corporate Policy



Policy Name: Social Media Policy

Policy Type: Administration & Personnel

Policy Number: AP14

Reference: Resolution COW-2023-083

Date Approved: May 27, 2013

Date Revised: March 13, 2023

Approval By: Administration & Personnel Committee

Point of Contact:

1. Statement of Organizational Commitment

The Corporation of the Township of Brock is committed to communicating with its residents in a manner that provides the most accurate information in a timely and appropriate manner. To achieve this objective, the Township may utilize social media networks to connect with residents, businesses, customers and other stakeholders. While the Township's website, www.townshipofbrock.ca, is the Township's primary online presence, social media may also be used to advance Corporation and Council goals.

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy is to support the Township of Brock's use of social media networks as a communication tool, recognizing the many opportunities for communication through these platforms to the public.

2.2 The Town encourages the responsible use of these communication tools by its employees, agents, elected and appointed officials, consultants, volunteers and any person conducting business with or on behalf of the Township of Brock.

This policy will ensure social media is used in a way that positively manages the Township's reputation by providing guidelines for staff who manage Township corporate or department social media accounts and/or personal accounts where Township interests may be involved.

This policy also applies to members of Council, providing guidance and to clarify boundaries between the appropriate and inappropriate use of Social Media in reference/representation of the Township of Brock.

3. Scope and Responsibility

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Township of Brock Members of Council and employees, including, but not limited to full-time, part-time, contract, paid apprenticeships, seasonal employees and students. All staff and Members of Council are required to adhere to this policy when using corporate social media accounts and personal social media accounts or websites that discuss, share or comment on Township business. This policy does not apply to the Township of Brock's elected officials when they use social media networks for political, campaign or personal purposes.
- 3.2 The use of the Council member title provides legitimacy for the perspective of social media providers and the public. Authority and influence are similar to the use of Corporate letterhead or other incidents of office.
- 3.3 The CAO & Municipal Clerk or designate, is responsible for the overall implementation and enforcement of this policy.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 **“Corporate Accounts”** are the official social media accounts for the Township of Brock that are used to communicate municipal news, events, information and engage with the community. They are administered by the Clerk's Department.
- 4.2 **“Corporate Use”** means management-approved activity on any of the Township's social media channels.
- 4.3 **“Department Accounts”** means social media accounts that represent specific programs that the Township of Brock manages. These are typically larger scale programs that have a specific audience they are targeting. They are administered by the respective department staff responsible for the program with assistance and guidance provided by the Deputy Clerk.
- 4.4 **“Employee”** means any paid employee, including, but not limited to, full-time, part-time, paid apprenticeships, seasonal employees, and students.
- 4.5 **“Municipality” or “Township” or “Township of Brock”** in this policy means the Corporation of the Township of Brock.
- 4.6 **“Personal Account”** means an individual's own social media account that has no relation to the Township of Brock.

- 4.7** “**Personal Use**” means use of individual staff members’ personal social media accounts at any time.
- 4.8** “**Social Media Channels**” means the various social media the Township or any organization or individual may use, including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or LinkedIn.
- 4.9** “**Staff**” means any employee, as defined above, of the Township of Brock.
- 4.10** “**Council/Councillor**” means a body of people elected to manage the affairs of the Township/an elected member of Council.

5. General Policy

- 5.1** The Township of Brock’s website, www.townshipofbrock.ca, is the Township’s primary online source of information. Social media may be used to connect with residents, businesses, customers and other stakeholders.
- 5.2** The use of the Township’s social media networks will comply with other applicable Township policies and guidelines and laws and regulations.
- 5.3** All social media accounts are owned by the Township of Brock, including the login and password information of individual users approved to manage the accounts.
- 5.4** All individual users approved to manage corporate or department social media accounts will be provided with login and password information.
- 5.5** The CAO & Municipal Clerk or designate serves as a centralized resource for the oversight of corporate and department social media accounts created on behalf of the Township. The CAO & Municipal Clerk shall:
- Oversee the Township of Brock’s corporate and department social media accounts, by providing protocols and guidelines to meet the outlined purpose of the use of social media by the municipality.
 - If necessary, work with the appropriate Department Heads to designate additional/existing staff as required to oversee corporate social media accounts.
 - Provide training to staff whom are responsible for updating corporate and department accounts.

- Securely hold confidential social media login and password information to coordinate corporate and department social media accounts.
- Keep a master list of all corporate and department social media social media accounts.

5.6 Official Township of Brock social media accounts are categorized as follows:

- Corporate Accounts
 - The Clerk's Department shall manage all primary Corporate Accounts on behalf of the Township for the purposes of:
 - 1) Disseminating public information from the municipality;
 - 2) Engaging the community in municipal news, events, programs and services; and
 - 3) Monitoring and responding (when necessary) to social media postings related to the Township.
- Department Accounts
 - Respective department staff responsible for the program will manage their department account on behalf of the Township for the purposes of:
 - 1) Disseminating public information related to the specific program or service; and
 - 2) Monitoring and responding (when necessary) to social media postings related to the specific program or service.

5.7 Written permission from the CAO & Municipal Clerk must be obtained before creating a department social media account. Criteria for adopting new social media tools – or establishing new accounts on social media sites already in use by the Township will include, but not be limited to comprehensive research that:

- Demonstrates the need for the specific tool and why it is required
- Demonstrates the added benefits of using the tool

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.
Please contact the Clerk's Department at 705-432-2355 or clerks@townshipofbrock.ca.

- Demonstrates a content approval process to ensure that posted content is consistent with Township messaging and standards

Demonstrates that the use of the new tool will not interfere with the credibility of the Township's other established social media sites/networks or general online presence

- 5.8 Where possible, each social media account used by the Township should contain a disclaimer clearly advising visitors to the site that third-party comments are not official communications of the Township of Brock. The disclaimer should also note that in addition to the social media accounts, the township website is the official destination for township 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 Township of Brock and are owned by the contributing commenter. These comments are not reflective of the township's views, opinions, and/or policies.

This page is primarily monitored during regular business hours, between 8:30 am -430 pm Monday-Friday. The township of Brock website towshipofbrock.ca should be used as the official online resource for township information."

6. Policy

6.1 Site Content

- 6.1.1.** Only staff approved by the CAO & Municipal Clerk or designate shall be permitted to post content or make changes to the social media account.
- 6.1.2** All message content is owned by the Township of Brock.
- 6.1.3** All messages conform to Township of Brock policies and are designed to inform and engage the public.
- 6.1.4** Where possible, all social networking sites will clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Township of Brock and will have the Township's logo and contact information prominently displayed. The dates and times during which the social media network is monitored by Township staff will be posted including an estimated response time for replying to posts or inquiries.

Example: This social network is monitored by Township staff during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm. Responses to posts or inquires may take up to two business days.

- 6.1.5** Where possible, content will include hyperlinks to the Township of Brock's website that will provide more information, documents, forms and resources.

6.2 Inappropriate or Unacceptable Content

- 6.2.1** Township of Brock social media networks and sites will include an introductory statement that clearly specifies what content is unacceptable and that unacceptable content will be subject to removal without notification.

- 6.2.2** Township of Brock social networking content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall be prohibited:

- Comments not typically related to the particular theme of the social media account or discussion thread
- Profane language or content
- A statement that is reasonable to interpret as a threat
- Any comment or conduct that is reasonable to interpret as bullying, teasing, intimidating or offensive
- Personal attacks on individuals or specific groups
- A violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination
- Sexual content or links to sexual content
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Offensive pictures or materials
- Offensive jokes or innuendos
- Content related to sales, advertising or promotions not directly connected to the Township of Brock or a general community event that is not-for-profit
- Content that promotes a particular candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- Content that is believed to be inappropriate in the opinion of the CAO & Municipal Clerk

- 6.2.3** Council Members should not post the following content on social media if it is identified as a member's social media account or uses publicly funded resources:
1. Content that promotes or appears to promote any third-party interest including events, products, services or goods; or
 2. Content that promotes or appears to promote any candidate or political party in any election at the municipal, federal or provincial level including leadership campaigns.
- 6.2.4** Content flagged as inappropriate or unacceptable shall be reviewed by the CAO & Municipal Clerk or designate to determine the appropriate course of action.

6.3 Employee Expectations and Personal Responsibility

- 6.3.1** Use of an employee's Township email address, communicating in an official capacity, or discussing Township business – on personal or Township social media accounts, websites or networks – shall constitute conducting Township business.

Items Applicable to Township Staff:

- 6.3.2** Township staff who update or monitor social media accounts outside of regular business hours are not permitted to claim this effort as overtime. Any monitoring or updating of social media outside of regular business hours is done exclusively at the employee's discretion and is not a requirement of the Township of Brock as an employer.
- 6.3.3** Employees of the Township of Brock should not engage in any conduct to violate this policy and should use their best judgment when using **personal** social media accounts and follow these guidelines:
- Staff will not access or post to any social media accounts during work hours, unless they are on a designated break/lunch.
 - Staff will not use the Township of Brock's logo, crest, and any corporate images on their personal social media accounts.
 - Staff will not use their personal social media accounts to respond to online inquiries or comments directed to the Township of Brock by the public. Should staff be contacted on their personal account, staff are to respond with the following:
 - "This is a Township of Brock's employee's personal facebook account. For any matter related to the Township of Brock please contact the Municipal office by phone at 705-432-2355 or by email at brock@townshipofbrock.ca."

- Staff should not identify themselves as a Township of Brock employee on their personal social media accounts. Even if you do not identify yourself as a Township of Brock employee, be advised the content on your social media accounts may tie or link you to the Township of Brock. Staff who use LinkedIn for networking purposes may post that they work for the Township of Brock.
- Staff should not use any visual cues that are easily identifiable with the Corporation of the Township of Brock, including, but not limited to, the Township of Brock Coat of Arms, Township of Brock logo & tagline, Township of Brock signage, Township of Brock vehicles, prominent Township of Brock officials, and any corporate identifiers.

6.3.4 Staff should not use their personal social media account to endorse any candidate for Municipal Election in order to preserve the integrity of the Council/staff working relationship. Staff members who do endorse candidates will not be considered for election-related employment duties in order to preserve the integrity of the election process.

6.3.5 When using social media or other online mediums, staff shall conduct themselves in a manner that conforms to the Township's health and safety policies passed under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

6.3.6 Township of Brock employees who fail to comply with this policy may be subject to discipline, in accordance to the Township's Progressive Discipline Policy, up to and including termination of employment on repeated violations of this policy. In addition, depending on the nature of the online change/page content, participants may also be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties.

6.3.7 Staff who may be in doubt are advised not to post/publish material and seek clarification in advance.

Applicable to Staff and Council

6.3.8

- Staff and Council should not use their personal social media accounts to comment or question any of the Township of Brock's policies, procedures and decisions of Council or senior staff in a profane, offensive or abusive manner on the basis that there are alternate mechanisms in place to address any concerns.
 - Staff who do provide comment in this regard shall clearly state that the opinions expressed are that as an individual only. Notwithstanding, staff are responsible to ensure that their behaviour does not violate applicable legislation and policies and procedures adopted by the Township of Brock.

- Work related conversations will take place during regular business hours, in person, on the phone including text messages, or email and will not be conducted via social media.
- Staff and Council will not post material that reflects poorly on the Township of Brock.
- Staff and Council will respect corporate confidentiality and not divulge any confidential papers or matters, or other information.
- Staff and Council should ensure information posted is factual and not use information that has not been validated.
 - Use caution directly commenting or posting into your own comments things that you read in the paper. The news you read can be wrong therefore do not always believe what you read.

A social media account is identified as a “Council Members social media account” if:

1. Uses Brock.ca as the point of contact for registration purposes;
2. Identifies the member as a current member of Brock Council
3. Is publicized on business cards, newsletters or other publications that have been paid for the Township of Brock
4. Uses the Township logo
5. Contains contact information for the member at the Township Municipal Office
6. Is managed using Township of Brock resources including computers, smart phones, tables, etc.

Recommended uses for social media:

1. Promoting local events and activities with constituents including businesses
2. Content that raises awareness of federal and provincial programs
3. Content that publicizes the member’s attendance at a ceremony, event or activities permissible under the Code of Conduct
4. Content that publicizes the members interactions with constituents, including businesses

This Policy is part of a broader framework of policies in relation to communications and transparency. These policies include the:

- Accountability and Transparency Policy;
- Code of Conduct Policy;
- Harassment and Violence Policy;
- Use of Corporate Resources Policy;
- Procedure By-law;
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment;
- Public Engagement Charter;
- Council-Staff Relations Policy.

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.
Please contact the Clerk’s Department at 705-432-2355 or clerks@townshipofbrock.ca.