



Area: CL - Clerk
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Subject: Corporate Social Media Policy

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to guide the appropriate, consistent, and responsible use of social media on behalf of the Town of Goderich.

Social media is one of several tools the Town uses to share timely and accurate information, promote transparency, support informed public dialogue through appropriate municipal channels, and strengthen trust between the Town and the community.

This policy provides a framework to help staff and Council communicate clearly, consistently, and respectfully in a changing public environment. It reflects the Town's commitment to transparency while recognizing the need for realistic, sustainable communication practices.

2. Scope and Application:

This policy applies to all official Town of Goderich social media accounts and to employees, volunteers, and contractors acting on behalf of the Town.

It also provides guidance for Members of Council and employees when referencing Town business on personal social media platforms, as outlined in Schedule C.

This policy does not replace or override the Employee Code of Conduct Policy, Civil and Respectful Workplace Policy, Code of Conduct for Members of Council, emergency management protocols within the Town's Emergency Response Plan, or legislative requirements under the Municipal Act, MFIPPA, or the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

3. Authority and Governance

All official Town social media accounts are corporate assets of the Town of Goderich.

Overall administrative authority for corporate communications rests with the Chief Administrative Officer. Day-to-day oversight of social media operations is delegated to the Clerk or their designate.

This policy is approved by Council and administered by staff. Supporting tools, templates, and guidelines may be updated administratively to reflect evolving platforms, risks, and best practices.

4. Guiding Principles

The Town's use of social media is guided by the following principles:

- Information shared must be accurate, verified, and kept current.
- Content should be written in clear, plain language and made accessible to residents wherever possible.
- Engagement should remain professional, respectful, and consistent with the Town's role as a public institution.
- Messaging should align with Council decisions, Town priorities, and approved corporate communications.
- Social media is a tool for information-sharing and awareness, and does not replace formal public engagement, Council decision-making, or legislated public processes.
- Posting expectations should align with available staff capacity and operational priorities to ensure sustainable, effective communication practices.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Council

Members of Council play an important role in reinforcing public understanding and confidence through their use of social media. In doing so, Council members are expected to:

- Act as ambassadors for the Town by sharing accurate, Town-issued information on personal social media platforms where appropriate, supporting public understanding of Council decisions and municipal initiatives.
- Redirect resident or business inquiries received through personal social media accounts to Town Hall or appropriate service channels to support proper records management, coordinated follow-up, and consistent service delivery.
- Represent Council decisions and processes consistently on social media, recognizing Council's collective governance role, even where individual votes or perspectives may differ.
- Use personal social media in a manner that aligns with Council decisions, approved information, and official Town sources, and participate in training or briefings related to constructive online engagement, including responding appropriately to misinformation and disengaging from unproductive interactions.

Mayor

As Head of Council, the Mayor has an important leadership role in communicating about the Town's priorities, decisions, and direction. Communication related to Town business shared through personal social media accounts can have a wider public reach and influence.

- Share accurate, Town-issued information and highlight Council decisions, priorities, and municipal initiatives, helping residents better understand the Town's work and direction.
- Communicate about Council decisions and municipal matters in a way that reflects Council's collective governance role and supports public confidence in the Town's decision-making processes.
- Approach communication related to Town business with an awareness of the Town's broader communications approach, including how timing, tone, and clarity can support informed and constructive public dialogue.
- For complex, sensitive, or high-profile municipal matters, coordinate with the CAO or their designate to help ensure publicly shared information is accurate, timely, and aligned with available Town updates.
- Redirect resident inquiries or service-related concerns received through personal social media accounts to Town Hall or appropriate service channels to support proper records management, coordinated follow-up, and consistent service delivery.
- Engage residents online respectfully and apply the principles of constructive dialogue, including addressing misinformation appropriately and disengaging from unproductive interactions, as outlined in this policy and supporting tools.
- During a community crisis or declared emergency, adhere to the Incident Management System (IMS) and support centralized, coordinated communications. In these situations:
 - Information shared on personal social media accounts will be based solely on verified updates provided through the Community Emergency Management Coordinator or Incident Commander.
 - Major announcements and official updates will be coordinated through the designated Emergency Information Officer (EIO) or their designate.
 - Independent statements or updates related to the emergency will not be issued outside the IMS structure on external media or social media channels.

Chief Administrative Officer

- The CAO provides overall leadership and oversight for corporate communications and supports alignment between Council and staff messaging.
- The CAO ensures social media use aligns with governance, emergency, and operational protocols.

Clerk and Designated Moderators

- The Clerk or their designate(s) manage the Town's official corporate and service-based social media accounts.
- Responsibilities include monitoring comments and messages during regular business hours, responding to or redirecting inquiries as appropriate, escalating issues when required, and ensuring records are maintained in compliance with legislative requirements.

6. Accessibility and Records Management

The Town is committed to meeting accessibility requirements. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure social media content is accessible, including the use of plain language, alternative text, and captions where appropriate.

All social media content is subject to records retention, privacy, and access legislation.

7. Emergencies

During declared emergencies or emergency situations, social media communications will follow the direction of the Community Emergency Management Coordinator or Incident Commander and will be coordinated through approved channels indicated in the Town's Emergency Response Plan.

8. Elections

During municipal election periods, Town social media accounts will be used solely for operational and informational purposes, in accordance with legislation and policy.

9. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective action in accordance with applicable Town policies and procedures.

“Schedule A”
Corporate Social Media Governance & Account Management

1. Purpose

This Schedule establishes clear governance, approval, and management practices for all corporate social media accounts operated on behalf of the Town of Goderich. It ensures that corporate accounts are authorized, secure, consistently managed, and aligned with Council decisions, Town priorities, and approved communications.

This Schedule supports accountability, continuity, and effective use of municipal resources, recognizing the Town’s size, operational capacity, and governance responsibilities.

2. Account Approval

All corporate social media accounts representing the Town of Goderich, its departments, services, or programs must be approved prior to creation or use.

Requests to establish, modify, or discontinue a corporate social media account are submitted to the Clerk or their designate for review.

Approval considers:

- The purpose and audience of the account.
- Alignment with Town priorities and services.
- Staffing capacity to maintain the account.
- Records management and accountability requirements.

Council approval is required when creating an account that represents a new corporate communication channel or has policy implications.

3. Account Ownership

All corporate social media accounts are owned by the Corporation of the Town of Goderich.

Accounts are not owned by individual employees, contractors, Council Members, or third parties.

The Town retains full authority over account content, administration, access, and continuity, including the right to suspend or close accounts as needed.

4. Account Administration

The use of all social media sites by the Town will adhere to:

- Applicable provincial and federal laws and regulations.
- The Terms of Service of each social media platform.
- All applicable corporate policies, guidelines, and By-laws, including, but not limited to, applicable administrative and human resources policies, information security policies and records management policies and By-laws.

Corporate social media accounts are administered by staff authorized by the Clerk or their designate.

Authorized staff are responsible for:

- Posting approved content.
- Ensuring accuracy and consistency.
- Monitoring accounts in accordance with Schedule B.
- Escalating issues as required.

Where applicable, departmental leads remain accountable for the accuracy of service-specific content, while overall governance remains centralized.

5. Access and Password Management

Access to corporate social media accounts is restricted to authorized staff approved by the Clerk or their designate.

Login credentials, passwords, and administrative permissions are managed centrally to ensure continuity, security, and operational oversight.

Passwords must be updated when:

- Staff roles change.
- Authorized users leave the organization.
- There is a risk of unauthorized access.
- Shared or informal password practices are not permitted.

6. Service-Based and Program Accounts

Service-based or program-specific accounts (e.g., Tourism, recreation, special initiatives) must follow the same approval, ownership, and access requirements as other corporate accounts.

These accounts must:

- Clearly identify their connection to the Town.
- Align with corporate messaging and priorities.
- Coordinate with the Clerk or designate on key messaging, issues, or emerging risks.

Temporary or campaign-based accounts must have a defined purpose and sunset plan at the time of approval.

7. Account Review and Sunset

All corporate social media accounts are subject to periodic review to ensure they remain relevant, active, and aligned with Town priorities and capacity.

Accounts may be consolidated, paused, or discontinued where:

- The original purpose is no longer relevant.

- Content is no longer regularly maintained.
- Resources are no longer available to support effective use.
- Platform dynamics or public discourse present increased reputational or moderation risks.

When an account is discontinued, content and records are managed in accordance with the Town's records retention requirements.

8. Records Management

Information posted to or received through corporate social media accounts forms part of the Town's official records and is subject to MFIPPA and the Town's Records Retention By-law.

Corporate accounts must be managed to support record-keeping, transparency, and accountability.

9. Relationship to Other Schedules

This Schedule establishes governance and account management requirements.

Schedule B addresses moderation and engagement practices for corporate accounts.

Schedule C addresses personal use of social media by employees and Council.

Together, these schedules form an integrated framework for responsible, consistent, and effective use of social media on behalf of the Town of Goderich.

“Schedule B”
Corporate Social Media Use and Moderation

1. Purpose

This schedule provides practical guidance for staff responsible for managing the Town’s social media accounts. It is intended to support clear, consistent, and professional communication and to help staff share information with the community in a respectful, informative, and aligned manner with the Town’s communications approach.

2. Monitoring and Response

Official Town social media accounts are monitored during regular business hours to ensure information shared is accurate, current, and appropriate.

The Town uses social media primarily as an information-sharing and awareness tool, supporting transparency and public understanding. To ensure consistency, accountability, and effective use of municipal resources, Town social media platforms are not intended to operate as discussion forums or as a primary channel for two-way service delivery. Residents are encouraged to direct questions, service requests, or feedback through established Town channels, such as Town Hall, the Town’s website, or formal engagement opportunities, to support timely, coordinated, and trackable responses.

3. Engagement Approach

The Town’s approach to social media engagement focuses on sharing clear, reliable information and guiding residents to the appropriate channels for questions, feedback, or participation.

Where inaccurate or unclear information appears on a Town social media channel, reasonable efforts may be made to correct or clarify it in a timely and proportionate manner through appropriate Town channels.

As a general practice:

- Town social media platforms are used to communicate information and raise awareness and are not intended to host ongoing public dialogue or debate.
- Where comments are visible on social media platforms, staff monitor content to ensure it aligns with the Town’s Social Media Terms of Use (Appendix A).
- When appropriate, staff may contact individuals privately to redirect inquiries, provide guidance on how to engage, or address content that does not align with the Terms of Use.

This approach supports consistent, accurate communication and ensures that public inquiries are handled through channels designed to provide coordinated, trackable, and timely responses.

4. Publishing Content

Town social media content is developed and published through an established internal process to support accuracy, consistency, and alignment with approved communications.

- Town departments and staff may identify information suitable for social media and submit content through the Town’s established internal process for review and scheduling.
- Social media content is reviewed prior to publication to confirm accuracy, appropriateness, and alignment with Council decisions, Town priorities, and the Town’s communications approach.
- Publishing access to official Town social media accounts is limited to designated staff, and publishing permissions are managed centrally to support accountability and records management.
- Social media content is scheduled and coordinated, where appropriate, with related website updates, public notices, or announcements to ensure clarity and consistency for residents.
- Content related to complex, sensitive, or high-profile municipal matters is coordinated with the Clerk or their designate prior to publication.
- Social media content is written in clear, plain language and developed with accessibility and inclusive communication practices in mind.

5. Moderation and Escalation

The Town is committed to maintaining a respectful and informative online presence. Social media platforms are monitored within available staff capacity.

When content raises concerns about safety, harassment, persistent misinformation, or potential public impact, staff should escalate the issue to the Clerk or CAO in accordance with the authority and governance framework outlined in this policy.

Moderation actions are taken to support a respectful, safe, and informative online environment. Decisions are guided by staff judgment, informed by this policy and supporting administrative tools, and applied in a proportionate and consistent manner.

6. Sharing and Reposting Third-Party Content

The Town may share or repost content from external organizations, partners, agencies, or community groups where the information is relevant, accurate, and aligned with Town priorities.

When sharing or reposting third-party content, staff should ensure that:

- The content supports municipal programs, services, initiatives, or community awareness and aligns with Council decisions, Town priorities, or approved communications.
- Information is factual, current, and sourced from credible and reliable organizations, and does not rely on speculation, opinion, or unverified claims.

- Sharing or reposting does not imply endorsement of the views, positions, or activities of the external organization, and captions clearly explain the purpose of sharing where context may be needed.
- Content related to other levels of government, agencies, or third parties remains informational in nature and avoids advocacy, commentary, or policy positions outside the Town’s mandate.
- Shared content meets accessibility requirements where possible and is accompanied by plain-language context to support public understanding.
- The timing and potential impact of shared content are considered, and coordination with the Clerk or their designate occurs in advance for sensitive, high-profile, or emerging issues.

The Town generally avoids sharing or reposting content that:

- Promotes political advocacy or partisan positions
- Involves ongoing disputes, litigation, or enforcement matters
- Could reasonably create confusion about the Town’s role or position
- Amplifies misinformation, unverified claims, or emotionally charged commentary

These practices help ensure that shared content adds value for residents, supports public understanding, and reinforces the Town’s role as a trusted source of local information.

7. Supporting Tools

Designated moderators may rely on approved internal tools, including response charts, rules of engagement, guidelines for managing anger, and sample response language, to support consistent communication practices.

These tools are intended to support staff judgment and confidence and may be updated administratively to reflect evolving needs, platforms, and capacity.

8. Emergency Communications

In the event of a community crisis or declared emergency, the Town of Goderich activates its Emergency Response Plan. Social media content during emergencies is limited to verified public safety information, service impacts, and official instructions.

During these situations, public communication must be coordinated to ensure the information shared is accurate, timely, and consistent.

When an emergency is declared:

- Corporate social media channels are used to share official emergency-related updates approved through the Town’s emergency communications structure.
- Emergency-related content is coordinated by the Emergency Information Officer (EIO) in consultation with the Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC), Incident Commander, and the Municipal Emergency Control Group, as outlined in the Emergency Response Plan.

- Designated social media moderators post and share only verified information provided through the emergency communications process.
- Social media content during emergencies focuses on public safety information, service impacts, and official instructions relevant to municipal operations.

This coordinated approach supports public safety, reduces the spread of misinformation, and ensures residents receive clear, reliable information during emergencies.

9. Elections and Corporate Social Media Channels

During a municipal, provincial, or federal election period, the Town's corporate social media channels must remain impartial and non-partisan, focusing on municipal operations and public information.

The Town's official social media accounts will continue to be used for business-as-usual communications, including service updates, emergency information, public notices, and factual municipal information.

Corporate social media channels will not be used to:

- Promote or oppose any candidate, political party, or third-party advertiser;
- Feature individual Members of Council in a campaign-related context; or
- Share content that could reasonably be interpreted as influencing an election.

Where appropriate, the timing, tone, or frequency of non-essential content may be adjusted during an election period to avoid the perception of advantage or endorsement.

The Clerk is responsible for providing guidance on the appropriate use of corporate social media channels during an election period.

This section is intended to support neutrality and public confidence and does not replace the requirements of the Municipal Elections Act, or any future Town policy related to the use of corporate resources during elections.

**“Schedule C”
Personal Use of Social Media
(Employees and Council)**

1. Purpose

This schedule outlines expectations for the personal use of social media by Town employees and Members of Council. It recognizes that personal social media activity can affect public trust, workplace relationships, and the Town's reputation when individuals are identifiable as representatives of the municipality.

These guidelines are intended to support professionalism, accountability, and respectful conduct, while protecting the Town's ability to deliver services effectively and maintain public confidence.

2. Employees

General Expectations

Employees are expected to always conduct themselves professionally when using personal social media, particularly where their employment with the Town of Goderich is known or reasonably identifiable.

Personal use of social media must not:

- Interfere with job responsibilities or performance;
- Compromise the Town's reputation or operations; and,
- Conflict with Town policies, legislation, or codes of conduct.

Use of Social Media During Working Hours

- Employees shall not use personal social media accounts during working hours except during designated breaks or where explicitly required as part of their job duties.
- Use of Town equipment, systems, or networks for personal social media activity is not permitted unless authorized for business purposes.
- Excessive or inappropriate use of social media during work time may be addressed through performance management processes.

Posting, Commenting, and Engagement

- Employees who are not designated social media moderators shall not post, comment, or respond on social media regarding Town business, services, programs, or issues.
- Employees shall not engage in online discussions, debates, or commentary about Town operations, Council decisions, or internal matters using personal social media accounts.
- Employees shall not respond to resident complaints, service requests, or inquiries through personal social media accounts.

- Employees who receive inquiries related to Town business through personal social media should direct the individual to appropriate Town service channels.

Representation and Identification

- Employees shall not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the Town unless expressly authorized.
- Use of Town logos, crests, branding, uniforms, or official imagery on personal social media accounts is not permitted.
- Employees should exercise caution when referencing their role, title, or employment with the Town on personal social media accounts, recognizing that posts may be interpreted as reflecting the Town's position.

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Records

- Employees shall not post confidential, privileged, or non-public information related to the Town, its employees, Council, residents, or third parties.
- Employees must comply with MFIPPA and the Town's records management requirements.
- Information related to Town business shared or received through personal social media accounts may be subject to records retention and disclosure obligations.

Conduct and Tone

Employees are expected to always communicate respectfully and professionally when using personal social media, particularly where their employment with the Town is known or reasonably identifiable.

Personal social media activity must not include:

- Harassment, discrimination, or offensive language, including conduct that is contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- Content that could reasonably be perceived as bullying, threatening, defamatory, or intimidating.
- Commentary that undermines public confidence in the Town, its services, its employees, or its governance.
- Statements or behaviour that conflict with the Town's workplace policies, codes of conduct, or human rights obligations.

Employees are reminded that personal social media conduct may be subject to review if it relates to the workplace or affects the Town's reputation, operations, or civil and respectful working relationships.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this schedule or related Town policies may result in corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including termination, in accordance with applicable employment agreements, legislation, and Town policies.

3. Members of Council

Members of Council are governed by the Town's Code of Conduct and are guided by the Corporate Communications Plan and Corporate Social Media Policy, which together establish a shared approach to clear, respectful, and effective communication.

When using personal social media accounts in relation to Town business, Council members are encouraged to:

- Act as ambassadors for the Town by sharing accurate, Town-issued information and communicating Council decisions in a way that reflects Council's collective governance role and supports public confidence.
- Respect the distinction between governance and administration by avoiding commentary on operational matters or staff performance.
- Guide service requests and operational inquiries to appropriate Town staff or service channels to support effective follow-up and records management.
- Engage respectfully and professionally, particularly when discussing complex or contentious municipal issues.

4. Emergency Communications

In the event of a community crisis or declared emergency, the Town of Goderich activates its Emergency Response Plan. During these situations, public communication must be coordinated to ensure the information shared is accurate, timely, and consistent.

Employees and Members of Council are expected to:

- Refrain from sharing independent or unverified emergency-related information on personal social media accounts.
- Rely on official information provided through the Town's emergency communications structure, including updates coordinated by the Emergency Information Officer (EIO) in consultation with the Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC), Incident Commander, and Municipal Emergency Control Group.
- Share or amplify official Town-issued emergency updates, where appropriate, rather than creating original emergency-related content.
- Direct questions or concerns related to emergency situations to official Town channels to ensure consistent and accurate responses.

This approach supports public safety, reduces confusion, and ensures emergency communications remain coordinated and aligned with the Town's Emergency Response Plan.

5. Elections and Personal Social Media Use

The Town recognizes that employees and Members of Council may participate in elections as private individuals. During an election period, personal social media use must remain clearly separate from the use of Town resources and municipal authority.

Members of Council

- Members of Council may use personal social media accounts for campaign-related purposes. Town social media accounts, logos, branding, or other municipal resources must not be used to promote or support an election campaign.
- Campaign-related content must be clearly distinguishable from Town business and must not imply municipal endorsement, approval, or official status.
- When referencing municipal matters during an election period, Members of Council are encouraged to rely on Town-issued information (such as content shared through official Town channels) and to avoid framing Town initiatives, decisions, or activities as campaign messaging.
- Questions regarding appropriate social media use during an election period should be directed to the Integrity Commissioner.

Employees

- Employees must not use Town systems, equipment, accounts, or working time to support or oppose any candidate, political party, or third-party advertiser.
- Employees must not reference their Town position, title, or affiliation on social media in a way that could reasonably be interpreted as municipal endorsement during an election period.
- Participation in elections as a private citizen must remain consistent with the Employee Code of Conduct and applicable legislation.
- Questions regarding appropriate social media use during an election period should be directed to the Clerk.

Appendix A – Town of Goderich Social Media Terms of Use

1. Town of Goderich – Social Media Terms of Use

The Town of Goderich uses social media to share timely information, service updates, and important notices with the community. These channels support transparency, public awareness, and understanding of municipal programs, services, and decisions.

By interacting with the Town of Goderich on social media, you agree to follow these Terms of Use.

The Town monitors its social media accounts during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) and during declared community emergencies. Social media is not intended to replace formal engagement processes, service requests, or official consultation opportunities such as surveys, public meetings, or delegations to Council.

How the Town Uses Social Media

The Town's approach to social media is guided by the following principles:

- Respectful interaction – The Town supports civil, inclusive, and constructive interaction.
- Accurate and reliable information – Content shared reflects verified, up-to-date information from official Town sources.
- Clarity and consistency – Information aligns with Council decisions, Town priorities, and approved communications.
- Appropriate use of channels – Social media is primarily used for information-sharing and awareness. Residents are encouraged to use established Town channels for service requests, feedback, or formal input to ensure timely, coordinated, and trackable responses.
- Clarifying information when helpful – Where misinformation may affect public understanding, the Town may provide factual clarification or direct residents to reliable sources.

The Town focuses its social media presence on sharing clear, helpful information and may redirect questions or concerns to more appropriate channels when dialogue is better addressed through formal processes.

Commenting Visibility and Moderation

The Town's social media platforms are not intended to function as discussion forums. While commenting features are generally limited, comments may appear in certain circumstances (such as from public user accounts or platform-specific settings).

Where comments are visible, the Town may hide or remove content that does not align with these Terms of Use.

Commenting Guidelines

To help maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive online environment, the Town may hide or remove comments that:

- Contain abusive, threatening, defamatory, or offensive language;
- Promote hatred, harassment, or discrimination against individuals or groups protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- Include personal, confidential, or identifying information about individuals without consent;
- Contain misinformation or disinformation presented as fact, or content intended to mislead;
- Are repetitive, spam-related, or unrelated to the original post;
- Promote illegal activity, infringe on copyright or intellectual property, or advertise commercial products or services; or
- Compromise public safety or the security of Town staff, facilities, or residents.

Accounts that repeatedly disregard these Terms of Use may be restricted or blocked from the Town's social media platforms.

Emergencies and Community Safety

In the event of a community crisis or declared emergency, the Town follows the Incident Management System (IMS) to ensure accurate, timely, and coordinated public communication.

During these situations:

- Official public updates are coordinated through the designated Emergency Information Officer (EIO) or their designate.
- Information shared on social media reflects verified updates approved through the Municipal Emergency Control Group.
- During emergencies, residents should refer to the Town of Goderich's social media channels for official updates on municipal operations and public safety.

Questions or Concerns

If you have questions about these Terms of Use or wish to report content that may not align with them, please contact the Town through the online [Customer Service Feedback Form](#).

The Town of Goderich is committed to fostering a respectful, informed, and inclusive online environment. Thank you for helping us maintain a constructive space for sharing information and updates.