



## THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF O'CONNOR

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the Social Media guidelines and standards surrounding official Township accounts and the personal use of Social Media by Township representatives and staff so that expectations and protocol can be enforced, whilst enhancing communication and information exchange among O'Connor stakeholders, streamlining processes and fostering productivity with Township employees.

This policy is to establish guidelines for the use of Social Media so that the disbursement of timely and accurate information is balanced with the need to ensure that:

- 1.1 The use of Social Media tools does not compromise public safety and/or the Township's image.
- 1.2 The information provided through Social Media is in line with the Township's vision and guiding principles.
- 1.3 The Social Media content does not violate individual privacy or conflict with existing municipal policies and by-laws or other regulations as applicable.
- 1.4 The Social Media content posted on behalf of the Township is accurate, accessible, transparent, and accountable.
- 1.5 Social Media pages clearly indicate that they are maintained by the Township of O'Connor and shall have the township logo, contact information, and information directing them to the township website clearly displayed.

#### 2. POLICY STATEMENT

The Township of O'Connor is committed to excellence in municipal management with a focus on accountability, transparency, communication, and customer service. The Township recognizes that Social Media applications are widely being utilized as communication tools with the potential to provide the public with timely information. The Township is committed to disbursing media information in approved formats to reach a variety of stakeholders.

#### 3. DEFINITIONS:

"DESIGNATE" – The dedicated staff member(s) authorized to operate and manage the Township's Social Media sites and platforms.



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“PERSONAL USE” – The personal use of any Social Media account, site or platform used by any one Township Representative of the Corporation of the Township of O'Connor.

“POST” – Content an individual shares on a Social Media site/platform or the act of publishing content on a site/platform.

“PROFILE” – Information that an individual provides about his or herself on a social networking site.

“SOCIAL MEDIA” – A category of Internet-based resources that enable the user to generate content and encourage other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites and platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest, Wikipedia, Google Plus or blogs.

“TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVE” – Any paid officers or employees of the Corporation of the Township of O'Connor, including all members of Council, Committees or Boards and Volunteers.

“HASHTAG” – A Social Media tool to allow Social Media users to engage an individual, business or entity with a social profile when they mention them in a post or comment. Social networks use hashtags to categorize information and make it easily searchable for users. In Facebook and Instagram, tagging notifies the recipient and hyperlinks to the tagged profile.

“TOWNSHIP ACCOUNT” or “TOWNSHIP USE” – An approved account or activity on any Social Media site/platform that is owned, operated, and/or maintained by the Township of O'Connor.

### 4. SCOPE

The Township of O'Connor's Social Media Sites/Platforms are coordinated through the Clerk-Treasurer and/or designate by the Clerk-Treasurer. As trends and corporate communication goals change, the Township of O'Connor's Social Media Sites/Platforms may be expanded or condensed. Any addition or removal of Sites/Platforms will occur only under the direction of the Clerk-Treasurer. The intent is to promote relevant information found on the Township's website, directing followers whenever possible back to the Township's website contact information. The scope for the Township's use of Social Media is to:

- 4.1 Increase awareness of Municipal Services,
- 4.2 Augment existing corporate communication methods and processes in a cost-effective manner,



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- 4.3 Provide an additional mechanism through which the Township keeps abreast of customer comments and perceptions regarding the Township,
- 4.4 Disseminate time sensitive information quickly,
- 4.5 Correct misinformation, remedy mistakes or alter services to build stronger relationships,
- 4.6 Develop trust and humanize the Township,
- 4.7 Utilize Social Media analytical tools to help monitor, track and evaluate the Township's communications and marketing efforts,
- 4.8 Provide another method by which stakeholders can engage with the Township,
- 4.9 Provide an additional method of collaborating with the public and other municipalities on mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

## **5. GUIDELINES**

This policy applies to all Township of O'Connor Representatives and includes personal Social Media accounts related to an individual's position or role with the Township.

These guidelines are to make sure that corporate and/or personal social media accounts are operated in a dignified and respectful manner protecting the township's reputation and public image. The Township of O'Connor Representatives will:

- 5.1 Comply with all current legislation, as well as the Ontario Public Service Social Media Guidelines and Freedom of Information Act.
- 5.2 Ensure that all Social Media sites/platforms operated by Township Representatives adhere to the appropriate Township of O'Connor Code of Conduct.
- 5.3 Use of the Corporate Social Media Accounts is for corporate messaging only and shall be factual and unbiased. It will be managed by the Clerk-Treasurer and/or the Social Media Designate in accordance with the Social Media Policy as defined in Appendix B of the Social Media Policy Document. Corporate Social Media accounts are not to be used by individual Township Representatives.



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- 5.4 Comply with the Township of O'Connor Complaint Policy stating that any complaints are dealt with and responded to by the Clerk-Treasurer.
- 5.5 Forward any posts requiring a political response on behalf of the Township of O'Connor to the Clerk-Treasurer where an appropriate response can be drafted in accordance with the Social Media Response Chart (Appendix E) of the Social Media Policy Document.
- 5.6 If the Township's Corporate Social Media Accounts are "tagged" or mentioned in a Social Media post or comment, the Social Media Designate in responding, will follow the process identified in the Social Media Response Chart (Appendix E) or forward to the Township Clerk-Treasurer if deemed necessary.
- 5.7 Emergency situations requiring the mobilization of the Township of O'Connor Emergency Plan will follow the protocol defined in the Emergency Plan. Emergency information will be developed, approved, and released by the Mayor (or Alternate) as listed in the Township of O'Connor Emergency Plan.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Every Township Representative has a responsibility to conduct themselves in a professional manner that reflects well on the Township of O'Connor as any Social Media accounts, whether personal or professional, may be perceived as representing the Township.

### 6.1 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OPERATED BY TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVES:

- Shall not be accessed or operated during working hours or meetings unless they are on a designated break or lunch period.
- Shall acknowledge that such accounts are not Township Accounts, and as such they shall refrain from the use of the Township logo, crest, or any other Corporate insignia or image.
- Shall not link or post the Township's email address or other professional contact information.
- Shall not discuss or disclose information about the Township, Township Representatives, or third-party service providers or contractors that is not available to the public.
- Shall strictly comply with all policies and procedures, of the Township of O'Connor, that may apply to content shared or posted to Social Media Sites/Platforms. Such policies and procedures may include, but are not limited to, the Township's Code of Conduct for



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Employees, Code of Conduct for Council, policies regarding confidential information, the protection of privacy, and/or workplace harassment or violence.

- Shall make clear that their views are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Township, particularly when posting or commenting on any political party or candidate, business, product, or cause.
- Shall not disparage or malign any Township Representative, whether expressly personal or professional.
- Shall ensure that all information circulated is accurate and current. Township Representatives who wish to share information on personal accounts regarding Township and Council activities, including meetings of Council or Committees/Boards, should direct members or followers to the Township website or Township Accounts where such information is posted.

### 6.2 CLERK-TREASURER AND/OR SOCIAL MEDIA DESIGNATE:

- Shall exercise due diligence when they are posting information to the Township Social Media Sites/Platforms to protect the Township's reputation and public image.
- Shall ensure all posts are presented in a professional manner, thus eliminating all potential risks to prevent or reduce legal liability.
- Shall maintain that all content posted on the Township Social Media Sites/Platforms is timely, professional, relevant, accurate, and aligned with Township policies and respect privacy legislation.
- Shall post content on a regular basis to ensure current and up-to-date information and some content designed to invite feedback as a key component of Social Media public engagement.
- Shall respond in a timely manner to comments of a sensitive or contentious manner to mitigate risk to the Township. Refer to the Township Complaint Policy and Social Media Response Chart (Appendix E) for a guideline on how a response should be administered.
- Shall maintain approved Corporate accounts on approved Social Media Sites/Platforms as outlined in Appendix A.
- Shall remove all Social Media accounts that are no longer required and/or can no longer be maintained.
- Shall post the following in a manner appropriate to each Social Media account and site/platform;
  - i. Identification as a Municipal Social Media Site, including the Township name, address and logo
  - ii. A link to the Township website and Social Media disclaimer as provided in Appendix D.



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- Shall be permitted to post the following pending all other policies and regulations are met, including but not limited to those listed in this policy:
  - i. Municipal sponsored events and activities
  - ii. Municipal services
  - iii. Public Health and Safety (i.e. road closures, inclement weather, etc.)
  - iv. Emergency Services
  - v. Community events and/or community group events, which are open to the public and where membership is not required to participate in the event
  - vi. Public Service Announcements from other government agencies
  - vii. Recognition of local achievements (i.e. business awards)
- Shall remove any posts or content on Township Social Media sites/platforms for reasons including, but not limited to:
  - i. Profane language or content
  - ii. Commercial endorsement or solicitation, which includes showing preference of one product or service over another, request for products, services or assets for personal gain or use
  - iii. Personal attacks or threats on individuals, groups, or ideas
  - iv. Content that violates another person/party's copyright, trademark and/or intellectual property rights
  - v. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation.
  - vi. Confidential information pertaining to the Township or personal information about members of the public, Municipal staff and elected officials
  - vii. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
  - viii. Derogatory attacks on Municipal Council, its members and other levels of government
  - ix. Derogatory comments or opinions about Municipal employees and Municipal services
  - x. Political campaigning by politicians, individuals running for election or individuals/groups supporting or opposing a specific political candidate or party
  - xi. Commercial endorsement or solicitation including content that is commercial in nature and that attempts to endorse, advertise or sell the products or services of an individual, business or organization
- Advise repeat offenders that they are in violation of the approved policies and procedures for Social Media Rules for Participation



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(Appendix D) and immediately remove them from all Municipal Social Media sites and platforms.

- Advise all staff that any breach of this policy could be cause for disciplinary action based on the actions of those involved.

### 7. COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVES

Communications between the Township's Representatives regarding township business, shall take place in person, by telephone, or through approved email accounts. They should not occur via Social Media or any other online forum.

### 8. RECORDS MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENT

Posts/user comments that are the original records of the Township's business activities, rights, obligations, or responsibilities, such as responses to public consultations as part of Municipal studies are deemed to be official records. Posts/user content deemed to be official records must:

- Be retained and purged according to the Township's Records Retention By-law.
- Comply with the appropriate sections of the Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act.

Posts/user content which is considered to be a Transitory Record of the Township, such as a post by a Designated Communicator promoting an event that is advertised elsewhere, or a post by a member of the public commenting on Municipal services is not required to be retained and therefore may be purged from social media sites.

#### **Cautionary Note:**

Even after being deleted/purged, copies of posts/user content may remain viewable in cached and archived pages or in other users stored content and therefore, may be susceptible to disclosure requirements under applicable privacy laws and under rules of discovery for litigation.

### 9. REVIEW:

This policy shall be reviewed by Council, at least annually, or as required to ascertain if any amendments are necessary.

### 10. DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THIS POLICY:

- 2.9 – POLICY FOR EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT
- 3.9 – MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND EMPLOYEE INDEMNIFICATION (Schedule A – By-law 2007-14)
- 3.10 – WORKPLACE HARASSMENT/VIOLENCE POLICY



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- 3.14 – ANTI-STIGMA POLICY
- 3.17 – CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS
- 4.16 – ACCESSIBILITY POLICY
- 4.17 – ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY (By-law 2007-20)
- 4.21 – COMPLAINT POLICY
- 5.1 – FIRE DEPARTMENT POLICY
- By-laws relating to Committees established by the Township of O'Connor; Road Maintenance Standards, and any other by-laws or policies that reference acceptable behaviours and/or set out standards.
- FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT
- OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT WITH REGULATIONS FOR ONTARIO
- ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES
- WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE ACT
- MINISTRY OF LABOUR
- MUNICIPAL ACT
- CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** This policy shall come into effect as of Monday, September 14, 2020.

Reference: Resolution #5, September 14, 2020



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**Appendix "A"**

**Approved Social Media Sites/Platforms**

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Twitter



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**Appendix "B"**

**Designated Communicators  
for Corporate Social Media Accounts**

<b>Site/Platform</b>	<b>Designated Communicator</b>
Facebook	Clerk-Treasurer (or Social Media designate),
Instagram	Clerk-Treasurer (or Social Media designate),
Twitter	Clerk-Treasurer (or Social Media designate).



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### Appendix "C"

#### **Social Media Guidelines for Staff**

The Township of O'Connor's Code of Conduct policies and corporate values are the foundation for these principles and guidelines.

##### **Maintain confidentiality**

Do not post information that you would not present in a public forum (ie. information obtained in closed meetings).

##### **Maintain privacy**

Do not post private or confidential information about Councillors, Municipal employees or constituents. Do not discuss situations involving names, pictures or otherwise identifiable individuals without their record of permission in writing or text.

##### **Refer customer service questions to the Township's official channels**

If you are asked a question about Municipal operations (office hours, disposal site hours, tax due dates, etc.) you may not have all the answers. Please refer people to the Township's website ([www.oconnortownship.ca](http://www.oconnortownship.ca)), phone or email.

##### **Give credit where credit is due**

Be authentic. Write as an extension of your own voice. When you re-post something written by someone else, first ensure you have the proper permissions to do so. Clearly state that the material, letter, response, etc., has been authored by someone else. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, publicity rights or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the right holder(s).

##### **More isn't more**

Resist the urge to post everything. Refrain from cutting and pasting emails from staff or constituents into posts without clear context and permissions. These messages are written for a specific audience, for a specific purpose, that is probably different from your own. You could be doing your readers a disservice by sharing information without context. Take the time to interpret the contents and re-present them based on your audience and its needs.

##### **Provide information when it counts**

Should you decide to engage in social media, know that monitoring and responding in a timely way are crucial. Social media participants expect timely responses to requests and expect co-participants to monitor social media properties frequently and regularly.

##### **When in doubt do not post**

All Township Representatives have an obligation to ensure their posts are accurate and not misleading, and that they do not reveal confidential information.

##### **Know the Internet is permanent**

Once information is published online, it becomes part of a permanent record. It is a good practice to provide a link to an online space where your thought or message can be expressed completely and accurately if it, along with its context, cannot fit within a character-restricted space (such as Twitter).



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**Social media needs maintenance. If you start it, commit to it**

Be dynamic: update news feeds, post developments, upload new pictures. Social media participants are savvy; if your online property appears static, it is likely to quickly fall into disuse.



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### Appendix "D"

#### Rules of Participation and Disclaimer

##### Disclaimer Example:

We welcome your participation on this (Social Media Site/Platform) page. Responses to questions and comments to this page will be dealt with during regular business hours. Comments outside of business hours will be reviewed the following business day. This is the official (Social Media Site/Platform) page for the Township of O'Connor. This page is NOT intended to report emergencies. If you have an emergency requiring Police, Fire Department or Emergency Medical Services, please call 9-1-1.

For non-emergency complaints, please call the Township Office during regular business hours or email the office at [twpoconn@tbaytel.net](mailto:twpoconn@tbaytel.net). This page is intended to serve as a social media outlet for the Township of O'Connor in matters relating to public safety. Information on road closures, health hazards, large emergencies and other similar incidents will be posted along with updates as time allows. Every effort will be made to keep the information up to date, however in the event of an emergency, users are encouraged to look for formal media releases through local and regional emergency response agencies. This (Social Media Site/Platform) page is intended to enhance our communication – not to replace normal Municipal business processes. If you would like to request a Municipal service or have a specific question, please contact the Township Office at 807-476-1451, send an email to [twpoconn@tbaytel.net](mailto:twpoconn@tbaytel.net) or visit the Township website at [www.oconnortownship.ca](http://www.oconnortownship.ca).

##### Rules of Participation

You are welcome to post respectful comments on our wall.

The Township reserves the right to remove any posts or content on Municipal social media for reasons, including but not limited to:

- Profane language or content
- Commercial endorsement or solicitation, which includes showing preference of one product or service over another, request for products, services or assets for personal gain or use
- Personal attacks on individuals, groups, or ideas
- Content that violates another person/party's copyright, trademark and/or intellectual property rights
- Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation
- Confidential information pertaining to the Township or personal information about members of the public, Municipal staff or elected officials
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity
- Derogatory attacks on municipal Council, its members and other levels of government



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- Derogatory comments or opinions about Municipal employees and Municipal services
- Political campaigning by politicians, individuals running for election or individuals/groups supporting or opposing a specific political candidate or party.

Notwithstanding the criteria listed above, the Township reserves the right to post, refuse to post or remove, any content from its (Social Media Site/Platform) page at any time, without notice and to block repeat offenders. The overall goal is to ensure that all parties participate online in a respectful, relevant way.

### **You are responsible for your own privacy.**

The Township would like to remind you that if you do not have your privacy settings restricted, then anyone who "follows" our account could potentially view your personal information. Be sure to get to know the security settings within the social media you are using.

### **About your personal information**

Personal information, which includes your Internet Provider (IP) address, is being collected, managed, processed and/or stored by a third-party service provider and is therefore, not in the sole domain, custody and control of the Township of O'Connor. Additionally, your personal information may cross the border to a foreign jurisdiction and will therefore, be subject to the governing laws of that jurisdiction.

The Township of O'Connor will post topics and updates on Municipal activities and, from time to time, will ask for your feedback. This information will be monitored, reported back to staff and sometimes Council. We look forward to hearing from you.



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Appendix "E"

Social Media Response Chart

