

CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

DEVELOPED BY: **City of Hamilton's Strategic Communications Team**

APPROVED BY: **SMT**

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POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Hamilton recognizes the importance of citizen engagement. In addition to traditional methods of accessing community feedback the City needs to keep pace with technology and establish a clear process for approved staff to participate in strategic social media opportunities for approved business purposes. Participation in social media tools provides many benefits such as maintaining open dialogue, enables rapid sharing and receiving of information, and a convenient and often more accessible forum for two-way communication. Although the benefits to embracing this tool outweigh the challenges, it is critical that a policy is in place that ensures use of social media that it effective, efficient, and secure. All employees must understand their roles, responsibilities, and legal obligations when leading or participating in online communities, as it may have implications for the City of Hamilton.

POLICY PURPOSE/RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure the mission, vision, and values of the City of Hamilton are maintained
- educate staff on what social media is and how it fits within community engagement and promotion
- educate staff on the legal implications of social media
- manage the City's brand integrity and identity
- provide staff with guidelines when participating in online communities either as official City spokespersons or as private citizens during business and non-business hours, using City of Hamilton and/or personal computer equipment;
- support and adhere to the following policies and legislated acts:
 - Email and Internet Use Policy
 - Media Relations Policy
 - Employee Code of Conduct Policy
 - Social Media Guidelines (draft)
 - Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)
 - Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)
 - Charter of Rights and Freedoms
 - Any and all other applicable City of Hamilton policies

SCOPE

This policy applies to staff participation in all social media tools regardless of whether the tools are set-up and maintained by the City of Hamilton or by an external organization or individual.

Staff who are approved to participate in social media must have received appropriate training where necessary and authorization from their communications or public affairs representative or departmental designate. (I.e. these individuals are likely approved Media Contacts for their departments as well but may not be limited to just media contacts). To receive approval for use of social media tools, Communications staff (i.e. Communication Officers and Public Affairs Officers) should be consulted and presented with a rationale (and/or business case) prior to the establishment of social media campaign for official City of Hamilton business.

Departments who wish to make use of social media as defined by the policy are required to develop departmental policy and procedures regarding staff training and awareness of the policy, as well as any department specific guidelines.

In addition, any requests for participation (providing comment) in external online discussions (i.e. blogs) related to City business and acting in their capacity as a representative of the city must be treated just like a media request and the same procedures should apply (see Media Relations Policy).

DEFINITIONS

Social media includes websites where people can post information, build community knowledge, discuss issues, and network. These online communities include, but are not limited to:

- Twitter;
- Blogs (or Weblogs);
- Bulletin Boards;
- Chat Rooms;
- Discussion Groups;
- Instant Messaging (IM);
- Mailing lists or listservs;
- Photo/Video sites e.g. YouTube;
- Social networking sites i.e. Facebook, Twitter etc.
- Wikis

These online communities may have different levels of access. Some are open to anyone and others restrict membership. Although postings, comments, and content on restricted access communities (password protected) may seem like a private conversation, the content may still be publicly accessible and available (i.e. nothing is ever off the record).

Approved Social Media Representatives can be defined as:

- Approved Media Contacts but not limited to; and
- those who have completed consultation with their Departmental Communications or Public Affairs Officer
- non-student employees

Staff should be cautious and aware of the following:

- Submissions are often permanent. Even comments meant to be short-lived or deleted later can be found through search engines.
- The laws of privacy, libel, copyright, human rights as well as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms apply online, the same as they do to verbal, hand-written, or printed communications.

When making any online submission that either:

- A. Directly identify an employee's professional relationship with the City of Hamilton, its staff or elected officials; or
- B. Are submitted while using equipment/network resources owned by the City of Hamilton

then, staff are:

- subject to the City's policies, the Human Rights and Harassment Policy and the law; and
- personally responsible for the content of their submissions.

POLICY OVERVIEW

Participation in Social Media for Personal Use

The City of Hamilton recognizes that staff participate in social media/or set-up online communities during their own personal time. This policy does not restrict personal use.

At no time, should staff comment as a representative of/on behalf of City of Hamilton, unless approved by Communications or Public Affairs Officers, their respective GMs and/or designates. If they are not designated spokespersons, then staff should not reveal, disclose or discuss:

- City of Hamilton business;
- Identifiable and/or personal information about another employee or citizen that is not publicly known, and without consent;
- Information from companies contracted with the City of Hamilton to provide programs and/or services; (3rd party)

All other policies for personal use can be found in the Email and Internet Policy.

Participation in Social Media for Approved Business Purposes

If you are an Approved Social Media user/representative your dialogue and tools may be occasionally reviewed.

When making a submission you are required to clearly identify yourself as a City of Hamilton employee and your position title. Each new tool (i.e. type of online discussion forum, Facebook, Twitter etc.) as it relates to a program or campaign should be reviewed and consultation must take place with your Department's Communications or Public Affairs Officer or designate before developing or participating in any new tools.

Note: This policy does not prohibit or exclude those methods of consultation that are used for peer-to-peer professional consultation, web training and various online training that includes discussions. These are formats where staff are not communicating with the general public in a professional capacity but rather peers. (i.e. linkedin, professional organizations).

Responsibilities:

- Any staff who becomes aware of an accidental or intentional privacy breach must report it to their supervisor in a timely fashion. Supervisors will contact their Communications Officer and Human Resources for direction. All staff must demonstrate organizational commitment; a sense of corporate responsibility, commitment to public service, and maintain a favourable image of the City.

BREACH OF POLICY

A breach of this policy by an employee is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.