

TOWN OF LAKE COWICHAN

COUNCIL POLICY



DATE APPROVED:

APPROVED BY:

SUBJECT: Social Media Policy

1. PURPOSE

Websites and other electronic media such as Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (collectively "Social Media") provide an opportunity for Town staff to communicate with local businesses and residents. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that online communications on official Town of Lake Cowichan websites and Social Media sites are clear and meet the needs of the community. This Policy outlines acceptable use of Social Media at the Town of Lake Cowichan and identifies how Town staff members may communicate online and on behalf of the Town. This Policy also ensures that staff and council are provided with guidance on the personal use of Social Media when Town interests may be impacted. This Policy is consistent with and complements the standards outlined in related Town of Lake Cowichan policies, including but not limited to the Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy. Town staff members are also referred to the Town of Lake Cowichan Employment Code of Conduct, which is applicable in the exercise of this Policy.

This policy is intended to:

- Safeguard the Town's reputation
- Provide employees and members of Council with clear usage guidelines
- Provide protocol around monitoring, administration, acceptable use, and privacy requirements of the social media tools.

2. POLICY

The Town of Lake Cowichan will utilize social media as a communications tool to effect information sharing. Guidelines will be consistent with accepted online business practices. The Town's social media protocols including the development, implementation, and usage of these channels, is to be managed through the Chief Administrative Officer.

3. PARTICIPATION

Social media is understood to be an effective tool to enable Communications to share facts related to specific capital projects, emergency material and other Town activities. Messages will be simple and straightforward and link the reader to further information on the Town's website or affiliated sites, including but not limited to other local governments, Provincial or Federal

governments or their affiliated agencies. Town staff members are not permitted to post content on the Town 's social media sites without prior approval or direction from the Chief Administrative Officer. Posting information and commentary on social media platforms carries similar obligations to that posted in other publications. All utilization of social media follows the same ethical standards that employees must follow when corresponding with the public. Staff members must not divulge confidential information on social media sites, including but not limited to, in camera items, personnel matters or Emergency Operations Centre internal information. The Town advises against using photos on non-Town social media sites, where employees are present with the Town logo to avoid giving the image or site an official appearance. The Town logo may not be used as part of a personal blog or social media profile. Staff members may communicate through online communication tools such as Facebook with residents and visitors to the site. Inquiries, questions, and concerns will be invited through email, phone, and mail. If it is clear that the Town has the resources to appropriately manage this tool, it will be consistently utilized.

4. DISCLOSURE

All Town of Lake Cowichan social networking sites must follow branding standards in accordance with established branding templates and guidelines. If a program or department wishes to use social media to promote Town activities, staff members need to contact the Chief Administrative Officer who can ensure consistency, use of best practices, which are integrated into the social media tools.

The Town of Lake Cowichan is not responsible for comments made by subscribers or members related to its social media applications and reserves the right to remove any content that is inappropriate for any reason and at any time.

If staff members discuss work-related issues on private blogs or other personal online sites, a disclaimer must be added to clarify that the views expressed are theirs alone. This disclaimer does not exempt employees from the obligations they have under the Town 's Employee Code of Conduct. Personal details regarding staff members including photos and names should not be posted on personal online forums.

5. POSTING GUIDELINES

As outlined in this policy the recommended social media tools include:

- First/Second Phase: The Town website, Facebook, and YouTube;
- Third Phase: Twitter, dependent on social media experiences to date, staff time and discussions with Senior Leadership Team, the Mayor and Council. Content, comments, or links containing any of the following will not be allowed on Town social networking sites:
 - Comments not topically related to the site or blog article in question;
 - Slanderous or defamatory remarks, obscene language, or sexual content;

- Content that could, in the sole discretion of the Town, constitute harassment of an elected official, staff member or other person;
- 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; or any other component protected under the BC Human Rights Code.
- Promotion of commercial services of any variety;
- Promotion of political candidates or use by sitting members of Council during year of local government elections or period of by-election;
- Promotion of illegal activity;
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

The Town of Lake Cowichan reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy, incorrect or erroneous posts by external users of the Town social media sites or any applicable law.

Employees and members of council need to be aware that a private social media account used in a personal capacity can be construed as inappropriate and may prompt an allegation of abuse of trust or unprofessionalism.

6. AVAILABILITY

The Town of Lake Cowichan will monitor social media accounts and sites during office hours, between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm. During events where a state of emergency has been declared, monitoring may be increased depending on the nature of the emergency.

7. RECORDS

The Town of Lake Cowichan social networking activities will adhere to all provincial, federal, and local laws and other public regulations. The activities will also adhere to Internet Access and Email User Policy and other applicable Town policies. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act applies to social media content and therefore content must be able to be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with the Act.

8. DEFINITIONS

“Town Websites” means the official websites of the Town of Lake Cowichan www.lakecowichan.ca as well as any sub-domain of this site.

“Posted” means published online, whether through a public post or a private message.

“Content” means words, images, video, audio, or links that are published online.

“Inappropriate Use” means one or more of the following:

1. Transmitting any materials in violation of local, provincial, or national laws;
2. Using vulgar, profane, or inappropriate language;
3. Transmitting or posting threatening, abusive, discriminatory, or obscene material;
4. Duplicating, storing, or transmitting copyrighted material;
5. Lobbying for political purposes;
6. Duplicating, storing, or transmitting pornographic materials;
7. Suggesting or supporting illegal activity;
8. Posting material that is likely to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
9. Advertising or soliciting on behalf of businesses or not-for profit organizations;
10. Posting material that is not topically related to the Content; and
11. Repetitive or multiple postings by a single user.

“Social Media” means any application, tool or software used for online information and publication including, but not limited to: Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

“Town Social Media Sites” means Social Media that is sanctioned by and operated by the Town of Lake Cowichan.

9. PROCEDURES

Digital technology has revolutionized the way we think and share information. As a Town, we need to understand, monitor, and use these technologies appropriately so we can operate effectively in an increasingly digital world. This policy is intended to be a living document that introduces Social Media and an overview of how the Town uses Social Media as a communications tool. These guidelines will evolve as new technologies and social networking tools emerge.

These guidelines must comply with appropriate content and requirements spelled out in other Town policies and such legislation as the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Joseph A. Fernandez
Chief Administrative