

TOWN OF SLAVE LAKE			
SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY			
Department:	Corporate Services	Policy No:	CRS.HR-24.1025
Policy Title:	Social Media Policy	Issue Date:	04-10-2024

1. **PURPOSE**

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to create a structured framework of guidelines that define the permissible usage boundaries of social media for Town employees. Additionally, it outlines guidelines for the responsible and suitable utilization of social media.

2. **POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1. The Town of Slave Lake Social Media Policy provides an overview of approved practices for creating, posting, and working with social media. The guidelines are designed to help employees better understand the opportunities, manage the risks, and ensure that as an employee or representative of the Town, you understand the responsibilities and boundaries associated with using social media.

3. **DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1. **Social Media**: includes all forms of online presence or publications including (but not limited to) YouTube, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, blogs, wikis, and other platforms that provide opportunities for social networking activities or content sharing on the internet.
- 3.2. **Post**: any online content, including comments, links, documents, and images, which may include photographs, graphics, videos, and emoticons.
- 3.3. **Town**: is the Town of Slave Lake

4. **CONTEXT**

- 4.1. The Town of Slave Lake uses social media to provide accessible, timely information to residents. Social media contributes to the overall communications goals of the Town which include being transparent and accessible; having a progressive image; keeping residents, community organizations, and stakeholders informed and engaged using the channels of their choice; and reaching local, national, and international audiences. The unique benefits of social media include (but are not limited to):

- 4.1.1. **Increase citizens' access to government:** social media provides a direct connection between the public and the Town and fosters civic engagement. The Town uses social media to provide real-time information to citizens on issues, programs and services, and news and events that affect them. The Town's presence on social using various platforms and accounts provides residents with different options to access information.
- 4.1.2. **Build relationships with residents, partners, and stakeholders:** the Town of Slave Lake has built and fostered relationships with people and organizations in the community through its social channels. The Town supports and shares information from partner organizations and stakeholders to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones.
- 4.1.3. **Increase the level of trust in Municipal Government:** residents can often question or even distrust the government. The Town of Slave Lake has committed to being as transparent and open as possible in providing public access to information. Social media is an important tool in building high levels of trust through continual, timely, and accurate information sharing.
- 4.1.4. **Enhance the reputation and image of the Town:** social media provides an opportunity to showcase different offerings that enhance the Town. The Town's social media accounts are entry points for residents and audiences worldwide to experience and understand Slave Lake. It is important that social media is engaging as it is often the first impression many in the community and the world are exposed to.
- 4.1.5. **Provide additional communication channels in times of emergency:** in the event of an emergency, social media allows the Town to reach citizens quickly and effectively. The Town can provide updates to help keep residents safe, secure, and informed.
- 4.1.6. **Provides an opportunity to adjust communications quickly when necessary:** social media supports the Town's efforts to manage issues as they arise. Staff using social media can monitor trends and conversations on social media, allowing the Town to prepare messages/responses and be on top of issues before they escalate.
- 4.1.7. **Reach specific audiences on specific issues:** the Town's social media posts include messages from all Town departments in an effort to represent all operational areas and services. Residents can follow the main Town accounts to receive valuable information about Town services, programs, and events.

5. GUIDELINES

- 5.1. Using social media comes with a certain amount of risk. To manage the risk effectively, all Town employees need to know, understand, and put into practice the guidelines for acceptable use of social media. Town employees should consider the following risks when using social media:
- 5.1.1. Staff are personally responsible for the content they publish online, whether in a blog, social media site or any other form of user-generated media. Staff are advised to be mindful that what they publish will be public for a long time and they should protect the privacy of staff and take care to understand the Terms of Service for the social media sites they use.
 - 5.1.2. Staff are advised to be aware of their association with the Town in online social networks and should be aware that the public may still associate them with their professional role with the Town, even while posting in their personal capacity or on a personal social media profile.
 - 5.1.3. Staff should be aware that when using social media/networking sites online, there is no expectation of privacy and therefore should conduct themselves in such a manner. Anything posted online should also be deemed appropriate for public distribution via traditional media or otherwise, and content can exist online in perpetuity or in individual computers even if the original post is removed or edited.
 - 5.1.4. Staff have a duty to act in the best interests of the municipality and should always be alert to the fact that their comments and opinions might be used as evidence against themselves or the Town in legal proceedings. The legal risk is amplified in the case of social media, where an off-hand comment or opinion instantly becomes part of the permanent public record, and available for use against the local government.
 - 5.1.5. Staff should be aware that the Town retains ownership of all computer systems and data given to them to perform work as a Town representative. Social media usage on the Town's network, computers or electronic devices is neither private nor confidential and may be monitored or recorded without any further notice by the Town as per the Town's Information Technology Policies.
 - 5.1.6. Administration reserves the right, at any time and without any further notice, to revoke, limit or alter a user's right to access the internet, including the use of social media, on Town computers or electronic devices.

- 5.1.7. Staff are accountable for on- and off-duty conduct on social media sites including any communication which exposes or creates legal or other liability for the Town. Staff may be individually liable if they act contrary to advice and engage in the disclosure of personal, confidential, or privileged information or advice.

5.2. Social media on Town accounts

- 5.2.1. Using social media for the Town means you are acting as a spokesperson and must represent the Town in a positive way. When using social media in an official capacity, the same rules apply as when speaking with the media or when representing the Town at a business conference or similar event. Employees acting as official Town representatives or spokespeople must not express personal opinions when posting or commenting from a Town of Slave Lake social media account.

5.3. Personal use of social media

- 5.3.1. Employees are encouraged to use social media to be informed about the Town and issues that may impact our programs and services. However, if it is reasonable that you could be identified as a Town employee, then your comments must accurately reflect the decisions of Council and Administration and must not weigh in on the opinions or political positions of elected officials. Caution is also advised during an election period. Your comments and actions on your personal social media accounts should remain neutral and not show preference or opposition to any candidate.

- 5.3.1.1. Tips to avoid being identified as a Town employee on your social media page to avoid contraventions with this Policy include:

- 5.3.1.1.1. Do not include your role or job title in your social media profile, page, posts, or bio.
- 5.3.1.1.2. Do not post photos on your social media profile of your workplace or work-related activities.
- 5.3.1.1.3. Do not post photos of you in Town of Slave Lake branded clothing or apparel.

- 5.3.2. Posts to your personal social media accounts must not undermine Council or Administration's objectives, the Town's reputation or relationships with its stakeholders. Comments should not discriminate, harass, or demonstrate disrespect toward any person or entity. Engagement with members of the public, in any forum, that encourages respectful dialogue on relevant municipal issues is not a breach of the code of conduct provided it is factual, appropriate, and does not conflict with Council direction and the

Town's other obligations, such as protecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality and a respectful workplace. Likewise, employees must uphold anti-discrimination and anti-harassment principles as outlined in the Alberta Human Rights Act. Inappropriate content posted on personal social media may impact your employment with the Town whether or not it was posted from a Town device during work hours.

6. CONTRAVENTIONS OF THE POLICY

- 6.1. In the event a Town employee uses social media in a manner that violates this Social Media Policy, the user may lose access to that corporate (Town's) social media account and may face disciplinary action as per the Disciplinary Procedures contained within the Grievance/Disciplinary Policy:
 - 6.1.1. The Town of Slave Lake supports the belief that ongoing two-way communication between Employees and Management about performance and expected standards will generally avert the need for disciplinary action. Following this, a progressive approach to discipline is taken so that Employees receive specific feedback when their performance is not up to standard, and also receive the consequences of not upgrading their standards.
 - 6.1.2. When the Employer takes disciplinary action against an employee, the employee shall be informed in writing as to the reason(s) for such action. Such notices shall include reference to the employee's ability to access the review process. The employee will be provided with a copy of all written reprimands and shall be made aware that it will form part of their personnel file.
 - 6.1.3. A "progressive discipline model" will be used to represent increasingly serious contact with an employee, and designed to bring about a change in performance or behaviour. The initial starting point and manner in which discipline progresses will be dictated by the severity of the offense.
 - 6.1.3.1. Verbal Reprimand – the problem is brought to the employee's attention. The Supervisor will discuss the employee's behaviour and what is desired, the reasons why standard performance is necessary, and a time frame in which improvement is required.
 - 6.1.3.2. Prior to the next process, the Manager of Human Resources shall be consulted on the procedure.
 - 6.1.3.3. Written Reprimand – if no change in performance occurs following a verbal reprimand, the situation will be discussed with the Employee. The Supervisor will provide the employee

with a written reprimand including the record of the discussion, a statement of the problem, the steps necessary to improve the situation, and what the consequences will be should the employee repeat the behaviour. A copy will be placed in the employee's personnel file.

- 6.1.3.4. If no change in performance occurs following the first written reprimand, the Supervisor will provide the employee with a second written reprimand restating the problem, the steps necessary to improve the situation, and the consequences should the employee repeat the behaviour. A copy will be placed in the employee's personnel file for a period of twenty-four (24) months unless otherwise noted in written reprimand for a shorter amount of time.
- 6.1.3.5. Any disciplining, notation, or warning shall be removed from the employee's record after a period of twenty-four (24) months, unless there is another related incident then there will be an extension of an additional 24 months.
- 6.1.3.6. Suspension – consists of a conversation between the employee and the Director about a discipline problem and is followed by the employee placed on "Suspension without pay" for no greater than 3 days. The CAO may extend the Suspension time greater than 3 days up to 2 months total. The employee may be terminated if the employee does not change his/her performance or behaviour. Suspension is usually used only after a verbal and written reprimand has been given to the employee and no change in performance or behaviour has resulted, or the improvement has not been sufficiently sustained.
- 6.1.3.7. Discharge – is not a step in the disciplinary process. This can only be done by the CAO. Discharge is the action taken:
 - 6.1.3.7.1. After the employee has been through all the disciplinary steps and no improvement has resulted, or;
 - 6.1.3.7.2. When an employee commits an offense so serious that his/her continued employment cannot be tolerated, regardless of any previous discipline problems.

7. RELATED POLICIES

- 7.1. Communication Plan
- 7.2. Mobile Client Computing Technology Policy

- 7.3. Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy
7.4. Grievance/Disciplinary Policy

ISSUED BY:	APPROVED BY:	DATE:
Chief Administrative Officer		04-11-2024