



**Policy:**                      **Social Media Policy**

**Main Contact:**        **Communications & Engagement Coordinator**

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### Policy Statement

The Town of Renfrew is aware of the importance of using social media to communicate and engage members of the community. What follows is a policy statement that outlines the responsibility of the Town's employees, members of Council and/or volunteers who may use social media on behalf of the Town. These online social media principles are intended to outline how the Town of Renfrew values should be demonstrated in the social media space and to guide staff and Council participation in this area, both when acting on behalf of the Town and participating personally.

### Purpose of the Policy

The Town of Renfrew is committed to making our social media accounts a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. We encourage interaction on our official accounts and social media pages. The Town of Renfrew social media pages will be regularly updated and will share timely and accurate information with the public including, but not limited to, decisions of Council, information about the Corporation of the Town of Renfrew, services, programs, employment and career opportunities, surveys, questionnaires, promotions, and other information related to the municipality.

### Definitions

**Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)** - Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.o. 2005, chapter 11, as amended or replaced from time to time. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) – Appointed head of the Corporation and reports directly to Renfrew Town Council.

**Department Head** – highest level of management including, but not limited to, the following positions: Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Director of



Development & Environment/Deputy CAO, Clerk/Director of Legislative Services & Council Relations/Town Clerk, Treasurer/Director of Finance & Corporate Services, Director of Development & Works, Director of Infrastructure, Public Works & Engineering, Director of Parks & Recreation Community Services & Recreation/Library CEO, and Fire Chief/Director of Fire, Emergency & Protective Services.

**Media** - Refers to communications outlets that use a medium such as radio, television, newspaper, magazine, or the Internet to reach an audience.

**Member of Council** – Elected Head of Council and elected Members of Council.

**Municipal Act** - Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25, as amended or replaced from time to time.

**Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)**

- Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, as amended or replaced from time to time.

**Social Media** - Shall mean verbal discussion, electronic communication, or social media post addressed to a Member of Council, any staff member of the Corporation, or the Corporation whether specifically addressed to Council, an individual person(s) or department(s).

**Staff** – includes anyone employed by the Municipality, including officers, fulltime, part-time, temporary, casual or seasonal staff, contract staff, students and volunteers.

**Town of Renfrew** (Town) - The Corporation of the Town of Renfrew

## Application and Exceptions

### Application

The Policy applies to all employees, including those acting on behalf of the Town, such as permanent, temporary, and part-time employees; contractors hired for a specific project or timeframe; volunteers; students; and interns.

### Exceptions



The Policy does not apply to the Offices of the Integrity Commissioner or other Accountability Officers; the Town's agencies and corporations (i.e. Renfrew Public Library, Renfrew Hydro, or Renfrew Power Generation, Downtown Renfrew BIA, etc.).

### Terms of Use

The Town of Renfrew will ensure open, honest, and clear channels of communication using social media as a tool to engage the community, increase awareness of the Town's services and improve accountability through the sharing of accurate and timely information. The use of social media should add value to the Town's traditional forms of communication.

**The Town's website is the primary online source for information.** The Town's social media sites are intended to complement the website's information and engage the community with instantaneous two-way communication. The town's social media sites, where possible, will link to the Town's website.

Social media should be used as a communications tool to enhance communication from the Town to the public about programs and services for the following purposes:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting Municipal events, programs, and services
- Increasing access to information
- Promoting opportunities for public involvement and engagement

### Social Media Moderators

- Communications and Engagement Coordinator
- Community Outreach and Programs Specialist
- Program Assistant
- Manager of Environmental Services
- Town Clerk (or designate)
- CAO (or designate)
- Department Heads (or designates)

### Who Can Post on Social Media

Town social media sites will be maintained and monitored by the social media moderators. Social media moderators and/or their designates will be responsible for creating and updating the Town's social media sites with departmental, service and/or program-based information.

It is the responsibility of all Town departments to provide content to the social media moderators on services, events, resources, or updates pertaining to their department for online posting.

### Acceptable Content

Information from the following departments and community organizations:

- All Town of Renfrew Departments
- Town of Renfrew Programs and Events
- Fire/Protective Services
- Renfrew Public Library
- Public Notices
- Items from Council and Committee Agendas
- Notification of awards given to members of the community (ex: Citizen of the Year, Senior of the Year).
- Shared information from regional, provincial, or federal accounts (including recognition of grants or awards).
- Information sharing from the Renfrew & Area Chamber of Commerce, Renfrew Business Improvement Area (BIA), Enterprise Renfrew County, Renfrew County Community Futures, Renfrew Victoria Hospital or Renfrew County and District Health Unit.
- Information pertaining to a major community tourist attraction or event (ex. Renfrew Fair).
- Information from a local charitable organization that services the community (ex: Legion, Food Bank) that will assist, benefit, or affect the general population.
- Holiday Greetings from the Mayor or Community Addresses from the Mayor of a general nature – with review and approval from the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO).



### Comments & Content Moderation

The Town of Renfrew welcomes respectful and constructive public engagement on its social media platforms. To maintain a safe and inclusive online environment, all users are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner when interacting with others or posting content.

Comments may be enabled on certain posts; however, the Town reserves the right to limit or disable commenting on specific posts at its discretion. All social media accounts are actively monitored during regular business hours, and comments may be reviewed, hidden, or deleted as needed.

The Town of Renfrew has the sole discretion to monitor or remove any content or comments that violate the guidelines outlined in this policy. Inappropriate or unacceptable content includes, but is not limited to:

- Content contrary to the principles of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Racist, hateful, sexist, homophobic, defamatory, slanderous, or threatening messages
- Profanity or offensive language
- Serious, unproven, or inaccurate accusations against individuals or organizations
- Aggressive, violent, obscene, or pornographic content
- Impersonation or misrepresentation (e.g., messages not authored by the sender)
- Commercial advertising or endorsements
- Politically partisan messages
- Spam, unintelligible, or irrelevant content
- Comments that include personal information or name Town employees
- Content that infringes on copyright, trademarks, patents, or other intellectual property rights
- Derogatory remarks about Town Council, staff, services, or other levels of government
- Any other content deemed inappropriate by the social media moderators or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)

The Town of Renfrew is not legally responsible for user-generated content posted by members of the public on its social media channels and expressly disclaims all liability associated with such posts. While the Town does not retain records of comments that are deleted or hidden by users or administrators, it may retain records of social media content that meet the definition of a “record” under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

Please note that while staff may choose to respond to questions, comments or complaints on social media, social media is not an official or recognized channel for two-way communication with the Town or its staff. Members of the public are encouraged to use the Town’s formal communication channels for service requests, inquiries, or feedback. These include:

- Submitting a request through *AccessE11 Portal* for resident complaints and concerns available at [renfrew.ca](http://renfrew.ca).
- Contacting the appropriate staff directly
- Town of Renfrew bciti+ App
- Emailing [info@renfrew.ca](mailto:info@renfrew.ca)

Official contact information and details on accessing Town services are available on the Town of Renfrew’s website.

When staff choose to respond to comments on the Town’s social media platforms, they are encouraged to consult the *Social Media Response Chart* provided in *Appendix A*. This tool, developed by Red Brick Communications, serves as a practical reference to help staff determine the most appropriate course of action - whether to respond, not respond, or escalate for removal. The chart offers a clear and concise decision-making framework to support consistent, respectful, and effective online engagement.

## Emergency Management

Emergency Management ensures the Town of Renfrew is prepared for and can respond to a serious incident or disaster. The Town’s social media sites may be used to relay information to the community in emergency situations (ie. Severe weather, utility outages, road closures, curbside collection disruptions, etc.).

The Communications & Engagement Coordinator is trained to act as a *Public Information Officer* when the Town’s Emergency Operations Centre is activated. This role includes managing and monitoring social media. In the



event of a major crisis, administrators from the main Town accounts will override department social media accounts with emergency messaging.

### Personal Use of Social Media

Town employees and departments, members of committees and volunteers are free to use social media as private citizens but are not authorized to comment on social media sites on behalf of the Town unless they have been appointed to do so.

Staff personal accounts shall not be used for work purposes to advance business of the Town of Renfrew. This is to facilitate compliance with public records law and to ensure that communications from the Town is streamlined through appropriate corporate social media channels.

Disparaging or inflammatory comments and/or unprofessional remarks made about the Town of Renfrew, its employees, members of Council, members of committees, volunteers, municipal affairs, or business could be considered detrimental to the Town of Renfrew and may result in disciplinary action.

It is critical that every municipal employee, member of Council, member of committee, and volunteer be committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior, including while posting and/or commenting on any social media sites.

Disciplinary action may be considered should any social media posts and/or comments be considered to negatively affect the public's perception of the Town of Renfrew.

### Accessibility

The Town is committed to ensuring that communication is accessible to all individuals. The Town will follow all the requirements and best practices from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Communications should be written in plain language, using clear and simple language the average person can understand. Staff should avoid using technical or complex terminology that may be difficult for some individuals to understand.



The Town website will include an accessibility statement indicating the commitment to accessible communication and providing contact information for individuals requiring assistance or accommodations.

### Criteria for Promoting Community Events

The Town of Renfrew may choose to share information about community events on social media. Those events must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Funded in full, or in part, by the Town of Renfrew;
- Organized or funded by another order of government;
- Organized by a group/organization that is affiliated with the Town (i.e. Renfrew Public Library, Renfrew BIA, McDougal Mill Museum, etc.);
- Organized by a registered charitable organization operating in the Town and;
- Events declared significant by Council

Any posts that promote events that are for individual businesses or for-profit companies/organizations not affiliated with the Town, include objectionable material, do not comply with municipal, provincial, or federal legislation, are political in nature, or promote an individual religion or religious service must not be shared or reposted on a Municipal social media account.

### Social Media Channels

The Town may make use of highly visible, popular, and readily accessible social media channels including:

- Facebook,
- Instagram,
- X (formerly Twitter),
- YouTube,
- LinkedIn and;
- Other social platforms as approved by the Office of the CAO and Town Clerk.

### Single Corporate Account for Each Social Media Platform

All user accounts must be registered to the Town of Renfrew and not be employee and or department name specific. A single corporate account



within each tool – as opposed to several accounts for various projects and enterprises – will ensure:

- Existing staff resources can be used to effectively use and monitor the tools.
- Consolidation of Town's base of followers under a few accounts
- Effort and advertising dollars needed to build followers are only required once.
- Consistency of corporate information presented through each tool.
- One-stop-shop for the public – consolidation of all Town information in a few key locations where the public would expect to find it.

All corporate social media accounts, along with their login and password information, will be owned by the Town of Renfrew and not the individuals managing the content.

### Specialty Pages

The following departmental pages are approved for use:

- Renfrew Fire Department
- Renfrew Public Library (covered through Library Policies)

### Creating a New Social Media Account

Town employees wishing to create additional social media pages/accounts shall suggest the idea to the social media moderators while justifying that the platform meets the necessary criteria. Criteria considered for adopting new social media pages will include, but not be limited to, research that:

- Demonstrates the need for the specific page;
- Demonstrates the originality of the specific page;
- Identifies appropriate staff resources that would be required to establish and maintain the new page;

If the social media moderator thinks there is a need for a new social media page, the social media moderator will present the proposal to the CAO. The CAO shall make a final decision or refer the proposal to Council for a further decision; Only social media platforms with final approval from the CAO or Council may be used on behalf of the Town. Only the social media



moderators shall be granted access to the new account to monitor and manage. Login and password information of new accounts will be created by the social media moderators.

### Maintenance and Monitoring

All active Town social media channels will be monitored and maintained during regular business hours, Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. unless the need arises and/or is directed otherwise by the CAO or Clerk.

The Town will maintain a list of all approved social media accounts and their login and password information.

### Transparency in Social Media Engagement

The Town does not condone manipulating the social media conversation by creating “fake” posts or pages designed to mislead followers and control a conversation.

### Protection of Privacy

Social media moderators should be mindful of any personal information collected through public comments. Any such information will be securely stored in the Town of Renfrew’s database and may be used if required under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA), in accordance with the Town’s privacy policies.

### Guiding Principles for Employees & Members of Council

As an employee or member of Council and a representative of the Town, you must act with honesty and integrity in all matters. This commitment is true for all forms of social media, but especially when acting on behalf of the Town. The following principles guide how our employees must represent the Town.

- Be mindful that you are representing the Town. As a Town of Renfrew representative, it is important that your posts convey the same positive, informative spirit and tone that the Town in stills in all of its communications.



- Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions, and cultures; how you conduct yourself in the online social media space not only reflects on you – it is a direct reflection on the Town.
- Fully disclose your affiliation with the Town: All employees who are communicating on behalf of the Town should always disclose their name and their affiliation. It is never acceptable to use aliases or otherwise deceive people. Your relationship with Town of Renfrew must be stated from the outset.
- Keep records: It is critical that we keep records of our interactions in the online social media space and monitor the activities of those with whom we engage. Because online conversations are often fleeting and immediate, it is important for you to keep track of them when you're officially representing the Town.
- Remember that online statements can be held to the same legal standards as traditional media communications. Keep records of any online dialogue pertaining to the Town.
- **When in doubt, do not post:** Employees are personally responsible for their words and actions, wherever they are. As an online contributor, you must ensure that your posts are completely accurate and not misleading, and that they do not reveal non-public information about the Town.
- Exercise sound judgment and common sense, and if there is any doubt, **DO NOT POST IT.** In any circumstance in which you are uncertain about how to respond to a post, discuss with senior management.
- Give credit where credit is due and don't violate others' rights: **DO NOT** claim authorship of something that is not yours. If you are using another party's content, make certain that they are credited for it in your post and that they approve of you utilizing their content. Do not use the copyrights, trademarks, The Town rights, or other rights of others without the necessary permissions of the rights-holder.
- Remember that even the smallest posts can have large ramifications: The way that you answer an online question might be accurate but can be misinterpreted or misconstrued. Keep that "comprehensive view" in mind when you are participating in online conversations.

## Authority

Section 224 of the Municipal Act, 2001 states the role of Council includes the development and evaluation of the policies and programs of the municipality.

### Monitoring

Legislative Services and Council Relation Department will monitor and evaluate this policy at least once per term of Council to improve communication practices and identify areas for enhancement.

The Town Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints related to this policy.

### Contacts

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### Change History

Policy Name	Effective Date	Significant Changes	By-law No.
Social Media Policy	July 8, 2025	New	66-2025



### Appendix A – Social Media Response Chart from Red Brick Communications

