



Regional Municipality of Durham

Durham Region Policy and Procedures Manual

Title: Social Media Policy		
Approved by: Chief Administrative Officer		Page number: 1 (of 6)
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Responsibility: Office of the Chief Administrative Officer		
Section: Standards of Conduct		

1. Policy statement

The Region of Durham ("the Region") recognizes that social media is a valuable tool that complements traditional communications and facilitates two-way engagement with the community. Social media allows the Region to share time-sensitive and emergency information, deliver responsive customer service, increase awareness of programs and services, develop community partnerships and ambassadors. Some employees may also use personal social media to connect, learn, and/or share opinions. While social media can foster democratic participation and connection, it can also be a place where discrimination and hateful rhetoric can spread. The Region supports safe, inclusive, and informed use of corporate and personal social media.

The Region respects employees' right to engage in personal social media activities. However, employees are expected to ensure that their personal use of social media does not negatively impact the reputation of the organization, violate Regional policies, or harm other employees.

By outlining a clear approach to use of social media by Regional employees we can advance transparency and accountability, as well as reduce and prevent harassment, discrimination, racism and violence. This supports priorities identified in the Region's Strategic Plan, including process improvement and fostering a caring and connected community.

The policy is designed to protect the Region's reputation and image by promoting professionalism in all communications, providing a consistent and professional voice for social media communications and marketing and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements on accessibility, privacy and records retention.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes acceptable use of social media tools and communicates clear expectations regarding corporate and personal use of social media for employees.

Acceptable use is further detailed in the [Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use](#) and [Social Media Protocols for Corporate Use](#).

Employees must understand that their personal use of social media can impact the organization, and that social media posts are subject to laws governing publications. Due diligence must be taken to avoid harm to the Region's reputation or its employees.

3. Definitions

The following definitions should be used when reading this policy:

Social media

Applications and platforms that allow users to interact, share and publish content such as text, links, photos, audio and video. Examples include (but are not limited to) TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, X, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and blogs.

Social media account

An established profile on a social media platform that is created, managed, and used for official Region of Durham business or communications. For clarity, this includes accounts for Invest Durham, Durham Tourism, Region of Durham Health Department and Durham Region Transit.

Official social media accounts are authorized by the Region and represent the organization, its departments, or programs.

Personal accounts used by employees, contractors, or affiliates for non-official purposes are not considered official social media accounts under this policy.

Corporate use

Approved activities pertaining to Regional business conducted via the Region's official social media accounts.

Personal use

Individual employees' social media activity conducted on personal accounts. Social media posts and messages may be considered or become public in certain scenarios and employees must understand that their personal use of social media can impact the organization and other employees, and that social media posts are subject to laws governing publications. Due diligence must be taken to avoid harm to the Region's reputation or its employees. **Note:** The Region does not actively monitor individual employee's personal accounts but will investigate any potential issues that come to its attention.

4. Procedures

New Regional social media accounts

- 4.01 To establish a new Region-affiliated social media account on any online platform, program areas will complete the [New Social Media Account Application Form](#).
- 4.02 New Region-affiliated account requests will be evaluated by the Executive Director of Communications and Engagement, in collaboration with Corporate Services Information Technology, the Chief Information Officer and the Commissioner of Corporate Services.

Records retention and management

- 4.03 All employees designated to use social media will be responsible for maintaining records for their program area's social media activities per the [Records Retention Schedule Policy](#).

Privacy

- 4.04 The Region of Durham is subject to the Ontario *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and other privacy legislation and all official social media posts must comply with applicable privacy legislation.
- 4.05 Personal and other information contained in electronic correspondence directed to the Region of Durham are subject to MFIPPA and may be subject to disclosure under this legislation. Social media platforms are third-party service providers, and they are not private. As such, the anonymity or confidentiality of the sender and any information contained within the correspondence cannot be guaranteed. These facts will be clearly stated on the Region of Durham's social media accounts.

Consent

- 4.06 Any use of images, names, or personal stories of individuals on official social media accounts must have documented consent. Individuals must be informed about how their information will be used and shared on the social media platform.

Accessibility

- 4.07 Materials shared on official social media accounts will be reviewed for accessibility and will adhere to accessibility standards, in compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

Training

- 4.08 Social media training for employees will be coordinated and/or delivered by the Communications and Engagement Division with the support of the Corporate Services Department.

Reporting complaints related to employee social media activity

- 4.09 If an employee believes that another employee's personal or corporate social media use violates this policy, they are encouraged to report their concerns using the [Employee Social Media Policy Violation Complaint Form](#). Incidents of workplace harassment, harassment based on an Ontario *Human Rights Code*-protected ground, and/or discrimination should also be reported using the [Harassment, Discrimination and Racism Incident Report](#). Incidents of workplace violence should also be reported using the [Workplace Violence Incident Report](#).
- 4.10 All complaints about employee use of social media will be reviewed by Corporate Services - Human Resources in accordance with the Region's Code of Conduct, any applicable policies, and legislation. Where appropriate, complaints may be referred for further investigation. This applies to both corporate and personal use of social media where employee conduct may impact the Region's reputation, operations, or workplace culture.
- 4.11 Members of the public or stakeholders may report Region-connected social media activity concerns (corporate or personal use) using the [Compliments, Complaints and Comments Form](#).

Contravention

- 4.12 Violations of the Social Media Policy and affiliated protocols and guidelines may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Employees may also be subject to civil or criminal penalties pursuant to applicable laws. Compliance with the Region's policies applies regardless of whether they identify themselves as Regional employees on their personal social media account and is subject to discipline.
- 4.13 Employee misuse of social media, whether involving personal or corporate accounts, should be reported to Corporate Services - Human Resources, by using the Employee Social Media Policy Violation Complaint Form. All complaints will be reviewed by Corporate Services - Human Resources in accordance with the Code of Conduct and other applicable policies and legislation. Where appropriate, complaints may be referred for further investigation.

5. Roles and responsibilities**Employee personal social media use**

- 5.01 Employees are responsible for the effects their personal social media activity may have on the workplace. Content posted, shared, or messaged on social platforms, regardless of settings, can reach audiences beyond the employee's intention and may be reviewed under applicable laws and Regional policies. Employees must use sound judgment and avoid conduct that could reasonably be expected to undermine public trust in the Region or impede its operations.
- 5.02 Employees must ensure that personal social media activity that references the Region, their role, programs, services, or colleagues, or could reasonably be perceived as speaking about Regional matters, complies with the Region's policies and applicable law, including the Region of Durham's Code of Ethics Policy and Employee Code of Conduct. However, any personal social media activity that breaches Regional policies may be deemed a violation even if no online accounts identify them as a Regional employee. When identifying themselves as Regional employees on personal accounts, employees may include a disclaimer (e.g., "Views expressed are my own and do not reflect those of my employer"); however, disclaimers do not alter obligations under Regional policies. For practical guidance, employees may consult the Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use and the Social Media Protocols for Corporate Use. Nothing in this policy limits employees from holding personal views; it sets expectations for conduct when social activity intersects with Regional responsibilities.

Administration

- 5.03 The Communications and Engagement Division is responsible for the following item:
- Ensuring a consistent approach in the development and maintenance of the Region of Durham's social media strategy.
- 5.04 Communications Officers are responsible for the following items:
- Overseeing and coordinating the corporate social media accounts.

- Providing protocols and guidelines for corporate social media use.
- Managing account access and approvals.
- Designating moderators as needed.
- Maintaining a list of approved platforms.

5.05 Communications Specialists are responsible for the following items:

- Implementing protocols and guidelines for social media use.
- Creating content and managing inquiries for program areas.
- Coordinating approvals for program-specific accounts.
- Scheduling and monitoring social media content.
- Engaging with residents and ensuring compliance with policies.

5.06 The Durham Region Health Department and Economic Development and Tourism Division manage their own social media channels and are responsible for the following items:

- Designating a people leader contact in each program area to collaborate on messaging, campaigns and responses to community inquiries with the Communications and Engagement Division.
- Ensuring that the Social Media Policy and related protocols and guidelines are met within their respective department.

5.07 Corporate Services – Information Technology is responsible for the following items:

- Reviewing new social media channels and accounts for designated employees.
- Participating in the review of new social media accounts.
- Addressing potential security concerns.
- Responding to other information technology issues at the discretion of the Chief Information Officer.

6. Application

This policy applies to all employees, prospective employees, and contractors providing services on behalf of the Region. For clarity, this policy applies to all Regional employees including regular full-time, regular part-time, temporary, probationary and on-call/casual employees; volunteers, including special committees and task forces; interns and students on placements; contractors and consultants acting on behalf of the Region.

Additional departmental guidelines, specific to program area needs and compliant with corporate policies, may be followed by staff designated to use social media.

7. Related information

- Durham Region Policy and Procedures Manual including, but not limited to, the following:
 - [Acceptable Use Policy](#)
 - [Accessibility Policy](#)
 - [Code of Ethics Policy](#)
 - [Confidentiality Policy](#)
 - [Electronic Monitoring Policy](#)
 - [Employee Code of Conduct](#)
 - [Employee Social Media Policy Violation Complaint Form](#)
 - [Harassment, Discrimination and Racism Policy](#)
 - [Information Security Policy](#)
 - [Records Retention Schedule Policy](#)
 - [Social Media Protocols for Corporate Use](#)
 - [Social Media Guidelines for Personal Use](#)
 - [Workplace Violence Prevention Policy](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA)
- [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (MFIPPA)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- Communications and Engagement resources, including but not limited to:
 - [Website Governance and Social Media Policies Insider page](#)
 - [Communications Resources Insider Page](#)
 - [New Social Media Account Application Form](#)
 - [Terms of Use for Corporate Social Media Accounts](#)
 - [Video Production and Promotion Protocol](#)

8. Inquiries

For further information regarding this policy, contact your people leader or Communications and Engagement at SocialMedia@durham.ca.