

**Title:** Social Media Policy

**Number:** GOV-25-02

**Approved By:** City Council

**Administered By:** Corporate Communications

**Effective Date:** May 26, 2025

**Revision Date(s):** N/A

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## **1.0 Purpose/Background**

The purpose of this Policy is to establish clear and consistent guidelines for the use of Social Media platforms, forums, etc. by the City of Oshawa including defining roles, responsibilities, practices and procedures.

This Policy is part of a broader communications framework that works to enhance the City of Oshawa's profile and communications while encouraging effective and meaningful engagement with our community.

## **2.0 Policy Statement**

While the City's website, [oshawa.ca](https://www.oshawa.ca), remains its primary online source for information, it recognizes the importance of Social Media within our community, especially as a source of local information as traditional media continues to decline. The City uses Social Media to enhance communication and information sharing.

This Policy and related Procedures will set clear roles and responsibilities for the use of Social Media to assist in providing a safe and respectful space to inform the public, promote City achievements, and ensure that accurate information is available in regards to City Business and during Emergency/ Significant incidents.

## **3.0 Scope/Application**

This Policy applies to Employees, Contracted Service Providers and Volunteers in their capacity as representatives of the City of Oshawa. The Policy also applies to those engaging with City-managed Social Media accounts.

Although this Policy applies to Oshawa Senior Community Centres (O.S.C.C.) as Authorized Content Creators, Employees and/or Volunteers, the Policy does not apply to strategic oversight or management of O.S.C.C. Social Media accounts.

This Policy does not apply to personal or private use of Social Media by any of the abovementioned groups that does not involve posts related to City Business, the City Visual Identity Standards or City Assets, or when affiliation or connection to the City is not known or made evident.

<b>Effective:</b> May 26, 2025	<b>Revised:</b> n/a	<b>Page</b> 2 of 9	<b>Number:</b> GOV-25-02
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This Policy does not apply to Elected Officials in their capacity as members of Council. Social Media accounts representing the online activity of an Elected Official are created and maintained by the Elected Official and are not the responsibility of the City or its Employees.

In the event of an Emergency/ Significant Incident, the [City of Oshawa Emergency Master Plan](#) and its related protocols supersede this Policy.

## 4.0 Definitions

**Authorized Content Creators** means Corporate Communications Branch staff and Employees outside of the Corporate Communications Branch who have been approved by the Corporate Leadership Team (or designate) to have access to manage City Social Media either through a Corporate Account or Audience Account.

**Branch** means any a grouping of City of Oshawa Employees who are part of a unit of the organization that does not constitute a separate entity but is responsible for a type of work.

**Campaign Period** means in the case of a regular municipal election, the period between May 1 and Voting Day in the year of a municipal election; or, in the case of a municipal or schoolboard by-election, the period between the passage of a by-law authorizing a by-election and Voting Day; or in the case of provincial or federal election or by-election, from the date the writ is issued up to and including Voting Day.

**City** means the Corporation of the City of Oshawa.

**City Adult or Youth Image Consent Form** means the form that gives the City, and others outlined in the form, the irrevocable right to use the individual's name, photograph, image, audio recording, video recording or likeness in all forms and manner.

**City Assets** includes images or videos of and/or on City-owned property, facilities, parks, equipment, uniforms/ City-provided clothing, etc., or City created videos or images of Employees.

**City Audience Account** means a Social Media account managed by Authorized Content Creators that is dedicated to sharing informative updates and positive news regarding a specific City Business topic (e.g. Oshawa Animal Services, Oshawa Economic Development Services, Oshawa Fire Services).

**City Business** means a core, central or basic function of the City, as related to the City's mandate and functions. Examples include City events, programs, initiatives or issues as well as action taken as per Council direction.

**City Crest** means the City's official coat of arms, which is a formal symbol of civic authority and is only used for official purposes such as permanent City building plaques and signs, legal documents, City seal, office of the Mayor, and is not authorized for external use.

**City Corporate Account** means a Social Media account managed by the Corporate Communications Branch that is dedicated to sharing informative updates and positive news regarding City Business to residents, property owners and the broader community.

<b>Effective:</b> May 26, 2025	<b>Revised:</b> n/a	<b>Page</b> 3 of 9	<b>Number:</b> GOV-25-02
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**City Logo** means the primary graphic symbol of the City and the most important visual element of our brand.

**City Visual Identity Standards** means the approved look and feel for any visual content created by, for or on behalf of the City of Oshawa, including the City Logo and Crest, as well as graphics, videos, and photography, as outlined in the City's Visual Identity Standards manual.

**Community Members** means Oshawa residents, property owners and/or those with an interest in City Business.

**Contracted Service Provider** means an individual or business that undertakes a contract or agreement with the City in order to perform a service on a one-time, periodic or continuing basis (e.g. Oshawa Executive Airport Manager, Tribute Communities Centre Manager, Security Guard Services, Marriage Officiants, etc.).

**Corporate Communications Branch** means a City Branch that provides strategic communications support to the City and City Business through promotions, advertising, community engagement, media relations, emergency communications, branding and social media.

**Director** means the head of a City Branch.

**Emergency/ Significant Incident** means a natural or human-caused imminent or actual emergency within Oshawa affecting human health, property or the environment. Emergencies may vary in size and severity and may affect localized businesses, residential areas, and/or the general welfare of Oshawa residents.

**Elected Official** means a member of Council for the City of Oshawa.

**Election** means a municipal, provincial or federal election, or by-election, held in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, c.32, the Election Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.6, or the Canada Elections Act, S.C. 2000, c. 9.

**Employee** means all full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal and staff hired on a contract basis for a defined period of time, of the City of Oshawa, as well as students.

**Employee Code of Conduct** means the formal, written document outlining expected Employee behaviour within the City.

**External Partner** means external organizations, entities, businesses or corporations. Examples include community organizations, local partner organizations and other entities including post-secondary and health care institutions, and other levels of government.

**Handle**, also known as a username, means a unique identifier on Social Media that is often preceded by an @ symbol that individuals, organizations or businesses use to represent themselves.

**Head of Council** means the leader of the municipality. In the City, this position is called Mayor.

**Human Resource Services Branch** means a City Branch that oversees all human resource activities including labour and Employee relations, corporate learning and Employee communications, health, safety, wellness and disability support, talent and organizational development.

**Social Media** means third-party websites and mobile applications that enable users to create and share content and/or participate in two-way discussions. This may include platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and any future platforms developed, micro-blogging/forum sites, and more.

**Spokesperson** means an Elected Official who speaks on behalf of City Council, or an Employee who is authorized to speak to the media regarding City Business.

**Tag** means a hyperlinked reference to a Social Media Handle that is used to notify the tagged user of a post made online.

**Terms of Use** means a contract between a website or Social Media platform host and its users, defining how the service can be used.

**Volunteer** means an individual who volunteers their services, from time to time, to assist in areas of the City, including but not limited to event or service volunteers, members of Advisory Committees of Council or members of staff working groups such as the Public Art Task Force, Community Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, Cultural Leadership Council or Committee of Adjustment.

## 5.0 Responsibilities

### 5.1 Corporate Communications Branch:

- a. serves as the City's Social Media expert;
- b. manages the strategy and day-to-day activity of City Corporate Accounts;
- c. manages the strategy and provide oversight and advice to Authorized Content Creators, who manage the day-to-day activity of City Audience Accounts;
- d. provides training for Authorized Content Creators with respect to appropriate interactions and best practices;
- e. shares content with Elected Officials for use on their respective Social Media account(s) to further City messaging (e.g. available community engagement initiatives, upcoming events, etc.);
- f. identifies and evaluates new Social Media platforms for City Corporate Account expansion;
- g. identifies and evaluates requests from City Branches for new City Audience Accounts;
- h. secures City Handles to protect the City's reputation on up and coming Social Media platforms;
- i. reserves the right to:
  - i. monitor posts on Social Media in regards to City Business by any individual or group identified in Section 3.0 of this document;
  - ii. withdraw City Corporate Account or City Audience Account access for any Branch or individual.

### 5.2 Authorized Content Creators:

- a. may only create, post and monitor content within their area of expertise;

- b. manage the day-to-day activity on the City's Audience Accounts or messaging for a specific City Branch on the City's Corporate Accounts;
- c. regularly monitor their City Audience Account(s) and provide prompt and proactive communications management;
- d. reach out to Corporate Communications Branch when requiring advice or assistance;
- e. must not create or share:
  - a. private or confidential City Business;
  - b. information that is inaccurate, misleading inflammatory, offensive, discriminatory or harmful relating to City Business or that may negatively impact the City's reputation, Employees or Community Members;
  - c. content using City Assets in a manner that the City would deem to be detrimental to its reputation;
  - d. personal information or direct City phone numbers or emails of City Employees unless given permission to do so;
  - e. content that contravenes the City's [Terms of Use](#) in their capacity as a City Employee, or towards co-workers or the City of Oshawa; and,
- f. shall not use the City Logo and Crest unless granted approval to do so through process outlined in the City's Visual Identity Standards.

Employees may have employment-related consequences if their behaviour violates applicable legislation, directives, policies or procedures, up to and including dismissal.

**5.3 Employees on their personal Social Media account(s) are considered ambassadors of the City and:**

- a. should consider the online realm the public, and as a result are asked to continue adhering to the City's Policies and Procedures and demonstrating the City's core values;
- b. are encouraged to share information about City Business and positive information related to their employment;
- c. are encouraged to follow and share messaging from City Corporate Accounts or City Audience Accounts to amplify messaging;
- d. must not create or share:
  - i. private or confidential City Business;
  - ii. information that is inaccurate, misleading inflammatory, offensive, discriminatory or harmful relating to City Business or that may negatively impact the City's reputation, Employees or Community Members;
  - iii. content using City Assets in a manner that the City would deem to be detrimental to its reputation;
  - iv. personal information or direct City phone numbers or emails of City Employees unless given permission to do so;

- v. content that contravenes the City's [Terms of Use](#) in their capacity as a City Employee, or towards co-workers or the City of Oshawa;
- e. shall not use the City Logo and Crest unless granted approval to do so through process outlined in the City's Visual Identity Standards;
- f. are not expected to provide customer service on behalf of the City, but if an Employee chooses to respond they are encouraged to refer questions regarding City Business to City customer service avenues (e.g. Service Oshawa) or Tag the appropriate City Corporate Account or City Audience Account for an online response.

Opinions expressed by an Employee online (e.g. as part of a video, or on an Employee's personal website, blog, and/or Social Media account(s)) do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Oshawa.

Staff may consider adding a disclaimer to their account(s) indicating that their opinions are their own; however, this does not remove an Employee's obligation as a municipal Employee, and Employees may have employment-related consequences if their behaviour violates applicable legislation, directives, policies or procedures, up to and including dismissal.

Employees are reminded that information published on the internet (including Social Media) is public and permanent; if in any doubt, Employees are encouraged to not post.

#### **5.4 Contracted Service Providers:**

- a. must not share:
  - i. private or confidential City Business;
  - ii. information that is inaccurate or misleading relating to City Business;
  - iii. personal information or direct City phone numbers or emails of City Employees unless given permission to do so;
  - iv. content that contravenes the City's [Terms of Use](#) in their capacity as a Contracted Service Provider, or towards City Employees or the City of Oshawa;
  - v. content that reflects poorly on them in their capacity as a Contracted Service Provider of the City of Oshawa, City Employees or the City of Oshawa;
- b. shall not use the City Logo and Crest unless granted approval to do so through process outlined in the City's Visual Identity Standards;
- c. shall refrain from discussing anything not already present in a public forum;
- d. should not provide customer service on behalf of the City unless arranged as an element of their current contract.

Opinions expressed by a Contracted Service Provider online (e.g. as part of a video, or on a Contracted Service Provider's personal website, blog, and/or Social Media account(s)) do not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Oshawa.

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in default of contract up to and including termination of contract(s) with the City.

## 5.5 Volunteers:

- a. are encouraged to share positive information about their experience volunteering with the City, projects they have worked on and other City initiatives they are interested in;
- b. are encouraged to follow and share messaging from City Corporate Accounts or City Audience Accounts to amplify messaging;
- c. must not share:
  - i. private or confidential City Business;
  - ii. information that is inaccurate or misleading relating to City Business;
  - iii. personal information or direct City phone numbers or emails of City Employees unless given permission to do so;
  - iv. content that contravenes the City's [Terms of Use](#) in their capacity as a Volunteer, to other Volunteers, City staff or the City of Oshawa;
- d. shall not use the City Logo and Crest unless granted approval to do so through process outlined in Visual Identity Standards;
- e. should not provide customer service on behalf of the City, but may refer questions regarding City Business to Service Oshawa at 905-436-3311 or Tag the appropriate City Corporate Account or City Audience Account for an online response from Service Oshawa.

## 5.6 Community Members:

- a. are encouraged to engage with the City on its City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts within the conditions outlined in the City's [Terms of Use](#);
- b. shall not use the City Logo and Crest unless granted approval to do so through process outlined in Visual Identity Standards;

## 6.0 Practice/Procedures

### 6.1 Governance

City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts:

- will be monitored during regular business hours (i.e. Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.);
- will feature a profile picture reflective of the City's Visual Identity Standards, and biographies/about us section that indicate that they are managed by the City of Oshawa, include contact information, direct viewers to [oshawa.ca](http://oshawa.ca), and link to the City's [Terms of Use](#); and,
- follow the City's password best practices in regards to password requirements and update frequency.

### 6.2 Management and Administration of Social Media

City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts are used to enhance communication and information sharing and:

- will feature content that whenever possible directs viewers to an official City website (e.g. [oshawa.ca](http://oshawa.ca) and [connectoshawa.ca](http://connectoshawa.ca)) for additional information;
- will reflect the City's branding standards as outlined in the City's Visual Identity Standards;
- will feature high resolution City Assets;
- will feature identifiable images or videos of members of the public only when a City Adult or Youth Image Consent Form has been signed;
- may Tag External Partners so long as the partner is prominently featured in the post and the post is not promoting a paid product or service (note that this does not apply to sponsorships or the Downtown Oshawa account), but should never Tag Employees (except on LinkedIn) or Elected Officials.

Employees are encouraged to assist in identifying potential:

- content opportunities for City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts in their respective lines of work;
- contentious issues that may attract attention on Social Media.

### 6.3 Requests for New Social Media Accounts

An Employee at the Director level may approach Corporate Communications Branch to request a new City Audience Account. The request can be sent to the Director of Corporate Communications Branch and must reflect steps outlined in the respective Procedure. Requests should give consideration to target audience, account goals and staff resources.

Social Media accounts will not be created to represent Volunteer committees or groups.

### 6.4 Social Media during a Campaign Period

In alignment with the Council-approved Communications Policy, during a regular municipal and school board Election, or in the case of a municipal and/or school board by-Election:

Elected Officials:

- will continue to be featured in photos and videos shared on digital communications tools in their capacity as members of Council;
- will not have a speaking role in any videos, except as Head of Council.

The Head of Council:

- will continue to have a Spokesperson role (e.g. delivering remarks, etc.) in videos;
- will not be able to designate any video opportunities to another member of Council.

Corporate Communications Branch and Authorized Content Creators:

- will ensure City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts remain neutral and do not become a platform for candidates or third parties to comment or



<b>Effective:</b> May 26, 2025	<b>Revised:</b> n/a	<b>Page</b> 9 of 9	<b>Number:</b> GOV-25-02
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attempt to sway public opinion on a candidate or current member of Council, even if they are not seeking re-election;

- will use City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts to inform voters on the who, what, when, where, why and how of the Election or by-Election.

Employees, Contracted Service Providers and Volunteers:

- in addition to elements outlined in 5, this group is encouraged to share City-generated content regarding the Election or by-Election to amplify messaging within the conditions of the City's [Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes](#) and the City's Employee Code of Conduct;

Community Members:

- are encouraged to engage with the City on its City Corporate Accounts and City Audience Accounts within the conditions of the City's [Terms of Use](#).

In the event of a disparity, the City's [Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy](#) and Communications Policy supersede this Policy.

## 7.0 Monitoring/Review

This Policy shall be reviewed by the Director, Corporate Communications Branch every four years, or as required, to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legislation and current industry practices or as required based on legislative changes. The Director is authorized to make minor or housekeeping amendments to this Policy, as required.

Questions regarding Social Media can be directed to the Director, Corporate Communications Branch. Questions regarding Employee use of Social Media can be directed to a Human Resource Services Branch Director.

## 8.0 References

[City Adult Image Consent Form](#)

[City Youth Image Consent Form](#)

[City of Oshawa Municipal Emergency Master Plan](#)

[Communications Policy](#)


Employee Code of Conduct

[Terms of Use](#)

[Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy](#)

Visual Identity Standards

## 9.0 Approval

<b>Authority</b> Council	<b>Date</b> May 26, 2025	<b>Signature</b> 
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