



FORTFRANCES

**SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT
HUMAN RESOURCES**

POLICY 3.27

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SOCIAL MEDIA CONDUCT

1. PURPOSE

The Town of Fort Frances uses social media to provide timely, accurate, and accessible information, support transparent two-way communication, and strengthen public trust. This policy sets standards for acceptable use, expected professional conduct, and compliance obligations when communicating about Town business online, whether through official Town channels or personal accounts that could reasonably be linked to a staff member's role.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All official Town social media accounts and program-specific channels.
- All staff and Members of Council.
- Any online communication (on or off duty) related to Town business, Town services, colleagues, or municipal matters.
- Staff or Council posts on external (non-Town) platforms when the individual's Town affiliation is known or can reasonably be inferred.

3. DEFINITIONS

- **"Town"** The Corporation of the Town of Fort Frances.
- **"Staff"** All municipal employees, elected officials, volunteers, students, contractors, and committee/board members.
- **"Official Town Account"** Any social media channel created or managed on behalf of the Town.
- **"Personal Account"** An individual's private social media profile not operated on behalf of the Town.
- **"Social Media"** Online platforms enabling the creation and exchange of information (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube).
- **"Confidential Information"** Any non-public information protected under MFIPPA, the Municipal Act, personnel policies, or internal Town procedures.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Professionalism & Respect:

Treat residents, colleagues, and elected officials courteously; avoid hostile exchanges.

Accuracy & Transparency:

Share factual, verified information and correct errors promptly.

Accessibility:

Meet AODA-aligned accessibility requirements (e.g., alt-text for images, captions for videos, sufficient contrast, readable fonts).

Privacy & Records:

Protect personal information; social content created or received for Town business is an official record subject to retention and access rules under MFIPPA and Town by-laws.

5. CONDUCT STANDARDS

5.1. ACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

- Communicate with a professional tone in any post related to Town business.
- Direct service complaints to official Town channels.
- Use approved images and branding only when authorized.

5.2. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

- Confidential or proprietary information (e.g., internal documents, personnel matters, screenshots of internal communications, in-camera content).
- Discriminatory, harassing, or defamatory content, including against protected groups under the Human Rights Code.
- Misinformation or unverified claims about Town operations, public safety, or municipal decisions.
- Misuse of Town branding or copyrighted materials without authorization.
- AI-generated or altered media that misrepresents Town business or identifiable individuals.

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- Content undermining public trust, including disparaging remarks about the Town, Council, Administration, colleagues, or residents that could reasonably harm the Town's reputation or working relationships.

5.3. ENGAGEMENT EQUALS ENDORSEMENT

"Liking," reacting to, or otherwise interacting with a post is considered a visible form of endorsement. If such engagement involves harmful, defamatory, or disparaging content, it will be treated the same as directly posting or sharing that content.

6. PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Staff may use social media in their personal capacity; however, such use must remain professional and must not conflict with the interests or reputation of the Town.

The following requirements apply:

- Personal social media accounts must not be used to speak on behalf of the Town or to imply official representation.
- Individuals who do not wish their personal content to be associated with the Town should avoid listing the Town as their employer or referencing their role in a manner that suggests affiliation.
- Staff must not engage residents in service-related complaints, disputes, or municipal issues through personal messaging or personal accounts.
- Public concerns or complaints must be directed to official Town channels or appropriate staff through established processes.
- Workplace issues or grievances must follow internal complaint and resolution procedures.
- Staff must not use social media or other public platforms to voice, discuss, or debate internal workplace matters.
- Staff must avoid commenting on municipal matters or engaging in public discussions using personal devices during working hours, except during approved breaks.

7. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

To maintain public trust and comply with relevant legislation:

- Official Town accounts may not be used for political promotion, criticism, endorsements, or campaigning.
- Staff and Members of Council must keep all partisan activity separate from their municipal roles.
- Staff must not post political content using Town devices, networks, or while performing Town duties.
- When an employee's identity is known to be Town-affiliated, political posts must not create the impression of representing the Town.

During election periods, staff and elected officials must also comply with the Use of Corporate Resources In Election Periods Policy 1.28.

8. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Mayor & CAO: Authorized official spokespersons.
- Members of Council: May speak for themselves or delegated projects/committees; not on behalf of the Town unless authorized.
- Clerk: Oversees Freedom of Information (FOI) and privacy functions to ensure full compliance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).
- Human Resources Manager: Provides oversight, guidance, and support to ensure organizational compliance with HR policies, procedures, and relevant legislation.
- Department Heads: Deliver clear, accurate, and timely information to promote transparency and support effective communication with the public.
- Communications Coordinator: Ensure all public-facing content is accurate, accessible, and aligned with organizational standards.
- IT: Provide technical support and maintain secure account and system access controls.
- All Staff: Adhere to this policy and all related legislation and promptly escalate any questions or concerns to direct manager or Human Resources.

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9. INCIDENT RESPONSE, PRIVACY, AND REPORTING

- Privacy Incidents: Any accidental disclosure of personal or confidential information on social media must be reported immediately to the Clerk (FOI/Privacy) for assessment and response under municipal privacy protocols (including documentation and, where appropriate, notification of affected individuals).
- Misinformation or Harmful Content: Escalate promptly to the Clerk, and/or the Human Resources Manager, and/or the CAO.

10. VIOLATION & DISCIPLINE CLAUSE

Any staff member who fails to follow the guidelines set out in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of their employment, in accordance with Town policies, collective agreements, and applicable legislation.

11. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REFERENCES

- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*
- *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)*
- *Ontario Human Rights Code*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)*
- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Municipal Elections Act*
- Employee Conduct Policy 3.7
- External Communications Policy 1.1
- Use of Corporate Resources In Election Periods Policy 1.28.
- Records Retention by-law