

The Township of Centre Wellington's Social Media Policy December, 2015

Thousands of elected officials in all orders of government are using social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, to reach out to and engage with citizens. Social media offers municipality's new ways to update residents and businesses on municipal services. Increasingly, civil servants are using social media tools to share knowledge and collaborate on projects.

By embracing social media, the Township of Centre Wellington is showing its commitment to the public by providing them with timely, accurate, accessible, transparent and accountable information.

The Township of Centre Wellington will promote the use of their social media channels as a tool for fast, two-way communications about our programs, services and news affecting our community.

Definitions:

Facebook is a popular free [social networking](#) website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues

Twitter is a free social networking [microblogging](#) service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called *tweets*. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Tweets and replies to tweets can be sent by cell phone [text message](#), desktop client or by posting at the [Twitter.com](#) website.

YouTube is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, share and view videos.

Flickr is an image hosting and video hosting website, and web services suite. It is a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs, and effectively on an online community.

In a municipal setting, Facebook and Twitter can be used to communicate public notices, upcoming meetings, road closures, special events, public service information etc.

POLICY

Policy Statement

The Township of Centre Wellington promotes the use of social media channels as a tool for fast, two-way communications about programs, services and news affecting our community.

Purpose

The Township of Centre Wellington's Social Media Policy and usage guidelines outline for employees and elected officials the corporate standards for communicating and engaging the public using social media tools.

- That the Township of Centre Wellington provide a single, comprehensive corporate Facebook page that is monitored and maintained by the Communications Coordinator on a daily basis, and to which is used to inform and educate residents and other stakeholders, as well as engage them in conversation about Township business.

- That the Township of Centre Wellington provide a single, corporate Twitter feed that is maintained by a single, identifiable individual, the Communications Coordinator.
- That the Township of Centre Wellington create a corporate YouTube channel for posting all videos showcasing the Township of Centre Wellington. It is to be managed by the Communications Coordinator and content only to be published at the sole discretion of the Township.
- That the Township of Centre Wellington create a corporate Flickr account as a method of gathering photographs taken by citizens and other stakeholders for use by the Township.

The policy also serves to

- Protect the Township's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the Township and its employees communicate about the Townships business with our public stakeholders;
- Provide employees and members of Council with clear usage guidelines and acceptable corporate and personal use of social media sites and/or personal websites as they relate to discussing the business of the Township of Centre Wellington:
- Outline the official social media tools that the Township has adopted for use:
- Provide protocol around monitoring, administration, acceptable use and privacy.

General Guidelines

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media applications specifically so that the disbursement of timely and accurate information is balanced with the Township's need to assure that:

- a) Social networking relies on regular, timely postings of new and relevant content. For the ease of use by the reader, ensure that postings are kept consistent in grammar, spelling, style and format.
- b) The use of social media tools does not compromise safety or the Township's image.
- c) The information provided through social media is in line with the Township's vision and guiding principles.
- d) Social media content does not violate individual privacy or conflict with existing municipal policies and by-laws or other regulations as applicable.
- e) Social media content posted on behalf of the Township is accurate, accessible, transparent and accountable.

Governance

As the hub of information and social media expertise within the Township, the Communications Coordinator, under the CAO will lead the management and operations of the Townships social media channel. This ensures that the channel is managed and the tone is clear and consistent for followers. While other municipalities sometimes choose to segment their networks (e.g., a Twitter account specific to road/facility closures or other enterprises), a unified approach will remain in place for the Township of Centre Wellington based on our size and established practice in municipal social media management.²

² According to Redbrick Communication's 2014 Ontario Municipal Social Media survey, 66 percent of municipalities use a centralized approach, 21 percent have a number of unique accounts, and 13 percent are a blended mode.

During emergency situations, communication resources will be made available so that information can be transmitted through social media channels in accordance with corporate emergency management protocols.

Guidelines for Members of Council

Members of Council may participate in social media of their own accord. Council are welcome to like/follow the official Township site and are encouraged to share content that has already been officially posted to centrewellington.ca The Township's official sites will not share/retweet political content.

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the town and this will also apply to social media. Members of Council should clearly identify where they are expressing personal views, and not necessarily the views of the Township.

Guidelines for the Site Moderator (Communications Coordinator)

- The Township of Centre Wellington is committed to operating its social networking sites as an effective method of communication. Sites will be monitored during the Townships regular business hours of Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Outside of business hours, the Communications Coordinator will continue to passively monitor networks and, if necessary, flag items for follow up during regular business hours.
- Correct misinformation and ensure that content is up to date.
- Ensure responses to wall posts and in-box messages and discussion comments are made within 48 weekday hours of when they are posted or received.
- Deny access to users who post inappropriate or offensive comments
- Remove posts that are considered to be inappropriate
- Respond to any concerns or questions posted
- While the Township will make every effort to respond to concerns and questions directed to our Social Media accounts, at our discretion we may request that the discussion be redirected to either our phone or email support channels. The reason(s) for this request would include, but is not limited to, privacy concerns (yours, a fellow resident(s), or employee(s) of the Township), character limitations for messages (Twitter), and amount of detail required to resolve a situation.

Guidelines for staff

Employees who post, discuss, share or comment on Township business via corporate or personal social media sites, networks or websites should reflect the Township's values and follow these guidelines:

- Make sure communications are in good taste.
- Be careful about linking to other websites. Despite our disclaimers, redirecting to another site may be interpreted as an endorsement of its content.
- Do not publish or report on conversations or information that is confidential, pre-decisional or speculative. A good rule of thumb is to ask: Is this information suitable to post to or available on Centre Wellington's website?

- Be respectful. Never engage in personal attacks or divulge personal information about others. Ethnic or discriminatory slurs, insults, obscenity will not be tolerated.
- Do not defame or speak negatively about the Township of Centre Wellington, its personnel, other companies or other people when conversing on social media.
- Employees must have written approval from their Department Head and the Communication Coordinator, prior to establishing a social media site or a page within an existing social media service, on behalf of the Township of Centre Wellington.
- Online participation in a social media site as an employee of the Township of Centre Wellington must be job-related and fit into the employee's work schedule and duties.

Guidelines for the Public

- While the Township of Centre Wellington is committed to the concept of free speech, that speech must, at all times, be responsible, free of insults, and respectful of others. Participants in discussions must not:
 - Defame, abuse, harass or threaten others;
 - Make any bigoted, hateful or racially or sexually offensive statements;
 - Advocate illegal activity or discuss illegal activities with the intent to commit them;
 - Post or distribute any material that infringes or violates any right of a third party or any law including copyright;
 - Post or distribute any vulgar, obscene, discourteous or indecent language or images;
 - Advertise, sell or solicit others;
 - Impersonate other participants or public figures.
- For the most part, user comments and messages posted to the Township of Centre Wellington's official social networking sites are considered transitory records and will not be kept as a permanent record by the Township. By using Centre Wellington's Social Media, users acknowledge and consent that their comments or messages may become part of the public record and used in official Centre Wellington documentation. It is at the Township's sole discretion as to which comments will be saved to form part of the Township's official business records.
- Images and comments posted by third parties do not necessarily represent the views of the Township of Centre Wellington. The Township cannot and does not guarantee users privacy on third party social networking websites, as users are subject to the terms and conditions of the specific application on that website. Users should review and agree to the third party terms and conditions prior to participating.
- The Township of Centre Wellington will not be responsible for any losses or damages suffered as a result of using third party Social Media sites. Those using Social Media participate at their own risk and for their own benefit, and in so doing accept that they have no right of action against the Township of Centre Wellington related to such use.
- A link between the Township of Centre Wellington's Social Media sites and any other website does not imply an endorsement or sponsorship by the Township of that website, or the creator of that website.
- The Township of Centre Wellington's Social Media sites are provided on an "as is" and "as available" basis. The Township makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied, as to the sites' operation or the information, content or materials included on these sites

