



POLICIES

DIVISION:	CAO and Warden		
POLICY SECTION:	Media and Public Relations	EFFECTIVE DATE:	November 27, 2012
SUBJECT:	Social Media policy		
POLICY NUMBER:	COMM 1.0	SUPERCEDES:	NEW

1. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

The County's Corporate Communications Department is responsible for the accurate, open, and transparent sharing of information with the public through education and promotion of County programs, services, initiatives, and County Council decisions. To effectively share that information, the Corporate Communications Department uses a combination of traditional communications and online communications (see Definitions) to reach the largest number of residents, visitors, and stakeholders possible.

The popularity of social media sites and/or networks (see Definitions) provide the County of Simcoe with a powerful communications tool that allows for information to be shared immediately, effectively, and in a cost-efficient manner, while also allowing for engaged discussion with residents and stakeholders. The County of Simcoe recognizes the growing demand from the public to have access to information through social media, but is also cognizant of the complex issues that surround the use of social media.

The County of Simcoe Social Media Policy provides employees with the appropriate use of social media for official and unofficial purposes. The Corporate Communications Department is the lead department for the County of Simcoe's online communications strategies. Social media accounts for corporate use will be established and managed by the Corporate Communications Department in conjunction with Information Technology and with the assistance of appointed departmental Social Media Moderators, in accordance with the overall Social Media Strategy. The Corporate Communications Department will work collaboratively with all Social Media Moderators to ensure that information posted on all social media sites about the County of Simcoe adheres to all standards laid out in the Social Media Strategy, Social Media Policy, and related procedures.

Corporate Communications and appointed Social Media Moderators are the only employees authorized to speak on behalf of the County of Simcoe through social media. Excessive personal use of social media by County of Simcoe employees while on County time is prohibited. County employees will be granted access to certain social media channels during work hours provided that their use is work related. The lines between public and private, personal and professional are often blurred in the social media context, therefore it is important to remember that any time an employee makes a public statement (see Definitions) regarding the County, they are held to the same standards of professionalism they would be at work.

All employees must adhere to the standards and procedures associated with this policy and the Social Media Strategy.

All Corporate social media content must be in compliance with the *Collection, Access, Use, Disclosure, and Destruction of Information Policy* (CAUDDI) and the County's Records Management Program and associated policies and procedures as it pertains to social media content as records.

2. DEFINITIONS

Online communications refers to the communication of information through the use of the Internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement).

Social Media refers to the web-based technologies and sites (often called Web 2.0) and includes blogging, microblogging (Twitter), photosharing (Flickr), video sharing (YouTube), webcasting (blogtv), and networking (LinkedIn, Facebook, wikis, discussion boards), which allow users to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests. It allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content and focuses on building online communities of people through two-way communication.

Traditional communications refers to the sharing of information for any purpose using common communications tools, such as media relations (releases, advisories, interviews), print (brochures, posters, paper advertisements, newsletters, County Council updates), and radio.

Social Media Moderators are employees within the Corporation who have been appointed by Corporate Communications and their General Manager/Manager/Supervisor to speak on behalf of their department on Corporate social media sites as a representative of the County of Simcoe.

A public statement is a declaration made by County of Simcoe employees in any public forum, which relates to the County of Simcoe, its employees, its member municipalities, and/or its vendors. This includes statements made in blogs, online forums or discussions, social media sites, wikis and elsewhere in the public record at any time.

Political campaigning refers to comments and posts made by politicians, individuals running for election, or individuals/groups supporting or opposing a specific political candidate, on County of Simcoe social media sites for the purpose of political gain.

3. SCOPE

The County of Simcoe Social Media Policy applies to all County of Simcoe employees, at all locations of the Corporation, particularly those who make public statements on corporate or personal social media sites, networks and/or personal websites that discuss, share or comment on County business. Specific guidelines for social media use for corporate purposes apply to certain departments and Social Media Moderators given written approval by the Director of Corporate Communications to use social media in an official capacity. Procedures pertaining to political campaigning (see Definitions), particularly during an election, apply to members of County Council.

4. RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Director of Corporate Communications and the Corporate Communications Department, with assistance from General Managers, Directors, Supervisors, and Social Media Moderators to enforce this policy.