



POLICY No. 2015-03

Corporate Use of Social Media

Originating Department Report CAO-01-2015

SMT Approval: March, 2015

Council in Committee: 2015-04-14

Recommendation #: 12

Council Approval: 2015-04-20

Resolution #: 70-15

Revision History:

[Click here for revision history](#)

1. PURPOSE

This Corporate Social Media Policy applies to Haldimand County staff excluding members of Council. It outlines for employees, the corporate standards and principles of communicating in the online world when it relates to discussing, sharing or commenting on County business. Additionally, it serves to:

- Protect the County's reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how County staff communicate with public stakeholders via online forums and social media/networking sites.
- Provide employees with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding the acceptable corporate and personal use of social media sites and/or personal websites as they relate to discussing the business of Haldimand County.
- Establish protocols, criteria and courses of action for:
 - Establishing and monitoring of acceptable social media tools for use by the corporation.
 - Determining/adopting new social media tools/accounts for corporate use.
 - Appropriate monitoring and administration of corporate social media tools.
 - Providing timely, effective and accurate information and responses.
 - Ensuring a mechanism to address controversial or sensitive matters relating to online content about Haldimand County, its business or its employees.
 - Ensuring appropriate records management and retention efforts as it relates to online forums and tools.
 - Ensuring appropriate protection of privacy of the public who engage or interact with the County via social media/networking tools.

Although this Policy does not apply to members of Council, Councillors are able to establish their own social media account as a member of Haldimand County Council as long as it adheres to:

- Code of Conduct and Complaint Protocol for Members of Council
- Logo and Coat of Arms Usage – Corporate

2. POLICY

- 2.1. This policy applies to all Haldimand County staff, particularly those who make public statements (see Definitions) on corporate or personal social media sites, social media networks and/or personal websites that discuss, share or comment on County business.

Social Media contributors have a responsibility to promote the openness, transparency and accountability of the work and business of the County through:

- sharing information;
- educating the public, and;
- promoting enterprises, programs and services.

To ensure that information about the County's decisions, programs, services and initiatives reaches as many people as possible, a balanced approach – using both traditional communication methods (see Definitions) as well as various online communication methods (see Definitions) – is utilized.

While the use of online and social media sites and/or networks (see Definitions) creates new opportunities for enhanced communication and collaboration with residents and other County stakeholders, it also creates new responsibilities for Haldimand County employees.

Haldimand County recognizes that social media networks are powerful communications tools that can have a significant impact on organizational, personal and professional reputations. Because they blur the lines between personal voice and corporate voice, the following policy has been developed to establish standards and expectations for employees when using social media to discuss, share or comment on the business of Haldimand County.

Please note: For the purpose of this policy “social media sites” and/or “social media networks” refers to those sites/networks whose content is open to the general public.

- 2.2. Site Selection/Establishing New Accounts:

The Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives will serve as a centralized resource for the oversight and use of social media tools and sites by the County and its enterprises, as well as for the creation and maintenance of content on those sites.

The County will maintain a series of corporate accounts on various social media tools. Approval for the corporate use of new social media tools and/or new accounts on social media sites already in use by the corporation will be the responsibility of the co-chairs of the Web Steering Committee (Manager of Information Systems and Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives).

Criteria for adopting new social media tools – or establishing new accounts within social media sites already in use by the corporation – will include, but not be limited to research that:

- Demonstrates the need for the specific tool/why it is required
- Demonstrates the added benefits of using the tool
- Demonstrates a content approval process to ensure that posted content is consistent with corporate messaging and standards
- Demonstrates that the use of the new tool will not interfere with the credibility of Haldimand County's other established social media sites/networks
- Addresses any legal concerns

- Identifies appropriate staff resources that would be required to establish and maintain the new account.

2.3. Site Administration:

The use of all social networking sites by Haldimand County will adhere to:

- Applicable provincial and federal laws, regulations and policies;
- The Terms of Service of each social networking site; and
- All Administrative, Human Resources, Records Management policies and other applicable County policies and guidelines.

All new and existing social media tools being used to conduct Haldimand County business will be established and administered by appointed social media content contributors from user divisions, who are responsible for creating and posting approved content and monitoring public response.

All County social networking contributors will be trained regarding the terms of Haldimand County's Corporate Social Media Policy and Social Media Guidelines, including their responsibilities in regards to reviewing content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy, the County's web writing guidelines and online netiquette guidelines.

2.4. Site Content:

Where possible, all social networking sites will clearly indicate that they are maintained by Haldimand County and will have Haldimand County logo, the website URL, and contact information displayed.

Where possible, social networking sites will link back to the official Haldimand County Internet site for forms, documents and other information.

Haldimand County social networking sites will include a link to the Social Media usage statements which specifies what content is unacceptable and will be subject to removal without notification.

Haldimand County social networking pages and their content will adhere to the policies and guidelines of each individual social networking site.

Proper permission to use others' intellectual property must be obtained prior to using.

Updates to social media sites being used for corporate business will be created by Divisional social networking contributors following the Divisions' own internal approval processes, and will then be posted by the appropriate Divisional staff in accordance with Haldimand County's Social Media Guidelines.

Haldimand County social networking content and comments containing any of the following shall not be allowed for posting:

- Comments not topically related to the particular site or blog article being commented upon;
- Profane language or content;
- Personal attacks on individuals or specific groups.
- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of any prohibited grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code;
- Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;

- Content related to sales, advertising or promotions falling outside of Haldimand County Divisions' mandates;
 - Content for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election;
 - Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party
- 2.5. Any Haldimand County employee engaged in online, electronic dialogue that involves information about Haldimand County business – including dialogue or information posted to personal social networking sites and/or personal websites – is also required to meet a standard that mandates:
- **Transparency of Origin.** The County requires that employees disclose their employment or association with Haldimand County in all communications with citizens, customers, the media or other County stakeholders when speaking on behalf of the Corporation of Haldimand County.
 - **Accurate Information.** Communications on the corporation's behalf, on all social networking sites, should be based on current, accurate, complete and relevant data. Haldimand County will take all reasonable steps to assure the validity of information communicated via any channel but it is the employee's responsibility to assure accuracy in the first instance. Anecdotes and opinions will be identified as such.
 - **Ethical Conduct.** Haldimand County will not be seen to conduct activities that are illegal or contrary to Haldimand County's corporate policies.
 - **Protection of Confidential and Proprietary Information.** Haldimand County employees must maintain the confidentiality of information considered confidential, including company financial and business information, citizen and/or customer personal information, personal information about County Council, partner and/or supplier information, personal employee data, or any information not generally available to the public.
- 2.6. Recognizing the benefit of monitoring online stakeholder input into County issues – and the potential need for the County to respond to and/or correct information – County staff can access social media sites during work hours provided that they are related to or contain posts or discussions related to County business and are done in accordance with the IT Acceptable Usage Policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. *Online Communications* refers to the communications of information through the use of the internet for any purpose (i.e. information sharing, marketing, engagement). There are several different general categories of online communications, including, but not limited to:
- *Social Networking and Social Media* focus on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others through two-way communication. Popular methods of social media/networking include Facebook and Twitter.
 - *Online Advertising* is a form of promotion that uses the Internet for the expressed purpose of delivering marketing messages to attract customers or

sell products. Examples include ads placed on third-party websites or search engines and rich media ads.

- *E-mail Marketing* is a form of direct marketing which uses email as a means of communicating to an audience. All commercial electronic messages (CEMs) must comply with the regulations of Canada's Anti Spam Legislation (CASL).
- 3.2. *Traditional Communications* refers to the sharing of information for any purpose via commonly used or traditional tools such as media relations (releases, advisories, interviews), print (brochures, posters, paper advertisements) or radio.
 - 3.3. *Social Media Content Contributors*: are employees within the corporation who have been appointed to speak on behalf of the County through updating the content of the County's social media sites and pages.
 - 3.4. *A Public Statement* is a declaration made by a Haldimand County employee in any public forum, which relates to Haldimand County, its employees and/or its business and enterprise units and includes statements made in blogs, online forums or discussions, social networking sites, wikis and elsewhere in the public record.
 - 3.5. *Intellectual Property* describes ownership of an intellectual 'product' which may have commercial value. It encompasses areas including: copyright, trademarks, patents and design.
 - 3.6. *An Official Record* is anything which is created in the regular course of conducting County business and which documents the business of the County regardless of format. Official records document decisions, policies, procedures, transactions, activities, commitments, obligations, ownership, entitlement, legal rights, etc. of the County and are relied upon by the County or proof of such or to support County business.
 - 3.7. *Personal Information* is defined by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, C.M. 56 (MFIPPA) as recorded information about an identifiable individual that includes, but is not limited to their: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, education, medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history or financial transactions; any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual; address, telephone number, fingerprints, blood type of the individual; the personal opinions or views of the individual except if they related to another individual; correspondence sent to an institution by the individual of a private or confidential nature; the views or opinions of another individual about the individual; the individual's name where it appears with other personal information relating to the individual.
 - 3.8. *Web Steering Committee* Representatives from Haldimand County departments, the Manager of Information Systems and the Application Support Coordinators compose the Web Steering Committee.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1. Web Steering Committee Co-chairs (Manager of Information Systems and Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives) will:
 - Maintain corporate accounts on various social media tools.
 - Approve corporate use of new social media tools and/or new accounts on social media sites already in use by the corporation.
 - Review social network content periodically to ensure content is in compliance with the policy. Will review content reported by social media content contributors to determine appropriateness and remove if necessary.

- Ensure the Social Media Policy and Procedures are updated as required.

4.2. Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives (or designate) will:

- Serve as a centralized resource for the oversight and use of social media tools and sites by the County and its enterprises, as well as a resource for the creation and maintenance of content on those sites.
- Review and post content created by social media content contributors as needed.
- Review content or status updates as provided from content contributors (see 4.3 below), that generate negative feedback from the public or feedback that is sensitive or controversial in nature to determine the appropriate course of action.

4.3. Social Media Content Contributors will:

- Contribute content for social networking sites on a regular basis – a minimum of once per week – to the appropriate Divisional staff, Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives or designate for posting.
- Review the County's social networking sites a minimum of once per day to ensure that content not in compliance with the policy guidelines for appropriate content is immediately removed. In cases where there are questions in respect to the appropriateness of the content, the Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives must be contacted.

4.4. All County Staff / Council:

- Will provide information to content contributors for review and potential posting
- Use of an employee's County e-mail address, communicating in an official capacity for the County, or discussing County business – on personal or corporate social media sites and/or personal websites – will constitute conducting County business.
- Employees who choose to discuss County business within their posts to personal social networking sites and/or personal websites – must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the County and in accordance with this policy and all human resource and administrative policies including, but not limited to:
 - Accountability and Transparency
 - Code of Conduct – All Staff
 - Code of Conduct Policy for Non Union Staff
 - Information Technology – Acceptable Usage
 - Information Technology – Corporate Web Presence
 - Information Technology – Security
 - Information Technology – Requesting, Assessing and Implementing Technology
 - Logo and Coat of Arms Usage – Non Corporate
 - Logo and Coat of Arms Usage – Corporate
 - Respect in the Workplace
 - Workplace Violence Policy

- All posts on social media sites are subject to FOI requests and/or subpoena.
- Employees shall not post information relative to any on-going applications, investigations, projects, etc., to personal or corporate sites unless previously approved by the divisional manager or designate. Employees should make sure that online postings do not violate any non-disclosure or confidentiality obligations.
- Any photographs or video posted shall not identify any person either directly (picture or video of person) or indirectly (picture or video of items that may identify person such as street address, license plates) unless appropriate photo release forms have been signed.
- County staff should not be posting information to their own personal social media pages – including but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, websites or blogs – during work time unless they do so during their break or lunch hour.
- Staff will not use Haldimand County logos, the County crest, enterprise logos, badges or other departmental identification for endorsements – or any other corporate/County images or iconography on personal social media sites and/or personal web sites or to promote a product, cause, or political party or candidate.
- Haldimand County employees who fail to comply with this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment. In addition, depending on the nature of the policy violation or the online channel/page content, participants may also be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties.

5. REFERENCES

- 5.1. Records Retention Schedule
- 5.2. Social Media Guidelines for Staff
- 5.3. Social Networking Disclaimer Statements
- 5.4. Website Privacy Statement

| REVISION HISTORY | | | | | |
|------------------|------|------|---------|------|---------|
| REPORT | CIC | | COUNCIL | | DETAILS |
| | Date | Rec# | Date | Res# | |
| | Date | Rec# | Date | Res# | |
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Social Media Guidelines for Staff

If you participate in social media – through contributing to blogs or other online forums, personal websites, wikis, or social networks – and you want to discuss, share or comment on County business, please keep the following guidelines and helpful tips in mind.

The Guidelines:



- Know our policies. Haldimand County has a number of policies which must be followed. It's important that you know what they say and how they apply to your participation on social media sites or networks when discussing County business.
- A suggested format is a simple green light, yellow light and red light model. Social media contributors have a green light to communicate on matters that are always safe. A yellow light is assigned to posts that could be contentious and require managerial approval, such as a municipality's resolution to criticize the proposed legislation. Finally, a red light is assigned to posts that are inappropriate, such as criticizing the County. (Each division to further define their stop light.)
- Be transparent. Identify yourself by name and, when relevant, your role at Haldimand County when you discuss, share or comment on County business. Make it clear that you're speaking for yourself and not on behalf of Haldimand County. (You might consider a disclaimer such as: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily reflect Haldimand County's positions, strategies or opinions.")
- Be accurate. Even though your blog/website/social media posts may be primarily made up of personal opinion, do your research well and check that your facts are accurate and consistent with other information released publicly via other corporate channels.
- Be discreet. Don't provide confidential information that relates to corporate business, County council, employees, citizens, clients or partners. Don't provide personal information or cite or reference people without their consent.
- Be aware of copyrights. Just because it's on the Internet doesn't mean it's free to use. Respect copyright, trade marks, fair use and financial disclosure laws.
- Don't use our logo. Refrain from using the County's official logo, crest, enterprise logos, or any other County-created images or iconography on your personal sites or pages.
- Don't become an official county spokesperson – unofficially. In other words, don't go ahead and start a new social media account or page for a County project, event or division without consulting the Web Steering Committee co-chairs (Manager of Information Systems and Coordinator of Strategic Initiatives) first.
- Do us all proud. Be protective of the County's interests and your own, and ensure that all content associated with you is consistent with your work and with the County's values and professional standards.
- Don't forget your day job. Remember that blogging and posting to other social networking sites or your own personal website are personal activities and should be done on your own time.

Online Netiquette:

'Netiquette' is a short-form for Internet etiquette. The term represents the informal code – or appropriate behaviour – that people adopt when interacting with others online or through email.

Netiquette Guidelines

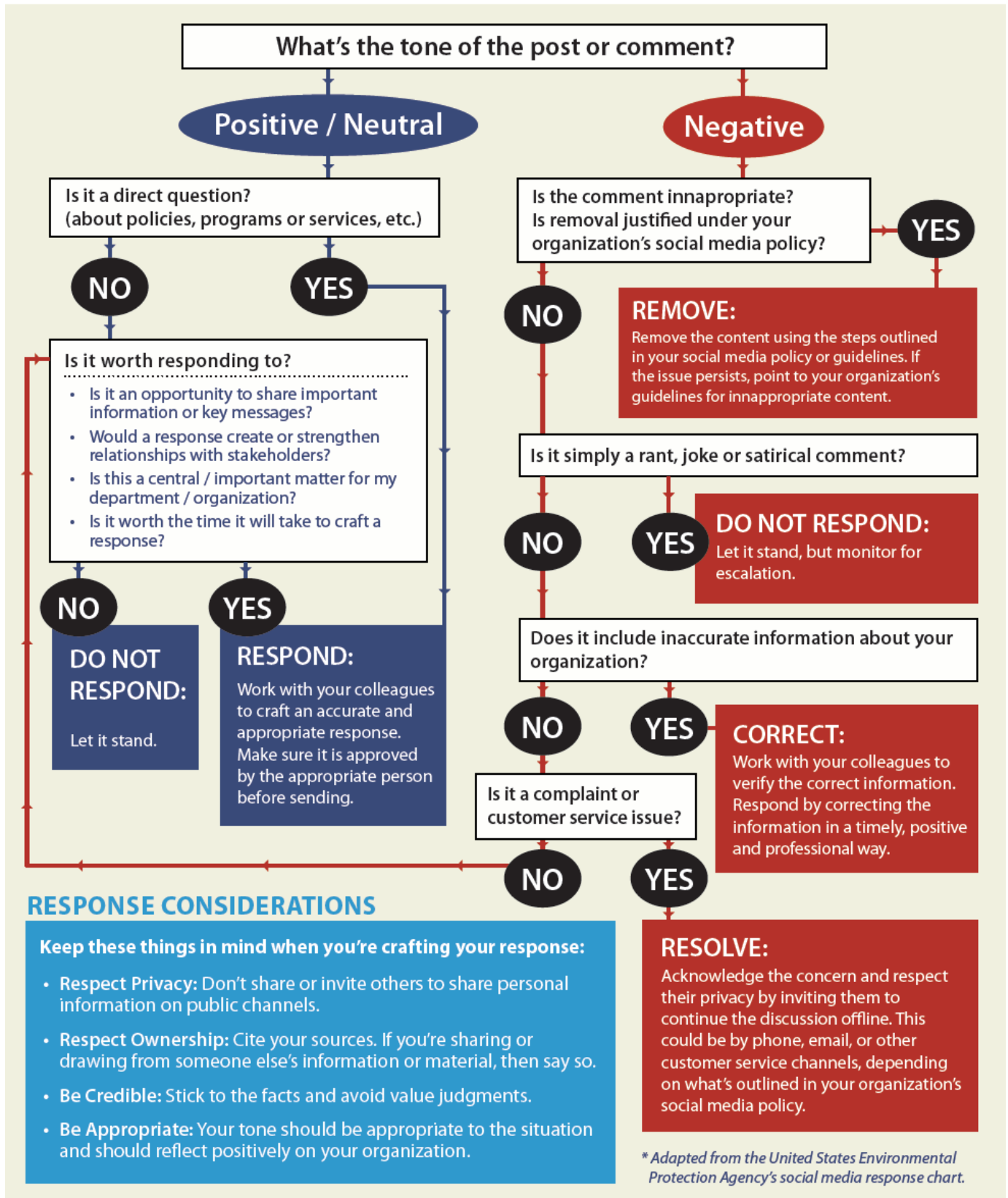
Before communicating online, consider these general Netiquette guidelines:

- Consider whether email or online communication is the best way to communicate. Sometimes it's better to pick up the phone or speak to someone in person.
- Remember that when communicating by email, you can't convey tone to help get your message across and that can lead to confusion or misinterpretation of your message.
- Think first—messages can be forwarded or copied. Do not send information that you wouldn't want forwarded to a large audience.
- Do not evangelize. It is better to offer a humble opinion and write with reason and diplomacy than to preach it.
- Use the 24-hour rule. Hold off on responding to or sending messages that could provoke an emotional response. Emotional responses sent in haste or anger can be kept indefinitely, recalled, printed and forwarded.

"Netiquette" tips to consider:

"Netiquette" tips that are a good idea to consider when you are using online forums – whether you're discussing County business or not include:

- Think twice before posting: Privacy doesn't exist in the world of social media. Remember that what you publish will reflect on the County's reputation and yours – and it will be public for a long time.
- Respect your audience. Remember that anyone, including your colleagues, may be reading what you publish online. In choosing your words and your content, it's a good practice to imagine that your supervisor and your family are reading everything you post.
- Be clear. Ensure your commentary is expressed in such a way that it can't be misrepresented or misunderstood.
 - Keep in mind that brief, well written messages have a greater impact.
 - Spelling and grammar are important:
 - Write, edit and proofread as you would any other business communication.
 - Don't use 'chat line' lingo.
- Be respectful of others. Never use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would be unacceptable at the workplace. Don't pick fights, be the first to correct your own mistakes, and don't alter previous posts without indicating that you have done so.
- Answer carefully. Understand that content contributed to a social media site could encourage comments or discussion of opposing ideas. Consider your response carefully and think about how it will reflect on you and/or the corporation.



RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

Keep these things in mind when you're crafting your response:

- **Respect Privacy:** Don't share or invite others to share personal information on public channels.
- **Respect Ownership:** Cite your sources. If you're sharing or drawing from someone else's information or material, then say so.
- **Be Credible:** Stick to the facts and avoid value judgments.
- **Be Appropriate:** Your tone should be appropriate to the situation and should reflect positively on your organization.

RESOLVE:

Acknowledge the concern and respect their privacy by inviting them to continue the discussion offline. This could be by phone, email, or other customer service channels, depending on what's outlined in your organization's social media policy.

** Adapted from the United States Environmental Protection Agency's social media response chart.*

Social Media - Disclaimer Statements

Social Media sites are maintained by Haldimand County for the purpose of providing useful information and relevant dialogue. It should not be considered official communication from Haldimand County. For official information on Haldimand County and its programs, services and policies, please visit HaldimandCounty.on.ca. The views of external participants commenting on this site do not necessarily represent those of Haldimand County.

The County monitors this site during regular business hours, Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. We cannot commit to replying to all comments or moderating all discussions on this site.

In no event shall Haldimand County be held responsible or liable, directly or indirectly, for any damage or loss in connection with the use of or reliance on any posting, content or information provided by another party on this site.

The County does not accept responsibility for ads, videos, promoted content or comments accessible from any external website and we do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness or completeness of information contained on a linked website.

Where sites are open to two-way dialog, visitors are welcome to post comments on Haldimand County's social media sites. However, the County expects participants to follow a few simple rules. Please keep your posts clean and respectful. Haldimand County reserves the right to remove any posts or content that do not meet the guidelines noted below.

We do not allow posts that:

- Provide the personal information of individuals.
- Promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of any prohibited grounds under the Ontario Human Rights Code
- Are a personal attack on an individual or group.
- Are profane or abusive.
- Are sexually explicit or links to content that is sexually explicit.
- Conduct or encourage illegal activity.
- Are commercial in nature and is attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual or an individual business
- Are for the purposes of promoting a candidate for municipal, provincial or federal election.
- May tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- Violate a legal ownership interest of another party.
- Do not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.
- Promote an individual religion or religious service.

Notwithstanding the criteria listed above, the County reserves the right to post, refuse to post, or remove any content from its social media sites at any time, without notice.

Community events

Members of the public are also welcome to submit event information for inclusion on Haldimand County's social media sites if that event is open to the general public, occurs within the boundaries of the County, and meets at least one of the following criteria:

- Organized or funded by another order of government.
- Organized by a government-funded agency or board.
- Organized by a County affiliated group.
- An organization identified as eligible for a Haldimand County community grant.
- Funded in full, or in part, by Haldimand County.
- Sponsored by the Haldimand County.
- Organized by a charitable organization with a registered charitable number and operating within Haldimand County.
- Organized by a service club operating within the Haldimand County performing work that benefits County residents.
- Organized by a business improvement area for general promotional purposes.
- Not commercial or for profit

To protect your privacy

When you registered for your social media accounts, you provided personal information. Since that time, you may have added more information and photos to your social media profiles. Haldimand County reminds you that if you have not restricted your privacy settings where possible, then anyone who is a fan or following us could potentially view your personal information. We strongly encourage you to review your personal privacy settings in each of your social media accounts and remind you that if you don't restrict your privacy settings, then you have consented to the display and release of your personal information.

About your personal information

No personally identifiable information is collected by Haldimand County; however, personal information, which includes your Internet Provider (IP) address, may be collected, managed, processed and/or stored by a third party service provider and is therefore, not in the sole domain, custody and control of Haldimand County.

What may happen to content posted to our page

While Haldimand County will always take a balanced approach between reaching out to citizens in the ways that you're used to – through venues like public meetings, and opportunities to provide feedback on our website for example – we also recognize that real-time platforms, like Facebook or Twitter, provide other opportunities to reach you where you are – rather than you coming to us.

- Topics and updates on County activities will be posted and, from time to time, may ask for feedback. This information will continually be monitored, and may be reported back to staff and Council.
- Staff will strive to be current and responsive to comments that contain inaccurate or inappropriate content.

We look forward to hearing from you.