

Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's

Social Media Policy

Pursuant to the authority vested in the Town Council of Portugal Cove - Philip's the following policy was adopted on the 26th day of August 2025

1. TITLE

- 1.1 This document shall be known and cited as the *Social Media Policy*.

2. INTERPRETATIONS

- 2.1 “**Council**” shall mean the Town Council of Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s.
- 2.2 “**Councillor**” means an elected or previously elected member of a town or city council, including, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and all Councillors.
- 2.3 “**Chief Administrative Officer**” (**CAO**) refers to the person appointed to the position of Manager under the *Municipalities Act, 1999* or designated employee.
- 2.4 “**Employee**” or “**Employees**” shall mean any individual under an employment contract with the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s including all members of staff, volunteers, contractors and members of Council.
- 2.5 “**Employer**” shall mean the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s as represented by the Chief Administrative Officer or his/her designate.
- 2.6 “**Town**” shall mean the Town of Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s.

3. POLICY STATEMENT AND SCOPE

- 3.1 The Town of Portugal Cove–St. Philip’s is committed to maintaining high standards of integrity and professionalism in local government.
- 3.2 As required by the *Municipal Conduct Act*, the Town has Codes of Conduct in place for both municipal councilors and employees.
- 3.3 The codes state that councilors and employees must not post or comment—on personal or official social media—in a way that could harm the reputation of themselves, Council, or the municipality. All municipal business must be communicated through the Town’s official social media accounts.

- 3.4 If a complaint is received and cannot be resolved informally, the Act requires formal investigation and a report that is reviewed by Council. If Council determines the code of conduct has been breached, it is required to take action:
 - 3.4.1 For councilors, this may include a reprimand, training, suspension, or in serious cases, a court application to remove the councilor from office.
 - 3.4.2 For employees, disciplinary measures may be taken if a breach is confirmed.
- 3.5 These steps help ensure respectful, transparent, and accountable leadership in our community.
- 3.6 These steps help ensure respectful, transparent, and accountable leadership in our community.
- 3.7 The goal of this policy is to support Town employees and council to engage professionally and positively online, resulting in building trust for the Town, avoiding conflicts of interest and helping inform community members about matters that interest them most.
- 3.8 Social media can be used to share information, connect with the community, and discuss Town activities. However, it's important to remember that most social media platforms are public, and posts or comments can be shared widely.
- 3.9 Town employees and council members should think carefully before posting online, considering how it might affect themselves, their colleagues, the Town's reputation, and the community.
- 3.10 The code of conduct for employees and councilors already addresses positive and healthy social media use. This policy will further ensure responsible and respectful use of social media. The policy will help employees and council engage positively when using official Town accounts, as well as when commenting on personal accounts about Town matters.
- 3.11 The policy applies to all social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, blogs, and more.

4. POLICY PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Professional Responsibility
 - 4.1.1 When using social media, employees and council are reminded they are subject to the same professional and ethical obligations as when engaging in other types of public commentary.

- 4.1.2 When engaging on online platforms, users must do so in alignment with the codes of conduct and the *Municipal Conduct Act*. In addition, online activity must be consistent with the policies contained in the Town's Employee Handbook, including the Antitrust Compliance, Sexual Harassment, Confidentiality and Disclosure, and Use of PCSP Equipment and Services.

4.2 Personal Responsibility

- 4.2.1 While acknowledging the right to personal expression, employees and council should exercise caution and discretion, as their online presence reflects upon the Town whether they are commenting professionally or personally.
- 4.2.2 If what is being published is, in fact, official Town business, be sure that you are authorized to make such statements on behalf of the Town. If you are unsure about the appropriateness of a post related to a Town matter, consult with your supervisor or the Town's communications team for advice and to receive accurate information.
- 4.2.3 Employees and council should also consider adjusting privacy and security settings on their personal accounts to limit what members of the public can access to protect your own personal engagement with friends and family.

4.3 Respectful Engagement

- 4.3.1 When engaging on social media platforms as a representative of the Town, employees and members of council must be respectful of their audience, fellow employees and council, and all others. They should seek to maintain a respectful and inclusive tone in all interactions on social media platforms and encourage positive interaction and engagement, avoiding confrontational or derogatory conversations.
- 4.3.2 Posts or comments that could be deemed discriminatory, derogatory, defamatory, harassing, threatening, culturally inappropriate, sexualized or obscene to any individual or group, including on personal social media accounts, should always be avoided. In addition to causing harm, these types of comments could potentially result in legal repercussions for the poster.
- 4.3.3 Employees and council should not post items that would not otherwise be acceptable in the Town workplace and that could reflect negatively on the Town, or otherwise embarrass the organization, or cause harm to others.

4.4 Respect for the Law and Regulations

- 4.4.1 Online engagement must be conducted in respect of all applicable laws, including all those governing privacy, intellectual property, defamation, discrimination, harassment, and copyright.

4.5 Confidentiality

- 4.5.1 Employees and council are privy to a wide variety of privileged information, organizational strategies, sensitive data and employee and constituent information. When posting or commenting on social media, never share confidential information, only that which is public knowledge out of respect for the municipal affairs process and legal procedures, as well as others.
- 4.5.2 Do not reference Town staff, members of council, partners or vendors without their approval.
- 4.5.3 Do not discuss ongoing work-related initiatives that are not yet in the public domain.

4.6 Fact check and be honest

- 4.6.1 When engaging online, employees and council must always endeavor to offer clear, concise and accurate information.
- 4.6.2 Community members and constituents will have trust in comments made by employees and council. Sharing inaccurate information can lead to the spread of misinformation, undue stress on colleagues and create unnecessary conflict not based on facts.
- 4.6.3 Employees and Councilors have a duty to not spread false information online. The two main types of false information spread on social media are misinformation and disinformation. Misinformation is defined as false information that is not intended to cause harm. Disinformation refers to false information that is intended to manipulate, cause damage and guide people, organizations and countries in the wrong direction.
- 4.6.4 If a constituent makes an extraordinary claim about the Town online, ensure that it is flagged to the communications team so that its accuracy can be fact checked.

5. GUIDELINES FOR ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Engaging on Official Town Social Media Channels

- 5.1.1 Only authorized users can post and respond to comments on the Town's official social media accounts. Authorized users include the CAO, Recreation Staff, Directors and members of Council when representing the Town.
- 5.1.2 Posts should be respectful, accurate, transparent and be aligned with the Town's strategic goals.
- 5.1.3 Posts must be approved by CAO or Director of Community Services (or another Director in their absence).
- 5.1.4 Content should be focused on public education and awareness of Town activities.
- 5.1.5 Official Town accounts will be used to share the following information: Recreation, Economic Development, Public Relations, Emergency Notifications and Public Works.
- 5.1.6 All other topics/items will be acknowledged and referred to respective staff for private follow-up.
- 5.1.7 Regular monitoring is required. Responses should be timely and must be in accordance with the Town's strategic communications plan and approved by the CAO, Director of Community Services (or another Director in their absence).
- 5.1.8 Personal users are able to share official information and may post on the accounts as individuals. However, personal users are not authorized to respond to other posts, comments or inquiries. They must not provide confidential information obtained through their position and may only post content that is publicly available.

5.2 Engaging on Unofficial Social Media Channels About the Town

- 5.2.1 A number of community social media groups that are not managed by the Town are active online.
- 5.2.2 No employee or member of Council is responsible for responding to questions or comments on these community-based pages.
- 5.2.3 Any employee or member of Council choosing to engage in these groups must do so in accordance with the Town's Social Media Policy and their respective Code of Conduct.

- 5.2.4 If you choose to respond to an issue or question, only post content that is publicly available, do not provide confidential information obtained through one's position.
- 5.2.5 Whenever possible, suggest those with concerns bring them to the Town's attention on official social media and other communications channels for appropriate follow-up.

6. REPORTING CONCERNS

- 6.1 If employees or council encounter any inappropriate or concerning content related to the Town on social media, they are encouraged to report it and bring it to the attention of management, or the Town's communications team for appropriate and further review and follow-up.

7. PENALTIES

- 7.1 Any person found to be in contravention of the Social Media policy is considered a violation of the code of conduct and subject to the procedures outlined in the codes and the penalties outlined in the *Municipal Conduct Act*.

8. REVIEW

- 8.1 This policy is subject to review and modification as necessary to ensure it remains compliant with current legal standards and aligned with the overall mission of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philips.
- 8.2 Council and employees will have read, understand and agree to comply with the Town of Town of Portugal Cove - St. Philip's Social Media Policy. Council and employees will be aware that violations of this policy may be subject to corrective action.
- 83.3 This policy may be amended from time to time in response to changes in the social media landscape.

9. AMENDMENTS

- 9.1 August 26th, 2025, Motion # 2025-284.

10. INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE / RESOLUTION

10.1 Date effective: February 11th, 2014, Motion #: 2014-033.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Carol McDonald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carol" and last name "McDonald" clearly distinguishable.

Carol McDonald, Mayor

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Claudine Murray". The signature is cursive and elegant, with the first name "Claudine" and last name "Murray" clearly distinguishable.

Claudine Murray, Town Clerk