

April 10 2024

I am writing in support of the motion: **That the City Clerk be directed, in collaboration with the Integrity Commissioner, to review the Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards and the Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy as they relate to use of personal versus corporate social media accounts and administered groups and report back as a part of the 2025 Governance Review. Also that the City Clerk be directed, in collaboration with Accessibility staff to provide accessibility guidelines and training for Council's corporate social media accounts to bring them in line with City of Guelph communications standards.**

As local traditional media sources disappear, Guelph residents are increasingly turning to social media for local news and updates. Social media has become an important tool for Council to communicate with Guelph residents. However, the current Code of Conduct and the various policies that guide interactions between Council and Guelph residents do not adequately address social media usage and conduct, creating opportunities for confusion and conflict. Corporate social media accounts should meet the City's standards for transparency, accessibility, equity, clarity, and fairness.

I urge Council to support this motion. Clarifying the use of personal versus corporate social media accounts, clarifying the Code of Conduct for Council and Local Boards and the Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy and how these codes apply to Council's use of social media, and ensuring Council's corporate social media accounts are accessible to all Guelph residents, would provide many benefits:

- Ensuring that Guelph residents can easily determine whether a social media message is an official communication from a member of Council, or if the message is personal and not related to the member's job. It should always be clear to residents what is an official communication from the City or from a member of Council acting in their official capacity with the City, and what is a personal opinion. Personal social media accounts should be clearly indicated as personal to avoid confusion;
- Providing assurance to Guelph residents that our elected officials are using the power that comes with their Offices responsibly on social media. Our elected officials should be accountable to the City's Code of Conduct, the Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy, accessibility policies, and DEI policies when they are exercising the powers of their Office on social media;
- Ensuring social media postings about news and events in our city posted by members of Council follow the City's accessibility guidelines, such as using ALT-text on images or using captions for video, so that all Guelph residents can access important local community news and information;
- Ensuring the City's DEI policies are followed when the members of Council spotlight various events, businesses, or charitable organizations on their corporate social media accounts, to ensure the safety and inclusion of all Guelph residents;

- Clarifying the appropriate personal and professional use of social media by incumbents during election campaigns, to avoid the appearance of City resources or official corporate social media accounts being used in election campaigns;
- Providing clear guidelines for Council's corporate social media accounts with respect to moderating or restricting comments from the public;
- Providing clear guidelines and processes for Council to address online harassment or abuse on their corporate social media accounts.

I respectfully request that Council and staff address these issues, and again urge Council to support this motion.

Sincerely,

Aerin Milley Smith
Guelph