



2297 Highway 12  
 PO Box 130  
 Brechin, Ontario L0K 1B0  
 p. 705-484-5374  
 f.705-484-0441

## Social Media Policy

<b>Origin Date: March 23, 2026</b>	<b>Description: Use of Social Media</b>	<b>Policy #:</b>
<b>Supersedes: Social Media Policy 2022</b>	<b>Scope: Employees, Members of Council, volunteers, advisory committees, local boards and commissions</b>	<b># of Pages: 13</b>
<b>Effective Date: March 27, 2026</b>	<b>Senior Leadership Team Approval: Council Approval: March 23, 2026</b>	

### 1.0 INTENT:

The Social Media Policy sets guidelines and standards to ensure the appropriate use and management of social media on behalf of the Township of Ramara. This policy supports the Township’s commitment to clear and effective communication with residents, businesses and community stakeholders.

This policy also establishes governance for Township corporate social media accounts and provides guidance for employees, Members of Council, volunteers, and members of Township boards, committees and commissions when communicating Township-related information through social media platforms.

### 2.0 SCOPE:

This policy applies to all Township of Ramara employees, Members of Council, volunteers, advisory committees, local boards and commissions discussing Township business on any Township and/or personal social media platform and to members of the public interacting with Township social media platforms.

This policy also applies to the creation, management, monitoring and moderation of Township corporate social media accounts.

Township social media platforms support public communication and engagement; however, the Township of Ramara website (ramara.ca) remains the Township’s official online source for municipal information, documents and notices.

### **3.0 DEFINITIONS:**

**Boards, Committees and Commissions –** Advisory bodies, committees of Council, local boards or commissions established by the Township of Ramara.

**Corporate Social Media Account –** An official social media account created and administered by the Township of Ramara for the purpose of communicating municipal information, programs, services, public notices and emergency updates.

**Departmental Social Media Account –** A social media account created to support a specific Township department or service area and approved by the Senior Leadership Team.

**Social Media Contributor –** A Township employee authorized to create, manage or publish content on Township corporate or departmental social media accounts on behalf of the Township.

**Personal Social Media Account –** A social media account created and maintained by an individual including employees, Members of Council, volunteers, or members of boards, committees and commissions that is not owned or administered by the Township of Ramara.

**Township Business –** Any matter related to Township operations, programs, services, initiatives, projects, policies or decisions of Council.

**Social Media Platforms –** Online platforms that allow users to create, share and interact with content in online communities including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube and other emerging platforms.

**Monitoring –** The process of reviewing comments, posts and interactions on Township social media platforms.

**Inappropriate Content –** Content posted on Township social media platforms that violates Township guidelines including offensive language, harassment, misinformation, spam or content that violates legislation or Township policy.

**Emergency Communications –** The use of Township communication channels including social media to share timely information with the public during emergency situations.

**Senior Leadership Team (SLT) –** The administrative leadership team responsible for operational decision-making including approval of new Township social media accounts.

#### **4.0 RESPONSIBILITY:**

All Township employees, Members of Council, volunteers, members of Township boards, committees and commissions are responsible for reading, understanding and complying with this policy when using or interacting with Township or other social media platforms.

The Manager of Communications & Community Experience, or staff designated by the Chief Administrative Officer, is responsible for the administration, oversight and coordination of Township corporate social media accounts.

The creation of any new Township social media accounts must be approved by the Senior Leadership Team and must demonstrate a clear operational or communications need and the ability to meet minimum posting standards.

#### **5.0 PURPOSE AND USE:**

Social Media Contributors must ensure that all content is accurate, timely, professional and consistent with Township policies, communications standards and brand guidelines.

Social media should be used as a communication tool to enhance communication between the Township and the public about programs and services for purposes including:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting Township events, programs and services
- Increasing access to information for specific audiences
- Disseminating time-sensitive information quickly
- Promoting opportunities for public involvement

Where possible, Township social media accounts should link back to the Township website for forms, documents and additional information.

#### **6.0 MINIMUM MONITORING AND POSTING STANDARDS:**

To ensure Township social media platforms remain active, responsive and effective communication tools, minimum monitoring and posting standards are established for Township corporate and departmental social media accounts.

##### **Monitoring Standards**

Township social media accounts must be monitored regularly to ensure timely awareness of comments, questions, misinformation or inappropriate content posted on Township platforms.

Corporate social media accounts will be monitored a minimum of two times per business day, Monday through Friday, excluding statutory holidays.

Departmental social media accounts will be monitored a minimum of two times per business day during normal operating hours.

Monitoring frequency may increase during emergencies, major Township initiatives or significant public engagement activities.

#### Posting Standards

Township social media accounts are used to share timely information, promote programs and services, and support community engagement. The Township will typically aim to publish content at least once per business day for the Corporate Township social media accounts and once every other business day for Departmental accounts; however, operational circumstances may occasionally prevent this.

Additional content may be posted as required to communicate important information, including emergency communications, weather events, service disruptions, public notices or major Township initiatives.

Township social media accounts that consistently fail to meet minimum posting standards may be reviewed by the Manager of Communications & Community Experience and the Senior Leadership Team, and may be consolidated, restructured or discontinued where appropriate.

#### **7.0 POSTING AND SHARING CONDUCT:**

Social Media should be used as a communication tool for the intent of enhancing communication from the Township to the public about programs and services for the following purposes:

- Raising awareness and sharing information
- Recruiting volunteers and employees
- Promoting Township events, programs, and services
- Increasing access to information for specific audiences
- Disseminating time-sensitive information quickly
- Promoting opportunities for public involvement
- Where possible, Township social media accounts should link back to the Township's website for the purpose of downloading forms, documents, and providing specific or additional information
- Utilizing social media as an analytical tool to help monitor, track and evaluate the Township's communication and marketing efforts

Social Media Contributors using social media on behalf of the Township must conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner as stated in the Township Code of Conduct. Any breach of this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Staff and/or Council Code of Conduct.

Staff will:

- Post accurate, credible, and consistent information and links in alignment with the Township's information, messages, brand identity, and policies.
- Post content in a manner that does not disclose confidential information or release personal or corporate information without prior consent. Social media must take the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) into consideration.
- Post content in a professional and non-confrontational manner that does not contravene the Township's Code of Conduct.
- Ensure proper protocols and obtain permissions before posting any copyrighted material (including documents, websites, logos, images).
- Maintain security of social media accounts, including password and login information.

Where possible, each social media account used by the Township should contain a disclaimer clearly advising visitors to the site that third-party comments are not official communications of the Township of Ramara. The disclaimer should also note that in addition to the social media accounts, the Township website is the official destination for township information and that social media accounts are regularly monitored Monday- Friday during regular business hours.

Disclaimer example:

"Comments made by members of the public are not official communications of the Township of Ramara and are owned by the contributing commenter. These comments are not reflective of the Township's views, opinions, and/or policies.

This page is primarily monitored during regular business hours, between 9 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, excluding holidays. The Township of Ramara website at ramara.ca should be used as the official online resource for Township information."

When sharing or re-posting content from a social media account that is not owned by the Township of Ramara, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Connects the public with information and services provided by upper tier governments or government-funded agencies or boards in Canada.
- Provides further information on subject matter found on the Township's website. Such information must be provided by an official and/or accredited source.
- A Township-affiliated organization, service club or registered charity (direct partnership by way of funding, sponsorship, staff resources or in-kind contributions).
- A business improvement area operating within the Township.
- A professional association as determined solely by the Township of Ramara.
- Organizations approved by Council.
- General benefit to the Township and its residents.

The Township's social media account shall not share or re-post the following: links to a personal account/website, individual business account/website, political party/candidate account/website, or objectionable material as defined in the [Website policy](#).

Content promoting events:

- a. Organized or funded by another level of government;
- b. Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
- c. Organized by the Township of Ramara or an affiliated organization/group;
- d. Funded in full, or in part, by the Township of Ramara;
- e. Sponsored by the Township of Ramara;
- f. Organized by a service club operating within the Township of Ramara and performing work that benefits Ramara residents;
- g. Organized by a business improvement area or Chamber of Commerce located in the Township for general promotional purposes;
- h. General benefit to the Township and its residents.

The Township's social media account cannot share or re-post the following: any posts that promote events that are for individual businesses, include objectionable material, are political in nature, or promote an individual religion or religious service.

#### **8.0 EMPLOYEE PERSONAL USE SOCIAL MEDIA:**

The Township expects all employees who use social media to do so without breaching their duties to the Township and adhere to the Codes of Conduct. Any breach in this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Staff Code of Conduct. Employees should consider the following:

- Even if you do not explicitly identify yourself as a Township employee, others may identify you as an employee by your name, your place of work, a photograph, or by the content you post.
- Posts should not include Township-owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Posts should not circulate any organizational or confidential information such as internal deliberations, personal information such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Township of Ramara, Councillors, employees or residents.
- Posts should not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

Overall, employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally on and off

duty. Even when an employee does not publicly associate themselves with the Township on social media, all materials related to their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Township. Further, employees should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities pertaining to the Township of Ramara. The traditional legal view is that posting content on social media sites about an employer is considered a publication and not private activity. Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online related to the Township.

#### **9.0 VOLUNTEERS, MEMBERS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS SOCIAL MEDIA USE:**

The Township expects all volunteers and members of Local Boards, Committees and Commissions who use social media to do so without breaching their duties to the Township and adhere to their Codes of Conduct. Any breach in this policy will result in being reprimanded based on the Local Board and Committees/Council Code of Conduct.

Members of Local Boards and Committees should consider the following:

- Posts should not include Township owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Posts should not circulate any organizational or confidential information such as internal deliberations, personal information such as client or employee information, or negative comments about the Township of Ramara, Councillors, Members of Local boards, Committees and Commissions, Employees, volunteers or residents.
- Posts should not engage in workplace discrimination or harassment, or activity that includes inappropriate comments, photographs, links, etc.

Overall, volunteers, members of Local Boards, Committees and Commissions are expected to conduct themselves professionally both on and off duty. Even when a volunteer, member of a local board, committee or commission does not publicly associate themselves with the Township on social media, all materials associated with their page may be perceived to reflect upon the Township. Further, members should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities as they pertain to the Township of Ramara. Volunteers, members of local boards, committees or commissions are personally responsible for the content they publish online, and cannot use Township resources to investigate or defend any matters related to their personal posts.

#### **10.0 COUNCILLOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE:**

Members of Council may maintain personal social media accounts to communicate with residents and share information regarding municipal matters. These accounts are personal accounts and are not owned, administered or managed by the Township of Ramara.

Members of Council using social media must conduct themselves in a respectful

and professional manner and comply with the Township of Ramara Member of Council Code of Conduct. Any breach of this policy may be addressed in accordance with the Member of Council Code of Conduct.

Members of Council should recognize that even if they do not explicitly identify themselves as a Member of Council on social media, they may still be identified by others through their name, photograph, place of work or the content they publish. As such, their social media activity may reasonably be perceived as reflecting upon the Township of Ramara.

Members of Council are responsible for the content they publish online related to the Township and must ensure that their social media use reflects the same standards expected of Township employees when communicating about Township business.

Members of Council shall:

- Ensure that information shared regarding Township programs, services or decisions is accurate and reflects publicly available information.
- Conduct themselves in a respectful and professional manner when engaging with members of the public.

Members of Council shall not:

- Post Township-owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Circulate organizational or confidential information, including internal deliberations, internal correspondence, emails, messages, screenshots of internal communications, personal information related to employees or residents, or information that has not been publicly released by the Township.
- Engage in workplace discrimination, harassment or inappropriate conduct, including the sharing of offensive comments, images, links or other material.
- Use Township corporate or departmental social media accounts to express personal opinions or viewpoints.
- Use Township corporate or departmental social media platforms to campaign for election or promote political activity.
- Engage in debate with other Members of Council on Township social media channels.
- Post comments on Township social media channels that may be interpreted as official Township responses.

Members of Council are encouraged to share or repost official Township social media updates through their personal social media platforms to help ensure residents receive accurate and timely information regarding Township programs, services and decisions of Council.

Where questions or concerns are raised on Township social media platforms, Members of Council are encouraged to allow Township staff to respond through

official Township channels to ensure responses are accurate, coordinated and consistent with Township communications protocols.

Members of Council should not expect confidentiality or privacy in relation to their online activities pertaining to the Township of Ramara. Content posted on social media regarding the Township may be considered a public communication rather than private activity.

Members of Council must respect the confidentiality of information obtained through their role and comply with all applicable legislation including the *Municipal Act* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA).

### **11.0 CITIZEN CONDUCT:**

The Township of Ramara's social media accounts and pages are intended to serve as communication platforms and information-sharing tools between the Township and members of the public.

Users and visitors to the Township's social media accounts/pages should be notified that the intended purpose of the site is to serve as a communication platform and information-sharing tool between the Township and the public. Where possible, a hyperlink to the Township of Ramara Social Media Policy should be posted on the respective social media account/page.

The Township reserves the right to remove, hide or moderate inappropriate, inaccurate, irrelevant or unproductive content on its social media accounts. Users who violate the Township's social media guidelines, including posting inappropriate, irrelevant, inaccurate or unproductive content, may be banned/blocked from Township social media platforms at the discretion of Township staff.

The Township is not obligated to respond to all comments, questions, or messages posted on its social media accounts. Township staff will make reasonable efforts to respond to direct questions, comments, or messages submitted through official Township social media channels when appropriate. Staff may also respond where necessary to clarify or correct misinformation related to Township programs, services, or initiatives.

Township staff will only respond to comments or direct messages made on the Township's official social media accounts. The Township does not monitor or respond to comments, tags, or discussions on third-party pages, groups, or personal accounts.

The Township is not responsible for comments or other content posted by users on its social media platforms or on other accounts and pages.

Comments, posts, or articles containing the following content will not be allowed:

- Posts should not include Township-owned logos, photographs, graphics or other media without the Township's authorization.
- Comments not related to the topic and/or issue within the post..
- Spamming, excessive posting, trolling or other disruptive activity.
- Posts that are meant to solicit sales or promote, products, or goods and services.
- Profane, aggressive, hateful, defamatory, insulting, rude, abusive or violent language or content as determined by the Township
- Content that includes or includes links to objectionable material, as defined in the Website policy.
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity.
- Information that may compromise the privacy, safety or security of the Township, public, or public systems.
- Comments or posts containing inaccurate information, material or misrepresenting facts relating to Township operations, services or decisions as known by the Corporation.
- Comments or posts that impersonate or misrepresent someone else, including public figures, Township staff or Township officials.
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- The Township of Ramara is not responsible for any comments or use of material posted by users.

Users who repeatedly violate these guidelines may be blocked or banned from Township social media platforms. In certain circumstances, the Township may disable or limit commenting on specific social media posts or Township social media platforms where it is deemed necessary to maintain respectful dialogue, prevent the spread of misinformation, or protect the integrity of Township communications.

The decision to disable or limit comments may be made by the Manager of Communications & Community Experience in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer.

Disabling comments does not limit the public's ability to contact the Township through other official communication channels.

## **11.0 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL:**

In emergency situations, including when the Township's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has been activated, Township social media platforms will be used (if available) to communicate timely, important public safety information, service disruptions, emergency response activities and other critical updates.

During declared emergency situations, all Township social media communications will be coordinated through the Emergency Information Officer (EIO) and/or Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) or designate in accordance with the Township's Emergency Management Program.

All declared emergency-related communications published on Township social media platforms must be authorized by the Emergency Information Officer and/or Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) or designate.

Departmental or other Township social media accounts must not publish independent posts in a declared emergency unless authorized or delegated by the Emergency Information Officer and/or Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) or designate.

Where possible, messaging in a declared emergency will be distributed through the Township's primary corporate communication channels to ensure information shared with the public is accurate, consistent and timely.

In emergency situations (non-declared), communications published on Township social media platforms will be authorized by the Manager of Communications & Community Experience or designate and/or the Fire Chief or designate.

Members of Council are encouraged to share or repost official Township communications through their personal social media platforms during emergency situations to help amplify accurate information to the community.

Members of Council should avoid publishing independent emergency-related information unless the information has been issued or confirmed through official Township communication channels.

Township social media platforms may also direct residents to official emergency information sources including the Township website, County of Simcoe, Ontario Provincial Police, public health authorities or other emergency response agencies.

Township social media platforms are not monitored continuously and should not be used to report emergencies. Residents requiring immediate assistance should contact 911 or the appropriate emergency service.

## **12.0 ELECTION PROTOCOL**

During any municipal, provincial or federal election period, the Township of Ramara's corporate social media accounts will continue to be used to communicate municipal information including service updates, public notices, emergency communications and community information.

Township social media platforms must remain politically neutral and must not be used to promote, endorse or oppose any candidate, political party or campaign.

Effective the first day of the nomination period for a municipal election, and at the commencement of any provincial or federal election period, Township corporate social media accounts will suspend engagement with political accounts.

All links, follows, likes and sharing of content associated with accounts belonging to Members of Council, candidates for municipal office, Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs), Members of Parliament (MPs), or their campaign or political accounts will be discontinued and removed where applicable.

During election periods, Township corporate social media accounts, including departmental accounts and accounts operated by Township boards, committees and commissions, must not follow, like, share, repost or otherwise engage with candidate campaign accounts or election-related content.

Township social media accounts may share or repost content from elected officials only where the Mayor, or a designate authorized by Council, is speaking on behalf of Council or the Township in an official capacity.

Candidates who are seeking election or Members of Council seeking re-election must not use Township corporate social media platforms to campaign, promote their candidacy or comment on election-related matters using Township communication channels.

Members of Council must comply with the Township's Use of Corporate Resources Policy, which prohibits the use of municipal resources, including Township communication channels and social media platforms, for election campaign purposes.

The Manager of Communications & Community Experience, in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, may limit or adjust the type of content posted to Township social media platforms during election periods to ensure compliance with municipal policies and applicable legislation.

This suspension of engagement with candidate accounts will remain in effect until the inaugural meeting of the newly elected Council, Legislature or Parliament has occurred.

### **13.0 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:**

All Township social media accounts must comply with the Township's information technology and security practices.

Passwords and login credentials for Township social media accounts must be shared with the Manager of Communications & Community Experience and the Township's Information Technology staff.

The Manager of Communications & Community Experience, in coordination with Information Technology staff, will maintain a master list of all Township corporate and departmental social media accounts and associated login credentials.

When a Social Media Contributor, administrator or designated staff member who manages a Township social media account changes positions within the Township or leaves the organization, the social media account password must be changed immediately.

The Manager of Communications & Community Experience must be notified prior to any changes to social media account passwords or account administration to ensure account security and continuity of access.

The Township reserves the right to access all Township social media accounts and content created on those accounts in accordance with applicable legislation, Township policies and records management requirements.

### **14.0 TRAINING:**

Employees responsible for administering Township social media accounts must complete training related to communications standards, moderation practices, privacy legislation and emergency communications protocols.

### **15.0 ACCOUNT REVIEW AND INACTIVE ACCOUNTS:**

Township social media accounts that fail to meet posting standards or policy requirements may be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and may be consolidated or closed where appropriate.

### **16.0 POLICY REVIEW:**

This policy will be reviewed by the Manager of Communications & Community Experience, or designate, at least once every three (3) years, or sooner if required due to legislative changes, operational requirements or emerging social media practices.