



Municipal Communications Policy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Cohesive and effective communications is an active process that, when done correctly, permeates every branch and department of an organization. It is essential to the effective administration of public policy, to the promotion of sustainable economic development, and it is integral to overall professionalism and staff and resource management.

Effective Communications is a term that denotes measured and thoughtful written and verbal transmissions and interaction with media, the public and with stakeholders in business, the social sector and internally to the Corporation. It also includes a monitoring and fulsome analysis of information received as a consequence of any public and/or feedback process. In effect, effective communications is an active and deliberate two-way process.

Direction needs to be provided to all officials of the Municipality regarding the basic requirements of corporate identity management within the municipality and standards set for municipal messaging at every level.

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2.0 DEFINITIONS

Brand Identity: indicates how the municipality wants its inhabitants to perceive its brand.

Brand Management: the process of maintaining, improving and upholding a brand so that the name is associated with positive results. Besides corporate identity, brand management involves a number of important aspects such as customer relations and satisfaction, business processes, staff motivation and communication. Brand management is built on a marketing foundation, and focuses directly on the brand and how that brand can remain favourable to customers/stakeholders.

Communications Designate of the CAO: the Chief Administrative Officer or an individual or Committee designated by the CAO to exercise a specific function denoted within this policy.



Confidential Material Information: any material information not widely disseminated within or external to the Corporation which, if disclosed, would be unduly detrimental to the Corporate interests. For example, immediate disclosure might interfere with the Corporation's pursuit of a specific objective or strategy, with ongoing negotiations, or with its ability to complete a transaction.

Corporation: The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, its Committees, Departments and/or any other branch or division falling under the operational or legislative control of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.

Corporate Identity: The means by which the municipality is recognized. It is also a means of conveying the ways in which it carries out, and values inherent in, its activities.

Disclosure Committee: A committee of corporate personnel with a primary function to assist the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) in fulfilling his/her oversight responsibilities with respect to certification of disclosure controls and procedures required under law. The Committee serves as an independent and objective party to help develop and monitor the Corporation's disclosure system.

Employee: Refers to any person, including a volunteer, who is acting or seen to be acting in an official capacity on behalf of the Municipality.

General and Routine Information: Information that would not otherwise be classified as material information, and which is not otherwise required to be kept confidential because of privacy laws.

Image: The impression clients or consumers have of the Municipality's total personality (real and imaginary qualities and shortcomings).

Material Change: A change in the business, operations, or capital of the Corporation that would reasonably be expected to have a significant effect on the financial or operational plans



or situation of the Corporation, and includes a decision to implement such a change made by the CAO, or an authorized member of Senior Management.

Material Information/Fact: Any information relating to the business and affairs of the Corporation that when publicly released would significantly affect, or would reasonably be expected to have a significant effect on the Corporation.

Municipality: The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, it's Committees, Departments and/or any other branch or division falling under the operational or legislative control of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.

Municipal Personnel: Any agent or person employed by the Corporation, as well as the Council, appointees of Council, volunteers acting for the Corporation; contractors, agents and representatives when acting as such.

Museum: The Museum Strathroy-Caradoc (~~colloquially known as the Strathroy-Caradoc Museum~~) is a division of the Municipality tasked with the preservation and showcasing of local heritage.

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Secured: Placement and/or storage of an item, package, information or material in a location that is accessible only to a person authorized to access it.

Selective Disclosure: Disclosure of confidential material information to one or more individuals or companies and not broadly to the investing public.

Senior Officer/Senior Management: Includes the CAO and all Directors of the Corporation.

Website: Refers to the Municipal website and all microsites maintained by and/or funded via Municipal resources unless otherwise specified in this policy or within an applicable regulation or statute enacted by another government with jurisdiction.

3.0 PURPOSE



- To provide clear rules, guidelines and structures for the deployment, management and oversight of all internal and external communications undertaken or authorized by the Municipality, including the release of information about the Municipality to the general public, media, customers, potential investors, and to other stakeholders;
- To establish messaging that underscores and promotes the corporate identity;
- To maintain continuity and consistency in all expression and applications of the corporate identity; and
- To compliment the Municipal Branding Guidelines and other authorized communications and marketing initiatives advanced by the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.

4.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Strathroy-Caradoc employees, volunteers, agents and to the whole Council with respect to all information (general, confidential, or material) in whatever form or means, regarding the Corporation that is shared between the Corporation and Corporate personnel, and other parties.

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For clarity, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) shall be primarily responsible for the general maintenance, advancement and stewardship of this policy and, to assist with this, the CAO may strike a staff Communications Advisory Committee comprised of municipal personnel representing key departments of the Corporation. The CAO, or a designate, will Chair such a Committee and that Committee will deliberate and make recommendations to the CAO with respect to the administration of this policy.

In cases of conflict or confusion, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc shall be empowered to make any and all necessary alterations or clarifications needed to ensure the equitable and effective application of this policy.

During times of the CAO's absence, the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement, will be authorized to



undertake all duties of the CAO with respect to corporate communications.

5.0 GENERAL

The custodian of key Corporate messaging is the Director of Economic Development & Community Engagement, executed by the Communications Coordinator, and ultimately approved by the CAO and Council. Key messaging will be in alignment with the current Strategic Plan.

In this capacity, the CAO shall, with the input and guidance of the Council:

- Ensure key messaging is in alignment with the current Strategic Plan
- Ensure key messaging supports the brand identity established by Council;
- Ensure consistency and coherence in communications objectives and methodologies;
- Manage the resources necessary for effective communications;

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In this capacity, the Communications Coordinator shall, with the input and guidance of the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement:

- Oversee and manage the Municipality's social media and web presence;
- Oversee and manage the Municipality's communications output; and
- Oversee and manage communications linkages and key priorities across the Corporation (to be in alignment with the current Strategic Plan)

For clarity, the above includes all Municipal communications (print, audio, electronic, verbal etc.) of the Corporation; whether internal or external.



6.0 OBJECTIVES

The Corporation has both a legal and moral obligation to ensure that all information relevant to the business and affairs of the Corporation is, if and when applicable, disclosed in an appropriate, fulsome and honest manner. This policy will assist the Corporation in satisfying the objectives above, and in assigning responsibility for the implementation and oversight of these policies and procedures. For clarity, the primary objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure material information is disclosed in a timely, consistent, and appropriate manner;
- To provide clear guidelines for the broad dissemination of material information pursuant to all applicable legal requirements and best practices;
- To prevent the improper use or premature disclosure of confidential material information under the care and control of the Corporation;
- To ensure that information is managed and/or released in a manner that is open and transparent while simultaneously ensuring the stewardship and preservation of the corporate brand and image;
- To provide guidance for all municipal staff with respect to the proper protocols and practices as they relate to all communications including social and conventional media practices, marketing and brand management relating to the Corporation and to municipal business; and
- To provide direction for all municipal personnel in the appropriate treatment of material, confidential, general, and routine Corporate information.

7.0 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

The Corporation is committed to timely, accurate, and complete disclosure of material information in an appropriate manner. The Municipality recognizes that it must meet the disclosure



expectations of stakeholders and as prescribed by all relevant legislation and regulation. Every effort shall be made by Municipal staff and officials to ensure compliance occurs. Similarly, confidentiality and protection of sensitive information is a key priority for the Municipality. Unauthorized and/or inadvertent release or communication of information is unacceptable and should be prevented whenever possible.

This policy recognizes, within the aforementioned context, that the Municipality shall research, devise and execute a communications strategy with the objective of favourable outreach, promotion, and information sharing and/or risk mitigation as deemed necessary.

Directors are responsible for ensuring that all requests received by their department, under any and all legislative access mechanism, are immediately communicated to the CAO and/or to the Communications Designate of the CAO in a timely manner.

7.1 DISCLOSURE COMMITTEE

A Disclosure Committee shall be established by the CAO. The Committee shall be tasked to recommend (to the CAO) and maintain (under the guidance and supervision of the CAO), a structure by which all formalized information of a personal nature shall be released. In effect, this staff Committee shall serve as the access to information branch of the Municipality. This Committee shall also undertake special tasks, as assigned by the CAO, relating to information disclosure. For example, should an unauthorized information disclosure occur, the Disclosure Committee could be mandated to investigate any breach and to report to the CAO for mitigation and/or corrective measures as are necessary.

7.2 COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The CAO may strike a staff Communications Advisory Committee comprised of municipal personnel representing key departments of the Corporation. The CAO, or a designate, will Chair such a Committee and that Committee will deliberate and make recommendations to the CAO with respect to the Municipal communications and, when appropriate, on the administration of



this policy.

7.3 COMMUNICATIONS DESIGNATE OF THE CAO

The CAO may appoint Communications designate(s) to assist with the administration of this policy.

8.0 PREVENTION OF INFORMATION LOSS

To prevent the inadvertent loss or misappropriation of information under the care and control of the Municipality, the CAO shall be responsible for establishing and communicating control guidelines and directives for all staff. For example, all staff and volunteers should be aware of the following:

1. Documentation and supporting materials (paper and electronic) shall not be taken home unless first authorized by a Director or the CAO. For clarity, all Directors are authorized to take work home unless notified otherwise by the CAO;
2. All off-site documentation must be secured at all times;
3. Sensitive information received by virtue of employment with the Municipality is not for public disclosure unless appropriately authorized;
4. Keys, radios, documents, computer equipment etc. should never be left unattended in any unsecured location or automobile; and
5. Loss, damage or theft of any Municipal property or materials must be reported to a Director or to the CAO immediately.

8.1 CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS

Confidential material information under the care and control of the Municipality is subject to strict confidentiality restrictions and care must be taken to ensure the information is used only to further the approved business purposes of the Corporation.



Access to confidential material information is restricted to authorized persons who should be aware of their confidentiality obligations. To assist with this, the CAO may use confidentiality agreements where required to fortify this protection.

Wherever practical, confidential material information should:

- be identified as such;
- be stored in locked cabinets to which access is restricted;
- be removed promptly from meeting rooms at the conclusion of meetings;
- be subject to secure limited access of electronically stored computer information;
- not be discussed in places where the discussion may be overheard; and
- not be copied unnecessarily or discarded where others can easily retrieve it.

9.0 MEDIA RELATIONS, PUBLIC COMMENTS, AND DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON

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9.1 MEDIA RELATIONS POINT OF CONTACT

Media relations activities are coordinated through the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Communications Coordinator, or designated spokespersons identified by position title (See **Appendix 3** for a list of designated spokesperson positions).

Members of Council, the CAO, the Communications Coordinator, and/or designated spokespersons may respond to media inquiries and participate in media interviews, in alignment with their roles and responsibilities.

Whenever possible, the Mayor or an appropriate member of Council shall serve as the primary spokesperson for the Municipality on non-technical and/or governance-related matters. This includes:

1. Political matters;



2. Emergency situations (as designated by the Mayor); and
3. Community matters of a non-operational nature.

Senior Officers, Directors, or subject-matter experts may, as appropriate, respond to media inquiries and participate in interviews relating to their specific areas of responsibility. In these cases, the Communications Coordinator must be notified of all confirmed interviews to ensure corporate consistency and coordination.

Municipal personnel who are not designated spokespersons are not authorized to respond on behalf of the Municipality to any media inquiry or to initiate communication with the media. Such inquiries must be referred promptly to the Communications Coordinator, CAO, or a designated spokesperson.

9.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON

Designated spokespersons have a duty to speak truthfully, clearly, and accurately to the best of their knowledge regarding the Municipality, subject to disclosure restrictions as outlined in this Policy.

9.3 PUBLIC COMMENTS AT MEETINGS/CONFERENCES

Municipal personnel invited to deliver speeches or presentations at conferences, community events, or stakeholder meetings as part of their normal responsibilities must notify their supervisor before accepting the invitation. In these situations, the roles and responsibilities of the designated spokesperson apply.

9.4 PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF PERSONAL OPINION



Municipal personnel should refrain from making public statements of personal opinion regarding the Municipality or municipal business, and must not present personal opinions as fact.

9.5 DUTY OF LOYALTY

All employees have a fiduciary duty of confidentiality and loyalty to the Corporation, prohibiting disclosure or use of confidential information to the Corporation's detriment. The Corporation expects all employees to act with good faith, honesty, and loyalty at all times.

10.0 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

10.1 PRINCIPLES OF MATERIAL INFORMATION DISCLOSURE

When releasing material information, the Corporation will adhere to the following:

- Where a determination has been made to disclose material information, such information will immediately be broadly disclosed to the public;
- Disclosure must include any information the omission of which would make the rest of the disclosure misleading (half-truths can be misleading);
- Unfavourable information must be disclosed as promptly and completely as favourable information;
- Disclosure on the Corporate website does not by itself constitute adequate disclosure of material information;
- No selective disclosure will be permitted for media purposes. Confidential material information must not be disclosed to selected individuals unless specifically directed by the CAO; and
- Disclosure must be corrected if the Corporation subsequently learns that earlier disclosure by the Corporation contained an error at the time it was given.

10.2 UNINTENDED SELECTIVE DISCLOSURE

If confidential material information has been inadvertently disclosed to any person not bound by a confidentiality



obligation, legal intervention or counsel must be secured immediately to remedy the situation. Upon becoming aware of an unintentional selective disclosure, Municipal personnel are required to advise the CAO of the circumstances immediately.

10.3 NEWS RELEASE

News releases containing material information will be issued as soon as practicable via a protocol approved by the CAO and/or Communications Coordinator. In addition, the news release will be transmitted to major and local media (as appropriate), as well as being posted on the Corporate website and social media platforms.

The Communications Co-ordinator, is responsible for the appropriate dissemination of information once approved for release by the CAO or Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement.

10.4 ROUTINE INFORMATION REQUESTS

Enquiries from the public for general and routine information can be answered by the appropriate employee/Manager/Director if the information requested is contained within records/publications previously released for public distribution and if the information falls under the operational control of the said employee/Manager/Director. If an employee/Manager/Director is unsure if they should release any information, clarity must be sought from a supervisor prior to any information release.

Enquiries from the public cannot be answered if the enquiry is regarding Corporate activities that constitute confidential material information. If such an enquiry is made, the employee/Manager/Director will respectfully decline the request as containing confidential or proprietary information.

10.5 RESPONDING TO RUMOURS OR GENERAL SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

In general, no comment will be made in response to rumours or speculation regarding the Corporation. However; certain exceptions may be made under the direction of the CAO or Communications Coordinator (for example, if the safety or



security of the public is subject to speculation). If such an exception is authorized, section 11.0 of this policy will apply. Also see **Appendix II** for additional clarification.

11.0 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND THE CORPORATE WEBSITE

All communications, including electronic communications, must comply with the relevant laws and with this policy. This includes email, the internet, social media, an intranet, and the internal network of the Municipality. Proper precautions should be taken when using electronic communications to discuss confidential material information. Additional clarity as it relates to the Municipal website and social media can be found in **Appendix II**.

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A Communications Co-ordinator is responsible, under the direction of the CAO and/or Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement for monitoring and updating information on the Corporate website, microsites and social media platforms. Postings on the Corporate website, microsites and social media platforms will (whenever appropriate and possible) adhere to the following principles:

- Postings will follow a content schedule created by the Communications Coordinator, which should be alignment with the Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision and Values of the corporation.
- Additions to the website, specifically press releases and pdfs, will include the original date of release
- Information posted on the website will be kept current;



- The website, and documents posted to it, will be AODA-compliant whenever possible; and
- Links to external sites will always open in a new browser to emphasize the fact that users are leaving the Municipal site.

11.1 INTERNET DISCUSSION FORUMS, CHAT ROOMS, BULLETIN BOARDS AND ELECTRONIC MAIL (EMAIL)

Due to the immediacy of electronic information, Municipal personnel are discouraged from participating in discussions about the Corporation on internet discussion forums, chat rooms, or bulletin boards. Municipal personnel may not, at any time, discuss confidential material information. Posting on official Municipal social media forums by unauthorized municipal personnel is restricted. Also see **Appendix II** for additional clarification.

11.2 QUIET PERIODS OR BLACKOUTS

From time-to-time, communications blackouts may be prescribed by the CAO.

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12.0 REPORTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

The CAO must be immediately informed of all relevant deaths, emergency situations and especially unusual incidents involving the Municipality. The CAO must be immediately informed of all legal actions involving the Corporation.

13.0 DATA AND RECORD KEEPING

Where practicable, spokespersons will keep notes of telephone conversations with stakeholders and members of the public. Spokespersons should consult the CAO or Communications Coordinator if questions arise concerning communications practice, policy or the release of information.

14.0 GOVERNING RULES AND REGULATIONS



This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other requirements that govern the release and retention of information.

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc accepts the doctrine of federal/provincial paramountcy as it relates to all municipal policies, procedures and by-laws. For clarity, this acceptance means that, where there is an inconsistency or overlap between any validly enacted municipal policy, procedure or by-law and a lawful and relevant federal or provincial directive, statute or regulation, the federal or provincial directive, statute or regulation shall take precedence and override the cited municipal provision to the extent of resolving the inconsistency.

Exemption from compliance with these guidelines will only be granted on the basis of a national emergency, extreme urgency or other extraordinary reasons considered appropriate by the CAO.

15.0 BREACH OF POLICY GUIDELINES

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Non-compliance of this policy is furthermore deemed as a breach and will be referred to the relevant source for corrective measures and/or disciplinary action.

16.0 SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

To identify responsibilities and standards for the establishment and administration of corporate social media sites.

To provide rules on the acceptable participation in social networks by Members of Council and municipal employees. This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Strathroy-Caradoc Employee Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct for Members of Council



and Local Boards, Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources Policy, and R-Zone.

This policy serves to:

- Provide direction to those managing and administering corporate social media sites;
- Protect the municipality's reputation;
- Provide employees and Members of Council with clear usage guidelines; and
- Provide protocol around monitoring, administration, acceptable use and privacy.

Scope

This policy applies to all Members of Council and employees of the municipality (including part-time and volunteer positions). This policy applies to usage during and outside work hours.

Definitions

"Social Media" includes any forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, ideas, personal messages and other content. These include web-based sites that include blogging, micro blogging, photo sharing, video sharing, webcasting and networking.

"Communications Coordinator and/or Communications Assistant" means the employee within Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc who has been delegated to establish and administer social media channels on behalf of the corporation, and to establish and enact social media strategies and reporting. The Communications Coordinator and/or Communications Assistant serves as a social media moderator.

"Social Media Moderators" means employees within Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc who have been delegated to speak on behalf of



the municipality through updating the content on the municipality's social media channels.

"**MFIPPA**" means the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Roles & Responsibilities

This policy is presented as two procedures - one for social media administration and one for personal use of social media.

Under the social media administration procedure:

Communications Personnel and Moderators are responsible for following this policy. The Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement is responsible for ensuring that staff delegated to these roles are aware of the policy and meet the standards set out in this policy.

Under the personal use of social media procedure:

- All municipal staff are responsible for the following this policy. Department directors are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the policy and meet the standards set out in this policy.
- All Members of Council are responsible for following this policy. The Clerk is responsible for ensuring that Members of Council are aware of the policy. The CAO is responsible for ensuring members of council meet the standards set out in this policy.

16.1 Procedure A - Social Media Administration

Statement of Purpose

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc supports the open and transparent use of social media to further corporate goals and objectives where appropriate. This procedure establishes guidelines for those involved in using social media on the Municipality's behalf.



Administration and Management

The use of all social media sites by the municipality will adhere to:

- applicable provincial and federal laws, regulations;
- the terms of service of each social media site; and
- all applicable corporate policies, guidelines, and by-laws, including, but not limited to: applicable administrative, human resources policies, information technology polices and records management policies and by-laws.

All new and existing social media tools being used to conduct municipal business will be established and administered by the Communications Coordinator as designated by the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement.

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The Communications Coordinator and/or Assistant will provide oversight for the use of social media tools and sites for business of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, as well as for the creation, maintenance, and measurement of content on those sites.

The Communications Coordinator will establish a social media strategy for Strathroy-Caradoc to be reviewed on a biennial basis by the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement.

The Communications Coordinator will provide training, as required, to staff serving in the role of social media moderators.

The Communications Coordinator will be responsible for managing the passwords for the municipality's social media sites. The



Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement will maintain back-up copies of these passwords.

The Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement will maintain a list of social media moderators, and will ensure a back-up is available should the Communications Coordinator or moderators be unavailable to post an urgent/emergency item to the municipal social media channels.

The decision to add or decommission a social media channel and/or account will be the responsibility of the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement, to be made in consultation with the Communications Coordinator and the senior management team.

Approach to and Responsibilities for Social Media Management

In general, municipal social media communications will be conducted through a "one-window" approach, meaning that there will only be one municipal account per social media site. Department-specific or group-specific Strathroy-Caradoc accounts will not be permitted without prior authorization.

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Posting to and the use of municipal social media sites will only be conducted through designated municipal staff (social media moderators).

Municipal employees who participate in social media communication as social media moderators on behalf of the municipality must do so in accordance with the following employee expectations and responsibilities:

- Use of an employee's municipal email address, communicating in an official capacity, or discussing municipal business on corporate social media sites will constitute conducting municipal business;
- Social media moderators shall at all times conduct themselves in a positive, professional, honest, ethical,



and fair manner in accordance with this policy and related policies;

- Social media moderators are expected, at all times, to conduct themselves in the best interest of the municipality; and
- Corporate responses to online postings, blogs, and discussion forums about municipal-related business will be coordinated by the Communications Coordinator, with input from the appropriate staff member or department.

Social media moderators who fail to comply with this Policy may be subject to corrective action or disciplinary action.

Any content that is deemed inappropriate or does not adhere to the social media policy must be immediately brought to the attention of the Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement or their delegate.

General Guidelines

Content Management Principles

Social media moderators must ensure social media content:

1. Is implemented in a manner that positively enhances the municipality's reputation and reflects the values of the corporation.
2. Provides a consistent and professional voice so that residents can be assured that the information they are receiving is official information from the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc.
3. Is effectively managed to ensure that they provide timely and accurate/truthful information and responses.



4. Reflects the municipality's position and factual information and not based on personal opinion.
5. Does not compromise public safety.
6. Does not personally attack, harass, discriminate or display any cultural insensitivity.
7. Does not violate trademark or copyright laws.
8. Does not blatantly or inadvertently make a public declaration or statement without prior approval of the organization.
9. Respects the confidentiality of municipal information, individual privacy, and any related municipal policies and by-laws.

Social media moderators are encouraged to discuss posts and/or responses to content with the Communications Coordinator, appropriate staff member and/or Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement if they are unsure of the content's appropriateness.

Availability

As time permits, the Communications Coordinator or delegate will update and monitor the social networking platforms it deems active during regular office hours, 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday. Weekend content posting is permitted for the promotion of Municipal events and/or emergency communications only.

Social media platforms may occasionally be unavailable and the municipality accepts no responsibility for lack of service due to the downtime of any service.

Privacy

Unless obligated by applicable law, by-law, legislation, or to demonstrate negative behaviour from a user, Strathroy-Caradoc does not capture or record the contact details of parties interacting with its social media accounts. Any information



identified and deemed confidential or private is treated in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

The municipality does not collect information for commercial or marketing purposes, nor does it sell, exchange, or otherwise distribute information collected through its use of social networking sites for commercial or marketing purposes. The municipality will not, under any circumstances, use any information provided by users for any purpose that is inconsistent with the purpose for which the information was provided, as stated on the social networking site.

Replies/Comments/Messages

Posting on a social media site is not considered official notice or an official complaint submission to the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. Unless otherwise noted in applicable policies, contact through a social media platform does not constitute formal feedback or consultation.

As time permits, the social media moderators will read the comments and private messages to 1) ensure they are appropriate 2) that any emerging themes or helpful suggestions are forwarded to the relevant departments, and 3) that any factual errors (misinformation) is corrected.

Social media moderators will respond to private messages sent via social media in a fashion similar to that of general calls to the office. Timelines for response will align with Strathroy-Caradoc's Customer Service Standards. Social media moderators will respond to simple information requests, but complicated or "hot-button" issues will be escalated to the appropriate staff member as the issue dictates.

When a response is required to an appropriate question or comment posed through social media, staff aim to address them within 8 business hours. Response time may be limited by staff availability and resources across the corporation; there will be instances when a response may take more time.



Content Standards – Post and Comment Policy

Comments made by the public on municipal social media sites will be monitored by municipal staff. Strathroy-Caradoc reserves the right to turn off commenting at times, remove inappropriate posts and comments from its social media platforms.

Inappropriate posts and comments can consist of spam, vulgar language, solicitations and other inappropriate content as decided by the municipality. Comments will be deleted if any of the following occurs:

1. Comments should relate to the posted topic; off-topic posts or comments may be deleted.
2. Comments must not contain any personal information about another individual. Comments that disclose confidential information, or compromise the impartiality or integrity of staff or Council; Defamatory statements, allegations, inferences, impertinent, disrespectful or improper matter will be deleted.
3. Users may only post their own, original content. Reproduced or borrowed content that appears to violate trademark or copyright laws will be deleted.
4. Threatening, offensive or harassing language is not permitted.
5. Comments that constitute discrimination or harassment under the Ontario Human Rights Code are not permitted. This may include, but is not limited to content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.
6. Comments that promote illegal or dangerous activities are not permitted.



7. Comments that contain information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems are not permitted.

8. Comments that present demeaning or derogatory portrayals of individuals or groups or contain any message that is likely to cause deep or widespread offence are not permitted.

9. Comments that promote religious or political messages that might be deemed prejudicial to other religious or political groups are not permitted.

10. Comments promoting or endorsing any business for commercial gain are not permitted.

Social media moderators will not engage in debate or arguments on social media channels, but will provide factual information, provide departmental contact and, if deemed necessary, the appropriate contact for municipal council will be provided.

All comments that are deemed to be abusive or harassing in nature will be reviewed and processed through the municipality's R-Zone policies.

If a submission violates the above guidelines, or in any other way is deemed as inappropriate at the discretion of the moderator(s), the submission will be removed in its entirety from the site.

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc reserves the right to block/ban specific users from the municipality's official social media channels whose activities do not comply with the above criteria.

Sharing/Following Guidelines

Information on the following will be permitted (this is not an exhaustive list of permitted topics):

- Municipal sponsored events and activities;



- Municipal services;
- Public health and safety (e.g., road closures, inclement weather, etc.);
- Emergency services;
- Community events and/or community group events, which are open to the public and where membership is not required to participate in the event;
- Programs and initiatives that support regional and municipal economic development and community engagement (while this content may feature or highlight specific businesses, the intent is to frame the information as it relates to the benefit for all residents/businesses);
- Public service announcements from other government agencies; and
- Recognition of local achievements (e.g., citizen awards)

The municipality will not share/promote fundraising events, sales, calls for online donations, or similar efforts made by an individual or group of individuals that is not linked to a community organization or recognized charity. While there are many worthwhile efforts by individuals to raise funds for local residents and causes, the municipality is not in a position to vet these efforts to ensure the proceeds are used as advertised, nor does the municipality wish to arbitrate which fundraisers are worthy of support.

The municipality does not have the capacity to review and track all social media posts from all possible community groups and organizations. As such, sharing of information may be limited to what the Communications Coordinator or moderators happen to come across as they post and review the municipality's social media channels.



- Organizations wishing to have their information considered for sharing by the Municipality are encouraged to tag the Municipality in their posts.
- Organizations without their own social media accounts may email information to the Municipality to be considered for sharing on Strathroy-Caradoc accounts. Information should be sent to the Communications email address [connect@strathroy-caradoc.ca] and must be received by the municipality a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the event.

It should be noted that in relation to the list in the content standards above, Strathroy-Caradoc may at its discretion share posts or other content that is of a factual and non-political nature. The purpose of these posts must be to communicate one or more of the following:

- Information exclusively related to the municipality, related agencies, or other level of governments;
- Information that poses an immediate threat to the safety of the community;
- Information regarding positive community engagement of Council members that do not constitute or could be perceived as an endorsement of a private corporation or business entity.

In these cases, correspondence shall come from designated staff using official Municipal social media accounts, and not through staff/volunteer/council personal pages.

Disclaimer

Each social media account maintained by the municipality shall contain a link to the municipal website, and, if permitted, a statement of the hours which the account is monitored and that the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc is not responsible for content posted by other users.



As each social media platform has different limitations, a Social Media Disclaimer section will be added to the “Disclaimer and Privacy” page on the municipal website and will include a link to this policy.

Decommissioning

When a social media channel is deemed to no longer meet the needs of the municipality, it shall be decommissioned.

Records Management and Retention

Social media posts on sites moderated by the municipality may only be destroyed in accordance with the Records Retention By-law.

- Posts are considered to be transitory records of the municipality and may be deleted/purged from the social media site as soon as they are no longer needed.
- Messages sent/received through social media platforms are considered to be transitory records. Messages of a nature that would cause them to become permanent records should be moved from the social media platform to email, phone or meeting format, as appropriate.

NOTE: Third party social media sites are private businesses with their own terms of service and privacy policies. The municipality does not accept any responsibility for the operation of third-party social media sites and is unable to guarantee the privacy of individuals who access content provided to such sites by the municipality.

16.2 Procedure B – Personal Use of Social Media

Employees of Strathroy-Caradoc

While the municipality recognizes the popularity of social media, certain guidelines must be observed to protect the municipality, its ratepayers and staff. All municipal employees must ensure the following:



1. You are only permitted to access social networking sites on municipal computers and equipment during working hours as necessary to carry out your job duties.
2. Your participation in any social networking site must not conflict with your role at the municipality and must in no way harm the municipality's reputation.
3. The use of social media devices including personal cameras, cell phones, audio recording devices, etc. shall not be permitted to be used by municipal staff at emergency scenes. Confidential sensitive information that is intended to be kept private shall not be posted to any website.
4. You may not use municipal logos, slogans or intellectual property without prior written authorization. Employees with permission to use municipal logos, slogans, or intellectual property shall cease to do so if they are no longer employed with Strathroy-Caradoc.
5. Employees must ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous. Employees will be held accountable for what they write or post on social media or Internet pages. Inflammatory comments, unprofessional remarks or disparaging remarks made about the municipality, its employees, ratepayers, or vendors may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Even postings that are not directly related to the municipality may result in disciplinary action if they might threaten the municipality's reputation or business. Even though you are acting on your own time, you are still connected with the organization and can affect Strathroy-Caradoc's reputation.
6. The municipality's policies with regard to the Employee Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards apply to the use of social media regardless of



whether you are on or off duty or access social media at home or at work (i.e., derogatory or offensive comments about your co-workers on social media may be considered a form of harassment).

7. Employees should be aware that many suppliers, ratepayers and other persons present on municipal property frequently use mobile phones and other devices to take photographs or recordings. Employees should always represent the municipality in a positive and professional manner so negative images are not posted on social media sites of ratepayers and suppliers. Employees who are photographed or recorded acting inappropriately or unprofessionally may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

8. Employee issues and discontent should be raised through supervisors, managers, directors, human resources staff or the Chief Administrative Officer, and not through social media networks.

9. Employees who cease to work for the municipality should promptly update their employment status on business networking sites.

Members of Council

Members of Council are welcomed and encouraged to participate in social media, through their own accounts, while respecting the Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards. Members of Council are encouraged to follow the official municipal sites and to share content.

Council and committee/board members must ensure that privacy, confidentiality, copyright and data protection laws are adhered to, and must not make comments that are considered defamatory or libelous.

Council and committee/board members may not use municipal logos, slogans or intellectual property on their own accounts without



prior written authorization. While Members of Council are welcomed to share the issues before and decisions of Council, there is an expectation that should they choose to use of social media during a council meeting, their use will not interfere with their active engagement with and participation in the meeting.

Strathroy-Caradoc will not intercede on behalf of Members of Council for items members post on their own social media accounts. In the case where a member shares erroneous information about municipal decisions, services, etc., the Clerk or their designate will bring their matter to the attention of the member directly, with the expectation the member will correct the error as soon as possible.

During nomination period of a municipal election candidates or people acting on their behalf, are not permitted to post on Strathroy-Caradoc social media sites. In addition, incumbent members of municipal Council who may seek re-election in a forthcoming term, may not utilize the Strathroy-Caradoc social media sites to post individual campaign related information.

Any violations of the Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, will be dealt with according to the resolution process outlined in the Code.



16.3 Acknowledgement of Policy – Social Media

I have reviewed this policy and have had an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the requirements. If I have further questions I will bring them to the attention of my supervisor (for employees) and/or the Clerk (for Members of Council).

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The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc takes the above-mentioned policies, the Municipal Act and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) requirements with utmost seriousness, and may discipline any employee that does not comply strictly with them, up to and including employment termination.

Name (print):

Position:

Department:



Signature:

Date:

Appendix 1: Key Messaging For The Municipality

In keeping with Section 5 of this Policy, below represents sample key messages of the Corporation in alignment with the **current Strategic Plan**. As per Section 5, the custodian of corporate messaging is the CAO and Council. Moreover, the CAO shall review this list annually and present any changes to Council (if required) for their information.

Key Messages

1. **Local Infrastructure and Capital Investment:** Households and businesses in Strathroy-Caradoc are supported by reliable, financially responsible and well-maintained infrastructure networks.



2. **Economic Development, Industry, and Jobs:** Strathroy-Caradoc will have a diverse tax base and be a place that offers a variety of economic opportunities to current and prospective residents and businesses.
3. **Community Wellbeing and Quality of Life:** Residents of all ages in Strathroy-Caradoc will have access to community amenities and activities that are accessible and support active lifestyles and wellbeing.
4. **Community Safety:** Community safety is fundamental to community well-being, and all relevant services and organizations, including the Hospital and fire service, have key roles to play. The Municipality values its community based Police Service.
5. **Customer Service:** The municipality offers seamless, responsive service and an exceptional experience for every customer.
6. **Growth Management:** Strathroy-Caradoc will be an inclusive community where growth is managed to accommodate a range of needs and optimize municipal resources.
7. **Destination Building:** Strathroy-Caradoc will provide distinct experiences that celebrate its past and future by prioritizing innovative new ideas that set the community apart.

APPENDIX 2: General Website and Social Media Guidelines and Procedures

In keeping with Section 5 of this Policy, below represents general website and social media guidelines and procedures. As per Section 5, the custodian of this information is the Director of Economic Development, Communications Coordinator, and ultimately the CAO and Council. In this capacity, the CAO shall,



with the input and guidance of the Council keep this document current and relevant. Moreover, the CAO shall review this Appendix annually and present any changes to Council (if required) for their information.

Nothing contained in Appendix II supersedes items noted within the main body of this policy.

1. WEBSITE PURPOSE

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc maintains multiple websites. The primary site is www.strathroy-caradoc.ca; as well as three microsites www.strathroy-museum.ca, www.strathroy-caradoc-police.ca, www.investstrathroy-caradoc.ca. For the purpose of this document, websites shall be collectively referred to as Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc website or websites unless specified otherwise.

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc website replicates, in an electronic manner, many of the services offered by municipal staff and officials. The primary purpose of the municipality's website is to convey information to users; not necessarily to facilitate real-time dialogue between the users.

Communications made through social media shall not constitute legal notice to the Municipality of any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents or representatives, with any respect to existing or potential claims or cause of action against the municipality or any of its agencies, officers, employees, agents or representatives, where notice to the municipality is required by any federal, provincial, or local laws, rules, or regulations.

1. A) Website Goals

The goals of the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's website are:

- To provide information about municipal programs, services, activities, amenities, and events;



- To provide, as resources permit, an electronic way of allowing residents to conduct various types of business with the Municipality;
- To promote the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's economic, social, and cultural quality of life and/or opportunity; and
- To further the interests of local agencies, associations, and businesses that support the municipality's goals, policies, and purposes.

1. B) **Hyperlink Guidelines**

The purpose of the Municipality's website is to provide information about its government, services, and attractions. The Municipality's website may, from time-to-time, provide hyperlinks to websites outside the municipality's website. The municipality is not responsible for, and does not endorse, the information on any hyperlinked website unless the Municipality's website specifically states otherwise. The following criteria will be used by the municipality to decide whether to grant requests for hyperlinks from its website.

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The municipality's website may provide hyperlinks to websites for:

- Government and educational institutions;
- Organizations with some economic or subject matter relationship to the municipality (including but not limited to those contracting with the municipality, those sponsoring municipal activities or programs, and those participating in municipal activities or programs);
- Generally recognized community or civic organizations with a connection to the Municipality;
- Organizations providing information about art, cultural, and sporting activities in the municipality; and/or
- Organizations related to the municipality's tourism industry or opportunities.



The municipality's website shall not typically provide hyperlinks to websites for:

- Candidates for any elected office, other than as permitted in the Strathroy-Caradoc Use of Corporate Resources Policy;
- Sources advocating positions or practices that are inconsistent with the values espoused by the Municipality (i.e.: content seeking to incite crime, violence or gender inequality);
- Discussion groups, chat rooms, bulletin boards, and other largely unedited content created by individuals who are not owners, operators, or agents of a Strathroy-Caradoc website;
- Partisan political organizations; and/or
- Individual or personal home pages;

Websites that have been approved and linked from the municipality's website, but subsequently demonstrating any of the above categories of content, will typically be unlinked from the municipality's website without notice or compensation of any kind.

1. C) Privacy Guidelines

The protection of individual privacy is a primary concern to the Municipality of Strathroy- Caradoc, and is governed by local, provincial and federal laws and regulations. Accordingly, the Municipality has created a privacy statement in order to demonstrate and guide its commitment to privacy. The following statement discloses the Municipality's information gathering and dissemination practices as they relate to the Municipal website.

No personally identifiable information is automatically collected about visitors who simply browse the municipality's website or who download information from it.

The Municipality's web servers maintain logs of user activity in order to help manage the website. Information stored in these logs does not identify the user personally. The logs store such



things as the domain name and IP address from which a user accessed the municipality's website; the type of browser and operating system they used; the date and time they accessed the website; the pages they visited; and the country or region of the world from which they accessed the website.

The Municipality uses this information internally to learn how many visitors the website as, where they are coming from, which parts of the municipality's website are of most interest to visitors, for security, and other facts that will help improve the website and the services offered.

The municipality values user feedback. If users participate in a survey or send an email, their email address and any other information they have volunteered will be collected. Visitors who request services through this website may be required to furnish additional information in order to provide the service requested. The additional information collected will be no more specific than if the visitor were requesting the service by any other means, including by telephone or an in-person visit to a municipal facility. The Municipality may share this information with another government agency or organization if the disclosure is required as part of the service requested. Information may also be made available to police if the information is material to a police investigation or if the Municipality is ordered to disclose the data by a court.

While no website can protect itself against all eventualities, every effort is made to protect any sensitive personal information provided by users. The Municipality will not rent, sell or give away any information identifying users individually (name, address, phone number, etc.) to third parties for marketing purposes.

As a government agency, the municipality is governed by freedom and access to information statutes as enacted from time-to-time by senior levels of government. Users must understand that some business they conduct with the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc becomes a matter of public record. Public records, as defined by



the appropriate statute, and not made confidential elsewhere in law, may be posted for electronic access through the website. This includes most municipal permits applied for, or requests for a municipal service. These same records have long been open for public inspection by anyone requesting them in person, by mail or by telephone at the appropriate government office. All information on the municipal website is public information.

1. D) Disclaimer of Liability

The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc shall not be held liable for any improper or incorrect use of the materials or information contained on the website and assumes no responsibility for any user's use of them. In no event shall the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc be liable for any damages, whether direct, indirect, incidental, special, exemplary or consequential (including, but not limited to, business interruption or loss of use, data, or profits) regardless of cause, and on any theory of liability, whether in contract, statute, strict liability, or tort (including negligence or otherwise) arising in anyway out of the use of this website or the materials and information contained on Municipal websites, even if advised of the possibility of such damage. This disclaimer of liability applies to any damages or injury, including but not limited to those caused by any failure of performance, error, omission, interruption, deletion, defect, delay, computer virus, communication line failure, theft, or destruction of data, whether for breach of contract, tortuous behavior, statutory liability negligence, or under any other cause of action.

Users are encouraged to consult with appropriate and accredited professional advisors for advice concerning specific matters before making any decision, and the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc disclaims any responsibility for positions taken by individuals or corporations in their individual cases or for any misunderstanding and losses, directly or indirectly, on the part of any user.



1. E) Disclaimer of Warranties / Accuracy and Use of Information

The materials posted on the municipal website are provided "as is" and without warranties of any kind expressed or implied. To the fullest extent permissible under applicable law, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc disclaims all warranties, expressed or implied, including but not limited to, implied warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose and title to any of the materials provided on this website. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc does not represent or warrant that the functions contained in the materials will be uninterrupted or error-free, that defects will be corrected, or that this website or the server that makes it are free of viruses or other harmful components. The Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc does not warrant or make any representations regarding the use or the results of the use of the materials in this website, or through links to other websites, in terms of their correctness, accuracy, reliability or otherwise. The user (and not Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc) assumes the entire cost of all necessary servicing, repair, or correction.

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Changes are made periodically to many municipal documents, including municipal bylaws, regulations, guidelines, and schedules, and these changes may or may not be reflected in the materials or information present on the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc's website. Additionally, because the website is frequently under development, materials and information may be deleted, modified or moved to a different part of the website by the municipality without advance notice.



APPENDIX 3: Designated Spokespersons

The following positions are authorized to act as designated spokespersons for the Municipality. For clarification or questions, please contact the Communications Coordinator.

Position/Title	Department
Mayor	Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
Chief Administrative Officer	Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
Communications Coordinator	Economic Development/Community Engagement
Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement	Economic Development/Community Engagement
Museum Curator	Museum Strathroy-Caradoc
Director of Community and Development Services	Community Services
Manager of Recreation and Culture	Community Services
Community Services Operations Manager	Community Services
Manager of Building Services	Building & Planning
Manager of Growth and Development	Building & Planning
Director of Engineering and Public Works	Engineering & Public Works
Manager of Environmental Services	Engineering & Public Works
Manager of Public Works	Engineering & Public Works
Director of IT Services, Financial Services	Financial Services, Information Technology
Manager of Information Technology	Information Technology
Manager of Accounting-Deputy Treasurer	Financial Services
Director of Fire Services, Fire Chief	Fire Services
Deputy Fire Chief	Fire Services
Fire Prevention Officer	Fire Services
Chief of Police	Police Services



**MUNICIPALITY OF
STRATHROY-CARADOC**

The Corporation of the
Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc
52 Frank Street, Strathroy ON N7G 2R4

Deputy Police Chief	Police Services
Community Engagement Officer	Police Services
Director of Legal and Legislative Services	Legal and Legislative Services
Director of HR	Human Resources