

## CORPORATE POLICY

**POLICY TITLE:** SOCIAL MEDIA

**POLICY NO.:** 17.C.06

<b>Section:</b>	Public Information		
<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 24, 2026	<b>Date of Last Review:</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Approval Authority:</b> Council	<b>Policy Owner:</b> City Manager		
<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>			
<p>The Communications, Marketing and Engagement department will lead Social Media activities and guide the organization in best practices, training and mitigating risks relating to Social Media.</p> <p>The Social Media Policy sets the standards for administering the City’s Social Media accounts as an effective and efficient two-way communications channel with citizens and partnering organizations to educate and share information.</p> <p>Employees of the City of Vaughan are responsible for practicing ethical and professional behaviour while using social media for personal uses.</p> <p>Members of Council and Members of Local Boards are bound by the rules of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, which includes the requirement to adhere to the provisions of various City policies, such as this one.</p>			
<b>PURPOSE</b>			
<p>The Social Media Policy establishes service standards and actions relating to overall guiding principles and day-to-day operations of Social Media sites in order to provide accurate, timely and clear information about City services, programs and public safety to City of Vaughan residents, businesses, visitors and other stakeholders through proactive posts and responses to public inquiries.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The primary purposes of this Policy are to:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Provide Site Administrators and all persons who this Policy applies to with direction on use and risk mitigation related to Social Media.</li> <li>1.2 Align Social Media content to approved messaging related to City priorities,</li> </ol> </li> </ol>			

programs, services, events and public safety updates.

1.3 Clarify the application of policies such as the Employee Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, and the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes to the use of Social Media.

1.4 Clarify the types of User comments that are subject to removal at the discretion of Site Administrators.

## **SCOPE**

1. This Policy applies to:

1.1 All employees, Council Members, Members of Local Boards, contractors working within a City facility, companies hired by the City, and volunteers of the Corporation of the City of Vaughan.

1.2 All current Social Media sites and any future sites.

2. Employees who fail to comply with this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

3. Contractors who fail to comply with this Policy risk termination of their assignment and applicable contract.

4. The Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards operates together with and as a supplement to this Policy. Members of Council or Local Boards who fail to comply with this Policy may be subject to a Code complaint.

5. The Communications, Marketing and Engagement department will lead Social Media activities for the corporation.

6. The Social Media Policy sets the standards for administering the City's Social Media accounts as an effective and efficient two-way communications channel with citizens and partnering organizations to educate and share information.

7. Employees of the City of Vaughan are bound by the rules of the Employee Code of Conduct and other applicable policies. They are responsible for ensuring ethical and professional behaviour while using Social Media for personal uses.

8. Members of Council and Members of Local Boards are bound by the rules of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, which includes the requirement to adhere to the provisions of various City policies, such as this one.

## **LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

None.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **Campaign Period:** The official campaign period of a municipal, provincial or federal election or by-election:
  - (a) For a municipal election, beginning May 1 in the year of an election, and ending on voting day.
  - (b) For a provincial election, beginning on the date the writ is issued and ending on voting day.
  - (c) For a federal election, beginning on the date the writ is issued and ending on voting day.
  - (d) For a ballot question, the date on which Council passes the necessary by-law and ending on voting day.
  - (e) For a by-election, beginning the date the by-election is called and ending on voting day.
2. **City:** The Corporation of the City of Vaughan, including all of its departments, employees and administrative divisions.
3. **City Department:** A department, office, portfolio within the City of Vaughan.
4. **City Social Media Site:** a social media site or account created and maintained by a City Site Administrator that officially represents the City or its business.
5. **Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards (CL-011):** Establishes rules that guide Members of Council in performing their roles in representing their constituents and recognizes Members' accountability for managing City resources allocated to them.
6. **Communications, Marketing and Engagement:** The Communications, Marketing and Engagement department, being the City department which, among other things, conveys approved messages about City programs, services and events to the public.
7. **Employee Code of Conduct (13.A.02):** Establishes standards designed to promote and protect the public interests through honest and ethical conduct which enhances public confidence and trust in the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the City.
8. **Member:** Refers to the Mayor and Members of Council.
9. **Member of a Local Board refers to a member of the following local committees/local boards:** Accessibility Advisory Committee, Committee of

Adjustment, Heritage Vaughan Committee, and the Property Standards Committee.

10. **Member Social Media Site:** A Member's social media site created or maintained using City resources and that may use the City logo and contact information.
11. **Social Media Policy:** Set of principles that guide and determine the daily operations of the City's Social Media sites.
12. **Site Administrators:** City employees designated to operate official Social Media sites on behalf of the City.
13. **Social Media:** Internet and mobile-based tools designed for sharing and discussing information online through various devices. Social Media sites provide two-way communications channels for sharing opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives.
14. **User:** A visitor (e.g. resident, member of the public) to a City Social Media site.

## **POLICY**

This Social Media Policy provides principles pertaining to the City's approach to social media.

1. **Service Excellence**
  - 1.1 Social Media plays an important role in the City's commitment to delivering Service Excellence. As more residents use Social Media to communicate with the City and with Members, the City must have the appropriate resources in place to respond to them in a timely and effective manner. By meeting that need online, the City is enhancing the citizen experience and delivering services in the platform in which the resident has chosen to interact with the City.
  - 1.2 Maintaining the public trust and the City's reputation, as required by the letter and spirit of the Employee Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, is a requirement of all City Social Media use.
2. **Social Media Channels**
  - 2.1 Refer to [vaughan.ca/SocialMedia](http://vaughan.ca/SocialMedia) for a list of City Social Media sites.
  - 2.2 The City's approach to Social Media is centralized and managed under the Communications, Marketing and Engagement department.
    - (a) Existing Social Media accounts operated by Economic Development,

Recreation Services, Tourism Vaughan and Vaughan Public Libraries are exempt from 2.2.

- 2.3 Decisions pertaining to the addition and/or elimination of Social Media accounts will be made at the discretion of the Chief Communications Officer.

### 3. **Management Tools**

- 3.1 Site Administrators must use an online social media management tool to manage their accounts to ensure conversations are properly monitored and metrics are captured.

### 4. **Branding**

- 4.1 City Social Media accounts should be clearly identified as being maintained by the City by using the City logo and contact information.
- 4.2 City Social Media accounts will include a standard Terms of Use if the capability exists to post it on the site. The Terms of Use are available by contacting the Communications, Marketing and Engagement department.
- 4.3 In their profile, City Social Media sites will include a link to the official City of Vaughan website.
- 4.4 To support communications with the public, a central listing or point of access for all Social Media sites managed by the City is available at [vaughan.ca/SocialMedia](http://vaughan.ca/SocialMedia).
- 4.5 In general, the City's corporate Social Media channels will be published in corporate materials. Departments with the exemption granted under 2.2(a). can advertise their Social Media sites in department-produced communication vehicles, such as a program brochure or newsletter, if appropriate.
- 4.6 Members may have a Member Social Media Site controlled by the individual Member for the purpose of carrying out work related to council and ward matters. These accounts should be clearly identified as the Member's account and not an official City account.
- 4.7 Member Social Media Sites that identify the City logo or a Member's title are not intended to support personal or third-party interests and are not to be used for campaign purposes.

### 5. **Site Operation**

- 5.1 All Site Administrators must have prior permission from their director to communicate on behalf of the corporation, and each City department is responsible for overseeing staff authorized to use Social Media. Members are responsible and accountable for the use of a Member's Social Media site by

their staff or volunteers.

- 5.2 City employees must act ethically and professionally at all times when using Social Media for City business. City employees using Social Media sites for work-related activities represent the City of Vaughan and are subject to this Policy, and all applicable legislation and City policies including but not limited to policies governing staff conduct (e.g. Employee Code of Conduct, Acceptable Use of Information Technology, the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, the Respectful Workplace Policy, and the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes) and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Accountability rests with an employee's direct supervisor.
- 5.3 Inappropriate usage of City Social Media sites by City employees can be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
- 5.4 Inappropriate use of Social Media for Member Social Media Sites by Members of Council will be governed by this Policy, the rules of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, as well as the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes.
- 5.5 Personal information about residents collected by the City is subject to the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and shall not be posted on City Social Media sites, except in compliance with the Act.
- 5.6 Information disseminated using Social Media is considered public domain and subject to being reproduced (e.g. in newspapers, magazines, online).
- 5.7 Comments and messages posted to City Social Media sites are considered transitory and will not be kept as permanent records by the City, except for comments and postings made by the public during a declared emergency which need to be recorded and tracked as part of the official records of the emergency.
- 5.8 User comments or postings on a City Social Media site will not be considered or processed as official correspondence.
- 5.9 Site Administrators will take action to respond to inappropriate, abusive, discriminatory, offensive or unlawful comments by Users on City Social Media sites, per section 9. Posting Guidelines and User Comments.
- 5.10 The City's policies respecting the use of municipal resources during a campaign period apply respecting all Social Media sites including Member sites.

## 6. **Roles and Responsibilities**

- 6.1 The Communications, Marketing and Engagement department will:
- (a) Maintain corporate Social Media sites for communicating general information about the City to the public at large.
  - (b) Maintain a master list of all City accounts.
  - (c) Be responsible for publicly communicating a significant weather or emergency alert on corporate Social Media sites once an alert has been formally declared by the governing authority.
- 6.2 Site Administrators will:
- (a) Be courteous and respectful at all times when interacting with the public.
  - (b) Ensure their Social Media sites are used to post relevant and timely information about City programs and initiatives. Social Media sites should add value to the City by raising awareness, sharing information and encouraging public involvement.
  - (c) Ensure all content – written copy, photographs, videos, external links, etc. – posted complies with applicable intellectual property rights and privacy legislation. Content that may infringe upon the intellectual property rights of a third party must not be posted. Ensure it is understood that the City does not endorse or validate content found through external links, unless otherwise specified.
  - (d) Consider accessibility guidelines when posting content, and wherever possible avoid abbreviations and include a link to the City’s website where accessible content is available.
  - (e) Actively monitor and update their City Social Media site(s) during work hours.
  - (f) Remotely monitor their City Social Media site(s) outside of work hours, as appropriate.
  - (g) Monitor User comments to ensure they are appropriate and respectful, and remove inappropriate User comments, per section 9 – Posting Guidelines and User Comments.
  - (h) Respond to questions received online if they directly relate to a post or to City operations, programs and services.
  - (i) Strive to reply to questions and comments in a timely manner as follows:
    - (i) Acknowledge receipt of question/comment within one business

day.

- (ii) Reply with information/answer within two business days.
- (iii) Use their judgement to determine if a response to a question or comment received during non-business hours is needed immediately or can wait for the next business day.
- (iv) Refrain from discussing individual complaints and/or situations in detail on the City's Social Media platforms; staff should inform the User that their question has been referred to the appropriate department for follow-up.
- (v) Safeguard User privacy by asking Users to direct message any personal information if it is required to facilitate a service request.

## 7. **Emergencies**

In compliance with the Vaughan Emergency Response Plan, all information issued by the City during a declared emergency is managed by the Public Information Section under the direction of the Emergency Management Team, including emergency information posted on corporate Social Media sites.

- 7.1 To reach the widest possible audience during a declared emergency, Site Administrators of any City Social Media site will be provided with pre-approved emergency information by the Public Information Section to rebroadcast on their Social Media sites, if appropriate.
- 7.2 Comments and postings made on City Social Media sites by the City during a declared emergency will be recorded and tracked as part of the official records of the emergency.
- 7.3 Where appropriate, City Social Media sites will display a statement that says the site is not monitored 24 hours a day and to contact 911 in the case of an emergency.

## 8. **Security**

- 8.1 Site Administrators will access City Social Media sites from City devices only and should not have a personal Social Media account linked to the same device.
- 8.2 Email addresses used to manage City Social Media accounts must be generic department email addresses (e.g. corpcomm@vaughan.ca) and not an email address for an individual.
- 8.3 Site Administrators must use a username and password combination that

differs from their City network login ID and password.

8.4 Site passwords must be changed monthly. Site Administrators should create strong/complex passwords – containing a mix of lowercase and capital letters, symbols and numbers. Passwords must be kept confidential and shared only with Site Administrators.

8.5 As part of the off-boarding process, if a Site Administrator is removed from their position or leaves the City, a new Site Administrator will be identified and all Social Media site passwords will be changed immediately.

8.6 If a Site Administrator is concerned that their account has been compromised, they shall bring it to the attention of their supervisor immediately, contact the appropriate Social Media site and notify the Communications, Marketing and Engagement department.

## 9. **Posting Guidelines and User Comments**

9.1 Site Administrators reserve the right to edit or remove comments, in whole or in part, posted by Users for any reason, including:

- (i) Comments not related to the original topic, including random or unintelligible comments, or repetitive or spamming of threads.
- (ii) Profane, obscene, aggressive, violent or pornographic content and/or language.
- (iii) Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, age, sexual orientation, religion, gender or national origin, or any other protected ground under the Ontario Human Rights Code.
- (iv) Defamatory or personal attacks, comments offensive to an individual or an organization, rude in tone, or otherwise abusive.
- (v) Threats to any person or organization.
- (vi) Comments in support of, or in opposition to, any political campaigns (federal, provincial or municipal) and made during an election period or during a leadership campaign.
- (vii) Solicitation of commerce, not related to City business or initiatives, put forward for advertising or marketing purposes, or to otherwise promote private enterprise, and/or are written in a language other than English or French.
- (viii) Content in violation of any Canadian law or that encourages

illegal activity.

- (ix) Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.
- (x) Content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party.
- (xi) Any other content the City deems inappropriate.

9.2 Member Social Media Sites are subject to the same posting guidelines as apply to City Social Media Sites operated by Site Administrators.

- (a) A Member Social Media Site may be used to publicize local events and activities, to inform residents about federal, provincial, Region and City programs and matters to be considered by Council, or to inform members of the public of the Member's accomplishments and activities as a Member. Members should consult with the Integrity Commissioner if clarification is required respecting what can be posted on Member Social Media sites or Member personal sites.

9.3 Any user acting contrary to these rules may be temporarily or permanently banned from use of applicable social media pages.

## 10. **Contests**

10.1 All Social Media contests will have a rules and regulations document. Site Administrators must have this document reviewed by the Communications, Marketing and Engagement department, Office of the City Solicitor, Access and Privacy team, and Licensing and Permit team prior to launching the contest.

10.2 The rules and regulations document must be posted on [vaughan.ca](http://vaughan.ca) for the duration of the contest.

10.3 Social Media contests must adhere to the guidelines of the Social Media site the contest is being run through.

## 11. **Personal Use of Social Media**

11.1 City employees, Members of Council and Members of Local Boards must act ethically and professionally at all times when using Social Media for personal use. City policies and applicable legislation including but not limited to policies governing staff conduct (e.g. Employee Code of Conduct, the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, Respectful Workplace Policy and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act) may apply to the use of Social Media by employees for personal purposes.

11.2 Use of a City title by an employee on a personal social media platform, with the exception of a professional social media site such as LinkedIn, is generally not encouraged. To the extent that employees identify their title and/or the City as their employer, a higher duty of professionalism and ethical behaviour is expected. Disclaimers such as “all views are my own” may help clarify the authorship of personal Social Media messages; however, this does not absolve an employee or Member of Council from the responsibility of adhering to the rules in the Employee Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards.

11.3 City employees, Members of Council and Members of Local Boards participating in Social Media for personal use shall not:

- (a) Claim to represent the City as a City spokesperson directly or indirectly.
- (b) Use a City email address or contact information to register an account.
- (c) Post false or misleading information about the City, its programs/services or partners.
- (d) Reveal confidential City information or compromise resident privacy, including posting photos without appropriate written consent.
- (e) Use visual cues that suggest they represent the City (e.g. City-owned logos, uniforms, photographs, graphics or other media) without the City’s authorization.
- (f) Make derogatory comments with respect to the City or comments that may reflect negatively on the City or harm the City’s reputation. Hate speech, harassment, violence, and/or discrimination through social media is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

When an employee or Member of Council is no longer employed by the City or acting as an elected official, they must update their personal social media sites to reflect their current status.

## 12. **Member Social Media Sites**

12.1 Use of a Member of Council’s title in a Social Media profile brings legitimacy and influence similar to the use of other incidents of elected office. A Member’s title can only be used for official City purposes. City logos, staff, volunteers assisting with Council office work, computers, tablets, smartphones and email accounts are City resources that can only be used for City purposes, in accordance with the Rules of the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards.

12.2 Taxpayer funded resources can be used to assist in the promotion of an official Member account, in accordance with the Council Member Expense Policy

(06.C.02) and the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes Policy (03.C.03). This includes, but is not limited to, business cards, printed newsletters, websites, eNewsletters, etc.

12.3 A Member's Social Media Site or one that "uses publicly funded resources" may:

- (a) use any vaughan.ca email address as a point of contact for registration purposes;
- (b) identify the Member as a current member of Vaughan Council in the handle name, the username, or the profile description;
- (c) publicize on the Member's website or the City of Vaughan's contact page for Members of Council;
- (d) publicize on business cards, newsletters or other publications eligible to be paid for out of the Member's office budget;
- (e) use the logo or any other proprietary mark of the City of Vaughan;
- (f) identify contact information for the Member at City Hall, a ward constituency office or any other official contact information;
- (g) manage using City of Vaughan resources including computers, smartphones, or tablets; or
- (h) manage or maintain the account using City staff, the Member's staff or volunteers, or using services eligible to be paid for out of the Member's office budget.

### 13. **Specific Election Requirements**

13.1 To comply with governing legislation and policies such as the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and the Code of Ethical Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards, and the Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes, Members must take affirmative steps to clearly distinguish between use of Social Media for personal or election purposes on the one hand, and use of social media in their capacity as a City official on the other. The Integrity Commissioner publishes an Election Activities Information Bulletin to assist in this regard. To take such affirmative steps Members must adopt one of the following two approaches:

- (a) **Maintaining Separate Election Accounts.** Establish separate and distinct social media accounts for election purposes that are clearly labelled as election accounts and that are not "identified as a Member's account" or one that "uses publicly funded resources." Members who establish separate and distinct social media accounts for election purposes may

continue to use Social Media accounts for purposes identified in this Policy throughout the Campaign Period.

- (b) Maintaining a Single Account Subject to Restricted Use. Members who choose not to maintain separate and distinct election accounts and who intend to use a social media account that has ever been identified as a Member's Social Media Site or used publicly funded resources for any purpose relating to their election campaign must (as applicable):
  - (i) beginning on the date their candidacy for an election is filed until the end of the Campaign Period:
    - A. remove any reference to the City of Vaughan, the City logos or images proprietary to the City of Vaughan, and reference to the Member's title from the account handle name, the username, or the profile description;
    - B. clearly identify the account as a candidate account and not a Member account.
    - C. ensure that the account's registration information does not include any vaughan.ca email addresses or City of Vaughan phone numbers;
    - D. remove all reference to the account from the Member's website or the City of Vaughan website;
    - E. formally inform staff and volunteers who previously had a role with respect to managing a Social Media account that no City resources whatsoever, including computers, devices and staff, may be used to maintain the account and proactively monitor staff and volunteers to ensure that no such actions are taken, and,
    - F. expressly notify followers or friends on the social media platform that the account will be used for purposes related to election purposes, provide an alternative source of information for followers interested in constituency services, and label the account appropriately.
    - G. cease producing and distributing any publication, including business cards, that includes account information (i.e. usernames, handle names) for the social media account.
  - (ii) On the date their candidacy for election is filed, Members shall submit a declaration in the form provided by the City Clerk that requirements one through six have been complied with, and requirement seven will be complied with throughout the

Campaign Period.			
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>			
<i>Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.</i>			
<b>Review Schedule:</b>	5 Years <small>If other, specify here</small>	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	March 24, 2031
<b>Related Policy(ies):</b>	13.A.02 - Employee Code of Conduct  13.C.01 Respectful Workplace Policy (Human Rights and Anti-discrimination/Harassment)  14.A.01 Acceptable Use of Information Technology  03.C.08 - Use of Corporate Resources for Election Purposes  06.C.02 COUNCIL MEMBER EXPENSE POLICY		
<b>Related By-Law(s):</b>			
<b>Procedural Document:</b>			
<b>Revision History</b>			
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Description:</b>		
March 24, 2026	Approved at Council. Report No. 12 Item No. 1		
Click or tap to enter a date.			
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