

Statement of Policy and Procedure			
Department:	Corporate Services	Policy No.	59.1
Section:	Communications	Issued:	January 27, 2014
Subject:	Social Media, Media Relations and Public Statements	Effective:	May 3, 2021
Council Resolution # and Date:	Council Resolution No. 0181 of May 3, 2021		
		Replaces:	Policy No. 59
Issued by:	Kiley Bear, Communications Manager	Dated:	January 27, 2014
Approved by:	Ken Leclaire, Director of Corporate Services		

1 POLICY

- 1.01 Employees should conduct themselves in a manner that reflects their position as a representative of the City of Prince Albert (The City). This policy provides employees direction on communications practices when making any public statement, whether verbally, online or in print, including without limitation: social media posting, interacting with the media in any forum, or declarations made in public settings.

2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect The City's reputation in promotion of the confidence of the public it serves;
- Protect employees' reputations;
- Provide standards and clarity of the Employer's requirements and expectations of City employees and contractors for both their workplace and personal use of social media as it balances their right to freedom of expression and their duty of fidelity due the City;
- Provide clarity of the Employer's requirements and expectations of City employees regarding the making of public statements on behalf of or affecting The City;
- Emphasize that fidelity to and public respectfulness of The City and its City Councillors, Mayor, Administration and fellow employees is fundamental to the employment position of all City Employees; and
- Promote consistency and professionalism in how employees interact with the media and members of the public.

3 SCOPE

- 3.01.1 This policy applies to all City of Prince Albert employees, contractors and appointed members of City Boards and Committees.

- 3.02 For clarity, this policy does not apply to members of Council or the Prince Albert Police Service, who are governed by their own policies and legislation.

4 EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITY FOR PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Social Media Responsibility

- 4.01 Social media has become one of The City's primary direct-to-citizen communication channels. Consistent use of these channels is critical to maintaining public confidence in The City and its operations. For this reason, the Communications Manager (or designate) will provide oversight for and be exclusively authorized to conduct or to direct designates to conduct all City social media activity including:
- a. The establishment of any new social media account that represents the City;
 - b. Maintaining a list of all City social media accounts and employees assigned as administrators;
 - c. Posting on City social media accounts;
 - d. Reserving the right to terminate any City social media account;
 - e. Audits of all City social media accounts and activity to determine operational relevance and alignment to the goals identified in The City's Strategic Plan and Communications Master Plan;
 - f. Authorizing employees as Social Media Administrators.
- 4.02 Only the Communications Manager and employees who are assigned as Social Media Administrators may post content or interact on social media platforms on behalf of The City.
- 4.03 Only the Communications Manager and Social Media Administrators may have the passwords to City social media accounts. Sharing of these passwords with anyone else is prohibited.
- 4.04 When The City declares a State of Local Emergency, activates the Municipal Emergency Plan or opens the Emergency Operations Centre, all City of Prince Albert social media activity must be coordinated and approved by the Communications Manager (or designate) through the Emergency Operations Centre.

Public Statements and Using Social Media within the Scope of Employment

- 4.05 When making public statements within the scope of employment, all employees must comply with this section. For clarity, it should be understood that these provisions also apply and extend to an employee's use of social media. Social media is not private. Information posted on social media is meant to be broadcast to others and generally seen by members of the public. Accordingly, due to the

very public nature of social media, employees authorized to use and access social media to carry out their employment duties and responsibilities must do so in compliance with this section. When making public statements or posting to social media, employees shall not:

- a. Disclose any sensitive, confidential information or unauthorized content of or about The City, its employees, programs, the Mayor, Councillors, Administration, volunteers and/or vendors;
- b. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any images of City premises or the workplace in which confidential information is visible;
- c. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any copyrighted material of which The City is not the copyright holder;
- d. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any illegal content;
- e. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any content that contains harassment, hate speech, threats of violence or encouragement of violence;
- f. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any derogatory comments about any race, sex, gender, ethnic group or religion;
- g. Promote inappropriate workplace behaviour;
- h. Disclose financial information about The City not already made publicly available;
- i. Disclose personal information about other individuals, including employees;
- j. Make any disparaging, critical, discourteous, untruthful or misleading comments about The City, its employees, programs, the Mayor, Councillors, Administration, volunteers and/or vendors;
- k. Make any commentary or announcements on behalf of The City unless you are an authorized Social Media Administrator, Designated Spokesperson or Subject Matter Expert;
- l. Engage with the social media accounts of the Mayor or any member of City Council inconsistent with this Policy;
- m. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any content of a sexual nature;
- n. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any images of City employees without their reasonably implied or express consent;
- o. Engage in any explicit political activity at either a municipal, provincial or federal level.

- 4.06 In the event that any employee authorized to use and access social media to carry out their employment receives a negative post or comment on any account they administer, that employee shall not reply with a negative post or comment. In providing any response, the employee shall give first consideration to whether The City can be reasonably committed to a public response that offers to remedy the situation through public action. If there is any uncertainty regarding an appropriate response the employee shall firstly consult with the Communications Manager and their supervisor.

Public Statements and Using Social Media Outside of the Scope of Employment

- 4.07 Employees shall always be mindful that away from the workplace their public statements and use of social media can impact The City's business, reputation, employee relations as well as public confidence and that any misconduct on social media or otherwise involving a public statement that affects those interests can be the subject of discipline up to and including termination of employment with cause.
- 4.08 The City recognizes that employees have access to and use social media on their own time outside of the workplace. Although employees have the right to freedom of expression, they also have a duty of fidelity in their employment with The City of Prince Albert owed to The City and to members of its City Council that is fundamental to their employment position. As such employees must be mindful that social media is not private but rather public, and therefore despite using personal resources on their own time, employees shall not:
- a. Post release, or cause or permit to be posted or released any sensitive or confidential information or content that employees are not specifically authorized to disclose about The City, its employees, programs, the Mayor, Councillors, Administration, volunteers and/or vendors. This includes internal messages to employees;
 - b. Engage in any conduct or behaviour on social media sites in violation of their duties and responsibilities to The City (including, but not limited to, posting commentary about other employees that is known or ought to be reasonably known as unwelcome to the employee concerned);
 - c. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released and/or upload any of The City's logos, trademarks or corporate information;
 - d. Conduct or attempt to conduct City business through their personal blog or other personal social network;
 - e. Use The City name, brand, or any other references, that would associate The City with the employee's activities, without express permission from The City;
 - f. Post, release, or cause or permit to be posted or released or reply to any comments which the employee knows or ought reasonably know would diminish, hinder or harm the public's confidence in The City, its employees, the Mayor, Councillors or Administration;
 - g. Post or engage in comments or discussions related to City matters that could be interpreted as an official endorsement, announcement or commentary/opinion of the City of Prince Albert;
 - h. Make any disparaging, critical, discourteous, untruthful or misleading comments about the City, its employees, programs, the Mayor, councillors, Administration, Volunteers and/or vendors;
 - i. Post, release or cause or permit to be posted or released any images of the workplace without the express consent of the Communications Manager and, where individuals may be identifiable, the express consent of the employee or contractors.

- 4.09 When using a personal account or platform, all employees shall only express their own personal opinions and not represent themselves as a spokesperson for The City. If employees or officials choose to identify themselves as employees of The City, they must include language which states that their views do not represent the views of The City but are personally held opinions. Official communications are represented solely through The City's official channels.

Lists Not Exhaustive

- 4.10 The lists of precluded conduct in section 4 are not exhaustive. The City reserves the right to discipline employees for any public statement or use of social media which negatively impacts the City's legitimate business interests or the City's reputation. Employees are encouraged to contact the Communications Office should they require further clarity on making public statements or social media use.
- 4.11 For clarity, nothing in this section 4 shall preclude an employee from engaging in any activity that is expressly permitted under a collective agreement or other agreement with the City.

5 MEDIA RELATIONS RESPONSIBILITY

- 5.01 The Communications Manager (or designate) will provide oversight for all City media relations activities.
- 5.02 Employees who have been designated as a City spokesperson may represent The City in response to general or issue-related media inquiries.
- 5.03 Each business unit shall appoint designated spokesperson(s).
- 5.04 Designated City spokespeople must successfully complete a City media course before responding to any general or issue-related media inquiries.
- 5.05 The Communications Manager will maintain a list of appointed spokespeople and a record of who has completed media training.
- 5.06 When speaking on behalf of The City as a designated spokesperson, employees will conduct themselves at all times in accordance with expectations outlined in section 4.05.
- 5.07 If approached by the media about a City-specific project, only a designated spokesperson that is directly involved in that project, or their supervisors, may respond to the inquiry. From time-to-time, the Communications Office, in

consultation with the applicable Department Head or Unit Manager and the employee may authorize a Subject Matter Expert to speak to the media if he/she is not on the authorized list. This would only be applicable in cases where the operational knowledge of the employee is suitable to the topic of inquiry.

- 5.08 The Communications Office shall be informed of all media inquiries and topics of inquiry from the media. Employees will not reach out directly to the media to provide information or promote a story. Story ideas and information should be provided to the Communications Office for review and follow-up.
- 5.09 Only the Communications Office or those designated by the Communications Office may issue news releases, stories, or editorials, on behalf of The City to the news media, where the news media is the primary intended audience.

6 DEFINITIONS

- 6.01 **Designated Spokesperson:** A person authorized to speak on behalf of the City of Prince Albert by the Communications Manager in consultation with Department Heads.
- 6.02 **City of Prince Albert Employee:** Individuals employed by The City including Fire Services. In this Policy, City of Prince Albert Employees shall also be referred to as “**City employee(s)**” and/or “**employee(s)**” .
- 6.03 **Media:** Television, radio, newspaper outlets, online reporting, blogs, forums and other similar platforms that provide news reported by journalists.
- 6.04 **Media Relations:** An ongoing relationship between The City and local, national and international media outlets and journalists.
- 6.05 **Official City Social Media Account:** Any social media account representing The City, City business or employees.
- 6.06 **Personal Social Media Account:** A social media account that has been created by an employee for personal use.
- 6.07 **Public Statement:** A declaration made verbally or in written text by an employee that is intended to be generally seen or heard by members of the public. This may include statements that relate to The City, City business or employees, including presentations made to Council or Committee and/or community forums (open houses, information sessions, engagement events). Public statements may also include interviews with media, journal, article, and print publication submissions, online forums and social media posts.

- 6.08 **Social Media:** An internet-based communication tool with a focus on immediacy, interactivity, user participation and information sharing. Social media includes social networking sites, forums, weblogs, wikis, online chat sites, video/photo sharing sites, etc.
- 6.09 **Social Media Administrators:** A person authorized by the Communications Manager in consultation with Department Heads, to post on social media accounts on behalf of the City of Prince Albert.
- 6.10 **Subject Matter Expert:** An employee of the City of Prince Albert that possesses in-depth knowledge on a specific topic, a business unit and/or specific programs or initiatives.
- 6.11 **Workplace:** Shall mean and include any location at which:
- a. City Employees are located to perform duties of their employment; and/or
 - b. Contractors of the City are located to perform City contract work.

7. REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

- 7.01 Electronic Communications Policy
- 7.02 Progressive Disciplinary Policy
- 7.03 Respectful Workplace Policy
- 7.04 Corporate Identity Guidelines
- 7.05 City Logo Policy
- 7.06 Local Authority and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- 7.07 Freedom of Information and Access to Information Policy
- 7.08 Prince Albert Fire Department Code of Conduct/General Rules

8. PROCEDURE

- 8.01 Any activity found in violation of this policy can be reported to the Communications Manager or Human Resources Department who will work with the appropriate departments to investigate.
- 8.02 The City will take corrective action in response to any infraction or transgression of this policy. Misconduct will be investigated and reviewed in accordance with the Progressive Discipline Policy and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee, up to and including dismissal from employment, seeking restitution, commencement of civil action, or any combination thereof. In addition, dependent upon the nature of the policy violation, the content and the context provided, employees may also be required to:
- c. Remove or delete posts or comments that are in violation of this Policy.
 - d. Remove or delete any City of Prince Albert reference or identifier from personal websites, blogs, social media accounts or profiles including identification of employer, job title, images, photos or logos.