

# Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone

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## Social Media Policy

Human Resources

No. 2020-04

<b>Adopted By:</b>	<b>Date Adopted:</b>	<b>Reviewed by Council:</b>	<b>Amended:</b>
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Social Media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

The Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone is committed to excellence in municipal management with a focus on accountability, transparency, communication, and customer service. As a result, the Municipality strives to provide open access to information about its policies, services, initiatives, and to provide the public with timely information in a range of formats to reach a variety of stakeholders. The Municipality recognizes that social media applications are widely utilized as an effective communication tool to assist in accomplishing that goal.

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of social media applications, specifically so that the disbursement of timely and accurate information is balanced with the Municipality's need to ensure that:

- a) Social media content posted on behalf of the Municipality is accurate, accessible, transparent, and accountable.
- b) Social media content does not violate individual privacy or conflict with existing municipal policies, by-laws, or other applicable regulations.
- c) The use of social media tools does not compromise public safety or the Municipality's image.

## **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this social media policy is to educate and guide Municipal employees and councillors on useful and effective communication practices when using social media in relation to Municipal matters and to protect the Municipality from misuse of social media to the detriment of the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone. It also serves to educate the public on what to expect from the Municipality when interacting through social media. Social media is to be used as a platform for delivering time-sensitive information to the public (e.g. emergency information), and as a marketing or promotional tool that allows the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone to communicate a message to a wider audience that would otherwise be difficult.

When participating in social media platforms, our role is to share, listen to, and converse with citizens in their own space. It is important that we use social media as a tool to:

- Provide transparency and efficiency regarding government or public relations.
- Demonstrate a commitment to engaging the public willingness to listen and respond to questions.
- Be accurate in the content that we post and share online.
- Allow for a friendly and courteous relationship with online conversations.
- Frequently release relevant information and promote healthy discussion among social media sites (e.g. Facebook updates at least once a week, website at least once a week, YouTube as needed for C.O.W meetings, Public Hearings, or Council Meetings).

## **APPLICATION:**

**Social media** use shall be executed following the same guidelines as other Municipal communication methods. The following information will be permitted:

- Information pertaining to public notices, upcoming meetings, special events and public service information.
- Information pertaining to the Municipality's business and sponsored events and activities.
- Information pertaining to Leisure and Recreation services, events, and activities.
- Information pertaining to Public Health and Safety (i.e. Road closures, inclement weather, etc.).

In a Municipal setting, Facebook can be used to communicate public notices, upcoming meetings, special events, public service information, etc. Other social media applications such as YouTube may be utilized from time to time under appropriate circumstances. Videos posted to YouTube will follow the same guidelines as all other social media applications as noted below and outlined in this policy.

Users are to consider what will be posted – share upcoming events, news, updates, photos, videos, and anything else that will engage citizens and promote community involvement. Staff will be sure to spellcheck and proofread as grammar and spelling is important.

**DEFINITIONS/DESCRIPTIONS:**

**Social media** tools are third-party internet-based applications that enable collaboration and sharing of opinions, insights, images, information, content, and experiences through real-time conversations among individuals and groups in social networking.

**Social Media and Networking sites** are an interactive application or website including, but not limited to Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

**Website** refers to the Municipal website [www.westlake-gladstone.ca](http://www.westlake-gladstone.ca).

**Personal Social Media Accounts** are those that exist outside of the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone and are therefore regarded as under the discretion of the individual, as long as they are in no way affiliated with, or act on behalf of, the Municipality.

**GENERAL GUIDELINES:**

- All social media activity and online communication is overseen by the C.A.O. or designate.
- Logins and passwords for the sites are confidential information and will be stored under the supervision of the C.A.O.
- Municipal staff or the general public are not permitted to create social media accounts on behalf of the Municipality, or any department, personnel, initiative, or event pertaining to the Municipality unless given written consent to do so by the C.A.O or designate.
- Information being posted must be accurate and objective while respecting all governing copyright laws and giving credit when linking to other URL's or sharing information; and using disclaimers when appropriate. Staff will use language that is simple and straightforward.

**Control of Content**

- The C.A.O. or designate will work collaboratively with staff to ensure that information published online regarding Municipal policies, programs, services, events, and initiatives is accurate, easy to understand and accessible in multiple formats.
- The C.A.O. or designate reserves the right to edit or remove content from social media sites that is deemed unsuitable, inappropriate, or in violation of this Social Media Policy.

- The Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone’s website ([www.westlake-gladstone.ca](http://www.westlake-gladstone.ca)) will be the primary and predominant Internet presence for in-depth information, forms, and online documents. All social media sites used will direct visitors back to the appropriate section of the website.

The C.A.O. or designate will carefully consider messages to be posted on the social media sites. Social media content generated by employees of the Municipality are records owned by the Municipality and not the individual employee. In addition to being a record of the Municipality, content maintained in a social media format that related to Municipal business is a public record and is subject to the rules of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

### **Unsuitable Content**

The C.A.O. or designate shall monitor all use of social media by employees for work purposes and will intervene to remove content that is deemed unsuitable. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions are provided to clarify the scope of what is considered unsuitable content:

- a) Commercial endorsement or solicitation including endorsement by the Municipality of one product or service over another, as well as statements requiring or requesting receipt of any product, service or assets for personal gain or use. Unless it has been posted in accordance with Municipal Advertising policy.
- b) Personal political content including supports of, or opposition of, political campaigns or matters before Council, personal comments or opinions about Municipal staff and/or elected officials as well as personal views about the municipal political process.
- c) Confidential information including classified-as-confidential or proprietary records in the possession of the Municipality, as well as about members of the public, municipal staff, and elected officials.
- d) Objectionable material including matter that may contain, but is not limited to, material promoting hate and/or violence, materials of pornographic, profane, or sexually explicit nature. It also includes text that links to sexual or sexually explicit content, content that encourages illegal activity or contains information that may compromise the safety and security of the public or public systems or postings that violate a legal ownership interest of any party including interest in copyright and other intellectual property.
- e) Discriminatory language is language that presents a discriminatory, demeaning, or derogatory portrayal of individuals or groups or contains anything that, in light of generally prevailing community standards, is likely to cause deep or widespread offence. It is also language that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, family status, status with

regards to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation.

**RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INQUIRIES/COMMENTS:**

Municipal staff will not respond directly to comments published on social media by the public. Exceptions to this policy may be made as directed/determined by the C.A.O.

Staffs are to be responsive and monitor and answer questions, inquiries, and concerns within a reasonable amount of time, however we encourage questions and inquiries be received by email or telephone calls. Remember that comments may be taken out of context, so always post accurate information and facts. Municipal staff is representing the Municipality just as they would in person; if it is not something you can say publicly then it is inappropriate to post on social media.

**DISCLAIMER:**

The Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone is not responsible for comments made by subscribers or members related to its social media applications and reserve the right to remove any content that is unsuitable, inappropriate for any reason and at any time. 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.

**For Staff and Elected Officials Outside of Work Hours:**

All Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone employees and elected officials (Mayor & Councillors) that maintain personal social media internet sites or networks are required to comply with the Municipality's Code of Conduct when they write or post on social media or networks. Council and Staff continue to act as representatives of this organization outside of regular operating hours and should conduct themselves in a manner that is appropriate. Inflammatory comments, unprofessional remarks, or disparaging, or otherwise unsuitable comments made about the Municipality, its employees, councillors, taxpayers, clients or potential clients, or passing of personal views as representing those of the organization, will be subject to disciplinary action following the Corrective Action Process, up to and including termination of employment.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

This policy is not intended to interfere with the private lives of our employees and councillors or impinge on their right of freedom of speech. This policy is designed to ensure that the Municipality of

WestLake-Gladstone's image is maintained and remains protected. Employees and councillors must abide by this policy whether the Municipality's name is mentioned or not. Even if the name is not mentioned, it is possible that a link can be made back to the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, which could negatively affect the Municipality's reputation.

Employees are prohibited from using personal social media during regular work hours. It should be limited to official breaks and not impact user productivity or efficiency.

**PUBLIC USE: (Employee Behavior & Client Use)**

Employees and Councillors should also be aware that many taxpayers, clients, and people present on WestLake-Gladstone property frequently use mobile phones and other devices to take photographs and recordings. Employees should always represent WestLake-Gladstone in a positive and professional manner so negative images are not posted to social media sites of taxpayers, clients, or visitors.

Employees who are photographed or recorded, on Municipal time or property, acting inappropriately or unprofessionally will be subject to disciplinary action following the Corrective Action Process, up to and including termination of employment.

**PROCEDURES:**

The following principals apply to professional use of social media on behalf of the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, as well as personal use of social media when referencing the Municipality.

- Employees need to know and adhere to the Municipality's Code of Conduct and other Municipal policies when using social media in reference to the Municipality.
- Employees should be aware that the Municipality may observe content and information made available by employees through social media. Employees should use their best judgement in posting material that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to the Municipality, its employees, or customers.
- Employees should be aware of the effect their actions may have on their image as well as the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone's image. The information that employees post or publish may be public information for a long time.
- Although not an exclusive list, some specific examples of prohibited social media conduct include posting commentary, content, or images that are defamatory, pornographic, proprietary, harassing, derogatory, or that can create a hostile work environment.
- Employees are not to publish, post, or release any information that is considered confidential or not public. If there are any questions about what is considered confidential, employees should check with the C.A.O. and/or Supervisor.
- Social media networks, blogs, and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Employees should refer these inquiries to the C.A.O. and/or Supervisor.

- If employees encounter a situation while using social media that threaten to become antagonistic, employees should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of the C.A.O. and/or Supervisor.
- Employees should get appropriate permission before you refer to or post images of current or former employees, council members, vendors, or suppliers.
- Employees should get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyright, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks, or other intellectual property.
- Social media use should not interfere with employee's responsibilities at work. The Municipality's computer systems are to be used for business purposes only. When using the Municipality's computer systems, use of social media for business purposes is allowed (ex: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs), but personal use of social media networks or personal blogging of online content is discouraged and could result in disciplinary action.
- Subject to applicable law, after-hours online activity that violates the Municipality's Code of Conduct or any other Municipal policy may subject an employee to disciplinary action or termination.
- If employees publish content after-hours that involves work or subjects associated with the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone, a disclaimer should be used, such as: "The postings on this site are my own and may not represent the Municipality of WestLake-Gladstone's positions, strategies or opinions".
- It is highly recommended that employees keep Municipal related social media accounts separate from personal accounts.