SUSSEX POLICY

Subject		Number
SUSSEX INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY		P-3
Date	Approved by	Date
JUNE 17, 2025	COUNCIL [X] OTHER(S) [ ]	JANUARY 24, 2011
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GENERAL

1. This policy is entitled Sussex Internet and Social Media Policy

2. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and elected officials acting in an official municipal capacity.

3. This policy shall be administered by the Chief Administrative Officer, who shall have authority to interpret and enforce this policy, and to delegate such authority as appropriate.

PURPOSE

This policy provides clear guidance for employees of Sussex on the appropriate and responsible use of internet and social media, both in an official and personal capacity. It ensures responsible use, safeguards municipal data, and promotes transparency and professionalism in public communication.

An employees' use of social media can pose risks to Sussex, its employees, council members, stakeholders and residents. These risks include:

- Damage to Sussex's information technology (IT) and communications systems.
- Harassing, threatening or discriminatory online behaviour directed toward co-workers, council members, contractors, stakeholders and residents, which may violate the New Brunswick Human Rights Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, or other applicable laws.
- Unauthorized disclosure of Sussex's confidential and proprietary information.
- Damage to Sussex's interests and reputation.

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- Unauthorized collection, use, or disclosure of personal information of co-workers, council members, contractors, stakeholders and residents.

Additionally, this Policy aims to uphold the values of transparency, professionalism, and public trust while respecting employees' rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, New Brunswick Human Rights Act, and other applicable provincial and federal legislation.

DEFINITIONS

Social Media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking (e.g., Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn).

Sussex Social Media Account: Any social media profile created and maintained by a Sussex department or on behalf of Sussex.

Official Use: Use of internet or social media as part of a person's job responsibilities or as a representative of Sussex.

SCOPE

This policy covers both:

- Use of Sussex owned computer and mobile devices while on the internet,
- Use of official municipal social media accounts, and
- Personal use of social media or mobile devices when such use may reflect on or involve the municipality.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Employees are expected to uphold the values of accountability, respect, non-partisanship, and service in all communications that reflect on the municipality.

While Sussex respects employees' right to free expression under the Charter, employees acknowledge and accept that their role as public servants may reasonably limit this right in accordance with applicable law and jurisprudence.

INTERNET USE GUIDELINES

Acceptable Use

- Using Sussex provided internet services primarily for job-related tasks.
- Access to research, communication, and collaboration tools that assist with professional duties is permitted.
- Such use constitutes a privilege, not a right, and limited personal use is permissible during designated breaks if it does not interfere with work duties, violate Sussex policies, or create security risks. Sussex reserves the right to monitor, restrict, or revoke this privilege at any time without notice or cause.

Unacceptable Use

- Accessing, transmitting, or downloading obscene or offensive material.
- Using the internet for personal business, political campaigning, or commercial gain.
- Engaging in cyberbullying, harassment, or any discriminatory behavior

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In using social media, employees must remember that their actions online may affect their workplace. Employee actions or statements through social media, even those made through personal accounts during non-working time, that harm the interests of Sussex, its employees, council members, residents and other stakeholders, or that otherwise breach Sussex policies described above, may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment for just cause.

In using social media for any reason, work-related or personal, employees should abide by the following common-sense guidelines.

- **Assume anything posted online is public**. Social media is usually public, and there is no guarantee that anything shared online will remain private, regardless of a social media account's privacy settings. Employees are personally responsible for what they communicate through social media and should act accordingly.

- **Speak on your own behalf**. Employees must be clear in their social media activity that they speak on their own behalf. They must use a personal email address and contact information in personal social media activities. Employees should not post anonymously to social media sites when a post could be attributed to Sussex, its affiliates, citizens, customers, business partners, suppliers, vendors or other stakeholders. Anonymous posts can be traced back to the original sender's email address.

- **Use a disclaimer**. Employees who disclose their affiliation as employees of Sussex should include a disclaimer that their views do not represent those of Sussex. For example, consider such language as "the views in this posting reflect my personal views and do not represent the views of my employer."

- **Be mindful of Sussex's interests**. Employees have a duty of loyalty to their employers. Employees should not make disparaging comments about Sussex on social media or engage in conduct that is harmful to Sussex's interests or reputation.

- **Use good judgment**. Employees should remember that anything said online can reflect on Sussex, even if a disclaimer is used. Employees should strive to be accurate in their communications about Sussex and remember that online statements have the potential

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to result in liability for the employee or Sussex. Sussex encourages professionalism, respectful conduct and honesty in social media and other communications.

- **Be respectful**. Employees are required to avoid harassing, threatening or discriminatory conduct on social media that impacts co-workers or other workplace parties. In personal use of social media, employees should also avoid conduct that Sussex's staff, council members, residents, stakeholders, business partners, suppliers or vendors would find offensive, including ethnic slurs, sexist comments, discriminatory comments, profanity, abusive language or obscenity, or comments that are maliciously false.

- **Respect terms of use**. Employees should review the terms of use of all social media sites visited and ensure that their use complies with those terms.

- **Report inappropriate postings**. If an employee is aware of any social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on Sussex or constitutes harassment or threatening behaviour towards an individual in the workplace, or outside the workplace, the employee should contact management.

OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Only designated staff may manage or post content on official municipal social media accounts. These employees must:

- Follow communication guidelines established by the Clerk's Office.

- Ensure information shared is accurate, timely, and respectful.

- Not disclose personal or confidential information as defined under the Right to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (RTIPPA) and the Personal Health Information Privacy and Access Act (PHIPAA).

- Avoid content that could be considered defamatory, discriminatory, or politically partisan.

- Archive all posts in accordance with public records requirements.

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PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Municipal employees may engage in personal social media activity during non-work hours, provided that:

- They do not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of Sussex unless authorized.
- They do not share confidential or personal information obtained through their role.
- They must refrain from making any comments that could reasonably be seen to damage public confidence in the neutrality or integrity of the municipality, violate professional conduct standards, or bring Sussex into disrepute. Violation of this provision may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
- If identifying themselves as municipal employees, they include a disclaimer such as: "Opinions expressed are my own and not those of my employer."

Examples of Inappropriate Conduct (Personal or Official):

- Sharing unreleased policy decisions or budget details.
- Posting discriminatory or harassing content (e.g. based on race, gender, religion, disability).
- Sharing internal communications without consent.
- Making threats or derogatory statements about council members, staff, or residents in a professional context.

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PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees must:

- Protect personal information under RTIPPA.
- Not disclose information subject to legal privilege, human resources processes, or internal investigations.

RECORDS AND RETENTION

Content posted on official municipal accounts is subject to public record laws and must be retained and accessible per municipal and provincial regulations.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

Sussex retains the exclusive and unrestricted authority to monitor, access, and if necessary, confiscate municipally owned devices, as well as review any publicly accessible internet content and social media activity related to its operations, employees, or interests. Any monitoring will be conducted in accordance with applicable privacy laws and employment standards, with reasonable notice provided when appropriate.

Any concerns, violations, or potential breaches will be promptly investigated under existing human resources policies, and Sussex reserves the right to take immediate action to prevent or mitigate any harm to municipal interests.

Disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the collective agreement, employment contract, or disciplinary policy, up to and including termination. Sussex reserves the right to pursue all available legal remedies and compensation for any damages caused by policy violations, including but not limited to direct damages, and where permitted by law, indirect damages such as reputational harm, breach of confidentiality, and operational disruption, with

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the violating party being responsible for Sussex's reasonable legal costs and expenses as determined by the court.

Consequences for Failure to Comply

Any violation of this policy may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment for just cause.

Administration of This Policy

Sussex expressly reserves the right to change, modify or delete the provisions of this Social Media Policy without notice.

PROTECTION OF RIGHTS

While this policy respects employees' legal rights under applicable laws, it establishes necessary and reasonable restrictions to protect municipal interests. These laws include but are not limited to:

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Applicable labour and employment legislation
- Whistleblower protection or reporting of wrongdoing in the public interest

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All employees are required to read, understand, and comply with this policy. Annual training on this policy is mandatory. Signed acknowledgment of both policy review and training completion will be retained in the employee's personnel file. Failure to complete required training or comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____