



Title: **Advertisement, Communication and Media Relations Policy**

Policy No. **2021-008**

Date: **Adoption: November 24, 2021 by Council Resolution No. 2021-382**
Amendment: January 19, 2021 by Council Resolution No. 2022-027

Subject: **Advertisement, Communication and Media Relations Policy**

1. Policy Statement:

The Township promotes the openness, transparency and accountability of its work and business, and uses various tools to share information and communicate with the public, stakeholders, partners and the media. Communications and advertising platforms offer another tool with which to deliver public information and customer service to constituents and give citizens another means to interact with their government. The Township recognizes that communications and advertisement applications are widely being used as communication tools with the potential to provide the public with timely information. The Township is committed to dispersing media information in a range of formats to reach a variety of stakeholders. In addition, the Township recognizes that appropriate advertising on Township property provides an acceptable means of maximizing revenue potential. Further, the Township recognizes the importance of media relations in building mutually beneficial and trusting relationships with news media to foster accurate, balanced and fair reporting.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all of the Corporation's departments and operations, Volunteers, students, Council and Committee Members. This policy relates to the use of media tools, including any online medium used to represent the Township. In addition, this policy addresses how Township spokespeople interact with traditional media.

The Township of Puslinch's communication and advertising is coordinated through collaboration between the Clerk's office and various Township departments. As social trends and corporate communication goals



change, Township communication and advertising platforms may be expanded or condensed. Any addition of a communication or advertising platform may occur under the direction of the Clerk where there is no budgetary impact.

3. Purpose:

This policy provides guidance to the Corporation's departments and operations, Volunteers, students, Council and Committee Members when implementing advertising, communications or traditional media on behalf of the Township and when considering requests for, and/or soliciting revenue for advertising opportunities on Township Property.

4. Definitions:

For the purpose of this Policy:

Application means a submission of a prescribed form to request to advertise on Township Property or through Township media.

Blocked/Blocking means the user will no longer have access to viewing or commenting on the Township's Facebook Account or Twitter Account.

Council or Councillor means the Council of the Township of Puslinch and any individual elected member of Council of the Township of Puslinch.

Committee Member means all Township Committees where members are appointed by Council and all individuals appointed to approved external committees.

Comment means a response to a social media post

Follow means to follow another users content feed

Employees includes anyone that the Township employs as a part of the Township's departments and operations including all seasonal, part-time, full-time and contract employees.

Social Media means the web-based technologies and sites, including blogging, microblogging (e.g., Twitter), photo sharing (e.g., Instagram), video sharing (e.g., YouTube) and networking (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) which allow users to interact with each other by sharing information, opinions, knowledge, photographs and interests.

Social Media Site refers to all social media sites with which the Township has an account.

Township means the Township of Puslinch.

User is a person using a social media tool or service.

Volunteer means any individual performing unpaid work in support of Township programs at any Township building or site.

5. Internal/External Content Standards:

Content, comments or links containing any of the following will not be permitted (or, in some cases acknowledged) on any Township of Puslinch media or advertising platforms. The Township reserves the right to remove content containing the following at their discretion in accordance with the following:



- 5.1 Content that disclose confidential information, or compromise the impartiality or integrity of staff, Council or Committees;
- 5.2 Content that contains defamatory statements, allegations, inferences,
- 5.3 Comments made in an impertinent or disrespectful manner;
- 5.4 Threats to any person or organization;
- 5.5 Social Media comments not directly related to the particular post or article;
- 5.6 Slanderous remarks, obscene language or sexual content;
- 5.7 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;
- 5.8 Commercial endorsement or solicitation: includes content that is commercial in nature and that attempts to endorse, advertise or sell the products or services of an individual, business or organization (This prohibition does not apply to Section 7.1 and 7.2 on Rink Board and Ball Diamond Advertising);
- 5.9 Personal religious content: includes content that promotes an individual's religion or religious service;
- 5.10 Content that promotes organizations with a political mandate and/or clubs with exclusive membership;
- 5.11 Content that promotes or supports services geared specifically to activities related to tenant/landlord associations;
- 5.12 Content that promotes political candidates (of any level of government);
- 5.13 Content that promotes political material (of any level of government);
- 5.14 Content that promotes illegal activity;
- 5.15 Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
- 5.16 Content that is known to or may be considered to violate a legal ownership interest of any other party.

The Township of Puslinch reserves the right to block/ban specific users from the Township's official social media channels whose activities do not comply with the above criteria. The Township of Puslinch reserves the right to reject a communications or advertisement application that does not comply with the above criteria.

Submissions deemed in violation of the above guidelines, or in any way deemed not in keeping with the general principles of permitted use, will be removed in its entirety at the discretion of the staff.

Posts that include profane or disrespectful language directed at Municipal representatives, Council or Committee members, are not appropriate and will not be tolerated. As a result, the Township may:

- 5.17 Reject the media or advertisement application; or
- 5.18 Remove the social media post; or



- 5.19 If removal is not possible, ask the poster to delete the post and refrain from further disrespectful and inappropriate comments.

The Township of Puslinch website (Puslinch.ca) will remain the Township's primary and predominant internet presence.

6. Social Media:

6.1 Creating Township Social Media Sites

All sites will be maintained by designated staff who are trained regarding best practices for social media use, procedures and guidelines in a municipal context. The Township will create and maintain no more than one corporate account and one Fire Department account for any given platform.

All municipal social media accounts, along with their login and password information, will be owned by the Township of Puslinch and not the individuals managing the content. The Township will maintain a list of all approved social media accounts and their login and password information.

Specified staff positions will be trusted to have access to login and password information of one or all social media accounts. When a staff member leaves the Township, all passwords will be changed for those municipally-owned social media sites to which they had access.

6.2 Administering Municipal Social Media Sites

Social media sites will be monitored during the Township's regular business hours. Township social media platforms will be utilized as an information sharing tool and not as an engagement tool with the public. Township initiatives seeking public engagement or consultation will be included on EngagePuslinch.ca

Staff will maintain a comprehensive annual calendar of events for each department, Council and Committee initiatives, and approved Township events. This calendar will be used to schedule posts on a three-month basis. Staff will accommodate requests outside of the annual calendar schedule with sufficient notice.

Content of the Township of Puslinch's Social Media Sites will be monitored by staff who are responsible for:

- 6.2.1 Correcting misinformation and ensuring content is up-to-date;
- 6.2.2 Removing any post containing information that violates the Township's Internal or External Content Standards; and,



- 6.2.3 Denying access to or blocking users who continue to post inappropriate or offensive comments as stated under the Internal/External Content Standards.

6.3 Site Content

Pre-approved content for inclusion on Township of Puslinch social media sites will be provided to the Clerks Department. Promotional messages may be scheduled after business hours or on weekends with sufficient notice. With the exception of messaging related to an Emergency Management Operation Centre, there will be there no unscheduled posts outside of regular business hours.

Specified staff are responsible for all updates to social media sites, pages, accounts and channels for the Township including posting all scheduled, unscheduled and shared posts in accordance with the internal social media standard operating procedures.

All social networking sites used by the Township should contain a disclaimer clearly advising visitors to the site that the Township website is the official destination for Township information and the social media platform is strictly an information sharing tool and not an engagement or consultation tool and so posts will not be responded to by staff. The Township website indicates how to contact staff, Council or Committee members directly.

Where possible, social networking sites will link back to the official Township website for forms, documents and other information. Township of Puslinch social networking sites and their content will adhere to the policies and guidelines of each individual networking sites.

6.4 Following Government Accounts and Local Community Organizations

The Township will not follow any individuals, including members of Council, or businesses.

The Township will follow the County of Wellington, MP's or MPP's (excluding during campaign periods), the Ontario Provincial Police, Wellington County Ontario Provincial Policy, Emergency Measures Ontario, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, conservation authorities, Source Water Protection, provincial/federal government ministries and agencies, as well as approved local community organizations as listed below:

- 6.4.1 Artistic endeavours, including literature, dance, music, theatre, painting, sculpture, movies, photography and live performances
- 6.4.2 Aberfoyle Agricultural Society
- 6.4.3 Aberfoyle Farmers' Market
- 6.4.4 Aberfoyle Public School



- 6.4.5 Badenoch Community Centre
- 6.4.6 Baseball Minor Sports
- 6.4.7 Charitable community services
- 6.4.8 Climate Change Steering Committee (if still in existence)
- 6.4.9 Conservation Authorities
- 6.4.10 Duff's Youth Group
- 6.4.11 Early ON Playtime
- 6.4.12 Farham Cemetery
- 6.4.13 Friends of Mill Creek
- 6.4.14 Guelph Community Health Centre (Playgroup)
- 6.4.15 Guelph YMCA
- 6.4.16 Local School Boards
- 6.4.17 Programs that improve the health and well-being of the community
- 6.4.18 Programs that encourage participation in organized athletic activities
- 6.4.19 Public safety enhancement services
- 6.4.20 Puslinch Places of Worship
- 6.4.21 Puslinch Highspeed
- 6.4.22 Puslinch Historical Society
- 6.4.23 Puslinch Lake Conservation Association
- 6.4.24 Puslinch Library
- 6.4.25 Puslinch Minor Soccer
- 6.4.26 Puslinch Minor Sports Organizations (If not listed)
- 6.4.27 Puslinch Optimist Club
- 6.4.28 Puslinch Safe Communities Committee
- 6.4.29 Puslinch Tennis Club
- 6.4.30 Senior Men's Baseball
- 6.4.31 Services or events directed for youth and older adults
- 6.4.32 Specific cultural and heritage activities
- 6.4.33 Sunrise Therapeutic Riding and Learning Centre
- 6.4.34 Whistle Stop Co-op Preschool
- 6.4.35 Well Interference Committee
- 6.4.36 Well Protection Committee
- 6.4.37 Wellington County's Plowmen's Association
- 6.4.38 Wellington Safe Communities Committee
- 6.4.39 4H Sheep Club
- 6.4.40 4H Life Skills Club



The Township may share posts from the County of Wellington, MP's or MPP's (excluding during campaign periods), provincial/federal government ministries and agencies, as well as the approved non-profits and service clubs listed above.

6.5 Sharing and Reposting External Content

The Township may share posts from the County of Wellington, Ontario Provincial Police, Wellington County Ontario Provincial Policy, provincial/federal government ministries and agencies, conservation authorities, Wellington-Guelph-Dufferin Public Health as well as the approved non-profits and service clubs as listed above.

The Township will not post on behalf of the County of Wellington, provincial/federal government ministries and agencies, as well as the approved non-profits and service clubs and will only share posts from their social media channels.

Based on the following criteria:

It is connected to the municipality or public sector initiative

It is timely and aligns within the current social media calendar/schedule

It doesn't contain commercial messages, advertising or political content

Examples of posts to be Shared/Reposts include:

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

Vaccination Clinics – Flu Shots, COVID-19, HPV, Hep B, etc.;

Scam Alerts;

Heat Warnings

County of Wellington

County Events, Workshops, etc.;

Waste, Recycling and Yard Waste Content;

Emergency Services, Alert Ready;

Ride Well

Provincial or Federal Government

Grant announcements;

Community Grants;

Puslinch relevant legislation

Approved Non-Profits and Services

Large Community Events: Remembrance Day, Santa Claus Parade, Aberfoyle Fall Fair

Any posts that include links to a personal account/website, individual business account/website, political party/candidate account/website, or objectionable material as defined in this policy must not be share or reposted on a Municipal social media account.



7. External Communications

7.1 Communications to External Publications

All Township communications to external publications including but not limited to advertisements, memos, letters, articles, statements and media releases are to be submitted by Township staff or Township Spokespersons as identified in this Policy. All Township communications to external publications must be pre-approved by the applicable process. This ensures accountability, accuracy and consistency and ensures compliance with Township Policies including but not limited to this policy as well as the Township's Council, Staff and Committee Codes of Conduct.

7.2 Advertisements to External Publications

Township staff are permitted to submit budget approved advertisements to local publications as defined below. Staff or Committee members are required to develop a project proposal to include justification for requirement for inclusion in publications not listed as a local.

All Township advertisement to be published in external publications must be based upon the following principals:

- 7.2.1** Advertisements must be placed in a manner that is most efficient and effective for the corporation;
- 7.2.2** Advertisements must be based on projects identified in the Corporate Work Plan, Township Annual Budget Process, or Council approved Committee Goals and Objectives;
- 7.2.3** Wherever possible, all advertisements contain the Township of Puslinch website address and applicable contact information;
- 7.2.4** Advertising placed by the Township of Puslinch must be in accordance with the Township's Council, Staff and Committee Codes of Conduct, accessibility standards as outlined by the AODA and Section 5 (Content Standards) of this policy;
- 7.2.5** Advertisements must be written in a manner and form that is easily understood by the intended audience; and
- 7.2.6** Advertisements must comply with any applicable statutory requirements

Local publications:

- Puslinch Pioneer (monthly circulation – one publication in the summer; one publication in December and January – total of 10 issues per year - print and online)
- Puslinch Today (daily online publication)
- Wellington Advertiser (weekly circulation print and online)

Publications applicable by geography, subject matter, or target audience may include:

- Guelph Mercury Tribune (2x weekly print and online)



- Guelph Today (daily online publication)
- Guelph Local (daily online publication)
- Elora Fergus Today (daily online publication)
- Cambridge Times (2x weekly print publication and online)
- Cambridge Today
- Community Heritage Ontario (quarterly publication – print and online circulation)
- Ontario Heritage Trust (monthly publication via email circulation)

Project proposals for justification of advertisements for inclusion in publications not listed as local must provide detailed budgetary requirements, outline the subject matter, and identify the target audience. Project proposals are to be approved by Council through either the Corporate Work Plan, Township Annual Budget Process, or Council approved Committee Goals and Objectives.

8 External Advertising Program Rink Board Advertising

- 8.1.1** Rink Board advertising is available for a term of one year only.
- 8.1.2** Rink Board advertising shall be in accordance with Section 5 Content Standards.

8.2 Ball Diamond (Outfield Fences) Advertising

- 8.2.1** Ball Diamond (outfield fences) advertising is available seasonally from May to October each year.
- 8.2.2** Ball Diamond (outfield fences) advertising shall:
 - 8.2.2.1** blend with surrounding flora; and
 - 8.2.2.2** not impair views or interfere with the enjoyment of the park
 - 8.2.2.3** be in accordance with Section 5 Content Standards.

8.3 Outdoor Marquee Sign Advertising

- 8.3.1** The Township's Outdoor Marquee Sign is available to promote community leisure programs, events and activities. It is also available to promote Township committees including Council advisory committees and external committees as approved by Council. All requests are subject to staff approval in accordance with Township policies and By-laws and compatibility with character limits and maximum display limits of the sign.
- 8.3.2** An Applicant hosting a community activity, program, or event at a Township facility is given first priority.
- 8.3.3** Outdoor Marquee advertising is available for a minimum period of one-week (Monday to Sunday).

8.4 Display Board Advertising (indoor display boards at Township facilities in front foyers)



- 8.4.1** The Township's Display Boards are available to promote community Township leisure programs, events and activities in accordance with Township policies and By-laws.
- 8.4.2** An Applicant hosting a community activity, program, or event at a Township facility is given first priority.
- 8.4.3** Display Board advertising is available for a minimum period of one week (Monday to Sunday)

8.5 Application Process:

- 8.5.1** Applicants shall submit a request to advertise on Township Property or through Township media by submitting the prescribed form as provided by the Township.
- 8.5.2** Approval of an application is subject to:
 - 8.5.2.1** compliance with all Township policies and by-laws
 - 8.5.2.2** size restrictions as prescribed by the Township
 - 8.5.2.3** payment of the applicable fee in accordance with the Township's Fees and Charges By-Law.
- 8.5.3** The Township reserves the right to reject any application that is not compatible with the Township's policies or By-laws.
- 8.5.4** The Township reserves the right to refuse or remove any advertising, at any time, considered to violate this policy or by-laws and may do so at the Applicant's expense.
- 8.5.5** The Township shall not be responsible for the costs to maintain an advertisement or for damage caused. A damaged advertisement deemed by Township staff to be unsafe will be removed immediately at the Applicant's expense.
- 8.5.6** An Applicant shall be responsible for all costs associated with the design, production, installation and removal of an advertisement.

9. Copyright, Branding, Logos

The use of the Township's name, logo, official marks and other forms of intellectual property owned by the Township of Puslinch, without permission, is prohibited and may result in legal action. Disciplinary action for the unauthorized use of Township intellectual property and branding by any municipal representative includes but is not limited to immediate termination.

10. Guidelines for Municipal Representatives using their Personal Accounts

The Township does not expect or encourage Municipal Representatives to deliver customer service on behalf of the Township by using their personal social media profiles. Questions about Township services and operations should be directed to the Township's customer service channels on Puslinch.ca, or phone or email.



If a municipal representative identifies their position with the Township on any social media or communication platform, the municipal representative must include a statement on the platform that all opinions and views are their own and do not reflect those of their employer.

Further, when commenting or posting as an identified municipal representative, it shall be made clear by the municipal representative that their opinions and views do not represent the Township's position by using phrases such as "in my personal view" or "Personally..." to communicate that personal views are being expressed.

In accordance with Section 8, the use of Township owned logos, branding material, uniforms, photographs, intellectual property, graphics or other media by a municipal representative on a personal platform are prohibited without the Township's authorization.

Municipal Representatives shall not discuss the Township its policies and procedures or any of its municipal representatives in a negative way through personal social media or communications pages.

11. Guidelines for Councillors and Committee Members using their Personal Accounts

Councillors and Committee Members are encouraged to refer questions posted on their social media accounts about Township services and operations to the Township's official channels. Councillors and Committee Members can acknowledge the question and refer people to the Township's official customer service channels on Puslinch.ca, or phone or email.

Councillors and Committee Members shall not post on their social media accounts information discussed in closed session or anything that they would not present in a public forum. Further, Councillor and Committee Members shall not post private or confidential information about fellow Councillors, Township employees or constituents.

If a Councillor or Committee Member identifies their position with the Township on any social media or communication platform, the Councillor or Committee Member must include a statement on the platform that all opinions and views are their own and do not reflect those of their employer.

Further, when commenting or posting as an identified Councillor or Committee Member, the Councillor or Committee Member shall clearly state that their opinions and views do not represent the Township's position by using phrases such as "in my personal view" or "Personally..." to communicate that personal views are being expressed.



In accordance with Section 8, the use of Township owned logos, branding material, uniforms, photographs, intellectual property, graphics or other media by a Councillor or Committee Member on a personal platform are prohibited without the Township's authorization.

Councillors and Committee Members shall not discuss the Township, its policies and procedures or any of its municipal representatives, Councillors or Committee Member in a negative way through personal social media pages or other public postings.

12. EngagePuslinch.ca

Engage Puslinch is an engagement software which allows the Township to collect feedback through community engagement regarding various projects, programs and initiatives. This media platform may be utilized by staff, Council, or Committees for approved projects. This is the Township's primary media platform for soliciting feedback from the community by using the various tools such as surveys, quick polls, forms, etc. All Engage Puslinch initiatives will comply with Township policies and By-laws.

13. Media Relations

13.1 Township spokesperson

A spokesperson is a municipal representative who has the authority to initiate traditional media activities and make statements to traditional media on behalf of the Township. Unless otherwise authorized, the Township's spokespeople are:

- Mayor or Designate
- Chief Administrative Officer or Designate
- Fire Chief or Designate

13.2 Non-spokespeople

Municipal representatives who are not authorized spokesperson must refer media inquiries to the authorized spokesperson for the department. Municipal representatives who are not designated spokespeople are not authorized to make statements to the media on behalf of the Township.

13.3 Responding to media inquires

Township spokespeople are encouraged to participate in interviews with journalists and/or bloggers who:

- Identify themselves and any affiliation they may have with print, broadcast or online media outlets; and



Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Canadian Association of Journalists' Principles for Ethical Journalism and Ethics Guidelines

Township spokespeople may address media inquiries on matters pertaining to their day-to-day operations. A spokesperson may share or delegate their spokesperson responsibilities when subject matter expertise/information is sought beyond what the spokesperson could provide, and when the delegated spokesperson is adequately prepared to undertake this responsibility.

Following media interviews, Township spokespeople are required to email the Chief Administrative Officer the following information:

The media outlet and reporter;

The interview topic and a brief summary of questions and responses;

Date and time when the article, online post or broadcast will be published or aired

13.4 Personal point of view

Township spokespeople are required to convey the official position of the Township rather than personal points of view when speaking with the media. Personal opinions must not be expressed using Township letterhead, email addresses or online accounts.

13.5 Known or potentially contentious issues

All media inquiries regarding known or potentially contentious issues must be immediately referred to the Chief Administrative Officer and the appropriate spokesperson. The Chief Administrative Officer and spokesperson will coordinate a plan and/or response on behalf of the Township.

13.6 Litigation, personnel and election issues

Inquiries regarding pending litigation, exposure to litigation or staff-related information must be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer, Municipal Clerk and any other relevant staff.

Inquiries regarding municipal election matters should be referred to the Municipal Clerk.

13.7 Public safety issues

Media inquiries regarding the Puslinch Fire and Rescue Service should be directed to the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief.



13.8 Crisis or emergency issues

The procedure for working with the media during an emergency is outlined in the Township's Emergency Response Plan. Under the procedure and the plan, a designated Information Officer is the main point of contact for the media.

13.9 Anonymous media requests

The Township reserves the right to refuse anonymous media requests.