



## **Administrative Policy # 2025-08**

### **Communications Policy**

#### **1. Policy Statement**

The Town of Digby is committed to consistent, clear, effective, timely, and transparent communications. Effective communications are critical to the Town's work and contribute directly to citizens' trust in their local government. This Policy is intended to guide open, honest, and effective communication with the Town's residents, stakeholders, Council, and employees.

#### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that communications with residents, stakeholders, Council, and employees reflect the values of the Town, and is efficient, and responsive. This Policy establishes the principles that will direct all communications and provides specific direction and standards for a variety of communications related activities.

This Policy provides direction to Council and employees to ensure that the Town:

- Provides clear, accurate and timely information about its policies, programs, services, and initiatives to the community.
- Uses a variety of communication methods to engage and provide access to local government information in formats that respond to and accommodate the community's diverse needs.
- Is visible, accessible, transparent, and accountable to citizens.
- Provides clear and timely messaging to Town residents in response to emergencies or crises.
- Engages the public when establishing priorities, developing policies, and planning programs and services.
- Provides timely, accurate and relevant information to staff and Council on key issues prior to release to the public.
- Provides a brand that is clear, cohesive and concise, and ensures communications regarding the official position of the Town on all issues reflect the majority vote of Council or existing policy framework adopted by Council.

#### **3. Scope**

This Policy applies to all internal and external communications of the Town of Digby and applies to all Members of Council and employees.

## 4. Definitions

**4.1 Authorized Person:** An employee appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to interact with media or represent the Town.

**4.2 Corporate Communication(s):** The variety of ways the Town, as a government body, communicates with external and internal audiences.

**4.3 Emergency:** A situation that requires prompt action to limit damage to persons, property, or the environment.

**4.4 Inappropriate Communication:** Means in-person, electronic, telephonic, written, or other forms of communication that:

- a person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause the subject of the communication, the person receiving the communication, or both to feel humiliated or intimidated.
- is discriminatory, threatening, violent, or defamatory
- is part of a pattern of communications that are frivolous, vexatious, or made with malicious intent

**4.5 Social Media:** Websites and digital applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content online, or to participate in social networking.

**4.6 Stakeholder:** A resident, business, municipal neighbour, elected official, staff, upper tier level of government, board, committee, authority, agency, association, and anyone with an interest in municipal affairs.

## 5. Values and Guiding Principals

In all communications, the values of the Town of Digby shall be embodied and reflected:

- **Accessibility:** Communications shall use plain language and a variety of methods to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of target audiences.
- **Diversity:** Communications shall be correct, concise, accessible, gender neutral, and non-discriminatory. Communications shall exclude words and images that connote stereotypes, exclude any negative or passive language relating to physical appearances, and exclude clichés, slang, and jargon. All communications shall reflect and promote inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility.
- **Accountability:** Communications and engagement must always reflect that the Town of Digby takes responsibility for its actions, words, goals, and objectives. When an error is made, it must be corrected, with notice and taking responsibility for it.
- **Listening:** As an organization, including Council and staff, the Town will strive to listen to the input from citizens to gain new information, view an issue from a unique perspective, reduce conflict and build confidence and trust.
- **Cordiality:** As individuals, and as an organization, the Town's communications, systems, and the execution of our work must be delivered with friendliness, kindness and compassion.

- **Timeliness:** In all matters, clarity and timeliness of communications shall be observed. The Town must communicate with citizens as quickly as possible without compromising key values. If an interaction requires seeking additional or detailed information and input, the request should be acknowledged, and the expectations defined around the communications.
- **Transparency:** The Town must communicate honestly and openly with stakeholders whenever possible. This includes providing proactive disclosure of information when appropriate.

## **6. Brand Usage**

- 6.1** Corporate communications shall make use of the Town’s brand and brand standards as appropriate and in accordance with the current or future brand(s) adopted by Council.
- 6.2** Candidates, candidate representatives, and third-party advertisers are not permitted to use the Town’s brand(s) including but not limited to the Seal of the Town of Digby or the Town’s marketing logo.
- 6.3** Usage of the Town’s brand(s) outside of corporate communications shall be at the discretion of the CAO.

## **7. Freedom of Information and Protection of Property**

In all communications, the Town, Members of Council, and employees are subject to the Municipal Government Act, SNS 1998, c 18, Part XX.

## **8. Respectful Communications Policy**

### **8.1** Responding to Inappropriate Communication to employees:

- If employees believe they have received an inappropriate communication, they will prepare an Incident Report detailing the incident. Employees will submit the incident report to their manager or director. If, if the incident involves their manager or director, the report shall be given directly to the CAO. If, if the incident involves the CAO, the report shall be given to the mayor. Where the Incident is limited to written or electronic communication, a copy of that written or electronic communication should be included with the Incident Report.
- If, upon receipt and review of an Incident Report, the Manager, Director, or Mayor believes the incident may have violated this Policy, they will notify the CAO (Council if it is the mayor) and provide the CAO (or Council) with the Incident Report.
- When the CAO (or Council) receives an Incident Report, they will take such action as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, considering the following guidelines:

- Whether the inappropriate communication concerned a matter for which the author of the communication had a statutory right to be heard.
- The role of the individual to whom the Inappropriate Communication was directed.
- Whether the inappropriate communication relates to comments and feedback regarding a program, service, or initiative of the Town.
- Whether the inappropriate communication is violent, threatening, defamatory of an individual, or discriminatory.
- Whether the inappropriate communication was a single or repeated act.
- Whether the person has acknowledged wrongdoing or apologized for the inappropriate communication.
- whether the person had received previous warnings or actions from the CAO, or Town Council regarding inappropriate communication; and
- any other relevant consideration.

**8.2** The CAO (or the mayor and Council) may determine that the incident did not constitute a violation of this Policy and take no further action.

**8.3** The CAO (or the mayor and Council) may determine that the incident constituted a violation of this Policy but decide that no further action is required in the circumstances.

**8.4** The CAO (or the mayor and Council) may determine that the incident constituted a violation of this Policy and take one or more of the following steps:

- Issue a written warning letter to the person who engaged in inappropriate communication.
- Request that the person who engaged in inappropriate communication meet with an employee.
- Impose limits on the way a person may communicate with employees, including.
- Limiting the person to communicating:
  - in a particular manner (e.g. email only);
  - at a particular time (e.g. telephone calls only one day per week, emails only reviewed once per week).
  - for a particular duration of time (e.g. a maximum time for telephone calls).
  - with a particular person (e.g. requiring that all communications from the person be directed to the Manager and advising other employees not to respond; and
  - any other action the CAO (or mayor and Council) considers appropriate in the circumstances.

- Instruct employees not to acknowledge, respond to, and/or publish future communications from the person engaging in inappropriate communication.

**8.5 Nothing in this policy shall prevent individual members of Council from engaging in open, respectful communication with residents on matters of public concern, provided it is made clear when the member is expressing a personal opinion as opposed to the official position of Council.”**

## **9. Communications Support Provided to the Mayor**

In their capacity as the spokesperson for Council, Town staff may provide communications support to the mayor, if required. Such assistance may include but is not limited to speaking notes for public appearances or events, scripts or research notes for media interviews, and key messages for media requests or emergency situations.

## **10. Communications from Members of Council**

**10.1** In all communications from Members of Council, including the use of social media, the following shall be considered:

- Obligations under Council’s Code of Conduct.
- Obligations under Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.
- The accuracy of information provided.
- If the communication could bring about disrepute to or expose the Town to legal action.
- Whether the subject or position on a matter is enabled or prohibited by a law, or By-law or Policy of the Town.
- Whether the communication reflects the values of the Town; and,
- Whether Council has taken a particular position, by way of a motion, on the topic.

**10.2** Every member of Council shall display the reserve inherent in their position with the Town when publicly expressing his/her personal opinions on matters of political controversy or on existing or proposed municipal policy or administration. This policy is not intended to restrict the legitimate public comment of spokespersons of Council, nor the public comment of Council Members on matters of essentially a personal interest related to their position as a Council Member with the Town of Digby. In cases where comments are made prior to an issue being discussed with the full Council, Councillors or the Mayor are to ensure they clearly indicate they are speaking for themselves and not on behalf of the Council. All members of Council should exercise caution when speaking publicly on issues not yet before Council as not to compromise their objectivity prior to information being presented for their consideration.

**10.3** Accordingly, when a Member of Council is communicating as an individual, they may include the following statement in written correspondence:

**“The information contained in this correspondence reflects the views of an individual Member of Council, and not those of Council as a whole or the Town of Digby.”**

**10.4** With respect to communicating the business of Committees of Council, the Members of Council serving as Chair shall refer to and be bound by the policies of their respective Committee.

**10.5** It shall be the responsibility of the Chair of a Committee to verify, if required, the accuracy of information being communicated to Council with the CAO.

**10.6** Following circulation of formal written correspondence, Members of Council shall provide a copy of the correspondence to the CAO. This shall include copies of letters of support or commendation, or responses to community issues, but exclude emails, social media posts, or routine correspondence with constituents.

## **11. Media Inquiries Received by Members of Council**

**11.1** Councillors shall refer all media inquiries to the Mayor and CAO for direction and assistance.

**11.2** The Mayor shall be the default spokesperson for all media inquiries regarding Council matters, unless another Member of Council is designated to respond to a particular matter.

## **12. Corporate Communications**

**12.1** The Town shall maintain a website to provide the public with information regarding municipal services, Council decisions, Council and Committee meeting schedules, minutes and agendas, By-laws, Policies, activities, events, and ongoing government business.

**12.2** The CAO shall be the official spokesperson for matters related to the administration of the Town. All media inquiries shall be referred to them for direction.

**12.3** If authorized by the CAO, an employee may serve as the designated spokesperson for matters relating to their position, skills, and expertise.

## **13. Internal Communication**

Open, two-way communication, between Council and Administration and among Chief Administrative Officer, Department Director/Manager/Supervisors and Employees is vital to the effective operation of the Town.

### **13.1 Council Member Inquiries**

- Council Member inquiries, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, must be addressed promptly.
- Formal inquiries are managed by the Chief Administrative Officer.
- Where a response is provided to an inquiry that is expected to attract media attention or become part of a Council or Committee agenda, the response shall be provided to all Members of Council.

### **13.2 Managers/Supervisors & Employees**

- Effective internal communication is a shared management responsibility, led by the Chief Administrative Officer and senior staff with support from the Administrative Assistant.
- Department Directors, Managers and Supervisors must communicate with employees openly, often and, wherever possible, before information is made public.

- To inform and engage employees, a variety of formats can be used, as appropriate and as resources permit, to reach all staff across the Town. This may include a mix of published materials including but not limited to newsletters, notices, electronic bulletins, oral presentations and staff meetings.
- The needs of all employees should be considered including outside workers who do not have access to electronic information and employees who work remotely.
- To ensure consistency and effective use of Town communication channels and formats, departments may consult with the Chief Administrative Officer for support and advice on communication initiatives.

**13.3 Mayor and Council:**

- The Mayor is normally the Town's chief spokesperson, explaining policies, priorities and decisions to the public, unless otherwise designated to another member of Council or the Chief Administrative Officer.
- The Mayor is normally the chief spokesperson for decisions approved by Town Council unless another Member of Council is designated.
- Committee Chairs are normally the chief spokesperson for matters dealt with under the jurisdiction of the committee unless another Member of Council is designated.
- On occasion. Council may designate an individual Member of Council as spokesperson on a particular issue.
- Once Council has rendered a decision, all members of Council have a duty to support that decision whether they voted for or against the particular motion. They can express their views when asked, however, it is incumbent upon them as a member of Council to support the decision of the majority.
- In cases where a member of Council speaks with the media on a Town related issue, they should notify the Chief Administrative Officer and other members of Council as soon as practical. This notification will ensure that everyone is aware of the interview prior to it being made public.

**13.4 Administration:**

- **Chief Administrative Officer, Department Directors:** The Chief Administrative Officer is the primary administrative spokesperson. Department Directors are normally the spokespersons for programs, services and initiatives they administer unless otherwise directed by the Chief Administrative Officer.

**13.5 Legal, Personnel and Election:**

- Inquiries regarding pending litigation, or involving a significant exposure to litigation, or personnel-related information should be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer or designate. Inquiries regarding municipal election and campaign issues should be directed to the Returning Officer.

**13.6 Designated Spokesperson:**

- Chief Administrative Officer may designate departmental spokespersons to communicate about policies, programs, services and initiatives they are familiar with and for which they have responsibility.

**13.7 Departmental staff:**

- Staff may provide background information that is publicly available.
- Requests for interviews should be referred to the Chief Administrative Officer

## **14. Social Media Use by the Town of Digby, its Council Members and Employees**

**14.1** The Town of Digby, its Council members and employees shall be in compliance with the Town of Digby’s Social Media Policy as it may be amended from time to time.

**14.2** The Town shall not provide administrative support to the individual social media accounts of Members of Council or employees.

**14.3** Only authorized persons shall post on the Town’s primary social media.

**14.4** All social media platforms and activities must be reflective of the Town’s values and will continually strive to protect the organization’s credibility and meet the information needs of citizens.

**14.5** The CAO, or their designate, shall be responsible for managing the primary social media channels representing the Town of Digby as a corporation.

**14.6** All social media content shall require approval by the CAO, or their designate, prior to publication.

**14.7** The Town may establish standards and guidelines for commenting and engagement with its social media content that include, but are not limited to:

- Responding to posts or comments.
- Moderating discussions.
- When posts or comments may be removed, such as instances of:
  - Racist, hateful, sexist, homophobic, slanderous, insulting, or threatening language.
  - Aggressive, coarse, violent, obscene, or pornographic content.
  - Offensive or threatening comments directed at an individual or an organization.
  - Content posted for the sake of advertising or self-promotion.
  - Unintelligible, repetitive, or spam content.
  - Post any comments in any way contrary to law.

**14.8** Council members shall remain mindful of their obligations under the Code of Conduct for Members of Council when sharing content on social media.

**14.9** Employees shall remain mindful of their obligations under the Towns Respectful Workplace Policy when sharing content on social media.

### **14.10 Media/ Social Media Relations**

- The Media plays an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest.
- Media inquiries, whether by phone, email, letter, or in person, should be addressed promptly to accommodate publication or broadcast deadlines, wherever possible, subject to the policies and guidelines established by Town Council.

- Social Media requests for information, are to be directed through the Chief Administrative Officer to knowledgeable staff designated as the spokesperson(s) by the Chief Administrative Officer.

**14.11 Guidelines for Departments:**

- Respect the authority and responsibility of Town Council, whose Members are entitled to learn about proposed policy initiatives or major new programs, services or initiatives before information about them is released to the Media.
- Preparation of campaigns or strategies that require participation by the Mayor or Members of Council, or when preparing a response to a Media inquiry that could have implications for the Mayor or Members of Council are subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer.
- Keep confidential information that is related to matters before the courts, legal actions or under the jurisdiction of another authority.
- Incorporate mechanisms for receiving and acknowledging public inquires and feedback.

**14.12 Links to Third Party Sites**

- This type of link, which will generally open a new browser, is provided for the convenience of the visitor. Inclusion of the link does not imply endorsement by the Town, and it accepts no responsibility for the content found on any third-party website. Links are subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer and may be removed without notice at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer. Factors affecting approval or removal may include business case considerations, an assessment of the needs of the intended audience, the relevance to the Town or appropriate department and technical or legal considerations

## **15. Emergency Communications**

**15.1** In times of emergency or crisis, the Town shall communicate any and all information that will protect the health, safety, security, of residents and their property.

**15.2** Communication decisions during a REMO activation shall be made by the Digby Regional Emergency Management Organization (REMO)

**15.3** Communications will take any form necessary to ensure residents receive accurate, timely, and relevant information to prevent, mitigate, respond to, or recover from an emergency.

## **16. Consultations**

**16.1** Open and effective communication is the key to successful public consultations.

**16.2** Departments must, subject to the approval of The Chief Administrative Officer:

- Inform citizens and stakeholders about opportunities to participate in public consultation and citizen engagement processes (such as surveys, town hall meetings and committees). This may be done through the Town's website, newsletters, letters of invitation, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising and other formats normally used.
- Clearly identify public information materials as being from the Town.

- Inform participants, in summary form, of the results of the public consultation and outcomes. This may be done through the Town's website, reports to citizens, letters, posted notices, notices to the Media, advertising, newsletter and other formats identified in the Town of Digby's communications Strategy.

## **17. Copyright**

The use of images in print and digital communications products, and their distribution to targeted audiences, will comply with the Canadian Copyright Act. The Town will ensure that the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected in the Town's communications channels and products.

## **18. Reporting Violations**

Members of Council and employees shall immediately report known or suspected violations of this Policy to the CAO. All good faith allegations of violations of this policy will be confidentially investigated by the Office of the CAO.

## **19. Roles and Responsibilities**

The communications function is a shared role that requires the cooperation of many internal stakeholders whose communications-related responsibilities are as follows:

### **19.1 Council will:**

- ensure the Town has a current and comprehensive Policy for communications; and
- review and amend this Policy as required.

### **19.2 The Chief Administrative Officer:**

- will implement this Policy and oversee effective communications of Town policy and initiatives.
- will identify and propose revisions to this Policy; and
- may delegate their authority.

## **20. Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every five years from the date of approval by Council. Council will be provided with recommended updates, as required, based on changes in the corporate reporting structure, changes in best practices or technological changes that need to be addressed in the Policy framework.

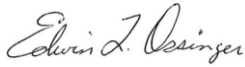
**Clerk's Annotation for Official Policy Book**

Date of Notice: **October 14, 2025**

Date of adoption: November 03, 2025

Policy effective date: November 04, 2025

I certify that this **Communications Policy** was adopted by Council as indicated above.



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**November 04, 2025**

**Clerk**

**Date**