

Social Media Toolkit



 **Alberta
Municipalities**
Strength
In Members

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Introduction

Social media is an important tool for elected officials. It's essential for communicating directly with your constituents, and it's also a useful way for people to get to know you, to see you as a person, not just through your role as a politician. It's an excellent way to build your profile and your brand and to share your own story in ongoing, meaningful ways.

The way you use social media can set the tone of your leadership style. It can define how you're perceived and how your ideas are received by your audiences. Effective social media starts with you. The better able you are to "read the room" — by understanding your audiences and their values — the more you'll be able to create content that keeps your audiences informed and respectfully engaged.

However, no matter how positively and effectively you use social media, we know that it can very often be an unfriendly and hostile space, and it can be one of the hardest parts of being a public figure. That's why we've put together this toolkit — to give you some tips for the aspects of social media that are within your control, and to provide some advice for how to manage the parts that are outside of your control.

Alberta Municipalities is excited to have partnered with [Parodos Social Marketing](#) to develop a social media toolkit for members. Over the last 15 years, Parodos has run numerous accounts, profiles, and communications campaigns for municipal governments and elected officials alike. Parodos specializes in talking about fraught topics, like anti-racism, gender, sexual identity, and community safety in the public sphere, and are very familiar with the challenging nature of social media conversations.

Based on their experience, this toolkit offers advice for how to analyze your audiences and how to frame and create content to engage them in meaningful ways. We also explore how to address criticism, and how to maintain your mental health and safety in this challenging environment.

Much like social media, this toolkit is intended to be the start of a dialogue — with your staff or supporters, with Alberta Municipalities, or with Parodos. To learn more, connect with us at advocacy@abmunis.ca.

SECTION ONE

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Here is a breakdown of the pros and cons of the most popular social media platforms.

Facebook	
Pros	Cons
As of spring 2025, there are 3 billion monthly active users, making it the largest and most active of all the social media platforms.	There is a news link ban in Canada, which makes it difficult to directly share news sources.
The format of the posts with threaded comments makes it easy to follow conversations, and the platform is among the best for analyzing sentiment amongst users.	Facebook comment threads can get quite heated and are often negative in tone.
Facebook users tend to be older than other social media users, so it's a great platform for reaching audiences who are 40+.	Facebook engagement is dwindling. For the last few years, many users haven't felt safe to comment, so direct engagement is significantly down. However, Facebook's reach and market saturation is still significant. It has simply become more of a broadcast medium, rather than an engagement platform.
It's the most intuitive platform, and supports many forms of posts (e.g. video, text, image, meme, etc), including link-sharing.	
Facebook has a lot of functionality, beyond just posting. It offers groups, event-planning functionality, stories, brand pages, messaging, advertising, and more.	

LinkedIn	
Pros	Cons
As of spring 2025, LinkedIn has more than 1 billion registered users.	Though LinkedIn's market saturation is high, its daily active user-base is smaller – approximately 143 million.
It's a great space for reaching people in a career-building or professional state of mind. It has a very focused use-case, which means it's easier to target your messaging to a more specific audience.	LinkedIn is primarily used for professional career development, so it's not a platform that will reach a broad swath of the general public.
LinkedIn has lots of valuable functionality, especially its built-in blogging feature.	

Instagram	
Pros	Cons
As of spring 2025, there are 2 billion monthly active users on Instagram. It has more than doubled in size since 2021, and is continuing to grow.	The lack of ability to share links outside of stories is a strategic liability. It is recommend to post a Linktree link, or your own website, in your bio so that you have a mechanism for follow up with your audiences (“Link in bio for further information”).
The audience is quite segmented from Facebook, users tending to be younger (18-45) and female. There are strong segmented audiences on Instagram, including queer communities, people with disabilities, artists/creators, and people who align with particular political identities.	Due to the focus on sharing high quality images and videos, Instagram is labour-intensive to do well.
Hashtags still provide relevant opportunities for discovery, though are less useful than they used to be from an algorithmic perspective.	Instagram is very much a lifestyle platform, where cute cats, travel photos, and beautiful food and fashion still reign supreme. It can sometimes be challenging to cut through with content about issues. However, more and more Instagram content has an issue focus, given the high emotion around political instability and polarization (south of the border, as well as here in Canada), and even lifestyle content creators are sharing more issue-based content.
To compete with TikTok, Instagram prioritizes reels in its algorithms, which can be an effective way of reaching new audiences.	
Stories have more functionality than posts, allowing for the sharing of links, countdowns, stickers, and many other creative and strategic opportunities.	
Instagram comment threads are more likely to be neutral or positive than Facebook comment threads.	
The structure of the platform allows for barrier-free communication with any user. A simple @tag means you can reach out to anyone, anywhere, and you do not need a reciprocal relationship in order to communicate with them. This used to be a major benefit of Twitter/X, and Instagram has borrowed this functionality from them.	

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X	
Pros	Cons
As of spring 2025, there are approximately 600 million active users on X.	X has lost more than 20% of its user base since 2023. While there are still 600 million active users, only 5.6 million are active on a daily basis, signalling a decrease in relevance in the strategic use of the platform.
The structure of the platform allows for barrier-free communication with any user. A simple @tag means you can reach out to anyone, anywhere, and you do not need a reciprocal relationship in order to communicate with them.	X's owner, Elon Musk, is a controversial and polarizing figure. Many users have left the platform, as they do not wish to support him.
The X audience skews male and tends to be 24-36.	Post threads on X are frequently extremely negative, and the platform is fraught with trolls. It is an especially unfriendly space to anyone who isn't white or male.
	As users flee the platform, it has a waning strategic value. Given the impact that Musk has had on American politics and attitudes, and the threats he has made to Canadian sovereignty, it may be ethically challenging to continue to use the X platform in Canada.
	Parados no longer recommends the use of X to their clients, though they do recommend maintaining a placeholder account in the space, so that your X identity can't be co-opted by bots or trolls.

X Alternatives	
Pros	Cons
There is a growing list of X/Twitter-like platforms that provide very similar functionality to the old Twitter, without the negativity of its owner. These platforms include: Bluesky, Threads, and Mastodon.	Threads is a part of the Meta-verse, which means it's owned by Mark Zuckerberg. While Zuckerberg is less of a polarizing figure than Musk, engaging on his platforms may still cause concerns for some Canadians.
Currently, Threads is the biggest of these new platforms, thanks to its integration with Instagram. It has nearly 275 million active users. Bluesky has only 20 million active users, however it is a highly engaged space, and growing. Mastodon has 10 million users, and allows for strong audience segmentation through its use of "instances," which are independent servers that audiences can join based on their interests.	All of the platforms are still on the smaller side, and therefore don't have the market saturation of the big name platforms.
Engagement on all of these platforms is higher than X, and is generally more positive.	
Bluesky, in particular, is a friendlier space for women and queer people than many other platforms.	

TikTok	
Pros	Cons
As of 2025, TikTok has 1.2 billion active users, and it's growing quickly.	TikTok's Chinese ownership has scared off many western governments. Indeed, in 2025, Trump threatened to ban its use in the US (though he has currently backed off on that threat). That said, many levels of Canadian governments have discouraged its use, due to fears around Canadian data protection. That said, given the newly contentious relationship between Canada and the US, and the involvement of the owners of X and Meta in the current administration, it seems disingenuous to penalize TikTok and not Meta and X. A review of government social media policies is suggested in light of this shift.
TikTok has developed its own unique culture, and it's a space that's well-suited to building a personal brand, and talking about issues.	TikTok's reliance on video makes it labour-intensive to post regularly.
TikTok videos tend to be rawer and more organic in feel than Instagram reels, which tend to be a bit glossier. This can make it easier to post consistent content.	
TikTok users tend to spend more than one hour per day on the platform, making it the longest any users use a social media platform.	
TikTok audiences tend to be 18-44, and skew slightly female.	
The platform encourages you to create content within it, so you don't need additional software in order to create and post. That said, you can also create content elsewhere, and then post in TikTok.	
There is a lot of functionality on TikTok to spur on your creativity, like stitches, duets, filters, effects, live-streaming, stickers, text, etc.	
TikTok has a strong presence across the political spectrum, and users have been able to find or form strong and productive communities around political topics.	

YouTube	
Pros	Cons
YouTube has a huge active audience, with more than 2.5 billion active users.	To do well, YouTube is very labour-intensive. For many content creators, YouTube literally becomes a full-time job.
The platform specializes in both long and short-form video content. If you're interested in regularly sharing video content, especially longer-form content, it can be a great place to build a presence.	As the costs to create high quality video content have decreased, the quality expectations on the platform have increased exponentially. A lot of YouTube content competes with professionally produced, broadcast-quality content on TV and other streaming platforms. This can raise the barrier to entry for individuals without a talented production team behind them.
Even if you don't want to build a YouTube following, it's a great online space to host your video content.	
YouTube is also an effective streaming/recording platform, should you want to produce online events/videocasts.	

SECTION TWO

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

As an elected official, you have one of the most challenging audiences to speak to: the “general public.”

Communications are most effective when you can reach your audience on a values level. However, with the “general public,” many of those values will differ, as will reactions and responses to the issues you need to discuss.

Therefore, it is helpful to analyze your audience spectrum, based on your own values, and identify how they compare to the people you’ll be reaching.

Start by looking at the people in your “**Choir.**” The people who share your values, and who will likely agree with your position, based on those shared values. The goal for your communications with the Choir is to empower them and to encourage them to amplify your messaging.

At the other end of the spectrum lie “**The Haters.**” These folks aren’t necessarily hateful, but they do hold significantly different values from you and will disagree with the things you stand for. They can sometimes be contentious and vitriolic online and are commonly known as “Trolls.” The goal for this audience is to mitigate the impact of their sometimes loud and disruptive messaging. This audience can be helpful to you, though, as the way you manage them will say a lot to others about your leadership style (please see “Section Five: How to Respond to Negative Feedback” for more information).

In the middle of your audience spectrum, spanning from just below the Choir to immediately above the Haters, will be the large swath of people who are “**Undecided.**” These people may possibly share some of your values (especially those who are closer to the

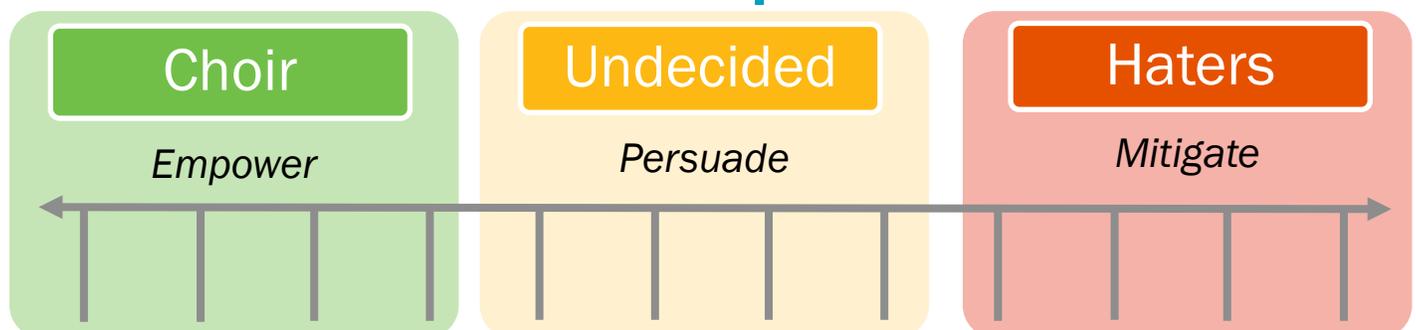
Choir), but for any number of reasons, they have not yet fully embraced your messaging. They may just not know enough about you to have formed an opinion, or they may be critical about your position on specific issues.

It’s important to note that “Critics” are very different from Haters, even though they may share some values with them. Critics are part of the “Undecided” audience and can often be engaged in productive conversation. Like you, they often want the best for their community, but they differ in how they’d approach the solutions. By connecting with them where your values overlap, you have a better chance of having productive conversations. Their positions can help you to better understand complex issues, solidify your own thinking, and help you make more nuanced and informed decisions. How to engage with Critics is explored in Section Five.

Your communications goal for the Undecided Audience is to encourage and persuade them to take steps up the spectrum towards the Choir to embrace your messaging. This likely won’t happen in a single interaction. But by analyzing the various values that these folks hold, you can identify the places where you connect, intersect, and where you can demonstrate that you do share their values — which will make it that much easier to craft messages that resonate with more of them.

The better you understand your audiences, and the more you can tailor your messaging appropriately, the more likely you’ll be to create content that keeps your audiences informed, engaged and respectful.

Audience Spectrum



SECTION THREE

FRAMING A POST

Creating a safe and vibrant online space starts with you. While you can't control how others will respond, the way you frame your posts can guide people to respond in more productive ways.

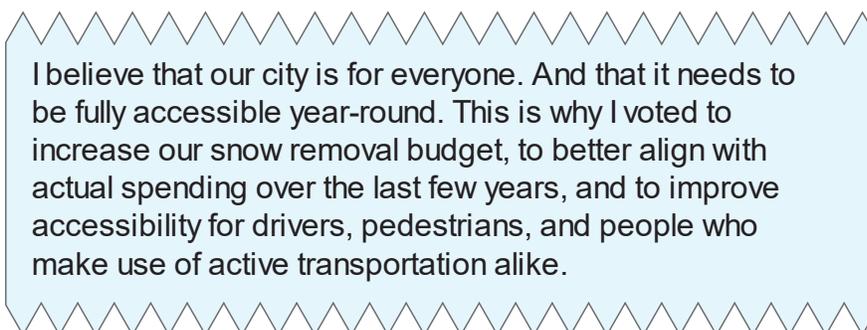
Here is a framework you can use to craft posts to elicit constructive engagement, along with an example so you can see it in action:

1. Always approach your posts with empathy for your audiences, rather than your own emotional state, and where possible, establish your solidarity. This helps remind your audiences that you're a citizen too, and it keeps your posts from feeling oppositional. Though there is space to acknowledge your own emotions, save it for the section where you state your position on an issue, or for the conclusion.



A social media post example for Councillor Smith. It features a profile picture of a woman with glasses, the name "COUNCILLOR SMITH", and the date "September 5, 2025". The text of the post reads: "I've been hearing from a lot of people about the challenges they've experienced with snow removal this year. I understand, and I'm especially concerned how people who use mobility devices have been negatively affected."

2. State your position, grounded in your values. Provide a personal statement about why you care, or why you made your decision. This not only helps you to explain your point of view, it also helps people to get to know and understand you.



A social media post example for Councillor Smith. The text of the post reads: "I believe that our city is for everyone. And that it needs to be fully accessible year-round. This is why I voted to increase our snow removal budget, to better align with actual spending over the last few years, and to improve accessibility for drivers, pedestrians, and people who make use of active transportation alike."

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3. Provide context for your post. This may happen before or after you state your position.

Over the past three years, our snow removal program has been underfunded, and I can see the harm that that's caused for people across our city. Drivers and commuters have been affected by slower response times, because our crews haven't been funded to work overtime during large snow events. Cyclists and pedestrians — especially people with disabilities — have had their options limited for how they use our path systems, since these routes have been deprioritized. Winter isn't going anywhere, so I believe we need to appropriately fund snow clearance in order to make our city function better for everyone.

4. Anticipate the likely criticism and acknowledge it in your post. Also, acknowledge the emotions of your audience.

Now, I recognize that whenever we increase funding, we need to carefully consider the fiscal ramifications. I understand, in this post-COVID reality, just how much people are struggling, and an increase in tax-payer costs could be just as damaging as lower-service snow removal. This is why we've tasked Administration with a cost-savings program review, to better understand how we can recoup costs elsewhere in our budget.

5. Provide the “What's In It For Me” context for your audience.

The reality is that winter is with us for nearly half the year. So, we need a city that runs efficiently and effectively all year long, not just the summer months. By taking better care of our city's transportation routes year-round, our city will be a more accessible, enjoyable, and productive place for everyone.

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6. End with a call to action. That call to action may be a specific action you want citizens to take on an issue, or as simple as a question for engagement at the end of your post.

So, I want to hear from you: how will snow removal improvements impact your experience in our city? What do you think city leaders need to know as we plan for next year?

75 Reactions 15 Comments

SECTION FOUR

CREATING AND SHARING VIDEO CONTENT

Sharing video content is a great way to build your brand on social media. It is richly sensory and allows people to get to know you in a more personal way. Also, many platforms prioritize video content, and by sharing videos, your profile can get an algorithmic boost.

What Gear Do You Need?

While all you *really* need is a good smartphone camera, great video content can benefit from the addition of some peripheral gear. All of it is readily available online and is relatively inexpensive. With a \$250-\$300 budget, you could outfit yourself with a very serviceable basic kit. Increase that budget to \$500-\$600, and you'd be set for a long while.

In addition to your smartphone, consider the following gear:

- A tripod, for stability*
- A selfie-stick, if you want to do “walk-and-talks” without a partner
- A battery-powered LED light and light stand. Look for a light that can represent a variety of colours or colour temperatures (2700k-6500k)*
- A wireless lavalier mic*
- A neutral grey or green-screen backdrop with stand
- A white/gold reflector board
- A phone-sized teleprompter

The items that are considered to be the most important are starred, so if you're looking to build up your gear slowly, they'd be the best pieces to prioritize.

Shooting and Editing Tips

Here are some tips to help you level up the production of your video content:

1. Lighting can make or break your video.
 - A key light is your primary lighting source. This may be the sun, if you're shooting outside or by a window, or it may be an additional light that you add to your filming set-up.
 - If you're shooting outside or by a window, angle your body so that you're not squinting into the sun, but use the sun as your primary light source.
 - If you don't have the opportunity to set up additional lights, try to shoot outside (or at least next to a window) during the day. Outdoor light on a cloudy day is going to give you the most even, flattering light.
 - Don't shoot into the sun, or directly in front of a window, as your subject will be backlit, with their face in shadow.
2. Most camera apps have a setting for image stabilization. Any time you're not using a tripod, be sure to turn image stabilization on. This will help to smooth out any subtle movement or camera jiggle — especially important if you're shooting a “walk-and-talk.”
3. Turn auto-focus off on your camera app, and set the focus manually before you shoot. This will prevent the focus from changing mid-take.
4. For most social media uses, shoot vertically, rather than horizontally.

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5. Frame your content loosely (head, shoulders and torso), so that you can “punch in” for a close-up (head and shoulders) in editing. This is a convenient way to create an edit point, so that you don’t have an awkward cut if you wish to edit two clips together.
6. Always include captions so that your video is accessible. Many people watch social media videos without sound, so it’s important for general usage, as well as for hearing-impaired people. Many editing programs will automate captions, though be sure you edit them before you post to ensure accuracy.

In terms of editing platforms, we recommend reviewing the following options:

- CapCut – the free app likely provides enough options for basic usage. It’s a powerful, intuitive platform, with a relatively simple learning curve.
- Canva – again, the free version will probably suffice. Makes it seamless to include graphics, or to build a video entirely from graphics.
- Adobe Premier Pro – requires a paid subscription. It’s the professional industry standard, and includes many bells and whistles. However, without experience or training, it’s likely more complicated than the average person requires.

Video Framing Reference



Wider shot.

“Punched in” closer shot.

SECTION FIVE

RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

When it comes to social media, negative feedback is an unfortunate fact of life, especially for elected officials. However, depending on the tone of this feedback, it can sometimes present helpful opportunities for you.

Your first step is to determine if the person commenting is a “Critic” or a “Troll” (check out Section Two for more information about how these two personalities fit into your audience spectrum).

A **Critic** uses fair and respectful language and presents an alternate point or argument using verifiable facts or presents a reasonable opinion. A critic may be misinformed, or have incomplete information, but they are not willfully spreading misinformation. Their goal is to be heard, and to advance their point of view.

A **Troll** uses inflammatory language and expletives, makes personal attacks, presents an emotionally loaded opinion, and spreads disinformation. Their goal is to disrupt, co-opt, or fully derail constructive conversation.

Critics provide an excellent opportunity for reasonable discussion. You can demonstrate willingness to listen, you can correct misinformation, and you can provide greater nuance and clarity on your position. These are all useful tactics to speak to not only the critic themselves, but also to anyone else (especially The Undecided) who is reading the comment thread.

A conversation with a troll is, unfortunately, pointless at best, and dangerous at worst. It is best not to engage. For more information about how to handle trolls, please see Section Six: How to Create a Safe, Respectful Space.

Sometimes, in the first interaction, it’s difficult to distinguish if a person is a critic or a troll. Therefore, give them the benefit of the doubt, and respond as you would to a critic. If they reveal themselves to be a troll, you have every right to disengage.

How to Engage with a Critic

Example — A Critic’s Response:



BOB KLINE— September 6, 2025

I don’t understand why Council can’t just stick to their damn snow removal budget. Every single year there are cost overruns. I heard from a reliable source that last year we were over by upwards of \$50 million. That’s \$50 million of our tax payer dollars, and it’s not like our snow removal is even that great. Like, my neighbourhood only got bladed once this year! Council needs to get their crap together and improve things, pronto, before you run us into the ground! We live in a winter climate, after all. We should be better at this.

15 Reactions 2 Comments

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1. Check your own emotional response – give yourself time to calm down. If you need to, in a separate notepad, write what you'd really like to say, without censoring your language. It can be helpful and cathartic to get it out. Then, once a cooler head prevails, write a more professional response.

Oh isn't it cute that you think it's SO EASY to plan snow removal for a community of this size? Right, I forgot that we can count on exactly the same amount of snow every month, every year. And who's your so-called "reliable source?" A \$50 million overrun??! Are you kidding me? That's more than our entire annual snow removal budget, even with the increase. Anyway, I'll just work with no budget and wave my magic wand and improve things immediately. Just for you. Ugh. I'm so tired of responding to different versions of this SAME comment, EVERY year.

Feel better? Ok, great. Let's now write the real response:

2. Remember that everyone's emotion is valid, even if their points are not. So, meet them with empathy first, and work to diffuse their anger.



COUNCILLOR JONES September 6, 2025

Hey Bob, thanks for your comment. I can appreciate your concerns and frustration. Winter weather definitely provides some challenges.

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3. Work to establish some kind of common ground, so that you're not oppositional in your response.

In fact, I share your concerns about quality service coupled with cost overruns.

4. Now, explain the “why” of your position, providing greater clarity and nuance. Also use this space to set expectations or address misinformation.

This is why I voted to increase next year's snow removal budget. We've been functioning at a deficit due to decisions made in the past, and the current budget hasn't adequately addressed the needs of the changing weather patterns we've experienced over the last several years, not to mention our community's significant growth. I think we agree that snow removal is an essential service, and I feel that we need to increase our capacity to provide more responsive service, and set a more reasonable budgetary baseline to accommodate that increased service. As opposed to underestimating the need, and then scrambling for dollars when the needs outpace the budget — as has happened in the last couple of years.

5. Next, set expectations or address misinformation. Don't give them fuel to double down. Instead, give them the opportunity and ability to save face.

Now, I do just want to mention that the cost overruns, per year, have been around \$5 million dollars, not \$50 million. Perhaps your source was looking at an aggregate number, though the total overrun for snow removal in the last 3 years has been around \$14 million.

6. If possible, anticipate the likely negative response you'll receive to your position, and explain what action you'll be taking in order to mitigate.

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However, as with any spending increase, I also recognize that we need to find a balance, in order to be responsible stewards of our city budget. This is why I've asked Administration to return to Council with a report to assess the feasibility of increased neighbourhood blading, within this new budget.

7. Conclude with a brief summary if your point is long, offer further thanks, and, if possible, a feel-good statement.

So, long story short, I support this budget increase because it puts us in line with the actual spending of the last few years, and provides an opportunity for us to look at areas where we can improve service for citizens. I appreciate your comment, and I am looking forward to seeing how these policy changes will change our winter experiences next year. Thanks for bringing up your concerns with me.

65 Reactions 22 Comments

Full Response:



COUNCILLOR JONES September 6, 2025

Hey Bob, thanks for your comment. I can appreciate your concerns and frustration. Winter weather definitely provides some challenges. In fact, I share your concerns about quality service coupled with recent cost overruns.

This is why I voted to increase next year's snow removal budget. We've been functioning at a deficit due to decisions made in the past, and the current budget hasn't adequately addressed the needs of the changing weather patterns we've experienced over the last several years, not to mention our community's significant growth. I think we agree that snow removal is an essential service, and I feel that we need to increase our capacity to provide more responsive service, and set a more reasonable budgetary baseline to accommodate that increased service. As opposed to underestimating the need, and then scrambling for dollars when the needs outpace the budget — as has happened in the last couple of years.

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65 Reactions 22 Comments

A Note About Length

The full response is a very fulsome and robust response to Bob's comment. A long response is useful if there are several comments in a similar vein, or if you feel the detail is necessary in order to address the commenter's concerns.

Not every response needs to be this lengthy. Indeed, each step can be limited to a sentence or so, and some steps can be combined.

A shorter response might look something like this:



COUNCILLOR JONES - September 6, 2025

Hey Bob, thanks for your comment. I share some of your same concerns. That's why I voted to increase the snow removal budget, to better align with actual spending, and to provide opportunities for increased service. I do want to mention that cost overruns have been around \$5 million/year, rather than \$50 million. Perhaps your source was looking at an aggregate number over several years, or a total budget line instead. But please rest assured that we're working to find ways to balance the increased budget with a responsible use of tax-payer funds. That's why I requested a report to analyze the feasibility of increased neighbourhood blading next year, within this new budget.

At any rate, I thank you very much for bringing up your concerns with me, and like all citizens, I'm hoping that this budget change supports more positive winter experiences for all of us next year.

48 Reactions 13 Comments

SECTION SIX

CREATING A SAFE, RESPECTFUL SPACE

While you cannot control how others will behave online, your online space is yours to set the tone, and to set the rules for engagement.

There are several ways you can work to create a safe and respectful online space.

- 1. Develop a comment policy and post it occasionally.** Also, post it on your website, so that you can link to it when needed. Include that link in your Instagram bio. Please see the sample comments policy included in the next section, and feel free to adapt it for your purposes.
- 2. Hiding Posts:** Hiding a post can be a useful way to moderate your page, however it should be used sparingly. Open dialogue is generally valuable — to you, and to the community at large. It's ok if people disagree, so long as they are respectful to you and others. However, if a comment is off-topic, or runs the risk of distracting or co-opting the conversation, hiding it can be useful. It can also be useful to temporarily hide a volatile comment that requires a nuanced response, in order to give yourself time to craft your response thoughtfully — without running the risk of other commenters piling on.
- 3. Blocking Users or Deleting Posts:** As a public figure, it's good practice to avoid blocking people or deleting posts. Generally speaking, only delete a post if it includes hateful or racist language, incites violence, or makes a threat. Take a screenshot prior to deleting it, document the context (and/or any other interactions you've had with the commenter in the past), and, if necessary, report it. After deleting a comment, mention on your post that you have deleted a comment and post your comments policy as a reminder of your rules of engagement.
- 4. When to Respond:** In general, it's best practice to respond to a comment as soon as you possibly can — ideally within 2-4 hours, definitely by the next working day. If the comment is especially volatile, contains significant misinformation, or presents a troubling narrative, it's necessary to get out ahead of the story immediately (within an hour). If you need to buy yourself time, hide it until you can deal with it effectively.
- 5. When Not to Respond:** To maintain some semblance of work/life balance, you may need to set expectations around your social media use. For example, you can state in your bio that you only respond to social media between the hours of 9 am and 7 pm. That doesn't mean you don't monitor it during your off hours — you (or an assistant) still need to stay on top of what people are saying on your profiles — but it's completely fair to set standards for what people can expect of you. It can also be prudent to strategically hold off on responding to some comments, if it would be preferable for community members to respond instead.
- 6. The Value of Listening:** Not every comment necessarily requires a response, but the value of demonstrated listening cannot be overestimated. Most people commenting on social media just want to feel heard. So, a "like," a thank you, or a simple response can go a long way towards building relationships with your community members. When you take the time to demonstrate that you're listening, the more likely people are to reciprocate accordingly.
- 7. Taking it Offline:** An offer for a phone call or a face-to-face meeting can very often take the sting out of a heated online exchange. As can a suggestion to email your office directly. Most people will maintain their decorum in person, and a meeting is almost always a better way to address a challenging issue than on social media. However, it's essential to manage your time and your safety accordingly. You can't meet with everyone, and, depending on the circumstances, it may not be safe to suggest it. So, use the suggestion of a more personal form of contact sparingly and strategically, and whenever possible, include a colleague so that you're not meeting alone.

Social Media Toolkit

8. **Don't be afraid to take a social media holiday.**
Everyone deserves a break, and social media can often feel like “too much.” No one benefits when your mental health suffers. If you have a trusted person who can manage your social media for you, work to develop a regular schedule where they can take it on for you (ideally at least once per week, if not more often). If you don't have someone who can take care of your social media, you can set an autoresponder or detail your social media response parameters in your bio.
9. **“When they go low...”:** You set the tone of your online space. By always responding in a dignified, respectful, professional manner, you set the standards on your own profiles. You have the right to determine the rules, to moderate as you see fit, and to ensure your safety — physical and emotional — in this space. By choosing not to tolerate abuse or lack of respect, and by making those expectations public, you are demonstrating that your space is safe for others to participate in as well. It's another way that you can show up for your community as a leader.

SECTION SEVEN

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS POLICY

Social Media Comments Policy

A sample social media policy could look like the following:

My purpose is to engage in meaningful, respectful conversation about my work as a Councillor for Municipality. While I encourage my friends and followers to share their thoughts and opinions on my social media profiles, I expect that this will be done in a safe and respectful manner.

My goal is to discuss issues that affect our community, and to gather and share ideas, stories, experiences, and research that will benefit our citizens. I do not agree with or endorse every comment that is posted on my profiles. It is my policy to accept most comments made to my profiles in the interest of transparent discussion.

However, I will only engage in discussions that are fair and respectful.

A comment, link, or image will be deleted if it contains:

- Threats
- Hate speech
- Racism, Sexism, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, Homophobia, Transphobia
- Profanity, obscenity or vulgarity
- Nudity
- Defamation
- Name calling or personal attacks
- Comments where the main purpose is to sell a product
- Other comments that my team deems inappropriate

Threatening language will be taken seriously, recorded and brought forward to law enforcement. Abuse of this comments policy may cause the author to be blocked from my accounts.

This is only a sample of what a policy could look like. Although these policies help mitigate negativity and create healthy spaces, they are not the end all be all. Develop a policy which suits your social media strategy and ensure it captures what you are facing.



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