

## Integrity Commissioner Report Regarding Use of Social Media

**Date:** April 26, 2016  
**To:** City Council  
**From:** Valerie Jepson, Integrity Commissioner  
**Wards:** All  
**Reference:**

### SUMMARY

---

The enclosed Integrity Commissioner Report on Use of Social Media responds to City Council's February 2014 direction to provide Council with recommendations for a general policy about social media use by members of Council, local boards (restricted definition), and adjudicative boards.

The codes of conduct for members of Council, local boards (restricted definition), and adjudicative boards are written in broad terms, allowing their principles to be applied and adapted to a variety of situations and circumstances. The codes of conduct, in combination with the City's established policies, are sufficient to adequately guide members' use of social media. Although clarification is necessary, a new policy framework is not required.

To clarify the application of the relevant codes of conduct to social media, I have developed comprehensive guidance for members of Council, local boards (restricted definition), and adjudicative boards. The guidance will be published in the form of Interpretation Bulletins (appended to the enclosed report) and will be monitored and updated as necessary to respond to new social media platforms or new uses of social media. The guidance acknowledges that there are some unique features of social media that distinguish it from traditional forms of communication, but that members must take clear and transparent action to ensure that neither public resources nor a member's official influence is used for campaign purposes or to improperly advance private interests.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

---

#### The Integrity Commissioner recommends that:

1. City Council receive the Office of the Integrity Commissioner Report Regarding Use of Social Media for information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

---

This report will have no financial impact on the City of Toronto.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

---

At its February 2014 meeting, City Council considered policy recommendations by the Integrity Commissioner about use of social media in the 2014 Municipal Election. City Council accepted some of the recommendations of the Integrity Commissioner, approved a modified policy for the election, and requested that the Commissioner return with recommendations for a general social media policy after the election.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CC48.7>.

The Office of the Integrity Commissioner has reviewed and researched a variety of social media guidance for public officials. The most appropriate mechanism to provide sufficient guidance is through the issuance of comprehensive Interpretation Bulletins. To assist members of Council, local boards (restricted definition), and adjudicative boards to meet their ongoing obligations under the applicable code of conduct with respect to social media use, the Integrity Commissioner has developed Interpretation Bulletins for each type of public office holder which are appended to the enclosed report.

The Integrity Commissioner does not ordinarily report to City Council when Interpretation Bulletins are issued but does at this time in fulfillment of the February 2014 Council direction.

## **COMMENTS**

---

The enclosed report includes: a discussion about social media; a summary of policies and guidance in other relevant jurisdictions; a discussion about members' social media use; and a discussion of the principles that inform the Interpretation Bulletins provided.

## **CONTACT**

---

Valerie Jepson, Integrity Commissioner

Email: [vjepson@toronto.ca](mailto:vjepson@toronto.ca)

Tel: 416-397-7770

## **SIGNATURE**

---

\_\_\_\_\_  
Valerie Jepson, Integrity Commissioner

## **ATTACHMENTS**

---

Integrity Commissioner Report Regarding Use of Social Media and Appendices