

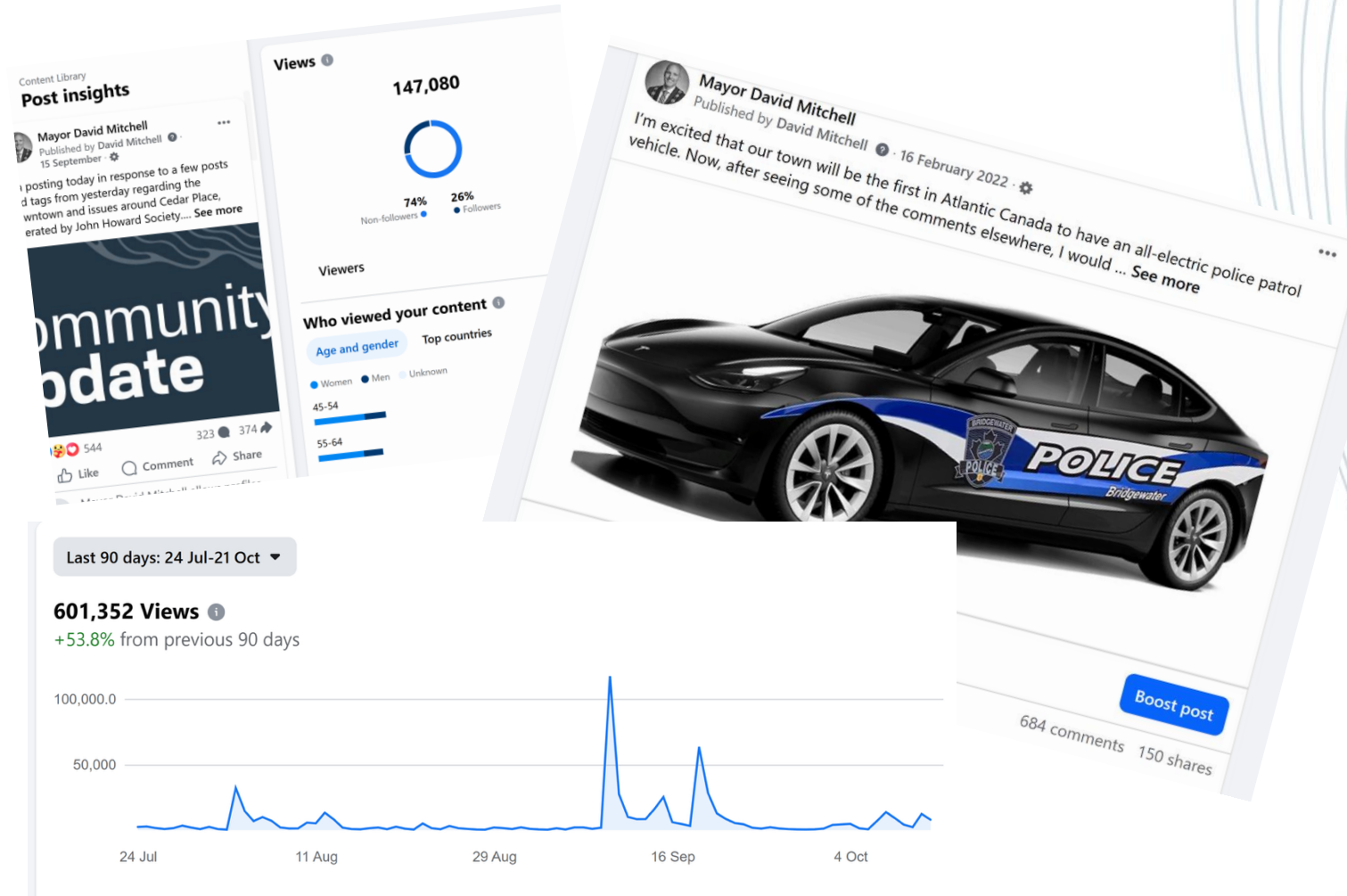
Social Media

From the perspective of an Elected Official



The Good

- No other medium gets the message out there like social media
- No cost (unless you advertise)
- Content is yours to create
- Put as much effort into it as you want (set your own expectations)
- Engages community on topics that otherwise they might miss (especially with commenting on)
- Builds community champions



The Bad

- No other medium gets the message out there like social media
- Requires monitoring and moderation (especially if commenting is on)
- Can be time consuming
- Can be tagged in posts (if setting is on) and could “lose track” of those

The screenshot shows a social media interface with the following elements:

- Insights** section:
 - A bar chart showing 80 comments hidden.
 - A bar chart showing 63 Moderation Assist actions.
 - A bar chart showing 17 Admins.
- Criteria hides** section:
 - Profanity in comments: 15
 - Keywords in comments: 8
 - Link in comment: 4
- Comments** section:
 - Kathleen Brown**: Gross waste of tax dollars...par for the government course!
 - Karl French**: That's great news for criminals! Another astute idea by a unqualified office clerk.
 - Matt Levy**: Mayor David Mitchell DO NOT...ING ffs! Everyone is tired of the excuses,
 - Craig N Tam Veinotte**: Full of shit period ,I need action not word salad
 - Anckaert**: Does no one else find the way Mayor David Mitchell is going about this to be completely unprofessional? Has he even proposed another location or service provider that could take on what JHS is providing at this location?



The Ugly

- No other medium gets the message out there like social media
- Regardless of the “safeguards”, people can and will be cruel
- Facts and Truth are often irrelevant to some
- It can be difficult to not respond in direct proportion to their comment



Canadian politicians appear to be facing increased harassment, intimidation

By [Lyndsay Aelick](#)
Published: May 27, 2024 at 8:00PM EDT



Why Bother?

- Building your social media audience means more of your community is informed.
- Having a social media presence means you can address misinformation about your municipality instead of letting it spiral.
- A big part of our role is communicating with the public and social media is an effective way to do that.
- In 2025 it is expected by our residents that we are accessible on at least Facebook whether we like it or not.



Best Practices

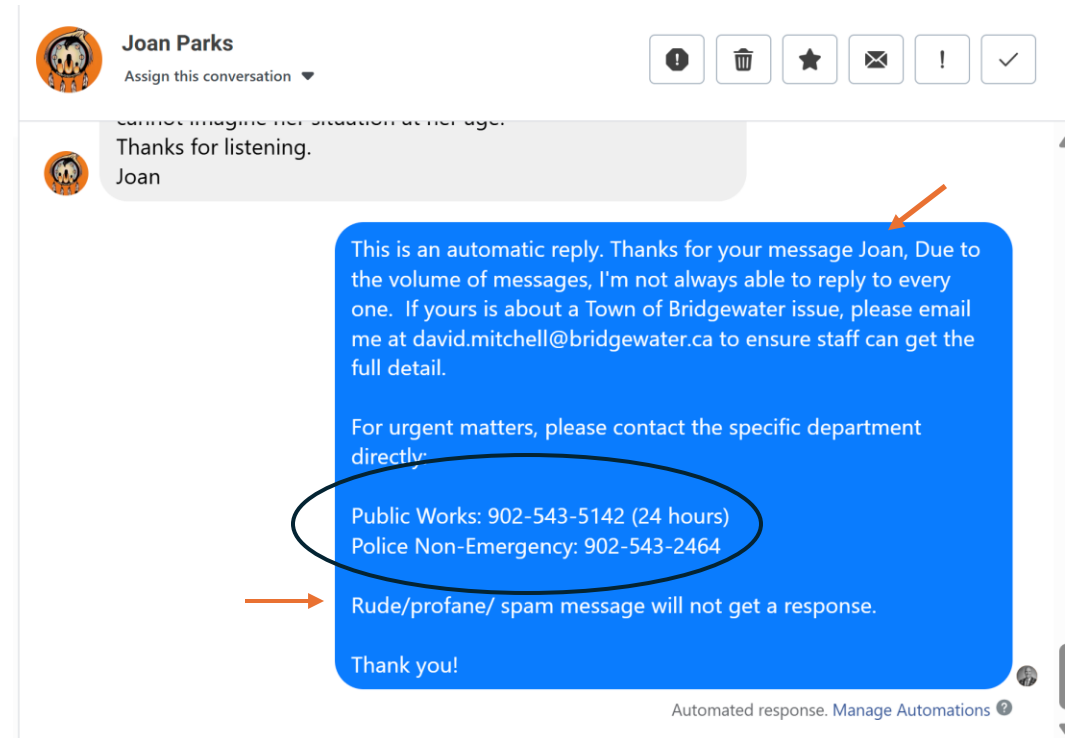
- First and foremost, have a “terms of use” you can direct or refer people to and ensure it has clearly defined rules for commenting. This is a must!
- How you use your Page is the new normal so think about what that means. More is not always better or best.

i TERMS OF USE: This Page is mine alone and not owned or managed by the Town of Bridgewater or Town staff. I encourage fair comment and interaction on this Facebook page, but ask that all who post/comment on this page engage in respectful Internet etiquette and refrain from personal attacks or the use of profanity in comments. Any comments that use language that is deemed to be: profane or contain personal attacks; use racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, or other hate speech; contain spamming or promotion of a business using spamming; spread inaccurate or inappropriate information; represent a danger to public safety may be hidden or entirely removed. Users who violate these terms may be banned from the page without notice. Thank you. [See less](#)



Best Practices Con't

- What is the goal for your social media space? Information only? Just sharing municipal posts? Community engagement? Cat videos?
- Comments on or off?
 - There are pros and cons to both.
- Set an auto-reply for messages with some details about limitations.



Final Thoughts

- Who has your back?
- How will you “offload” the negativity?
- “Frequent Flyers” are often across multiple Pages and Spaces
- Don’t be afraid to be yourself
- A strong social media presence can turn a community’s perspective around.
- Do not underestimate the power of or your reach on social media.

Key statistics and trends

- **Overall usage:** Roughly 85% of Canadian adults are on social media, with an average daily engagement time of about 2 to 2.5 hours.
- **Platform popularity:**
 - **Facebook** is still the most popular platform overall, particularly for older users, though its growth has stalled.
 - **Instagram** has seen a significant surge in popularity.
 - **YouTube** has the highest reach of any platform.
 - **TikTok** is more popular among younger demographics, with significant growth among Millennials and Gen Z, and some slowing in user growth recently.
 - **LinkedIn** has rebounded significantly since the pandemic.
 - **X (formerly Twitter)** has seen a sustained decline in usage.



SOCIAL MEDIA

How rooting your social engagement in policies and best practices can support consistency, transparency, and build public trust

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

For years, social media was viewed in the municipal world as a luxury.

The “nice to have” thing that sat on the side of someone’s desk, was often an after thought, and viewed with more than a bit of skepticism.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

Over the past 10 years, that view of social media as a tool for public engagement by municipalities has fundamentally changed.

Across a wide range of ages, local governments are using Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter/X, and even TikTok to reach residents and businesses with important information at lightning speed.

1

Communicate service disruptions quickly and clearly.

2

Share info on public meetings, proposed policy changes, and major initiatives and events that are of genuine interest to the community.

3

Establish its social media presence as a trusted and well-known source of information for residents.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

Fundamentally, municipalities should be striving to use their social media channels to create a Marketplace of Ideas.

Coined to describe the free press by its nature nurtures the exchange of thoughts and perspectives; ideas and hopes; cultures and beliefs.

The same approach can be applied to local government and our presence on social media. We want to create a place where our residents, business owners, and visitors can gather, engage, and share.

MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

But ... it must be done respectfully and there must be rules of engagement in order for our social media channels to be productive environments.

Without an established policy or practice in place, that's where engagement can get challenging and where citizens can become confused over what participation is and isn't acceptable on your social media channels.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

Everyone loves it when there's good news to share – the opening of a new facility, a community celebration, a big federal grant to support an important community project.

Where policy and best practices become critical is when your audience goes off the rails, gets a little unruly or ... worse.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust



[Redacted]

Town of Bridgewater, go ahead and ban me. You and this government is f[Redacted]ing this town/world up.

Better yet, I will remove myself from this page. This town went too [Redacted] because the people who run it don't care.

Peace

Just now

Unhide

Hidden by this Page is selected, so other comments have been filtered out except related replies that provide context. To reply to a comment you've unhidden, change your filter selection.



[Redacted]

These are the climate lockdowns your conspiracy friend told you about. Not long after most of the province signed onto this deal without a word to the public. UN Agenda 2030 bull[Redacted]

1m Message Unhide

Most Relevant is selected, so some replies may have been filtered out.



Write a reply...



[Redacted]

This was earlier today good choice to close the trails... no one is happy about it.. but we dont have bright people that know better apparently

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

🏳️‍🌈 THANK YOU!

An enthusiastic thank you from the Town of Bridgewater team to everyone from Lunenburg PRIDE - Lunenburg Co. and all supporting agencies, residents, businesses, organizations, and our municipal neighbours who helped to make the first ever South Shore Pride Parade a wonderful success today!



Let's celebrate heterosexual pride 29 days of the month. Gay pride can have the other 2 days.

WTF, deep state satanic, corruption is alive and well in Lunenburg County.

4m Message Unhide



Write a reply...



💎 Top fan

Thank you so, so much for your support! You were instrumental in making today possible.



Write a comment...



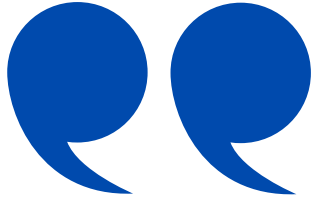
SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

There are a couple of ways you can approach establishing a “Terms of Use” for your social media.

Policy of Council versus operating practice of staff.

People always seem to come up with new and creative ways to dance on the edge of decorum.



We encourage fair comment and interaction on the Town of Bridgewater Facebook page but ask that all who post/comment on this page engage in respectful Internet etiquette and refrain from personal attacks or the use of profanity in posts.

Any comments that use language that is deemed by moderators to: be profane or contain personal attacks; use racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, or other hate speech; contain spamming or promotion of a business using spamming; spread inaccurate or inappropriate information; represent a danger to public safety may be hidden or entirely removed. Users who violate these terms may be banned from the page without notice. Thank you.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

The reality is that a lot of folks treat social media the same way they treat picking up the phone to call your Admin office, your Finance Department, or your Engineering Department.

They've sent a message and they expect an answer sooner than later – after all, as municipal employees we're all just sitting around waiting for those folks to reach out.

ARTIST'S INTERPRETATION



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Including in your Terms of Use or Social Media Policy a clear set of expectations around responding to inquiries is critical to ensuring you don't have an enraged public.

Something as simple as setting up an automated inbox response that says ...

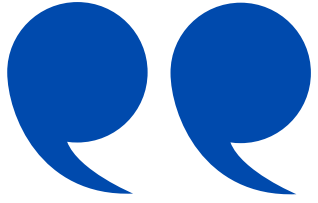
Please also note that while staff strive to respond to inquiries in a timely fashion, that is not always possible. Please allow 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends for response to inquiries.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

A lot of our municipal comms folks in areas where there is a municipal police force or volunteer fire department often end up doing double duty and running communications for those agencies too.

Again, setting expectations in by having a clear auto-response message is important.

Please note, we do not carry out or receive information on policing matters through social media. To file a complaint, please contact the non-emergency line at 902-543-2464 to speak with a dispatcher. In an emergency, please call 911.



**If someone is breaking into your home,
lighting your car on fire, or you are in
*any way actively under threat ...***

... please don't inbox us.

Call us.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

We live in a time where there is eroding trust in our society's institutions.

There are several reasons for that, ranging from genuine mismanagement to bad actors seeking to sow discord.

Building public trust through municipal social media channels doesn't happen overnight.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Approaches to building trust

It takes consistent messaging and dedicated effort to provide accurate, timely content and to moderate the comment section.

But it's time and money well spent – you can't put a price on trust.

A clear set of rules by which everyone is expected to play will go a long way toward building a trusted and successful social media presence for your municipality.



THANK YOU

How rooting your social engagement in policies and best practices can support consistency, transparency, and build public trust