

Social Media Policy

Policy Statement

The Nova Scotia *Elections Act* (the *Act*) allows the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) to implement public communication, education, and information programs to make the electoral process better known to the public, and particularly to those demographics most likely to experience difficulties in exercising their democratic rights.

Authority

Elections Act (the Act)

Section 21(1) of the *Act* allows the CEO to implement public communication, education, and information programs in order to make the electoral process better known to the public.

Section 21(3) allows the CEO to use any media or other means to provide the public with information relating to the Province's electoral process and the democratic right to vote.

Section 114 requires that voting during a provincial election must be held by secret ballot. 114(d) provides that taking a photograph or copy of a marked ballot is prohibited. Every person present at a polling station must preserve the secrecy of the ballot.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Social Media	Interactive websites and applications, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, that enable users to create and share content, and allow for the exchange of information and participation in a public forum.
Post	Individual content pieces published by persons or organizations on a social media site or application. Includes questions, comments, "likes," retweets, threads, videos, articles, links to websites and any other messages that provide feedback or content related to the social media accounts.
Private Message	A message sent privately from one user to another that cannot be viewed by any party except the sender and receiver. Also called a "Direct Message".
Public Post	A post that can be viewed by any member of the social media platform, or member of the public.
User	A person or organization that participates on a social media platform through an account that they manage.
Other User	Users other than ENS social media accounts as operated by ENS staff.

Policy Overview

During and prior to electoral events in Nova Scotia, Elections Nova Scotia (ENS) communicates with voters and future voters via social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. ENS has developed this policy to provide a clear and easy reference for the guidelines that ENS uses when operating social media accounts, while maintaining the goal of keeping the public informed about the electoral process in Nova Scotia.

Scope

This policy is to provide the public and ENS staff with a clear understanding of the guidelines that determine the social media conduct for ENS accounts.

This policy formalizes the code of conduct for ENS social media accounts and sets out the guidelines and expectations for operating ENS social media accounts.

Accountability and Responsibilities

Elections Nova Scotia (ENS)

- ENS is responsible for the administration of the *Elections Act*.
- ENS is responsible for the development and maintenance of this policy.
- ENS is responsible for informing the public on matters related to Nova Scotia provincial elections
- ENS is responsible for informing the public about administrative changes made by the House of Assembly to electoral district boundaries

The following are the major roles and responsibilities under the Social Media Policy.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

- 1) The CEO must consult with, advise, and supervise the ENS headquarters staff, and ROs in the performance of their duties. With regard to the Social Media Policy the CEO is responsible for preparing and distributing guidelines and policies with respect to matters within the *Elections Act*, and for varying said guidelines to suit existing circumstances.

Assistant Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO)

- 2) The ACEO may act in place of the CEO if required. If acting for the CEO, the ACEO is accountable for the same responsibilities as described above.

Director of Policy and Communications

- 3) The Director of Policy and Communications is responsible for managing ENS social media accounts, content, and postings. The Director may:
 - a. Delegate this responsibility to a Communications Officer as needed.
 - b. Decide the hours of moderation/management for ENS social media accounts.
 - c. Create, publish, manage, and moderate content for/on ENS social media accounts.

Communications Officer

- 4) A Communications Officer may act in place of the Director of Policy and Communications with regard to part or all of the Social Media Policy, if delegated. If acting for the Director of Policy and Communications, the Communications Officer is accountable for the same responsibilities as described above.

Policy Directive

Content

- 1) Social media accounts are one way that ENS aims to keep the public informed about the electoral process and democracy in Nova Scotia. Leading up to and during an election, ENS will post information about voter registration, voting opportunities, election worker job openings, and other relevant information.
- 2) ENS is not responsible for and does not endorse any content that other users post on its social media accounts. While ENS tries to ensure the accuracy of the content posted to its social media accounts, it is not responsible for the accuracy, completeness, efficacy, timeliness, appropriateness, or reliability of the content posted by other users.

Comments

- 3) ENS reserves the right to moderate content posted by other users to ENS social media accounts, feeds, and pages. ENS retains the right to delete, report, or otherwise remove any unacceptable content including but not limited to posts that:
 - a. breach ballot secrecy and/or violate Section 114 of the *Elections Act*,
 - b. are threatening, abusive, offensive, racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, hateful, defamatory, vulgar, indecent, violent, obscene, or pornographic,
 - c. provide non-published or private information about ENS or its employees such as personal e-mails, home phone numbers or addresses,
 - d. are posted by other authors that give the impression that they originate from ENS,
 - e. impersonate any person or misrepresents its author's identity or affiliations,
 - f. contain a solicitation, advertisement, or endorsement of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental organization, or any political party
- 4) ENS does not reply to, retweet, or otherwise share comments posted publicly, on any social media platform.
- 5) Where applicable, ENS will disable the comments section on its own posts to maintain an appropriate and accessible forum for voters to find election information.

Complaints

6) ENS does not respond to complaints issued in public posts on social media. If a voter would like to register a complaint, they should contact ENS by


- E-mail: elections@novascotia.ca
- Phone: 1-800-565-1504 (toll free)

Private/Direct Messaging

7) Subject to monitoring hours, ENS may respond to private/direct messages from voters through a social media platform such as Facebook.

Availability

- 8) ENS social media accounts will be monitored by ENS staff:
- a. during the writ period, monitoring will take place during the hours that election offices are open to the public and as prescribed by the Director of Policy and Communications, and
 - b. outside of the writ period, social media accounts will be monitored intermittently.

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