

'WE DON'T WANT TO SEE OUR STAFF GETTING ABUSED'

MUNICIPALITY IMPLEMENTING PROTOCOL ON ITS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

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The Town of Halton Hills is rolling out social media guidelines to combat an increase in poor behaviour by people interacting with staff online.

The new rules spell out that residents' comments and private messages received through the municipality's social media chan-

"There are some people that are not going on social media with the best of manners."

- Mayor Rick Bonnette

nels may be hidden, deleted or not responded to for a variety of reasons, including if they contain profanity or defamatory, libelous, offensive, abusive, discriminatory, harassing or demeaning content, including images, videos and links.

"There are some people that are not going on social media with the best of manners," said Mayor Rick Bonnette during the Aug. 30 council meeting, when staff received a memo on the topic. "We don't want to see our staff getting abused, et cetera, so there's

a protocol in place."

The memorandum from communications specialist Meagan Cooper said that since the start of the pandemic, the Town of Halton Hills has seen "significant higher" levels of engagement on its social media channels.

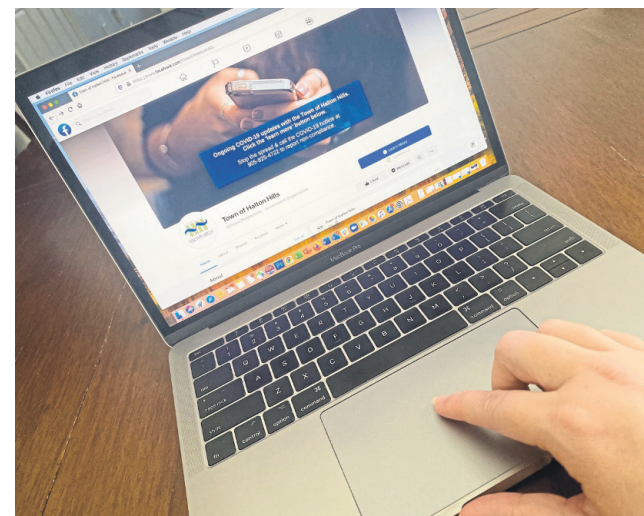
"In this current environment, many residents have expressed their frustrations to the Town regarding provincial closures, public health guidelines, vaccination rollout and more," she explained in the memo.

"Although the majority

of resident interaction is positive and respectful, staff has seen an escalation of negative feedback expressed in a disrespectful, mean or rude manner. This increase is to be expected, given the global health emergency and recognizing that many people are experiencing anxiety and various other challenges."

Cooper goes on to say staff recognizes the negative interactions and feedback "come from a place of stress and fear of the unknown," and that employees continue to communicate and de-escalate resident interactions with "well-thought-out communication and helpful resources."

The guidelines will soon be posted on the Town of Halton Hills website, linked to its social media



Melanie Hennessey/Metroland

The Town of Halton Hills is introducing social media guidelines for its platforms in response to an increase in "disrespectful, mean and rude" commentary from some residents.

platforms and added to the municipality's public engagement charter.

The town is also implementing virtual event

guidelines for staff and the community, as it intends to continue using online platforms for consultation with local residents.

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