



HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS USE FACEBOOK IN A WORD DOMINATED BY SOCIAL MEDIA

THE USE OF FACEBOOK by elected officials, including mayors and councillors throughout Durham Region, varies significantly. The complexity of navigating the responsibilities of public office in the face of growing online engagement has resulted in a range of approaches - and even consequences for some.

The more engaged members of Oshawa Council use their Facebook accounts to actively post updates, respond to questions, and communicate daily with their residents. Probably the best example of this is Ward 5 Regional councillor Brian Nicholson. One need only take a quick glance at his multiple Facebook groups to see how quickly information is shared – in real time - on matters concerning Council decisions that affect what he has long-since referred to as ‘Southern Oshawa’.

However, communicating on a daily basis with constituents in this way must undoubtedly blur the line between a councillor’s public duties and their private life, with the increasing expectation that they make themselves available at all hours of the day and night.

I had occasion some time ago during a casual conversation to raise that very subject with the councillor from Ward 5, and when I asked him as to the effect social media had on his time off, he immediately responded by reminding me that, once elected, a member of Council “really doesn’t have time off.”

As it stands, councillor Nicholson administers a number of Facebook groups. I can recall him telling me not long ago that his individual posts were on average read by well over 20,000 people, and that actual constituent inquiries numbered in the range of 100 per day. He also used to constantly credit municipal staff for making him “look good” by the speed with which they were taking care of issues passed on from social media.

Other councillors appear more inclined to use their Facebook presence to simply share specific announcements and various press releases issued by the municipality – on routine matters such as snow removal, garbage collection, and the introduction of new policies and programs that residents may find of interest.

One such councillor is Rosemary McConkey from Ward 1. She once told me quite unequivocally that she “doesn’t do photo-ops” therefore what you won’t see by way of self-promotion on her Facebook page will undoubtedly be made up for by endless Excel spreadsheets and other routine documents. The councillor from Columbus appears more inclined to act as an information resource, and you won’t find a whole lot of real-time interaction on what many see as a somewhat tinder dry social media presence.

On the other hand, some councillors seem to want very little to do with Facebook and all that it represents, and a good example of that is Ward 5 City councillor and ex-Mayor John Gray. A glance at his political page shows it to have been dormant since the last election, with the latest post dating back to October 2022. He does make use of his personal page to some extent, however you will see only seven posts since November 2024, all of which were added by others onto his timeline. He has repeatedly told me his preference will always be actual personal contact, either face-to-face or by telephone, and he has no willingness to change that.

Another interesting example of the use of Facebook comes from the Man-Who-Would-Be-Mayor himself, Ward 2 Regional councillor Tito-Dante Marimpietri. A glance at his political page shows no activity for the last four months, however if you swing over to his so-called personal page, you will see a veritable onslaught of selfie-videos the good councillor is using to share his views on everything from homebuilding to homicides.

It seems he can’t make a move without finding one reason or other to offer his loyal viewers a bit of commentary. The abandonment of his Ward 2 councillor page is undoubtedly strategic, as he prepares to campaign for the Mayor’s job in the next election. As one might expect, there is more than a handful of fans ready and willing to press the “like” button on most of his Facebook posts, including Ward 4 Regional councillor Rick Kerr, a man who lives in hope of becoming Tito’s Deputy Mayor.

Meanwhile, it’s important to remember a councillor’s social media conduct can be reviewed by an Integrity Commissioner if it violates the Code of Conduct adopted by Council. Oshawa’s own policy sets clear guidelines for online conduct. The expected standards dictate that members must not use their social media presence to bully, shame, or engage in disrespectful behavior toward the public, other council members, or staff.

Of course, the most recent offender in this regard was Ward 4 City councillor Derek Giberson who decided it was somehow appropriate to make comments on social media regarding an identifiable individual within the community who was engaged in a matter that was before the courts. The Ward 4 councillor was ultimately found to be in contravention of the obligation of elected officials to refrain from commenting on such matters. No sitting Oshawa councillor has since been seen to bring about such public humiliation and shame.

Of course, other rules exist to ensure that the proper use of social media is maintained. Blocking users on a Facebook account used for official business can be legally and ethically complex. In the city of Toronto, their social media guidebook advises councillors to be careful that blocking does not unfairly affect users, particularly if the account is intended for political debate.

The consequences for violating a social media policy or Code of Conduct can be significant. The recent case in Cambridge, where a councillor faced a potential pay suspension, illustrates that misconduct on Facebook can lead to official punishment.

On a final note, it must be remembered that, contrary to popular fiction, an elected official cannot separate their political Facebook account from any other they see as being personal. Statements and posts added or even shared to any social media account created in the name of a person holding elected office are equal in stature when held to the standards set by a municipal Code of Conduct.

They are equally subject to potential review by an integrity commissioner or any other judicial body that may be called upon to examine a councillor’s conduct.

Social media, and especially Facebook, are questionable means of communication and very much worthwhile in the practice of censorship, but they can also be self-destructive when in the wrong hands.



Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

I Am the Storm

By Councillor Lisa Robinson

There comes a point when the storm you’ve been forced to endure stops being something outside of you... and becomes the fire inside you.

I’ve faced more than most will ever see behind closed doors. The slander. The political punishment. The calculated attempts to isolate, humiliate, and silence. Every tactic known — from weaponizing codes of conduct to manipulating procedure — was designed to wear me down, to make me doubt myself, to force me to give up and stop. But they underestimated me.

I wasn’t built to bow to pressure. I was built to withstand it. The harder they’ve pushed, the stronger I’ve become. Every sanction, every vote to strip me of pay, (1.5 years thus far) every moment they tried to bury my voice has only deepened my determination. I’ve walked through their storm — head high, shoulders squared — refusing to bend to a system that punishes truth-tellers while protecting those who hide behind process. I’ve endured the isolation of standing alone at the table, watching colleagues look away instead of standing up. I’ve endured the personal attacks, the whisper campaigns, and the very public attempts to crush my credibility.

But I am still here. Unbroken. Unshaken. Unafraid. Because what they don’t realize is this: I was never meant to be swept away by the storm. I am the storm. I was put in this place for a reason...to stand, to fight, and to rise.

And storms don’t ask permission. They don’t wait for permission. They move with force, they reshape everything in their path, and they leave no doubt about their power.

This fight was never just about me. It’s about every person who’s been punished for refusing to stay silent. It’s about calling out corruption, exposing hypocrisy, and standing up for what is right — even when you stand alone.

I will not apologize for speaking the truth. I will not back down because it makes others uncomfortable. And I will never surrender my voice to those who fear it.

They tried to contain the storm. Instead, they created one.

I will survive the storm — because I am the storm.
"Strength Does Not Lie In The Absence Of Fear, But In The Courage To Face It Head-On And



The Price of Adulthood How Inflation is Producing a Indisputable Financial Struggle for Adolescents

By Camryn Bland
Youth Columnist

For many adolescents, the transition into adulthood comes with countless stressors, including education, identity, relationships, and job security. It’s a time to experiment with who you are and what you want to do, to adapt to the future you are building yourself. This transitional period is often seen as the most stressful stage of life, as every decision seems urgent and critical. In the past few years, a large issue has surfaced, enhancing the stress of teens and adults alike. This issue is the inflation crisis, as record high prices have become a normal occurrence.

As I come to the end of my teenage years, I find myself attempting to save money for my future. When I graduate secondary education, I will need to contribute to university tuition, transportation, food, and many other living expenses which I am not yet accustomed to. These expenses are much more than anything I have been exposed to, and I've realized the money saved from birthdays and babysitting isn't going to help me in the long run. Even if I manage to put aside a few thousand dollars, it will all be spent on my post-secondary tuition. The thought of my future finances leaves me feeling stuck and uncertain about how I'll support myself after I graduate University. How will I ever be able to pay for my own food, utilities, and cover the cost of a home if everyday prices continue to rise?

I believe the inflation crisis is the main cause of these haunting worries. It is something that has been affecting Canadian citizens ever since the Covid-19 pandemic began, and it's practically impossible to not consider when planning the future. Since then, every aspect of living has been impacted, from grocery prices to the cost of buying a home.

My biggest financial stressor is the cost of shelter, as everything else is futile without a safe place to sleep. When I consider my future, I am unsure and nervous about where I will live after university. Many individuals live with their parents long after graduating, something which I may be forced to do. Alternatively, I may find a friend or a significant other who is interested in renting an apartment or house together. I have also considered moving out of the Greater Toronto Area, possibly to Montreal or Ottawa, where real estate prices are significantly cheaper. I know it would be difficult to move away from my family and community, but if prices continue to rise, it may be something I am forced to do.

Inflation itself is something which has always existed, as resources change, product demand shifts, and population grows. It is not an inherently negative thing. Some inflation represents a flourishing economy and consumer spending, both positive effects. However, when prices rise too much, these benefits are replaced with harmful consequences, such as economic instability and impossible futures.

I believe one of the issues which makes the inflation crisis so harmful is the wages which go with it. Prices continue to rise, like always, however wages do not follow.

Although the minimum wage is raised every year, it is still not enough to live on. Millions of people live paycheck to paycheck, petrified by the thought of another price increase.

With everyday prices rising, with it grows the stress of adolescents attempting to plan their future. When budgeting, I constantly find myself worrying about the cost of housing, tuition, utilities, or even the occasional coffee shop visit. When viewing the numbers, I feel conflicted between the choice to spend or save money. If I spend, I am able to enjoy my adolescence, however I am betraying my future self. The choice to save results in feelings of boredom and isolation, and the finances I did keep are irrelevant to my future as a whole. Regardless of my choice, I am stuck regretting my financial decisions. Like many other teens, I believe I will always struggle with affording a future unless a big change is made.

If we hope to have a stable future, something needs to change. The next generations can not constantly live in fear of their next bill as we are now. Inflation is no longer about economic growth, but a sign of struggling individuals all across the country. Prices need to stop rising, supports need to be put in place, and wages need to be made liveable. This is the only way to ensure adolescents have a stable future. This is the only way to ensure a happy future is available to everyone.