

COUNCIL REPORT FORM

Presented to: Mayor & Council

Department: Human Resources & Corporate Services

Date: February 18, 2025

Subject: Town of Riverview's Use of X (formerly Twitter)



Background

With nearly 25,000 followers across our social media platforms, the Town of Riverview uses X, Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn to share information, updates and stories about programs and initiatives happening in our municipality with the public. Social media has been a key part of connecting with the community since our first posts almost 15 years ago.

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on January 13, 2025, Councillor Johnson brought forward a motion for the Town to cease use of X as an official communication channel for the municipality.

In consultation with peers in other communications departments, the consensus was that platform use is a hot topic that should be monitored closely. While X is the platform being evaluated today, other platforms and their leaders may be considered in the same capacity in the future. It's crucial to consider where these decisions may leave municipalities in terms of reaching residents with important information. From an administrative perspective, staff would require clear parameters for when platform use should be discontinued if not based on the relationship to residents (users) of the platforms but tied to the platforms themselves.

Even with ownership and branding changes since 2022, X has over 14 million active users across Canada (350 million globally), making it a top platform for citizens to get news, alerts, and updates due to its immediacy.

X Fast Facts for the Town of Riverview

- 4118 followers
- Town channel since 2011
- Town account is not monetized, no advertising on the platform. X is a free tool to enhance communication to residents.
- Users do engage with us (likes, retweets, replies) although it's minimal compared to other platforms – average of 3 engagements per tweet
- We are reaching between 100-200 people per tweet
- Used primarily for news/announcements (PSA), and as a tertiary channel to disseminate information
- X is a channel for communicating with residents quickly, viewed as another tool at our disposal to reach people with important, timely information. Particularly known for its capability to share information during an emergency or crisis due to its immediacy

- Maintaining this channel allows Riverview to be accessible to a small but engaged audience most often using the channel for news and updates from accounts like ours
- Another channel for us to amplify the Town’s key messages and a complement to our more active channels (Facebook, Instagram – both owned by Meta)
- We have not experienced an influx of comments or messages that are inappropriate, the primary platform for misuse by followers for the Town is Facebook, which is also our most robust and active user base.
- Road construction public service announcements, news releases regarding funding, and survey participation are examples of content that performed well on this platform for the Town in 2024. The best performing post was the Municipal Plan survey, with an engagement rate of almost 10%. If even one resident filled out the survey from seeing it on X, that’s valuable input as we shape Riverview’s growth over the next 10 years.

What other municipalities are doing

- [City of Kingston](#) – turned off replies and direct messaging on X (February 1) but remain active to share information with constituents.
- District of [North Vancouver](#) - Deactivated their account based on alignment concerns.
- [Halifax Regional Municipality](#) – HRM Council has asked for a report on the implications of leaving X.

Impact on resources

In terms of publishing relevant and timely information to X, including Public Service Announcements, public engagement surveys, and Town of Riverview news, choosing X as one of the platforms (or not) has a negligible impact on staff resources. The difference is about 1 minute per post to shorten the text so that it fits the limit of 280 characters, as we click platforms on or off through our social media management software. Transitioning to or incorporating a newer platform, like those listed below, would require significant resources to establish a following, understand the user behaviour, develop internal usage policies and strategy, and ensure accessibility and compliance.

Suggested alternative platforms

- Bluesky - Currently, there is limited data on Bluesky's user adoption in Canada, and specifically within New Brunswick. The absence of localized user statistics makes it challenging to assess the platform's effectiveness in reaching and engaging the municipality's residents. We will continue to monitor Bluesky's growth and reassess its potential as more localized user data becomes available.
- Threads - Threads is a microblogging platform operated by Meta, adjacent to Instagram (users need an Instagram account to engage on platform). It’s a great medium for getting deeper into topics with engaged users over a slower pace. We have yet to explore this as a channel for the municipality, but it’s on the table for the Communications team to discuss strategically.

- Mastodon – Based on recent data, it appears that most of the Mastodon audience comes from the US followed by Japan and Qatar. With just over 1 million monthly active users, it's not yet a viable alternative to X in terms of reaching an active and engaged audience in our area.

There is no logical 'replacement' for X at this time, given that many of these platforms are just getting started with active monthly users, and a limited/unknown representation for Riverview's population.

Conclusion

Disengaging from X could result in missed opportunities to connect with residents effectively, especially during critical moments. By leveraging the platform's unique strengths, the municipality can ensure it remains accessible, responsive, and connected to its community who choose to engage on this platform. If the time comes that there is no engagement with our account on the platform, or further considerations are brought forward (i.e. account security) the Town's Communications department will monitor and decide to continue or deactivate our account based on the information available at that time. Unless directed otherwise, town staff will continue to use X as one of its social media platforms due to our small but targeted audience who use X to access information from the Town, and alongside the commitment to non-monetized use of the platform.

CONSIDERATIONS

Legal: n/a

Financial: n/a

Policy: n/a

Interested Parties: Employees of Town of Riverview, X followers

Strategic Plan:

- Service Excellence
- Safe and Inclusive Community

Interdepartmental Consultation: Consulted with Finance & IT department, Corporate Services

External Consultation: Consulted with other municipal communications departments, including Moncton, Dieppe, and local RCMP. Including research into other municipalities' approach in reviewing online coverage of this issue.

Communication Plan: If Council decides that the Town of Riverview will cease use of X, we will prepare a communication plan to our over 4,000 followers on where else they can continue to engage with The Town of Riverview for information, programs, and initiatives. Ideally, we would have at least a month for this transition plan to inform users and reply to concerns.

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