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County of Dufferin votes against replacing X social media account with Bluesky

County councillors highlight their concerns around partisanship and reducing reach

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The County of Dufferin will continue to use X (Twitter) to get information out to residents after a motion to drop the social media site as a communication tool was struck down by County Councillors.

During their meeting on April 24, County Councillor and Mono Mayor John Creelman brought forward a motion to discontinue the use of X as a social media tool for the County of Dufferin. Coun. Creelman brought forward the motion as he says X has become an ?increasingly toxic and biased online platform.?

Staff recommended the social media platform BlueSky as an alternative to X.

The motion garnered mixed emotions from County Councillors, with many raising concerns about how the decision would look politically as well as the loss of communication and engagement with residents.

?I think we need to be careful about appearances of partisanship. For anyone who's kind of watching the social media landscape, we're seeing that platforms are starting to align themselves according to partisanship,? said Coun. James McLean, Deputy Mayor of Melancthon. ?I would just advise that in order to avoid the appearance of partisanship, we should either participate in most or all of these tools or none, but to go from a right-leaning tool to a left-leaning one, I think sends a message that I'm not comfortable with.?

A report created by Sonya Pritchard, Chief Administrative Officer for the County of Dufferin, noted that with the discourse on X, the social media platform no longer follows the County's Equity priorities or the values outlined in the County's Equity Strategic Plan.

?The County risks being viewed as inauthentic by continuing to communicate and engage on X, in turn threatening the County's communication and engagement goals and other priorities under the Strategic and Equity Strategic plans,? Pritchard wrote in the report.

?If this is not creating giant amounts of extra work or cost, I don't know why we would cut off one of our communication channels,? said Coun. White, Mayor of Melancthon. ?I get that there are concerns about inclusivity and being authentic. Our job is to communicate with residents where residents get their information?we have enough problems getting our message out to people and we shouldn't be looking to cut off any of those channels regardless of the toxicity.?

The number of followers that the County of Dufferin has on X compared to other platforms was also a significant factor in councillors support of its continued use.

?It seems odd to me that we would jettison the social media tool where we have the most users,? said Coun. McLean.

?I think you try to reach people everywhere and you try to reach everyone,? added Coun. Philip Rentsch, Deputy Mayor Grand Valley.

According to the report presented to council, the County of Dufferin has dropped from 5,813 followers to 5,788 as of March 31. During that time the County published 51 posts that resulted in 8,368 impressions, 24 reactions and 233 link clicks. Pritchard's report also noted that without subscribing to X Premium, the County of Dufferin cannot access the analytics that outline if the interactions

are from residents of Dufferin County or County partners.

?It's not the number that are signed up, it's the level of engagement that matters and the number of occasions where you can actually see engagement between the host and those they are trying to reach,? said Creelman.

?There's no way to know where those followers are from or if in fact, they're actual people or bots,? said Pritchard.

The County of Dufferin uses other social media platforms to reach its audience, including Facebook (more than 3,100 followers), Instagram (1,994 followers), and LinkedIn (4,053).

The report added that these other social media accounts have continued to grow, with LinkedIn being the most rapidly growing. Dufferin County is not the only municipality in Ontario or Canada to consider withdrawing from X.

Other municipalities that have chosen to leave X for alternative platforms, includes Cambridge, Ont.; North Vancouver, B.C.; St. John's, Halifax; and Whitby, Ont.

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) also left X at the beginning of 2025.

?We would be joining many other municipalities and public institutions in dropping what has become and very toxic media forum and I think we should do it as soon as we can,? said Coun. Creelman.

Despite the report from staff indicating that the use of X is no longer effective in the County's communication outline, a majority of Dufferin County Council voted in favour of continued use of the social media platform.

While County Council struck down the motion to discontinue the use of X, the County of Dufferin is proceeding with the recommendation to use BlueSky as an additional social media platform for communication with residents.