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To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

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Subject: Emergent Issue: City of Vancouver Plans for X (Jan 22, 2025)

Dear Mayor & Council,

Staff have identified that the question of the City deactivating its X account is emergent in the media, through 311 inquiries and internally. In response, staff have prepared a brief package with key messages, key facts and relevant Q&As that may be helpful to you in the media or conversations with stakeholders and constituents.

Issue in brief

In reaction to recent events in the United States, and in light of growing concerns about increasing changes to X's user experience and algorithms, several prominent figures and organizations have deactivated their X accounts, citing that they no longer wish to participate on a platform affiliated with controversial values or the spread of misinformation.

Relevant to the Lower Mainland, this included the District of North Vancouver; they deactivated their X account with approx. 13k followers on Monday. As a result, the City of Vancouver has started to receive media inquiries and public interest as to whether we also will deactivate our X account. This has also generated significant interest from staff.

Communications approach in brief

At this time, we have reactively issued a holding line to a handful of media outlets to advise that we are looking into the implications of deactivating this channel. This has been shared with the 311 team to use in response to community inquiries. Messaging will be included in City Insider on Thursday, January 23, to advise staff that the matter is being considered and to provide some context on the channel's operational prominence for the City.

Key messages

- With an audience of over 269,000 on X, we are currently exploring the operational impacts of deactivating the City of Vancouver's X account and how this may affect communicating with users across the city.
- At this time, we are looking into alternative platforms and other jurisdictional responses to inform the best path forwards for our organization and communication needs.

Key facts

- The City of Vancouver utilises X:
 - o as a key external communications tool to issue timely, critical information to thousands of people across the city. Removing this essential information-out channel may have widespread impacts on our ability to issue critical and timely information on last minute road closures, traffic, extreme weather events, emergencies and more;
 - o as a community management and engagement tool for answering questions and correcting misinformation;
 - o as a two-way tool for 311 to collate reports/service requests from the public;
 - o to interact and share information with affiliated accounts including VPL, Park Board and VFRS, and key partners such as VPD, TransLink, Destination Vancouver, Drive BC and various

levels of government.

- Given the size and reach of this network as part of the City's social mix, contingency plans must be in place before any decisions are made to withdraw from the platform.

Questions & Answers

- **Will the City be moving onto Bluesky?**

With similar short-form functionality, Bluesky is emerging as an alternative platform to X and has achieved phenomenal growth, hitting over 28 million users this month. As organizations, sports teams, celebrities, media groups and journalists join the platform en masse, it is being seen as a front-runner for those looking for a more neutral social media space. It is one option the City is looking into as an alternative platform.

- **Where does the City stand on growing concern regarding controversial changes in the platform such as reinstating banned accounts and loosening fact checking measures?**

The City's priority is serving and supporting the people of Vancouver. The purpose of our presence on the platform is as originally intended: to provide key information to thousands of people. Remaining on the platform for the time being is not indicative of a political stance, ethics or values.

- **The District of North Van cited reduced engagement on X as a contributing factor for their decision. Has the City seen a similar decline?**

The City had seen an overall increase in followers, engagement and impressions for X between 2023 and 2024, however there has been a notable decline in audience growth since the start of the year, likely influenced by platform changes and external political factors. We will be following this trend closely and evaluating impacts in the coming weeks.

- **The District of North Van also cited rising complaints about the municipality's use of the platform. Has the City received many complaints?**

311 has not seen a notable increase in complaints or questions about the City's use of X in recent months.

Related links

- [Interview with District of North Van CAO David Stuart](#) on rationale for leaving X.

Given this is an evolving issue, we will provide a follow up note if context or messaging requires updates. If you have any questions about the foregoing, please reach out to Maria at maria.pontikis@vancouver.ca. You are welcome to direct any media inquiries to media@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

City Manager

City of Vancouver

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.