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## REPORT TO GOVERNANCE AND FIRST NATIONS RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025

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**SUBJECT**     Deactivating the Capital Regional District X (Twitter) account

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

Staff have been monitoring the evolution of the X (formally twitter) social media platform. X has decreased in reliability over the last few years. The platform's instability, diminished content moderation, and policies around hate speech have had significant impacts on engagement, and have resulted in increasing challenges in managing misinformation and maintaining a positive online presence.

### **BACKGROUND**

Since February 2012 the Capital Regional District (CRD) has been on Twitter, now re-branded as X. The CRD has approximately 8,500 followers and follows 534 accounts. Because decision makers in media, government, business, entertainment, and the non-profit sector all leverage X, its impact has exceeded the size of its user base. Since Elon Musk acquired the platform in 2022, significant changes to the social media platform have been made including:

1. Laying off about six thousand employees, including eliminating its communications team.
2. Moved to a paid system for verified accounts.
3. Arbitrarily suspended and reactivated accounts.
4. Dissolved its Trust and Safety Council which was responsible for policies on hate speech, child sexual exploitation, and self-harm conduct.
5. Restricted and increased the cost of accessing the Twitter API (Application Program Interface).
6. Closed 4 large data centres leading to platform instability.
7. Changed the name of Twitter to X overnight.
8. The social conversation on X has increasingly degraded where the number of bots, hostile speech, excessively graphic content and misinformation has increased.

The platform instability, diminished content moderation, and policies have had significant impacts on organizations including in British Columbia. Numerous municipalities have deactivated their X account.

Some municipalities, public sector organizations, media companies and journalists have chosen to move to X alternatives like Bluesky. An analysis of Bluesky and other X alternatives and the CRD approach can be found in Appendix A.

Briefly, Bluesky shows promise with a focus on decentralization, privacy, and user experience. It aligns well with modern digital engagement strategies. However, the current limitations in Bluesky's discoverability, lack of integration with CRD's social media management tools, and verification, along with potential risks in content moderation, security, and technical issues, need to be carefully considered before a full-scale adoption.

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#### **ALTERNATIVES**

##### *Alternative 1*

The Governance and First Nations Relations Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the CRD begin the process of deactivating its X account on April 10, 2025 using the following deactivation procedure:

- a) Inform CRD X followers that the CRD will no longer post to this account.
- b) Publish a message stating the account is inactive and direct followers to the CRD website and other Social Media Channels.
- c) Continue to monitor the growth of Bluesky and consider CRD adopting the platform when it sufficiently matures.

##### *Alternative 2*

That the CRD maintain the status quo and continues to utilize the X social media platform.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

##### *Service Delivery Implications*

The primary utility of X to the CRD is as a platform to deliver public notices and alerts.

The CRD recently launched its new public website which has introduced new features designed to enhance how residents interact with CRD services and stay informed. Email subscription options allow users to receive updates on topics of interest, ensuring they remain aware of important changes, events, and service updates.

The move away from X will be mitigated by pointing users to other options and proactively promoting these new web subscription options for news, public notices and alerts.

Some physical CRD signage promotes CRD's presence on X, so a holding message will be useful to point users to other CRD platforms.

#### **CONCLUSION**

X has become rife with misinformation, which can spread rapidly and undermine public trust in official communications. Additionally, the time and resources required to monitor and respond to X can be better allocated to more effective communication channels, such as web notices and updates or other social media platforms. By focusing on these more controlled and reliable methods, the CRD can ensure that its messages are accurately conveyed and that public information sharing, and engagement remains constructive and meaningful.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

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**ATTACHMENT(S)**

Appendix A: Analysis of X alternatives