



# *Connecting You, Connecting Us.*

CITY OF GREATER SUDBURY

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

**2018-2020**



# *The Importance of Communication*

The details found in this strategic plan are all about connection: connecting you with information about your city, connecting you with the people who work hard to deliver services for you, and connecting you with engagement opportunities on the things that matter most to you. We will communicate with you in a way that connects the dots, so that you know and understand the stories of your municipality.

Our organization operates more than 60 different lines of work, proudly serving residents on the front lines, and working hard to support our service areas in the background. Each of these service areas plays a vital role in delivering the services our residents rely on every day.

For the purposes of this plan, strategic communication is defined as communication that serves the public interest and is designed purposefully to achieve organizational goals. Our ambition is to have a strategic communication plan that connects the community to the organization, and connects the dynamic elements of the City in ways that build momentum.

**This plan is the result of a series of consultations, research, collaboration, and best practice review.**

It outlines a framework for the City's communication practices over the next three years, covering communication with internal and external stakeholders. It is intended as an evolving roadmap for how to design our communications so that they meet the information and engagement needs and expectations of a diverse population.



# What We Know

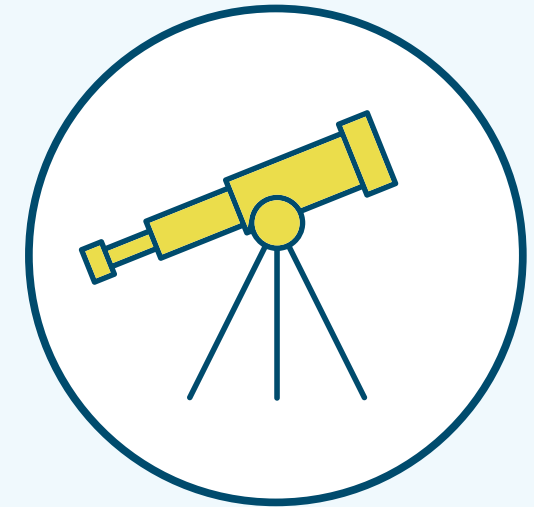
Research conducted, both in the context of this plan and in recent months and years, has told us that:

- » In 2012, residents preferred to receive their municipal information by direct mail; in 2016, 40% of residents surveyed indicated that the municipal website was their primary source of municipal information;
- » More than 50% of traffic to the City's website is from a mobile device;
- » Respondents to a 2014 survey indicated that they wanted to participate in engagement opportunities with the City but didn't always know how, and weren't sure how their feedback would be incorporated;
- » Transit, leisure, arenas, tenders, jobs and garbage are the things that most people want to know about the City - but there is wide variety in residents' topics of interest;
- » A survey conducted in 2016 identified that only about 35% of residents feel they are "very" or "somewhat" informed about municipal affairs, while close to 30% feel "not very" or "not" knowledgeable;
- » Employees do not always feel equipped to champion or speak to municipal issues, or provide the right customer service experience;
- » Social media usage continues to grow and diversify, as does the use of visual communications media to tell stories.
- » Residents feel they are "very" or "somewhat" informed about municipal affairs, while close to 30% feel "not very" or "not" knowledgeable.



# *Communications Vision*

A community that is aware and engaged. An organization that is informed, confident, and understands the value of communications. An empowered Communications team that builds business partnerships within the organization. A relationship of mutual trust and respect between the community and the City.



# *Communications Mission*

To build the understanding that citizens have of their municipal government, and the confidence of employees in their own performance, through ongoing, relevant, two-way engagement and communication.

# Communications Principles

We will communicate with employees and citizens in ways that are:



## *Timely*

Responsive and expedient.



## *Accurate*

Factual information, always.



## *Relevant*

Effective information that will resonate.



## *Purposeful*

Achieves a goal.



## *Memorable*

Impactful information.



## *Accessible*

Readily available and easy to find and understand



## *Measured*

Track success and always improve.

# Our Direction

There are *three* clear areas of focus for communications in the next three years.



## *Community Understanding*

**Enhance** the community's understanding of, and confidence in, municipal operations, supporting a relationship of mutual trust and respect.



## *Positive Story Sharing*

**Strengthen** our ability to share the City's positive stories using our own voice with the aim of igniting and fueling positive momentum in the organization and the community.



## *Empowered Communications*

**Empower** staff to communicate with confidence with Council, the community, and other staff.

# Achieving Success Through Areas of Focus

In this section we detail the three areas of focus supported by overarching goals that we'll achieve through a series of planned actions over the next three years.



**Enhance the community's understanding of, and confidence in, municipal operations, supporting a relationship of mutual trust and respect.**

## **Outcome:**

When residents and employees understand what the City is doing, why, what the process, policy, and outcomes are, a relationship of mutual trust and respect will be built. The City engages to understand and be understood and citizens participate in local government with confidence.

## **Goals:**

- » Information from the City is easy to understand and easy to remember.
- » Citizens are better able to understand local issues that involve the City.
- » Relationships with key stakeholder groups are strengthened.
- » Communications are citizen-focused, and not City-focused.
- » There are no wrong doors when it comes to communication.

## **Actions:**

- » Conduct detailed stakeholder and audience analysis to more effectively engage with different groups.
- » Leverage technology to make information from the City more memorable and communicate more effectively with identified audiences.
- » In partnership with stakeholders, build a community engagement framework for employees and citizens.
- » Build a framework that effectively links all communication channels (including 311) to ensure that the same message is heard across different platforms.

## **Measurement:**

- » Positive or neutral citizen feedback about the City is more frequent than negative feedback.
- » Opportunities and processes for engagement are clear, understood, and participation increases.
- » Employee morale is improved.

# Achieving Success Through Areas of Focus



**Share the City's positive stories using the right voice, to create momentum and build the community's knowledge of the municipality.**

## **Outcome:**

There is an opportunity to focus more on storytelling, and less on traditional methods of communication. Through storytelling, humanizing municipal employees and bringing into sharper focus the issues that the organization is navigating on behalf of citizens will ultimately enhance the relationship that citizens enjoy with their local government. Equally, the City can and should play an active role in shaping regional, provincial, and national policy.

## **Goals:**

- » Our focus on storytelling helps build the reputation of the organization.
- » The City's advocacy programs and activities are defined and developed.
- » The City's position on key issues is clear.
- » Stories are effectively told through new technologies and forms of communication.

## **Actions:**

- » Identify and seize opportunities for City leader outreach into the organization and the community.
- » Create mechanisms to identify positive stories from across the organization and share them with the community.
- » Publish a regular digital newsletter from the City.
- » Build positive relationships with media partners both locally and regionally to better position the City.
- » Consistently identify and publish positive stories and reports from the City.
- » Identify opportunities to position and advocate for the City on identified issues.
- » Implement a writing guide and training module for staff who write Council reports to enhance clarity and accessibility.

## **Measurement:**

- » The City's advocacy efforts are rewarded with results.
- » Stories from and about the City are more positive or neutral than negative.
- » Increased citizen reach and engagement through different channels.



# Achieving Success Through Areas of Focus



**Increase emphasis on communications throughout the organization and empower staff to act with confidence in their communications with Council, the community and staff.**

## **Outcome:**

Effective communication requires partnership between public relations professionals and subject matter experts. Building the capacity of the organization to identify both issues and positive stories will allow us to consistently provide the right information, to the right people, at the right time. At the same time, when Communications professionals are confident in their value and knowledge and are supported by development programs that build their skills, the organization – and the community – benefit.

## **Goals:**

- » The capacity of employees to champion the organization is strengthened.
- » Issues are identified and mitigated or eliminated.
- » The Communications team is confident and focused on delivering consistently excellent work, supported by technical expertise and solid business relationships with departments.
- » Communication team members are able to focus on providing strategic advice and service.
- » Communications is considered and valued as a key element of achieving operational success.

## **Actions:**

- » Establish an issues management guide.
- » Develop service level understanding, key performance indicators, and policies to provide guidance, authority, and standards for the organization in its communication practices.
- » Establish processes and templates that allow Communications team members to focus more on strategic communication needs.
- » Establish a system or platform for intake and tracking of communication requests and projects.
- » Establish a business partnership model in Communications.
- » Identify and apply for awards recognizing outstanding work in communications.

## **Measurement:**

- » Communications is a key consideration as projects are initiated.
- » Communication services, standards, and programs are consistent and consistently understood.
- » Feedback on communication offerings and services improves, from both the team and the organization.
- » Communication awards applied for and received.



# ***Beyond the Next Three Years***

What this plan means is that how the City communicates and engages with you is going to change.

Over the next three years we are going to build our capacity to **share our stories** and connect the dots, so that when we speak you know you can trust us, and when you speak **we know how to listen**.

This plan also means is that you can expect us to give you the right information at the right time, in ways that make sense to you.

You can expect that the information you get from us **will be relevant so that you can engage with us on the things that matter to you**.

Finally, this plan means that you can expect us to always try to learn from the feedback we get, so **you can always expect better from us**.

***We're excited to share the story of the City with you!***



***Get in touch with us:***

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