

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

1100 Patricia Blvd. | Prince George, BC, Canada V2L 3V9 | www.princegeorge.ca

DATE: January 17, 2022

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Walter Babicz, City Manager

SUBJECT: Communications Division 2021 Year in Review

ATTACHMENT(S): 2021 Year in Review Presentation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated January 17, 2022, from the City Manager, titled "Communications Division 2021 Year in Review."

PURPOSE:

To provide Council with an overview of the activities and changes in the Communications division in 2021 and the work plan for 2022.

BACKGROUND:

2021 was a year of transition for the Communications division. The division was known as External Relations and focused their work on relationships with external stakeholders. In August, the City's senior management team saw an opportunity to expand and refocus the services of the department. As it is now known, the Communications division is focused on external relations, issues management, community engagement and internal communications.

The team is comprised of a manager, a senior communications officer, a digital communications coordinator and a website content specialist.

Day to day, the team manages social media, the City website, newsletters, emergency communications, news releases and the production of reports and brochures such as the annual report for the City. In addition, they assist departments with their initiatives and reports to ensure communications from the City, whether in a Council report or an annual report is transparent, factual, timely and easy to understand.

In 2021, the division assisted or lead projects such as:

- Stormwater and infrastructure communication and public engagement;
- Enhancing City public engagement initiatives and strategies;
- New Content Management System planning for website;
- Develop capital project budget communications strategy;
- Launch Council meeting previews and summaries published to the City website and social media pages;
- Participation in the downtown strategy and move up Prince George campaigns.

Media relations:

In 2021, the division issued 123 news releases and managed over 500 media requests.

The significance of the news releases is not the sheer number of them and the extensive research and fact checking that goes into each one, but the hundreds of news articles that resulted from it. If this news had been distributed through advertising, it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in Advertising Value Equivalent. This has proven to be extremely important way to connect with our citizens about issues that matter to them.

Social media:

The communications division is also responsible for the City's websites and social media channels.

Page	Channel	# of Followers - December 31, 2021	# of Followers December 31, 2020	% Change (year-over-year)
City pages	Twitter	5,330	5,010	6.4%
	Facebook	16,051	14,854	8.1%
	LinkedIn	3,250	2,801	16.0%
	Instagram	5,614	4,937	13.7%
	YouTube	1,100	853	29.0%
CN Centre	Facebook	15,799	15,239	3.7%
	Instagram	1,055	1,050	0.5%
Conference and Civic Centre	Facebook	1,629	1,412	15.4%
	LinkedIn	62	55	12.7%
Move Up PG	Facebook	5,704	5,000	14.1%
	Instagram	1,540	1,300	18.5%
	Twitter	940	874	7.5%
Invest CityofPG	Facebook	960	Data not available	
	Twitter	2,430	Data not available	

The City's official social media pages saw increased engagement in 2021. The number of followers is only one metric. The engagement metrics (like, comments etc) are an indication of whether we are connecting with our audience.

Instagram:

- City: 17.1K engagements, and 536,356 views over 221 posts. Compared to 20.2 K engagements over 303 posts in 2020.
- CN Centre: 356 engagements, and 8,684 views over 22 posts. Compared to 577 engagements in 2020 when the page launched.

- Move Up PG: 3.1K engagements over 74 posts. Compared to 4.6K engagements over 119 posts in 2020.

Facebook

- City: 209,558 engagements and 2,540,546 views. Compared to 198,210 engagements in 2020.
- CN Centre: 73,396 engagements and 1,283,326 views. Compared to 71,525 engagements in 2020.
- Civic Centre: 11,492 engagements and 236,153. Compared to 2,372 engagements in 2020.
- Economic development pages are not available.

Twitter

- City: 4,122 engagements with over 376,000 views. Compared to 6,033 engagements and over 580,000 views in 2020. The higher numbers in 2020 may have been due to the large number of COVID related announcements.

Newsletters:

The City has three e-newsletters and one weekly blog including:

- Quarterly Community Recreation – 1,770 subscribers
- Monthly Economic Indicator updates – 1,215 subscribers
- CN Centre events as needed – 2,208 subscribers.
- Move Up Prince George weekly blog stories – 1,108 subscribers

In total, there are 6,301 subscribers to City newsletters.

In addition, there are 13 news categories and 7 event categories on the website citizens can subscribe to so they receive an email when new information is posted. This includes items like news releases, traffic disruptions and other service changes.

There are 10,522 subscribers to News and Notices, which has increased by 890 since 2020.

Website:

- 2020 - 1,163,971 total page views
- 2021 - 1,299,760 total page views

Not including the home page, our most viewed pages are:

1. Aquatics
2. Program Registration
3. Garbage Collection
4. Careers
5. Maps

CityofPG App

The app download data represents only downloads during the year. There is no data on the total number of users or on whether those downloads were later used or even uninstalled. It has proven to be a useful tool for generating service requests. The easier we can make it for citizens to connect with us and alert us to issues, the better our services to our community will be.

Year	Service Requests created with the app	Service Requests created with the website	Android Downloads	IOS downloads
2021	3013	993	435	768
2020	2169	1064	359	572
2019	1077	960	429	718
2018	569	1311	249	265
2017	149	310	274	649

Videos

If a picture tells 1,000 words, a video tells a million. In 2021, the team produced the following videos:

1. New Fire Hall No.1
2. Masich Place 2021 season opening
3. 2021 Emergency Preparedness Week - 72-hour kits
4. 2021 Emergency Preparedness Week - FireSmart Your Home
5. Mayor's Message - ALS Walk
6. Mayor's Message - 2021 Census
7. New Additions to Ron Brent Park
8. Why Managing Stormwater Matters
9. New Downtown Pool – 50% completion video

2022 Communications

The 2022 communications strategy is to guide City communications to be transparent, factual, timely, and communicated in plain language. We will do this through open and honest communication when we are starting, stopping or changing a municipal service and by correcting the incorrect in the public realm.

In 2021, the division began formalizing the communications function for the City. A draft communications policy and various administration procedures has been prepared, including an engagement toolkit, a style guide, a social media administration procedure and a communications administration procedure. When the senior management team has reviewed these, the policy will be brought to Council for approval and the procedures and guides will be approved by the City Manager and provided to staff.

Late in 2021, the division also began work on an internal communications strategy. The purpose of the strategy is to determine what tactics are best for connecting with staff and what information they would like shared with them. The City has an intranet for staff use but not all staff have a computer. The strategy will help us to optimize the tools we have and overcome the challenges of the different work environments. This work will continue in 2022 with a strategy in place by Q2.

Once the internal communications strategy is complete, the team will begin conversations with citizens about the best ways to connect with them and the information they would like to receive. A City communications strategy will be in place by the end of 2022.

In addition to the communications strategies and usual daily communications tasks, the division will begin work on the following projects:

- Achieve greater involvement with communications in other divisions to ensure the City brand and standards are apparent in all communications, with a view to reducing the overall City advertising spending (e.g. combining ads between departments and better utilizing social media, e-newsletters and subscriptions could reduce spending).
- Develop a City fact check page as a place where the City can address misinformation and disinformation found in the public realm.
- Take advantage of the new website content management system to revise website content and layout. The goal is to ensure information is easy to find and understand.
- Develop a social media strategy and content calendar to ensure City communications is timely and engaging.
- Improve the City budget engagement to allow for a longer period of public feedback and simplify the process to encourage more citizens and businesses to participate.
- Improve the City's presence on Google business pages.
- Produce information videos on storm water infrastructure, roads and bylaw services.

Projects in other departments the team will assist with include:

- Move Up PG
- Downtown Strategy
- New downtown pool grand opening
- Capital project communications
- Downtown daycare opening
- Another new daycare construction
- Storm water education
- Election information
- World Women's Curling promotions

The communications team is well appointed with education, experience and creativity that will provide excellent communications with limited resources to our citizens.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Under City Government and Infrastructure, goal 4: "Develop a communications policy that enables consistent and clear communication of City service levels and associated costs."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

With a refocus on addressing the information needs of the community in a transparent, factual and timely way, 2022 will be a good year.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Walter Babicz, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Julie Rogers, Manager of Communications

Meeting Date: February 7, 2022