

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: February 15, 2024

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Eric Depenau, Acting Director, Administrative Services

SUBJECT: Communications and Engagement Strategy

ATTACHMENT(S): Communications and Engagement Strategy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the report dated February 15, 2024 and titled "Communications and Engagement Strategy."

PURPOSE:

For council to receive the 2024 communications and engagement strategy.

BACKGROUND:

In 2023 the communications division contracted Discovery Research to conduct a communications engagement community survey using a random sample of addresses in Prince George. To allow citizens with an interest in the subject to also participate if they were not randomly selected, an online survey was offered at the same time. A staff survey of City communications and engagement was also conducted.

This information was provided to Jan Enns Communications who conducted a communications audit of the City's communications channels and worked with staff to develop a communications and engagement strategy. The strategy provides a roadmap for the what, why, when, who, and how we may best continue to inform our community and seek their input on matters that are important. It lays the strategic framework to achieve transparent, timely, accurate, and meaningful communications and engagement with our community.

Key points from what we heard, and have taken into account, in creating this strategy include:

- Provide clear, consistent, and meaningful information on topics that matter.
- Improve transparency by engaging our community sooner in the decision-making process.
- Provide more opportunities to listen and provide meaningful input, as well as learning how the input was used in decision-making.
- Continue to deliver a digital approach to communications.

While aligning with the guiding principles in council's communications policy, the strategy takes a community-centered approach and provides some goals and actions to achieve success.

Taking a digital first approach the strategy offers five specific goals:

1. Organize for success. Support and encourage meaningful communications and community engagement and participation.
2. Build connections. Build and strengthen trusted relationships with our community and our partners.
3. Expand our reach. Leverage community connections for delivery of a consistent and responsive message.
4. Amplify our message. Build and strengthen trusted relationships with our local media to help ensure our coverage is accurate, timely, and useful for both our media and their audience.
5. Assess our impact. Monitor, measure, and adjust our communications as needed to ensure we are continuously improving our practice.

The strategy also provides some analysis of the City's communication channels and offers many actions for improvement such as:

- Encourage council members to help amplify the message by liking and sharing City posts with their audiences on their social media platforms.
- Continue to work with appropriate and relevant partners' social media platforms to leverage reach (e.g., UNBC, CNC, Downtown Prince George).
- Explore adding a City e-newsletter to provide consistent and proactive updates to the community.
- Enhance both staff and council members' ability to respond to media interviews, or at meetings and events where media may be present, with ongoing media coaching and training, and key messaging.
- Monitor and measure ad buys.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This strategy is in alignment with council's values of civic pride, inclusivity, integrity, accountability, optimism, resilience, vitality, and transparency. It also supports council's goals:

- Focus on meaningful communications and relationship development to advance shared priorities.
- Promote presence and use of local assets and amenities in a way that aligns with growth goals.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

At this time there are no financial implications related to this report as the initial work can all be accomplished within the existing budget.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

This strategy to expand and improve the City's communications and engagement practices is based on feedback from our residents and staff.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Eric Depenau, Acting Director, Administrative Services

PREPARED BY: Julie Rogers, Communications Manager

APPROVED:

Andy Beesley, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: February 26, 2024