

This Communications Plan provides 5 broad goals to improve communications with staff and residents based on feedback gathered from staff, Council and the community.



Communication Plan 2014



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The City of Dawson Creek's Communication Plan outlines specific goals, objectives and actions to improve communications with key stakeholders; the community and employees, as well as to promote the City to investors, families and travellers.

Proactive stakeholder engagement is the most effective way to communicate important City initiatives and foster an atmosphere of community collaboration and ensure an open and transparent democratic process.

The City's Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles will guide the process of effective communication. One of the City's Guiding Principles is Trust and Integrity and states that trust can be earned by "Pledging to align our actions with the guiding principles that support our vision." If the City aligns communications with the Guiding Principles it will communicate with integrity and earn the trust of the citizens.

The key to effective communication is to keep it relevant, accurate and current. It is important that every method used to communicate is done well. It must be honest, in plain language and it must be clearly branded as information from the City.

The City Communications Plan will outline the goals and the work that needs to be done. It is by no means the end of a process; rather, it is the beginning of a process. From this plan will flow several plans for specific departments or activities as well as protocol for effective communication.

Each communication tool will need protocol attached to it to ensure that it meets City standards and criteria for appropriate communication.

Analysis

Feedback on City communications has been gathered in the following ways:

- March 2011 Community Survey
- November 2013 employee survey
- November 2013 Council survey
- January 2014 individual discussions with senior staff
- An internal Communications Committee with representatives from each department

There were several common messages received:

- Information to the public and staff needs to be more timely and easy to find.
- Employees are frustrated about learning City business in the newspaper rather than at work and they do not always feel they have all the information they need to be City ambassadors.
- The methods (website, email, Facebook etc) used to communicate information are not always the appropriate one for each message and the message is not always timely or informative.
- Information on the City website is difficult to locate and out of date.

Communication Plan 2014

Communication Approach and Tactics

Guiding all goals, strategies and actions are the following universal communications principles:

1. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive.
2. Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
3. Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual and timely.
4. Respect the access to information and privacy rights of citizens and employees.
5. Support opportunities for engagement to inform public policy.
6. Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and “communications excellence” practices.

Goal One

Increase staff knowledge of Strategic Priorities and Council decisions.

STRATEGY

Communicate Council decisions to staff in a timely manner.

Proposed Actions

- Ensure all current staff and new staff who have computer access are subscribed to website updates.
- Provide website News to staff who do not have computer access either by providing either a computer or monitor in staff lunch rooms, printed news updates or a digital information screen at work sites (similar to what is seen in airports with updated information).
- Design work flow to ensure Council meeting updates are posted to the website immediately following a Council meeting.

STRATEGY

Regularly communicate Strategic Priorities to staff.

Proposed Actions

- Once annual Strategic Priorities are set by Council develop a communication flow to communicate all of those priorities to staff.
- Develop a communication protocol to provide staff with updates that are provided to Council in the Committee of the Whole reports.

Communication Plan 2014

Goal Two

Improve the quality of internal communications.

STRATEGY

Make information about City activities, new initiatives, programs and hot topics easy to access.

Proposed Actions

- Promote and leverage online resources as a database for frequently accessed information and frequently asked questions for employees to find answers.
- Investigate costs, uses and staff capacity to maintain a City intranet.
- As with Goal One, provide website News to staff who do not have computer access either by providing either a computer in a staff lunch rooms, printed news updates or a digital information screen at work sites (similar to what is seen in airports with updated information).
- Clean up the S drive, determine it's usefulness and make use of it.

STRATEGY

Ensure employees at satellite locations feel a strong connection to the organization.

Proposed Actions

- Increase opportunities for employees across the organization to collaborate through cross-departmental projects, initiatives, and teams.
- Host employee events at satellite locations.
- Continue to inform employees of matters affecting them before informing the public.
- Provide access to electronic resources in satellite lunch rooms.

STRATEGY

Increase knowledge of departmental objectives and activities between departments.

Proposed Actions

- Increase information sharing capacity at clerical meetings.
- Have departments communicate key departmental initiatives to all departments. Perhaps this information can be relayed to one Administration staff person for appropriate dissemination of information.

Communication Plan 2014

Goal Three

Increase capacity to communicate with citizens in timely and meaningful ways.

STRATEGY

Create annual departmental communications plans.

Proposed Actions

- Work with Directors and Managers to identify annual communication priorities for the coming year; build actions into yearly work plans for staff.
- Determine resource requirements.
- Identify key audiences and determine how and when to engage.
- Dedicate a departmental staff person in all departments as a central point person to gather and prioritize City information for distribution.

STRATEGY

Standardize common operational procedures for communicating the City's message and receiving feedback from citizens.

Proposed Actions

- Create regular patterns of work across the organization for listening to citizens, sending out messages, alerting the media, hosting events, updating the website, informing staff, etc. (Ensure the City Reception receives accurate, timely information in this process)
- Filter communications through one or more key staff persons to ensure consistency and timely messaging.
- Identify best practices for communication processes in procedure documents and circulate these to staff.
- Update and distribute the City's current style guide and templates.
- Ensure City branding is evident in all communication tools.
- Maintain efficient and cooperative relationships with members of the media.
- Develop an Emergency Communications Plan for before, during and after a major emergency.

STRATEGY

Embrace the corporate identity of the City and translate it into how we do business with our customers through responsible, professional and transparent interactions so that all citizens receive quality customer service and results

Proposed Actions

- Develop an employee ambassador program to educate staff and encourage better engagement with citizens.

Communication Plan 2014

- Give staff ownership to follow through on citizen inquiries.
- Provide staff with appropriate customer service training.
- Provide staff with the resources to follow through on inquiries.

STRATEGY

Improve quality of communication tools and standardize the use of them.

Proposed Actions

- Purchase an app that allows for two way communication between the City and residents. Specifically a garbage schedule app that allows for additional messaging to be added to it from the City and allows citizens to report infrastructure or service issues to the City.
- Replace the City website to a platform with easy navigation and a user friendly Content Management System. Improve the quality of information on the City website and remove all secondary sites that detract from the City site.
- Develop protocol for website updates.
- Develop Facebook protocol to ensure Facebook updates are regular, relevant and content is informative and easily understood.
- Investigate costs and uses for Public Display Screens in City facilities.
- Conduct a review of all print communication tools to clearly define the message and the audience and target those communications appropriately.

Goal Four

Increase participation in local government and the public process.

STRATEGY

Develop a public engagement strategy to guide the public consultation process.

Proposed Actions

- Create more informal opportunities for public feedback.
- Always respond to public inquiries within 12 hours (regardless of the platform they use to communicate).
- Consider more consultation activities in different locations.
- Explore best practices in public engagement.
- Increase public awareness of engagement opportunities.
- Balance the use of traditional consultation methods (e.g. public meetings, surveys) and emerging methods (e.g. online forums) to best suit the situation.

STRATEGY

Secure larger turnouts during community consultations.

Communication Plan 2014

Proposed Actions

- Coordinate events in conjunction with popular public gatherings.
- Plan events in advance to access prime advertising opportunities.
- Identify barriers that may exist to public participation and how these barriers influence citizen turnout.
- Communicate the purpose of the event and the event details in multiple platforms.
- Share contact lists between departments for mail outs and emails to contact more people.

STRATEGY

Inform citizens about how to get involved and stay informed about City government utilizing public meetings.

Proposed Actions

- Educate citizens about the role of Council.
- Make guidelines for citizen participation clear by providing information on the various processes on the website.
- Simplify language used in all publications. Don't use 'government speak' and don't use acronyms.

Goal Five

Build the City reputation as a desirable place to live and do business.

STRATEGY

Raise awareness in BC and Alberta of the quality of life in Dawson Creek.

Proposed Actions

- Advertise in publications targeted to people who may be looking to relocate.
- Actively pursue articles profiling Dawson Creek.
- Allocate resources for Economic Development.

STRATEGY

Develop positive working relationships with industry leaders.

Proposed Actions

- Have the City Economic Development representative attend industry events.
- Maintain memberships in Economic Development or business focussed organizations.

Communication Plan 2014

Communication Tools

The information in these publications and web tools is important however the vast number of places to find the information causes confusion and misinformation. In keeping with the core principle of providing information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive, having too many tools leaves too much room for error and too much staff time to keep it all up to date. All communication tools should be appropriately branded to ensure it is recognizable as communication from the City.

Electronic	Status	Details
City Website	K	This site can be vastly improved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information needs to be easy to find Content should be concise and in simple language Information should belong to the City – providing information from other sources makes it impossible to ensure accuracy (ie: school district and Northern Health information do not belong)
Dawson Creek in the News website	D	This site is underutilized (very few visits recorded in analytics) and the information is repeating information found in other sources. Delete this website.
Planning for People website	I	The Planning For People Website contains important environmental information and should be given a page on the City website. This will add legitimacy to the information provided.
Planning for Youth website	D	At a time when resources are available to commit to this project, it could be brought back in partnership with the School District but at the moment the information is outdated and has no audience.
Dawson Creek Library Website	K	The website has an active audience and it is managed by the library well. There should be a link to it from the City website and the library site should be branded properly.
Dawson Creek Community Profile website	I	This is the same information that is provided in the print publication. The information should be reviewed for appropriate audience and messaging and the website should be a page on the City site not a separate site.
FACEBOOK:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City (1223 likes) 	K	This page needs protocol developed and messaging filtered through one or two staff to ensure effective and consistent messaging.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watershed Stewardship Program (80 likes) 	I	This page is not identified as an official City page, it has few likes and it has very little interaction. If the information shared here is important then it should be shared on the City Facebook page.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatic Centre Facebook (220 likes) 	K	While it is a generally accepted rule that organizations should only have one Facebook page, in this case the pool page is effective and it provides very specific information to people who are interested. Protocol needs to be developed for communicating on this page and sharing the posts on the City page.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KBAC Climbing Wall Facebook 	I	This page should be removed after advising its followers to like the Aquatic Centre page for updates. The Aquatic Centre can provide

Communication Plan 2014

(30 likes)		updates on the whole facility not just the pool.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dawson Creek Library Facebook 	K	As with the website, this page is managed well and serves a very specific audience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DC In the News Facebook (70 likes) 	D	This page merely shares links from other Facebook pages and as such has little value. It is not the role of the City to regurgitate information from other sources.
DC In the News Twitter (15 followers)	D	As with the Facebook, page this platform is only sharing information from other sources.
NEW* Internal Intranet		An intranet would provide accurate, timely information to staff on corporate objectives, council decisions, and strategic planning. Resourcing the site should be discussed.
NEW* Garbage pick up app		The cost for this product is relatively inexpensive and it would provide another platform for engagement with citizens. It also would not require a lot of staff resources to manage.

Print Publications	Keep?	
Annual Report	K	This is required by legislation. Identify specifically what is required by legislation and streamline the process to provide a quality document using the least amount of resources. Is there an audience for this beyond the legislative requirements? Can it be produced as an online report only?
DC Community Guide(Annual)	K	The content for the Guide and the Profile should be reviewed. Who is the audience and what is the message? Can the publications be combined or are the separated? How are they different? Should any information overlap?
DC Community Profile (Annual)	K	
Community Leisure Guide	K	As a trial this publication could be only available at City facilities for pick up. A card could be mailed the first time to citizens letting them know where it is available and advising it will no longer be mailed. Public feedback will determine the success.
Our Community Dawson Creek Newsletter (as needed). Mailed out.	K	A review of the value of this publication is warranted. Does it reach the desired audience? Is there another way to reach that audience that is more cost effective?
Dawson Creek in the News (not printed since March 2012)	N	This publication is no longer used.
Brochures	K	Brochures are used in several departments. The design of these brochures should be consistent. All print material should have a City look about it. Administration should have a copy of all brochures in use. Perhaps a basic template for brochures should be designed.

Communication Plan 2014

Other	Keep?	
Council Meetings	K	Required.
News Releases	K	This is still an effective way to reach a large number of people on important issues. Protocol should be developed to assist in determining when a news release is required.
Public Hearings	K	Required.
Email	Y	Individual emails are an effective way to provide direct communication.
Newsletters by email (as needed)	D	A strategic shift from email newsletters to email subscribers on the website will provide more timely information to citizens. Often by the time a newsletter is produced the information has already been in the news and it is dated.
Advertising – newspaper, television and radio	K	As required however other methods of communication should be explored and cost effectiveness reviewed.
Events	K	This is still an effective way to communicate. There is a small group of citizens who still prefer these. More effort into increasing attendance at these meetings. It also meets the City Guiding Principal of “Providing opportunities for engaged, active citizens to help create and participate in developing solutions for pressing issues.”
Portable Sign	K	The sign is inexpensive and easy to update. It can also be used to drive traffic to the website or Facebook page where more detailed information can be provided.

- * Status –
- K – Keep
 - I – Discontinue use of the tool but integrate information into other tools.
 - D – Discontinue use of this tool.