



Municipality of Port Hope

56 Queen Street
Port Hope, ON
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REPORT TO: Corporate Services Committee

FROM: Kate Ingram – Manager, Communications

SUBJECT: Communications Policy

DATE: October 19, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

That a resolution be presented to Council to adopt the Communications Policy; and

That a by-law be presented to Council to repeal By-law 115/2007.

BACKGROUND:

Council has recently authorized additional staff resources to increase capacity within the Communications Division. Part of the justification for the request was to allow staff to commit more time and resources to addressing pressing strategic initiatives, including policy, plan, and framework enhancement and development. To fulfill the commitment to upgrade, expand and develop policies, plans, and frameworks within the Division, Communications staff present the attached Schedule A – Draft Communications Policy.

The Municipality of Port Hope recognizes the value of communications and media relations in enhancing community awareness and understanding of Council decisions, as well as municipal services, programs, initiatives, and engagement opportunities. Comprehensive, accurate and strategic communications is essential to uphold the Municipality's reputation and can influence the perceptions and behaviours of its many audiences. For this reason, the Municipality is committed to delivering tactical, trustworthy, and timely communications with a consistent approach to foster trusting relationships with its stakeholders and enhance the reputation of the Municipality and the community.

The proposed Communications Policy ensures professionalism and consistency in how the Municipality communicates with its stakeholders. It establishes a clear, consistent, and manageable process for the successful delivery of communications at the Municipality, including:

- procedures for intake of, and response to media requests
- identification of designated Municipal spokespersons

- distribution and posting of messaging, including but not limited to releases, advisories, public notices, statements
- issues management and emergency communications
- website and social media communications

Additionally, the new Communications Policy appends current key policies and documents relevant to communications processes and guidelines for municipal staff, including the Social Media Policy, Branding Guidelines, Accountability and Transparency Policy, the Emergency Management Plan, and the Code of Conduct. This policy applies to Council, appointed members of all municipal committees, staff, contractors, and consultants, temporary and other workers, and volunteers.

This policy is intended to replace the previous Communications Policy adopted under By-law 115/2007. The previous policy is outdated and does not reflect the current operational structure of the Municipality. For example, the previous policy was developed before the creation of the Communications Division at the Municipality of Port Hope. Since then, Communications staff have been tasked with the responsibility of developing and delivering all external messaging to the public and the media. This policy reflects that imperative organizational shift.

Additionally, the previous Communications Policy incorporates procedures and guidelines for community consultation and event planning. The Municipality of Port Hope already has dedicated policies for community consultation and special event management. The contents do not need to be replicated in the Communications Policy.

The Communications Policy is a portion of a larger undertaking to develop, update, modernize, and implement policies and plans that fall under the portfolio of the Communications Division. In September 2021, the Social Media Policy was adopted by Council. As part of the work plan for the Communications staff, Council can expect the following policies to be presented to Council for adoption in late 2021:

- Notice By-law 127/2007 (to be updated)
- Community Consultation By-law 56/2011 (to be repealed and replaced with a new Community Engagement Policy)

Additionally, Communications staff is undertaking the following plans:

- Communications Plan
 - This Plan is intended to outline the ways in which the Municipality will effectively communicate with our external stakeholders, set goals to strengthen communications, and measure public awareness of the Municipality's services, programs, and initiatives. Staff will liaise with community stakeholders and internal departments as part of the development of this plan.
- Internal Communications Strategy
 - This Plan is intended to streamline internal communications using the

tools currently available to employees. Communications staff will audit the internal communications currently in place and develop a strategy to enhance internal communications goals, establish consistent use of the Municipal brand, and streamline internal messaging.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no resource implications associated with the adoption or implementation of the Communications Policy.

CONCLUSION:

Communications is a key component of service delivery for our residents and other municipal stakeholders. The Communications Policy informs the ways in which communications is conducted by the Municipality of Port Hope to build trust with our community and stakeholders and enhance our reputation as an accountable and transparent organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Ingram
Manager, Communications