



# Municipality of Port Hope

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Implementation of New Council e-Newsletter

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**Report to:** Corporate Services Committee

**Date of meeting:** January 24, 2023

**Report Author:**

Tamra Barlow, Communications Coordinator

**Department responsible:**

Corporate Services

**Report Number:** CS-02-23

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### Recommendation:

That Report CS-02-23 be received for information.

### Highlights:

- New e-Newsletter platform to replace the current post-Council meeting media release.
- Allows for added analytics and metrics such as open and click rates, delivery failures and tracked sent emails.
- Allows for integrated communications features such as images and video content.
- Contains a printable feature.
- Current subscribers of Council News will be automatically transferred to the new subscription.

### Background:

In 2017, an effort to increase transparency and accessibility of Council meeting decisions was undertaken by the Communications division. To do this, staff began to issue media releases after Council meetings which summarized noteworthy items advanced at Council Meetings. The media releases were sent to local media and published on the website.

The adoption of the new website in 2020 allowed for residents to subscribe to this feature and have these summaries pushed to their email inbox.

In 2021, the Committee of the Whole (COW) summaries were added to this publication. This broadened the scope of the information and informed residents and media of topics that were to be discussed at upcoming Council Meetings.

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During previous budget deliberations, Council discussed and noted a desire to have staff explore new non-digital ways to communicate this information. The current method, though effective, is not accessible to those who do not have email or reliable internet service.

**Discussion:**

After researching multiple providers, Envoke.com was the platform selected. Due to its usability, printability and ultimately its secure and Canadian data management policy, it was the optimal fit for providing a seamless transition.

The new platform provides a seamless email editor tool and allows for implementation of dynamic content including images and video content. Additionally, all email opens, clicks, unsubscribes, and delivery failures are tracked for every email sent. This will allow staff to drill down to see the list of contacts for each reported item and use the data to continue to improve and strengthen the content and subscriber list.

The e-Newsletter can also be easily printed, if needed or desired.

Additionally, from time to time, staff throughout the organization have developed or inquired about initiating e-Newsletters for content related to their departments and services. Communications staff recommends centralizing the newsletters to this platform to create consistent branding using built-in branding controls.

This service will be introduced following the January 24 Council and COW meetings.

All those subscribed to the current website subscription platform 'Council News' will be automatically transferred to the new subscription. New subscribers can opt-in via the municipal website. As required by law, all users also have the ability to unsubscribe at anytime within the email.

A Council e-Newsletter aligns with the delivery of Council news distributed by Northumberland County staff as well as other municipalities across Ontario.

**Financial Considerations:**

The subscription fee for using this service is nominal and captured within the existing Communications Division budget. Staff are building the time required to incorporate this enhanced communications tool into regular work load.

**Communication and Public Engagement:**

The new Council e-Newsletter will be communicated via our usual communications channels including the weekly newspaper advertisement, social media, website news channels and featured on the Council webpage. Regular campaigns will be planned to encourage an increase in subscribers to the tool.

**Conclusion:**

This report provides an overview of the new Council e-Newsletter tool launching following the January 24, 2023 Council and COW Meetings. The intention of this new platform is to reach a broader more diverse audience in the community and to enhance

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the communication of post-Council news delivery. It offers enhanced usability and aligns with the Municipality's accessibility standards.

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1 - Sample newsletter