

Communications Policy



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Administration & Finance	February 21, 2017	18-2017	1	8
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Purpose

The purpose of this communication policy is to ensure efficient, effective, timely, consistent and comprehensive communications to stakeholders of the City of Kenora through a variety of methods and means.

Effective communications and quality service delivery are key priorities for the City of Kenora.

Communication should be a priority in the development and planning of programs and services and is necessary to the successful completion and implementation of these activities. Communication resources and efforts should be considered in each part of activity planning to guarantee the success and quality of City customer service.

1.0 Municipal Identity

- i. All departments will use the City of Kenora official logo as the identifying symbol of the organization on all communication pieces. In the event a City department has their own departmental logo (ie: Kenora Fire & Emergency Services, Lake of the Woods Museum, Kenora Recreation Centre), wherever possible, use both logos to identify official communication from the department, as well as the City.
- ii. Staff will apply alternative forms of identification when the use of the City of Kenora logo is not possible, as with text-only applications or where layout space is constricted, such as with small digital screens.
- iii. Displaying the official symbols prominently, free from other visual elements and visually conflicting backgrounds is the preferred method to consistent municipal identity.

2.0 Consistency & Standards

To ensure clarity and consistency of information, plain language and proper grammar must be used in all communications with the public. This principle also applies to internal communications, as well as to information prepared for Council.

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The following guidelines are recommended:

- a) Use a Standard Typestyle. A uniform "Verdana" is the preferred serif typeface and "Arial" is the preferred san serif typeface. (Use at least a Font of 11 or larger whenever possible)
- b) Limit the use of bold text and do not use italics
- c) Do not underline
- d) Have adequate "white space" – ample margins and fairly short paragraphs
- e) Use graphics to accompany text whenever possible
- f) Avoid frequent changes in type style and style of graphics
- g) Directions often seem simpler if instructions are given in point-form in a vertical list and in the order they are to be carried out.
- h) Avoid writing too far above a grade six level (a grade nine level is the maximum recommended).
- i) Use short sentences
- j) Use simple words where feasible. If a technical term is truly necessary, use it several times so that it becomes familiar
- k) Instructions should be positive rather than negative
- l) Writing should be in the active voice, not the passive voice
- m) Writing should seem personal and direct, not impersonal and remote (avoid the third person)
- n) Limit the use of acronyms, but if necessary, extend the description of the acronym and use the acronym throughout the rest of the document consistently
- o) Use relevant and interesting examples.
- p) Present ideas clearly in a logical sequence.
- q) Use simplified, economical style, rather than padded or long-winded style.

Consultation with the Communications Lead on messaging is always recommended. Where possible and practical, have a member of the intended audience review and comment on a draft version of the information to be released.

3.0 Informing the Public

- i. Determining the best means of reaching the target audience for specific programs and messages will be determined by the staff person responsible for that objective.
- ii. Using digital media and platforms will be the primary means to connect and interact with the public while continuing to use multiple communications channels to meet the diverse information needs of the public.
- iii. Staff need to work with the Communications Lead on any new initiatives or specific messaging coming from their department/area

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- iv. Staff will identify their communication needs on Council reports that will best reach the target audience they are needing to reach.
- v. Staff need to ensure that communications products and activities are:
 - Aligned with the City's priorities, themes and objectives;
 - Objective and non-partisan;
 - Clear, timely, accurate, accessible and written in plain language;
 - Responsive to the specific needs and interests of the citizens, summer residents and visitors; and
 - Cost-effective

4.0 Methods of Communication

A. Municipal Portal (Website)

A primary source of official information for anyone seeking information regarding the City of Kenora is the municipal website (www.kenora.ca). The website is utilized to access information written by our administration and it is a resource for searchable reference material on the Municipality.

The website will maintain up-to-date user-friendly information to assist citizens in their business with the municipality. The site will be informative and inter-active to facilitate communication between the public, Councillors and staff. A calendar of municipal meetings and events open to the public will be kept up to date on the municipal website along with recent news and new programs along with consistent regular departmental information.

The website will contain several main categories that are identified as the top search priorities for visitors to the site and will provide clear, concise information that visitors may be searching for.

The website is not a forum for commenting on municipal issues and services. The website shall contain links to easily enable e-mails to municipal staff for assistance or concerns.

The Internet and other electronic communication are important tools, which allow 24-hour access to information and support two-way communication. Departments must:

- a) Make publications of interest to citizens that are widely distributed and make available on the website as soon as possible after distribution to the public.
- b) Ongoing updates and regular reviews of departmental pages and sub-sites so that information on policies, programs, services, initiatives and related third-party links is accurate and easy to understand.
- c) Ensure up to date information is posted immediately on department area for ease of public accuracy.
- d) Follow the standards for the look and feel of the City's website.

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B. Social Media

Social media has been proven to be a valuable tool in communicating important information to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders, either through direct interaction or by directing users to web content. Social media can also be used for collaboration and crowdsourcing to support policy development and service delivery, and to facilitate public engagement.

The City will engage in social media posts regularly to continually build a following of diverse groups of users. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, provide a platform to quickly share City events, service updates, Council information, job opportunities and other good news stories.

The City will maintain the following social media platforms:

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. Twitter
4. You Tube

Guidelines are established by the Communications Lead for frequency and content of social media posts for the City's main City account. Other department Lead's that have their own social media outlets, should:

- a) consult with the Communications Lead to advise that a separate social media account will exist, and in what means, for their specific department area;
- b) adhere to the same standards as established by this policy for publications and postings

Social media needs to be monitored closely and managed with the utmost professionalism. Posts need to be directly related to the municipality or have a significant impact to the municipality. Staff who manage secondary social media accounts (ie: Tourism, Recreation, Library, Fire) need to ensure the posts are polite, professional and positive and related directly to the City.

The City will not respond or engage in slanderous comments and will reserve the right to remove comments from their social media accounts that are derogatory in nature.

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C. Media Releases

Media releases will be issued regarding municipal issues and activities. They shall be coordinated through the Communications Lead who will distribute all Media Releases for the Corporation. They are issued by the Communications Lead/Communications Clerk and the CAO and Council is made aware of all media releases prior to the release.

D. Traditional Newspaper Advertisements / Municipal Memo

The Municipality shall place advertisements in any print medium deemed appropriate to inform residents about their rights, responsibilities, municipal policies, programs, services, initiatives, upcoming public meetings, dangers or risks to public safety. All ads shall be coordinated through the office of the Communications Clerk.

The Municipality does not purchase ads for general promotion of the municipality.

E. Traditional Radio

The municipality shall maintain a strong relationship with the local radio media partners and keep the radio stations informed of up to date information that is relevant to the general public. Public Service Announcements are vital to the day to day communications of the City and working with the radio stations will ensure the public keeps informed of last minute changes. Traditional radio ads are also an effective source of advertising for the municipality in certain circumstances.

F. Email updates

Citizens can register to receive email updates on the preferences they register for. When updates to that particular department are available, they will receive a personalized email.

G. Emergency notifications – Kenora Alerts

Everbridge Emergency System is a new mass notification service. We will use this tool to contact the public during emergency events and testing. In some cases, enrolled citizens will receive a combination of email, voice, SMS and push notifications. Each message will have an introduction, main content and a confirmation component. When the message is received by the receiver, they confirm receipt of the message, or the system will attempt to reach them again.

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This system shall be used for emergency purposes only such as forest fires, floods, city wide boil water advisories and any other emergency that effects the population as a whole.

H. Digital signage messaging

Internal televisions throughout City departments are updated regularly with current and important messages for staff to be aware of things happening in other departments. This tool allows quicker access to all staff and keeps everyone informed throughout the City. It reaches all employees, rather than only employees with email access or semi-monthly paper newsletters with outdated information. Digital messaging is extended to busy public areas which allow us to reach out to the public through our digital messaging.

I. MY 311

In April, 2017 the City will be launching a customer logging system whereas customer concerns will be logged and tracked for responses and response times. This will increase our communications internally as it allows staff to monitor concerns in target areas, concerns in target departments and responses to previous customer concerns. This tool will improve customer service and value to our customers and provide staff with vital information to customer history. Customers will be able to log their own concerns through our portal and My311 direct link which will provide the relevant staff with the logged customer concern and related staff will respond directly to the customer.

There are other forms of miscellaneous advertising that the City may use from time to time depending on the level of the program or service we are communicating.

5.0 Procedures & Protocol

The City Clerk/Communication Lead is responsible for managing, coordinating and approving communications plans, strategies and products and to work with departmental staff tasked with these responsibilities in their departments.

In partnership with Human Resources, the City Clerk/Communications Lead shall lead facilitating open and collaborative communications among all employees in their department through internal communication strategies.

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Through collaboration with other departments on priority initiatives that require input from multiple departments, communication efforts will be recognized as a joint effort within the communication team on single projects, or on-going long term communication needs in a department.

5.1 Programs/Deliverables

City Employees shall adhere to the following procedures and protocols when communicating programs through their areas:

Printed Products - Print communications products may be coordinated through the City Clerk's office if requested. A copy of any print material shall be provided to the Clerk's office for record.

Public Consultations and Engagement - The Communications Lead/Communications Clerk will be copied on all public consultations, open houses, and public engagement campaigns, meetings, surveys conducted throughout the municipality. Support will be provided through communications advice, support and guidance at all stages of consultations and public engagement initiatives for all departments as requested. Contact should be made with the communications department prior to final details of the plans. Staff must ensure that information about external consultations and public engagement initiatives are posted on the City of Kenora's web presence.

Public Events and Announcements - Staff need to ensure that their department does not participate in, or lend support to, partisan events organized for political purposes. Political announcements such as Federal or Provincial funding announcements for programs that may fall within their department, the department senior manager along with Division Lead should attend such announcements.

Private events where the City is asked to speak on a particular City related function or responsibility, should be discussed with the senior manager of the division, which will seek support from communications at their discretion.

Work with other department leads on advertising or publishing requirements along with communication plans for projects or specific activities;

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Social Media and Web – The Communications Clerk is responsible for overseeing the department's web and social media presence, including approving its social media strategy and official social media accounts. While we have other City departments with departmental social media accounts, any social media presence should be approved by both the senior manager of the division and the Communications Lead. Working together on large projects and sharing commonalities across the municipality is important in on-line presence for the municipality. Using the City of Kenora's social media analytics and official web analytics tool to evaluate and optimize the effectiveness of digital content.

Departments are to be part of the main www.kenora.ca portal (website) and no department shall have a separate web presence unless authorized by the department senior manager and the Communications Lead.

Sponsorships Arrangements – Any sponsorship of events, special programs or partnerships that govern partnering and sponsorship arrangements need to clearly outline communications roles and responsibilities of all parties and include corporate identity requirements. Using the official corporate logo in prominence of all publications is key and should be coordinated through the Communications department.

5.2 Official Spokespersons

The Mayor or Deputy Mayor is the head of Council and acts as the official spokesperson for the City. Each Councillor may also speak to any media requests they wish to respond to, or they may refer them to the Mayor or Deputy Mayor.

The City Clerk is the Lead for Communications and, when requested, will speak to official City programs, events, decisions of Council and initiatives of the City.

Each department manager may also be appointed as a media spokesperson for their respective department areas when requested.

Official spokespersons for the City who communicate with the media in an official capacity on behalf of the department shall:

- Receive training in media relations;
- Identify themselves by name and position;
- Speak on the record for public attribution;
- Confine their remarks to facts concerning policies, programs, services initiatives or a specific event;

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- Respect privacy rights, security needs, matters before the courts, City policies;
- Ensure comments are in a positive nature and reflect positively on the City; and
- Work proactively with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives.

Notice shall be given to the Clerk's office when a department manager or lead speaks to the media and/or any printed material is provided to the media a copy shall be sent to the Clerk's office for record.

Information provided to the media should reflect City management's interpretation of City Council policy and not the employee's personal views. Employees should not guess or speculate about City policy or programs, and need to have facts prior to speaking to the media.

5.3 Emergency Communications

In the event of a major crisis or incident, the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may be called and the communications officer for the EOC would handle all media relations. In this circumstance, and in the absence or addition of the EOC, the CAO, Communications Lead, City senior manager, or Manager of Fire & Emergency Services Manager are designed as City spokespersons. The EOC plan would be in effect and operate under that plan.

All information regarding the crisis is to be immediately communicated to the team along with Council. No statements will be made to the media until the information is available to Council. The Mayor should obtain regular briefings from the Communications Lead or CAO and it is recommended that any statements made to the media come only through the designated spokesperson.

This policy has been reviewed with me. I understand the policy and agree to abide by it.

Date: _____

Employee Signature

Print Name