



Town of Pelham Communications Plan

.....
2019-2022



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Communications vision and mission.....	4
Communications principles.....	5
State of communications.....	6
What is our focus?.....	7
FOCUS ON	
Information availability.....	8
Two-way communication.....	9
Positive storytelling.....	10
Target audiences.....	11
Communications tools.....	12
Media/Public Relations.....	13
Crisis Communications.....	14
What's next?.....	15

Introduction

A STARTING **POINT**

This document outlines the Town of Pelham’s approach to corporate communications and community relations. The focuses, objectives, and tactics established in this plan address comments and feedback from citizens regarding the methods and approaches the Town takes when communicating. Overall, the Town’s goal is to enhance the way it communicates with the community.

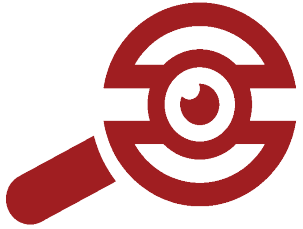
COMMUNICATIONS **STRATEGY STATEMENT**

The Town of Pelham serves over 17,000 residents with unique voices and needs. As the level of government that directly impacts residents the most, it is the Town’s belief that open, two-way communication is the best approach to helping the community understand how the Town operates, creating the feeling of connectivity between the Town and its residents.

The Town will focus on providing timely, accurate, clear, and proactive messaging, providing stakeholders with customer-focused, two-way communications and problem-solving approaches.

We’re here to make things easier for Pelham residents.





COMMUNICATIONS **VISION**

To build and enhance the overall understanding residents have of their municipality's policies, programs, services, and decisions through open, two-way communication and engagement.

COMMUNICATIONS **MISSION**

Explore new ways of communicating municipal information and updates, setting trends and best practices for other municipalities to emulate.

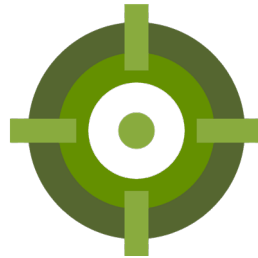


Communications *Principles*



ACCESSIBLE

Information will be easy to find, understand, and readily available.



ACCURATE

Facts. Always. No matter what.



TIMELY

Quick responses without compromising facts.



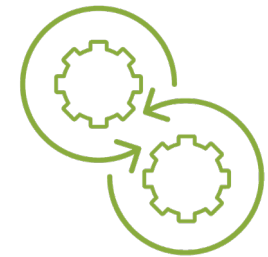
UNDERSTANDABLE

Plain language in all areas of the communications process.



RELEVANT

Information that has direct impact to residents and stakeholders.



CONSISTENT

Messaging stays on point, time and again.

State of *Communications*

WHAT ARE WE HEARING?

There are five themes in terms of resident feedback with Town communication. They are:

- 1) **Transparency**
- 2) **Public consultation and input**
- 3) **Engaging residents sooner**
- 4) **Utilize local media to share message**
- 5) **Response times for emails and phone calls**

Attention to these themes formed the foundation of the objectives, tactics, and measures this plan is designed to address.

WHAT ARE WE SAYING IN THIS PLAN?

By implementing this communications plan, we are saying that we will work with the community to supply timely, accurate, and understandable communications.

To engage the community in a knowledgeable way, the Town must ensure that information (background and historical) is available for public consumption and easy to access.

The basic transfer and receipt of communication is not enough. Trust must be built between the Town and the community igniting conversations that allow for thoughtful, forward-moving discussions.

What is our *focus*?

WHERE CAN WE IMPROVE WHAT AND HOW WE COMMUNICATE?

- 1) Make information available to everyone**
Enhance the way we deliver our messages by providing accessible, relevant information, creating and supporting trust and mutual respect.
- 2) Increase public engagement through positive, two-way communications**
Build strong communities and cultural assets by engaging residents, ensuring their voices are heard, respected, and included in the decision making process.
- 3) Sharing our story in positive ways**
Strengthen the ways we share positive stories through our own voice, energizing staff and the community to become ambassadors for the Town and for one another.



Broad in nature, our focuses are the vast-reaching achievements we hope to realize. Through brainstorming, creativity, and adaptability, Pelham's communications goals are achievable.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Enhance Communication and Engagement
- Build Strong Communities & Cultural Assets

Values Alignment:

- Honesty
- Trustworthiness

WHY FOCUS ON THIS?

When the community is informed, understanding of Town decisions increases. When this happens, trust and respect become an inherent byproduct of Town communications.

Ensuring the Town reaches out to residents, via every available avenue, creates an environment for easily accessible information.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Enhance Communication and Engagement
- Grow Revenue by Promoting our Cultural Assets While Protecting our Environmental Assets

Values Alignment:

- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Respect

Objectives

- Produce digestible and understandable information in a variety of formats: print, digital, radio, etc.
- Create understanding of municipal operations and decisions.
- Build trust between residents and the municipality.
- Employ community-first approach in all communications.

Tactics

- Run regular ads using local media, highlighting town events, information, and key issues.
- Balance between traditional and emerging communications technologies to reach a broad audience.
- Redesign the Town website to provide greater clarity on issues, programs, and services.
- Review methods of delivery on an annual basis to ensure the most successful channels are fully utilized and enhanced.

Measurement

- Increase in visitors to Town website for key information.
- Increase in social media impressions/engagements.
- Increased participation in town surveys, polls, and information gathering initiatives.
- Positive feedback and interactions with residents occurs more regularly than negative.

Focus on

... TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

WHY FOCUS ON THIS?

Active and open two-way communication builds relationships for all.

Invitations to join the conversation and engage people in meaningful communication, allows the Town to make decisions with broader community input. When communication is open, dialogue on sensitive issues is more productive and conducive to favourable outcomes.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Support a Strong Organization
- Enhance Communication and Engagement
- Grow Revenue by Promoting our Cultural Assets While Protecting our Environmental Assets

Values Alignment:

- Honesty
- Teamwork
- Respect

Objectives

- Create opportunities to engage in two-way communications.
- Respond to inquiries and feedback in a timely manner.
- Raise the profile of Town services and programs.
- Ensure consistency of messaging, brand, and communications channels.

Tactics

- Develop processes for communications standards for Council and staff.
- Update communications policies and procedures, reviewing annually.
- Explore the viability and use of two-way and engagement communications tools.
- Consult and involve stakeholders on important issues through a variety of measures: surveys, info sessions, etc.

Measurement

- Measureable engagement on social media and the website increase on an annual basis.
- Increase in attendance for special meetings, information sessions, and other Town-run sessions or programs.
- Positive feedback and interactions occurs more regularly than negative.

Focus on

... POSITIVE STORYTELLING

WHY FOCUS ON THIS?

Telling the story of the Town and the people who live here is an important pillar of the foundation in keeping our small-town feel. Highlighting our successes and our people creates a sense of pride, unity, and most importantly, community.

Our communications are not just about us, they are about our residents, businesses, and service clubs who make Pelham a desired place to live, work, play, and visit.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- Support a Strong Organization
- Enhance Communication and Engagement
- Build Strong Communities & Cultural Assets

Values Alignment:

- Caring
- Teamwork
- Respect

Objectives

- Focus on positive storytelling, building the reputation of the Town of Pelham locally, regionally, and provincially.
- Leverage positive storytelling into local and regional media coverage.
- Create ambassadors out of the community and staff in their personal and professional circles.
- Share positive departmental achievements, successes, and initiatives.

Tactics

- Develop an online presence of newsworthy, community- and Town-focused features.
- Publish monthly newsletter in print and online.
- Create volunteer and staff spotlight features.
- Enhance Life in Pelham guide content.

Measurement

- Increased pick up of press releases and media-focused initiatives.
- Media stories about the Town are more positive than negative.
- Life in Pelham guide demand grows year-over-year.

... TARGET AUDIENCES

Identifying and understanding how our target audience receives and consumes information is critical in crafting and delivering our message. Depending on the audience, the message and its delivery, is tailored specifically to each group. By doing so, we increase the likelihood of effective communications and a broader understanding of the issues we're speaking to.



WHO ARE THE TOWN OF PELHAM'S TARGET AUDIENCES?

EXTERNAL

- Residents
- Local/Regional businesses
- Media
- Contractors/investors
- Government agencies
- Third-party stakeholders: groups, associations, service clubs

INTERNAL

- Town staff
- Council and Committee members

What are our

... COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

PRINT COMMUNICATIONS

- Ads in local newspapers: The Voice of Pelham, Welland Tribune, Niagara This Week
- Life in Pelham Guide
- Posters and rack cards
- Direct mail pieces
- Monthly Town Newsletter

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Town website
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
- Email
- Information display screens

MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

- Press releases
- Radio/TV interviews and advertisements
- Story pitches

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATIONS

- Networking functions/meetings
- Community engagement at events: Home Show, Summerfest, Thursday Night Experience
- Community Outreach programs, events



What is

... MEDIA/PUBLIC RELATIONS

Though often connected, there are a few nuances to public vs. media relations.

Public relations builds and enhances the corporation's reputation through earned and unpaid communications to their direct and indirect stakeholders.

Media relations refers to a mutually beneficial relationship between the media (local or otherwise) and the corporation, most often its spokesperson or media/communications advisors.

Through positive relationships with the media, a corporation increases its ability to have its message, mission, policies, practices, decisions, and general interest broadcast to a wide audience.

The Town has a communications policy that states: ***The Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) are Council's official spokespersons on all matters. The CAO may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for the municipality. It is essential that authorized spokespeople for the municipality employ best practices to ensure that the organization speaks with one voice and presents clear and concise information.***

Providing a consistent, unified message is critical in corporate communications, and following this policy ensures that key messages and comments on behalf of the corporation are filtered through an appropriate spokesperson to eliminate confusion or discrepancies.



WHAT IS A CRISIS?

A crisis can be many different things. It could be a threat to the corporation's reputation or to its stakeholders. It could be continuous negative news cycles, or it could be a high-profile, controversial decision that requires strategic messaging from beginning to end.

HOW WILL THE TOWN OF PELHAM HANDLE A CRISIS?

The Town of Pelham will develop a crisis communications plan outlining the steps required to navigate a crisis before, during, and after one occurs.

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED IN CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS?

Though each crisis will present varying circumstances, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Public Relations and Marketing Specialist, and the appropriate department director will be constants. The Mayor, Council, and additional staff may be involved with varying degrees of responsibility, set forth and dictated by the CAO.

IT WON'T HAPPEN TO US.

It can, and it will. Being prepared for a crisis situation is the first step in effectively managing any crisis.



COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

Event/Programming

When events and programming are held in the Town of Pelham or coordinated by Town staff, pertinent information and updates will be provided through some/all of the following resources:

- Press release/News brief
- Website updates
- Posts to social media
- Town of Pelham monthly newsletter
- Direct mail
- Water/tax bill inserts
- Print and digital advertising
- Billboards/display signs
- Posters, rack cards, flyers
- Foam core poster boards

Road closures/watermain breaks/public works or other notices of an immediate nature

When public works performs maintenance and/or repairs, pertinent information and updates will be provided through some/all of the following sources:

- Public notice on website
- Posts to social media
- Print and digital advertising

General news and information

Throughout the year, The Town will share various news updates and information with residents. Information on taxes, land sales, or other corporate communications pertinent information and updates will be provided through some/all of the following sources:

- Press release/News brief
- Website up dates
- Posts to social media
- Town of Pelham monthly newsletter
- Direct mail
- Water/tax bill inserts
- Print and digital advertising
- Billboards/display signs
- Posters, rack cards, flyers
- Foam core poster boards



Communications Checklists will be created for project-specific plans - generally known, long-term plans that require full mapping.

And finally

... WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

WHAT DOES THIS PLAN REPRESENT?

During the 2018-2022 term of council we are going to focus on establishing a foundation of trust in our communications, supported by two-way communication and community input. We will reflect our commitment to providing clear, focused messaging and an open ear to hear concerns and rising issues.

This plan also represents the Town's willingness to adapt, understand, and employ messaging across various platforms that meet the needs of our stakeholders. The expectation from the community is that the information they receive from the Town is relevant, timely, accurate, and trustworthy.

As we share our positive stories, we will energize and motivate our residents to become ambassadors of the community, and by extension, a mechanism in which we can continue to share the good news generated in our own community.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US

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