

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY REGION OF QUEENS MUNICIPALITY

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INTRODUCTION:

Great communications is about doing a few simple things right, every single time. It is about creating a simple narrative message, supporting the person who is to do the telling, knowing who to tell it to, using the channels they want to receive it, and then compelling them to pass it on.

The Region of Queens Municipality (RQM) has been in existence for since April 1, 1996. Amalgamation formed an area that is diverse in geography, culture, and economics. RQM provides municipal services, including fire protection, community development and planning, engineering, parks and recreation facility services, a residential care facility, solid waste management and water/waste water services to a population of more than 10,000 citizens. In addition to the provision of services to the population, Council has developed three strategic priority areas of focus: 1. Growing the economy and population, 2. Delivering desirable municipal services, and 3. Governing to the best municipal practices.

The overall goal of this communications strategy is to make the Region of Queens Municipality the first and best source of information about what is going on in the Region. It is necessary to continue to move from communication which responds to negative publicity, to communication which is proactive and leads public opinion by focusing on the progression and accomplishments, notwithstanding the inherent challenges. While doing this, the goal is to also ensure that communication is planned, and anticipates issues and opportunities.

The RQM has internal and external audiences. There are a number of communication tools that can be used to deliver messages to each of these audiences, including the media, newsletters, notices and bulletins, public information sessions, and the internet. The more ways used to communicate a message, the more likely the message will be received correctly and by a broader audience.

A limited number of people will be official spokespersons, which will help to ensure that the messaging is constant. The Mayor will continue to be an official spokesperson for the RQM Council and in his/her absence, the official spokesperson shall be the Deputy Mayor. Additionally, the CAO will be an official spokesperson, and the Communications Officer may also provide information to the media.

It should be noted that no matter how effective the communications program is, not all people will want to receive information about their government. Also, it takes time to increase the public's level of knowledge and understanding of municipal affairs.

Communications messages and the means used to most effectively communicate with the Region of Queens Municipality's audiences may change over time; it is important to ensure that this strategy is reviewed and updated periodically (i.e.; updates may be made and circulated to Council and staff, as well as posted publically, as required. Full document reviews should be undertaken soon after a change in Council, as mandates are subject to change) to ensure that it remains reflective of the direction that the Municipality is moving, and also to ensure that the strategy remains a living document used by staff and Council.

Overall Communications Goal

For the Region of Queens Municipality to have an informed public, knowledgeable about the Region's plans, priorities, growth and progress.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

Objective – *To make RQM a key source of information for stakeholders seeking proactive information about growth, planning, and operations in the municipality .*

- Key stakeholders are informed about RQM's direction, and consider RQM their first and best source of information about developments and progress in the region. The RQM has an obligation to the public to keep them informed of the activities and undertakings.

Measures include:

- Increased website and social media site visits
- Increased readership of communiqués, *the Municipal Matters Newsletter* and updates
- Increased direct-to-influencer speaking platforms for Mayor and Councillors
- Increased positive media coverage
- Increased participation in public events

Objective – *To integrate communications within RQM and at Council towards a planned, proactive strategic model*

- Council members and Departmental leaders, think about the communications implications and opportunities when making key decisions and when planning
- Council members and Departmental leaders understand the value of communications, and actively seek out and communicate positive stories or potential issues

Measures include:

- Increased awareness and compliance with media relations and social media guidelines
- Minimize the exposure for negative media coverage by providing proactive accurate information

- No “surprises” – a well informed Staff and Council who are aware of the projects and actions of the organization

Objective – To augment the internal communications environment

- Members of Council receive news early in the process, through receiving copies of all information that will be disseminated to the public and media before the information is made public. This ensures that elected officials are aware, informed and are prepared in the event they receive questions from the public.

All employees receive news early in the process. By hearing news first, they feel engaged and understand their role in success of the Municipality.

- Measures include: Employees and Council have greater understanding and awareness of RQM plans and direction
- Increased employee engagement
- Increased employee satisfaction

Method: Align communications with management decision-making

How to: Communications is a key consideration of operations. Ongoing representation of communications issues at the council level ensures that the concerns and interests of all stakeholder groups are rooted into the organization’s way of doing business. As an integral part of every decision, communications issues are treated with the same level of priority as other business elements. The more sensitive and responsive an organization is to communication-based issues and challenges, the less likely it is to be in a constant position of "putting out fires"/reactive communications.

To implement this tactic, there should be a broad understanding of the RQM’s communications opportunities, and the senior team to ask, “Should communications be here?” whenever major decisions are being made. Key opportunities include: yearly budget planning, organizational business planning, project planning, etc.

Results: Communications Officer is able to input into strategy and business planning at a macro level

Method: Use proactive media relations

Objective: Provide key background information surrounding an issue to media proactively to ensure that accurate information is shared in a timely manner.

How to: Being proactive with media means initiating and responding to media interest promptly and honestly. Through the implementation of an issues management grid and the adoption of an issues action plan protocol, RQM can establish a more planned and proactive approach to communications surrounding issues.

Initiating media coverage when there is:

- A good news story about the organization to promote our vision, mission or plans
- Newsworthy information which, by virtue of being addressed through internal channels is now public knowledge
- Emergency and crisis situations
- Issues and events including negative ones, which are on the public radar, brewing on the government (Council) front or that will be of consequence to the way we do our business and offer our services.

Sample tools initiating media coverage surrounding an issue include:

- a) **Proactive statements/releases** – Similar to traditional media releases, when an issue arises that should be addressed proactively, one key tool is a statement issued to media. This should be provided to key media who are either covering a story, or from whom an inquiry has arisen.
- b) **Briefings with key reporters** – When appropriate, another key tool is a background briefing with one or two key reporters. This is a structured and well-messaged opportunity for the RQM to provide messaging and access to the media.

By anticipating the need for communication, we are in a better position to set the tone and make certain information in the media is accurate. In controversial or sensitive situations, a proactive stance demonstrates our commitment to keeping key publics informed about decisions that may affect them.

There are circumstances when it is not permitted by the MGA/advisable not to initiate media coverage. These include:

- Personnel matters
- During negotiations, when news and developments are confined to the negotiating table
- External or internal investigations of the organization, a staff member or someone else with connection to the organization
- Incidents under police investigation

In each of the above noted cases, it is best to be prepared with statements in case of requests. These statements should explain why we are unable to provide detail or additional information (as opposed to simply saying “no comment”).

Results: RQM is seen as a leader on key issues, rather than responding to negative coverage. RQM is seen as transparent as it provides information – even potentially negative information - proactively.

Method – Correct errors, misquotes and “bad press”

Objective: Create an opportunity and a practice whereby RQM’s Communications Officer correct misinformation as soon as possible and respond to negative media in a way that does not prolong a “bad news” story.

How to: Generally speaking, unless the factual error or misquote is serious (see below), the best policy is no response. Minor inaccuracies can easily occur, particularly when the information being relayed or interpreted is complex.

An error misquote is considered serious when it does the following:

- Jeopardizes the image or calls into question the integrity of the RQM
- Creates alarm and confusion for staff, stakeholders and the public
- Factually misrepresents the RQM

Appropriate responses might be:

- For simple factual errors and misquotes, ask the journalist, editor or producer to follow up with a correction, retraction, or clarification
- For widespread published errors that will be compounded over time, issue a press release
- If all else fails, lodge a formal complaint with the local press council (National News Media Council <http://mediacouncil.ca/>)

Ultimately, the actual practice of judging when to “let it go” (i.e. decide that the information is not worth challenging) or to correct misinformation lies with the Communications Officer for RQM, with the consent of the Mayor and CAO, who will be in the best position to develop the necessary relationship with the media.

Results: When misinformation is identified, RQM has recourse to correct it

Method – Maintain augmented and segmented stakeholders lists

Objective: Know your audience and create an engaged group of citizen-leaders.

Implementation: The RQM currently has a list of stakeholders with whom it shares information periodically. Some of this communication happens at the Mayor/CAO level, and in other cases,

departments may have specialized stakeholder lists for projects and special activities. A segmented and targeted contact database of key stakeholders could be developed to distribute correspondence, updates, and other materials to directly. Groupings to include:

- **Economic and business stakeholders** – Those who would be interested in budget/tax updates, etc.
- **Planning and development stakeholders** – The private development community who would be interested in updates
- **Community groups, tourism associations, and other organizations** – Those with a vested interest in RQM’s yearly events and planning.

Results: RQM has a list of key stakeholders at its fingertips for use in direct-to-stakeholder engagement.

Method – Establish a macro-agenda for communications

Objective: The CDC will create a simple, user-friendly yearly agenda for communications which identifies key moments and opportunities at a macro level. The items are populated by the Mayor and Communications Officer, as well as other members of the team; it focuses on events (positive and negative) on the horizon. This is an opportunity to create a visual roadmap for communications to use for communications activities throughout the year.

- The macro-calendar poster, will be a “year at a glance” document, with the draft calendar pre-circulated internally to ensure that nothing is missed. The final calendar will be shared with all inside the organization, including Council, and updated quarterly when Strategic Priorities are updated. The calendar is a natural guideline for ensuring communications is ongoing and well planned. For example, if in the calendar major construction or infrastructure development is identified for July, RQM communicators should seek opportunities in April/May to position the need and the opportunity for the project prior to trucks appearing on the road.

Method – Implement and communicate augmented media relations protocol

Objective: Maintain the established protocol for engagement with the media supports proactive and engaged media relations activities.

Implementation: The Mayor, CAO and Deputy Mayor serve as official spokespersons for RQM. The Communications Officer serves as the conduit through which media relations activities flow (i.e. inbound calls and inquiries flow through their office, not necessarily expecting them to serve as spokesperson, but rather, as facilitator for the media relations). While there is value in ensuring that

the municipality's Communications Officer is engaged and informed about all media relations, in today's media environment, it is also essential that those within the RQM can work in cooperation with the spokespersons to respond to media requests. The result is an organization that is transparent and accountable, while still maintaining a consistent message.

The Communications Officer, being the facilitator for media enquiries in addition to other work within the RQM, has a protocol and standard of service in place for responding to enquiries. While some enquiries from the media are deadline sensitive, not all enquiries necessitate immediate response. The service standard reflect our desire to be responsive and have a positive cooperative relationship with the media, while also recognizing that the communications aspects are one facet of the CDC's position.

In general, media inquiries are received by the RQM (staff and management) in two ways:

- A reporter calls the Mayor, CAO or CDC and asks for comment, or to arrange an interview with the appropriate spokesperson
- A reporter calls an employee or Director/Manager directly and asks for an interview or comment

Regardless of how the media call is received, there are a few steps to take to ensure that the interview is successful, and the reporter receives the information that they need:

1. **Ask the reporter for a few details about the request**
 - a. What information do you need?
 - b. What is the story about?
 - c. When will the story air/be published
 - d. Who else are you talking to about this story?
2. **Set a time for the interview.** It is preferable to take some time to gather information rather than doing an interview "on the spot".
3. **Provide the CAO, Mayor with an overview of the request.** They have information that relates to the issue, or are able to add insight into issues currently in the media that might have inspired this interview request.
4. **Review the media coverage when it airs/appears to ensure that there are no factual errors.** If there is an error in the coverage, make note of it, the air or publication date/time, and the correct information. If necessary, call the reporter and provide the correct information.

OTHER KEY POINTS:

- **In the event the request is received by someone other than the Communications Officer, do not accept an interview if you are not a designated spokesperson.** Instead, take the reporter's information and provide it to the Communications Officer who will supply the appropriate spokesperson.
- **Return telephone calls promptly.** Journalists are under extremely tight deadlines, their calls within the hour. Work within the deadlines they provide to coordinate schedules to ensure a spokesperson is able to speak with them. In the event of a tight deadline, if no spokesperson is available, advise the journalist, and provide a fact sheet, or an approved statement.

After Hours Media Requests. The Communications Officer responds to media inquiries during regular hours of operation: Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Summer hours in July and August are 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.). After-hours service for media enquiries is provided when the Region of Queens Municipality deems the request is of an urgent, operational nature. Other inquiries will be addressed during regular business hours.

Media requests from accredited media (representatives of a recognized media organization) are given priority. Other media/media students: Please note that while the Region of Queens Municipality will make every effort to accommodate non-accredited requests, delays in responding may occur.

Results: The RQM has a broader voice in the media, and an established media protocol and service standard.

AUDIENCES

“Who do we need to talk to, and what do they want to know?”

Knowing who are the target audiences or stakeholders is an important part of any communications plan. With every planned communication, the municipality must think about to whom it should flow, and how its messages will be received, while ensuring that they are relevant and impactful. The additional challenge is to ensure that those responsible for delivering the information are knowledgeable and well prepared to transfer that information easily.

The internal audience is made up of Council (the Mayor and Councillors), the CAO, senior management and all employees, and any members of agencies, boards, committees and

commissions. It is this internal audience that has to first be engaged in the communications strategy and vision. It is important that they understand the strategy so they can act on it, help build understanding and relationships, and improve the image and reputation of RQM. They are the municipality's voice and face in the community.

The external audience includes the residents of RQM, other government organizations, and the media. The Municipality has a responsibility to keep people informed and engaged on issues that affect the quality and pace of their lives. Businesses have a similar concern, wanting to have the assurance that their interests are being considered in the decision-making process. Other external audiences that should not be ignored are online users, social and community groups, youth, visitors, and the media. Tools like the website, Facebook pages, newsletters and other direct communication help these audiences get a better sense of the Region and its services and plans.

MESSAGES AND NARRATIVE

A narrative is the overarching story that communicates a single powerful idea that transforms and inspires the target audience to care, own and take action. The purpose served by short and simple narrative messages is to re-establish, quickly and effectively, an organization's goals and objectives, its vision, mission and track record, and the reasons that motivate it to act in a particular sector of activity.

While the spokesperson has the task of conveying specific messages about the issue he/she is addressing, he/she must at the same time send out a clear organizational message: who we are, what we do, and why we do what we do.

The RQM spokesperson must always attempt to link any communications back to the organization's vision of where the Region is going. RQM's vision and priorities are a process, a roadmap of how the municipality will grow, evolve and prosper. It is essential that all who are responsible for knowing about this process completely understand it and are engaged. It is not enough to tell them; they must understand and be able to carry forth the messages. Likewise, those who are on the receiving end of any information must understand that, whatever initiative or issue that is being discussed, it must be linked back to the longer-term vision, priorities and plan to get to achieve the priorities set by Council. Each message delivered must link to the vision and priorities of RQM, as long as the vision and priorities are clearly articulated. As always, proof points will fill in to substantiate the point being made, and the stories being told.

As a result of a workshop and several strategic planning sessions, combined with feedback heard from constituents during the 2016 municipal election campaign, the following vision, goals and strategic priorities have been developed that will guide the Region of Queens in the foreseeable future.

Developed during the 2009 Municipal Planning Strategy consultations, the vision statement establishes a general development framework upon which are built a series of land use priorities that

Council and the public deem important to the future growth of communities within the Region of Queens Municipality over ten to fifteen years. With updates to the MPS, this vision may change to reflect the changes and priority areas in the community.

VISION

The Region of Queens Municipality will be a place where communities respect the natural environment, possess strong character, enjoy access to a variety of recreational opportunities and continue to develop an economy that builds on the assets of the Region as a whole.

GOALS 2017-2018:

1. Revitalization of downtown Liverpool;
2. Provision of municipal infrastructure that improves lifestyle; And,
3. Maintaining and developing quality infrastructure

ADMINISTRATIVE GOALS 2016 – 2020

1. Organizational Capacity
2. Empowered Council
3. Clear public information and policy
4. Focussed and accountable performance

THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF COUNCIL were developed and adopted in January, 2017, and are:

1. Growing the Economy and Population
2. Delivering Desirable Municipal Services
3. Governing to Best Municipal Practices

DELIVERY OF MESSAGES

A number of communication tools will be used to deliver messages to the appropriate audience. Among those will be newspaper, radio, Municipal Matters Newsletter, the RQM website, the RQM and Queens Place Emera Centre Facebook and Twitter pages, RQM Instagram page, public speaking opportunities, letter to the editor, and others that arise. It is most important to deliver timely messages that can be clearly understood by everyone and provide useful information.

To ensure that messages are consistent and not coming from many directions, there will be a limited number of people who will be the spokesperson for the RQM. The Mayor, in his elected position, will continue in this role as has been the standard since the 2001 strategy was developed, and in his/her absence, the Deputy Mayor shall be the spokesperson. Additionally, the CAO will be an official spokesperson speaking on the operations and undertakings of the Municipality, as designated by the Mayor.

This is not to prevent staff from providing technical and other relevant information. However, the Mayor will be the official spokesperson and will speak as the official “voice” of the RQM, and in his/her absence the Deputy Mayor shall carry out this role. A coordinated effort from Council and staff is important.

The Communications Officer has been assigned the role of Communications Lead and will be responsible for managing the tasks and day to day preparation of the planned communications issued by the RQM. The Communications Officer is also the first point of contact for media enquiries.

COMMUNICATIONS ROLES OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Often, members of Council are contacted by members of the public or the media seeking information, expressing a concern, or enquiring about a rumor or misinformation. While Council members are not official spokespersons of the RQM, they may respond to these types of questions. An elected official may express their personal opinion, but may not speak on behalf of Council. When questions/concerns are made by the public, the Council Member should get the basic information, then pass this on to the CAO, or have the person contact the appropriate staff member directly. The standard service response time for staff in responding to enquiries made by the public is within 24 hours, or on the first working day following a holiday or weekend, if at all possible. When answering constituent requests, Councillors should be specific in what the Council Member will do,(i.e., promise a timely response, advise the CAO, etc.), but should avoid committing to “fix” the issue. Council Members are encouraged to coordinate with the CAO and Communications Officer before responding directly to complaints to ensure a united response and to prevent overlapping efforts in the event another department is currently responding or has already responded.

With regard to discussions with the media, Council members are to keep in mind that the Mayor and CAO are the official spokespersons for the media. If a Council member wishes to provide their personal opinion, it is advisable that they are clear in stating that it is their own opinion, and not that of Council. Council members shall not discuss or go “off the record” with the media regarding confidential or privileged information pertaining to in-camera or closed sessions, attorney-client privileged information including personnel, litigation, contract negotiation, or real property negotiations.

To enhance Council Member’s ability to communicate with staff and the public, municipally purchased tablet computers, or in some cases, a cell phone will be provided. When individual Council members have completed their term of office, the communication devices must be returned to the RQM. Members of Council have been provided a municipal email address to use for correspondence pertaining to the work of Council, and their role as elected officials. These email addresses are posted on the RQM website, in municipal newsletters, on Councillor business cards and given out by municipal staff as a means for the public to contact their elected officials.

COMMUNICATIONS REGARDING EMERGENCY SERVICES AND AT TIMES OF EMERGENCY

As part of the work of communications for the Region of Queens, the Communications Officer will share information about the actions of Council, the work of Region Staff, the progression of Council's Strategic Priorities, and celebrate the community and the accomplishments of its citizens, businesses and community groups. In addition to the daily work of ensuring the internal and external audiences are informed about these areas, there is other specialized communications work that is undertaken from time to time, as needed. The Communications Officer works closely with the EMO Coordinator and with Fire Chiefs of the Regions 5 fire departments as well as with the first responders to assist in their communications needs. Descriptions follow for these two communications considerations.

Fire Communications

The Communications Officer will work with the local fire departments to share information about fire safety, fundraising efforts, volunteer recruitment, as well as information on the work of the departments. Information may be shared on the website and social media pages, as well as via other means (ie; unpaid through public service announcements or paid advertising in local newspapers, radio stations and other opportunities as they arise). This messaging is important to convey in the interest of public safety, and to aid fire departments in their growth and development.

EMO Communications

Throughout the year, the Communications Officer works with the Emergency Management Coordinator to ensure that the public has access to information about safety (ie; provision of information on the RQM website in the EMO tab that pertains to emergency preparedness), and will also maintain a database online of river water levels and rainfall for the Medway River watershed.

During an emergency or disaster requiring EMO involvement, the Communications Officer will serve as a member of the Emergency Operations Centre team, providing communications updates regarding situational status to the public, the media and some agencies, as directed by the Emergency Management Coordinator or Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator and the CAO. Information flowing outward from the Emergency Communications Centre will be through direct contact with the media, as well as information posted on the Region of Queens website (on the Latest News Page and the EMO Current and Developing Situations page) as well as on social media (RQM Facebook page, RQM Twitter feed). The tone of the communications will be professional and calm, and the content will reflect the current situation, expectations of future developments, and advice on public safety. The public will be advised of locations of Comfort Centres, Warming Centre or evacuations as needed. Comfort and/or Warming Centres will open at the discretion, and under the advisement, of the Emergency Management Coordinator.

When there is an activation of the EMO Emergency Centre, or if the Emergency Management Coordinator requires information sent to the public, members of Council and RQM staff will

receive updates of the situation as well. To ensure that consistent and clear messaging is being provided to the public, Council and staff are advised to share the information provided to them, and to forward any requests for information from the public or media to the Communications Officer in his/her role with the Emergency Management Centre. This will reduce misinformation being shared or circulated.

Excerpts from the Region of Queens EMO Communications Plan follow.

Region of Queens Municipality EMO COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The ability to communicate during an emergency or disaster is possibly the single most important factor that contributes to the success or failure of emergency responses. Without effective communications, direction, coordination and control will not exist.

The aim of the Region of Queens Municipality's Communications Plan is to provide a communications resource and infrastructure that enables those dealing with an emergency to communicate with municipal departments, government and external voluntary agencies to support their function in responding to an emergency.

The scope of this communications plan will be to provide a plan for the following components:

- a. emergency alerting system
- b. communication links to various levels of government
- c. coordinated and controlled operations
- d. human and material resources inventory

ALERTING PROCEDURE

1. On receipt of a warning of a real or potential emergency or disaster, the police department will contact the Emergency Management Coordinator or Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.
2. On receipt of the warning from the police department, the Emergency Management Coordinator or Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator will activate the Emergency Operations emergency alerting system in whole or in part. If the Emergency Management Coordinator or Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator cannot be immediately contacted, then the Staff Sergeant or his designate shall be authorized to activate the emergency alerting system.
3. On receipt of the warning, it is the responsibility of all Emergency Operations Coordinators and volunteer organizations to activate their respective emergency alerting systems.

COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Immediately on arrival at the Emergency Operations Centre, the members of the Emergency Operations Centre will establish telecommunications via telephone with their respective agencies or organizations.
2. The Emergency Communications Coordinator will establish and maintain radio communications with the responding agencies or organizations and, if required, with the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Organization.
3. The Emergency Communications Coordinator will coordinate the provision of radio operators and equipment to furnish telecommunications to emergency agencies and organizations.
4. The Emergency Communications Coordinator will establish and supervise the Message Control Centre. All messages are to be logged and copies retained.
5. All IN and OUT radio messages are to be directed through the Message Control Centre.
6. All members of the Emergency Operations Centre and their respective operations are to maintain a log of all actions taken and significant actions not taken.

Emergency Operations Centre

Direction, coordination and control of all emergency operations will be conducted from the primary Emergency Operations Centre (Municipal Office).

Within the Emergency Operations Centre, provision is made for the Emergency Operations Centre Operations Committee.

Each of these officials will have access to the telephone system and can also send and receive messages via the Message Control Centre.

The Message Control Centre ensures that outgoing messages are properly routed and that incoming messages are routed to the correct officials.

The Communications Centre houses three (3) separate radio communication networks. Emergency Management TMR and VHF systems provide emergency command channels and liaison channels.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY: Social Media Strategy

REGION OF QUEENS MUNICIPALITY

REGION OF QUEENS MUNICIPALITY - SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines guidelines regarding social media goals and objectives, specific online target audiences, how to best create and leverage content, and how to manage an online social community.

REGION OF QUEENS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

All communications, including RQM social and broader online presence, should further the Strategic Priorities of the Municipality, which are:

- ***Growing the Economy and Population***
- ***Delivering Desirable Municipal Services***
- ***Governing to Best Municipal Practices***

With these broad objectives in mind, the business objective as it pertains to online communications should demonstrate that the RQM is a community that is addressing its challenges head-on and reinforce that the Council and staff are an integrated group dedicated to working with the community for the betterment of the region.

Through compelling online chronicling and actions, we will build the audience and activate supporters for the RQM.

By chronicling, we mean sharing good news stories and success, accomplishments, and when the Region overcomes obstacles.

By actions, we refer to acknowledging that the social presence will be viewed as a vehicle to generate conversation with citizens and stakeholders, and a way to engage broad community participation.

Online Communications Goals and Objectives

The goal of the RQM social presence is ensure that the public has information to reinforce the Region's overall vibrancy and development. This aligns directly to the broad communications objective of growing the economy and population of the Region.

Additionally, an engaged and active social presence will leverage the voices of Councillors and staff members who regularly participate in social conversation. These voices represent constituents, and while they may have particular priorities that may not always align with the Region as a

whole, they can reinforce important successes and add a layer of credibility to the Municipality with stakeholders and the public.

Finally, an active social presence can also impact other regional goals outside of the Strategic Priorities. Specifically, it's a good vehicle to reinforce tourism goals and objectives, especially as tourism is a primary industry within the Region.

AUDIENCES

The Region of Queens has many audiences to consider when creating social content and managing its online community.

1. Business and investors

One of our most important targets is the business community within the Region, across Nova Scotia, and ultimately, potential investors from outside the province as well. It is critical that should businesses be interested or investigating the area as a business location, they see an active Municipal government that's working together in the best interest of the community, and a dynamic, lively public community.

2. Constituents

A key primary audience to consider is the citizens of the Region of Queens. Councillors must account to those who elected them (constituency-based support) while considering what is in the best interest of the "greater good". As potential supporters of the efforts of Council and Administration, businesses and community groups are motivated in seeing their municipal government is working together to better their community.

3. Visitors and Potential Visitors

Showcasing the assets of our community to those who are visiting the RQM or may be planning a visit to the area, is an important external audience to consider. Visitors often check websites and social media pages of areas they are interested in, and to have compelling information that is a mix of events, business promotion, and services provided by the Municipality can lead them to plan a trip to the area. Visitors may become future residents, and it is important that they can see that the community is multi-faceted with year round, diverse activities.

4. Government, media and other stakeholders

It's useful to consider government and media as external stakeholders, both from a partnership perspective and as a potential distributor of information and stories online. Good news stories from the Region should be shared across the province to demonstrate the leadership role the Region is taking from a business development perspective. Similarly, sharing stories with local and regional media via online platforms will be an important addition to traditional media outreach to increase reach and impact.

CHANNEL CONSIDERATIONS

At this point, the RQM uses traditional methods to externally communicate progress to audience groups, though a website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages are also maintained.

As new social media channels become commonplace, the Communications Officer will access and use channels that will reach the majority of the RQM's audiences.

Current channels

- **Website**

The website is one of the Region's primary communications vehicles, and to fully support a social presence and traditional communications tactics, a reorganization of the website has been undertaken and is ongoing.

- **Facebook**

From a content perspective, the Facebook pages are well maintained and active with content posted frequently, incorporating pictures and video where possible. A Facebook page for the Region of Queens Municipality, Queens Place Emera Centre and the Town Hall Arts and Cultural Centre are maintained.

- **Twitter**

Nova Scotia has an incredibly active Twitter community. Nova Scotians are highly engaged on this particular platform, and journalists, bloggers, politicians and the community are all regularly participating in conversations online. During the summer of 2015, the Region activated a Twitter account. In late winter, 2016, Queens Place Emera Centre activated a Twitter account. As this is a relatively new platform for the Municipality, a protocol for use was developed and is included in this document, as follows.

Purpose: The purpose of maintaining a Twitter profile is to connect with target audiences, drive traffic to the website and Facebook page, and further leverage the organizations' online storytelling reach.

Administrators of the Twitter accounts: In the interest of ensuring that the presence on Twitter can be maintained as needed and frequently, more than one person must be responsible for the Twitter accounts. The Communications Officer in her role with Communications for the Municipality must have access to the accounts via being advised of account name, user name and password for both the Region of Queens Municipality and the Queens Place Emera Centre Twitter pages.

Administrators for the Twitter page for the Region of Queens Municipality are:

- Heather Cook, Community Development Coordinator
- Dana Henley, Secretary, Recreation and Community Facilities and Economic Development

- Richard Lane, Economic Development Officer

Administrators for the Twitter page for Queens Place Emera Centre are:

- Steve Burns, Manager of Events, Promotions and Sponsorships
- Heather Cook, Community Development Coordinator
- Meaghan Roberts, Director of Recreation and Healthy Communities

Content:

As with the Facebook pages, the expectation is that the content on both Twitter pages be posted frequently (ie; at least several times a week), and will be primarily promotional in nature – highlighting positive things taking place at Queens Place Emera Centre and in the Region of Queens Municipality. The key difference between the two accounts is that the Queens Place Emera Centre account will be focused on events and activities held at Queens Place Emera Centre, or that the Centre is directly involved in. These events and activities may include the events taking place at the Centre organized by user groups or renters of the facility, as well as those organized by the staff of Queens Place Emera Centre and the Region of Queens Municipality. The Region of Queens Municipality will promote the activities undertaken by the Municipality, cross promote some Queens Place Emera Centre activities as well, and will feature posts about things that make the community great, including volunteers, community festivals, and other events and activities.

Tone and style:

A clear tone and style to any online content is critical to ensure that the RQM can remain strategic, consistent and confident in their online presence. To help develop style and tone, those writing should consider the personality of an employee you'd want to represent the RQM -- someone community-minded, enthusiastic and friendly, as well as forward-thinking and open to new ideas.

Interactions online:

At the present time, Twitter will be used by the Region of Queens Municipality and Queens Place Emera Centre as a method to spread information in an outward fashion. Conversations will not be engaged in with followers. If there is a retweet or response to a post that is negative, do not engage with the person who tweeted it. Responding to negative posts simply prolongs the negative exposure.

In the summer of 2017, an Instagram account was activated and trialed by summer staff. While it is slowly growing followers, it is giving staff an opportunity to feature photographs of the community that show the beauty, diversity and unique features of our community. Instagram is a very visual social media channel, and is a good means to showcase the picturesque community, and the activities, events and festivals that take place here.

Secondary channels

- **Councillors active on social media**

The Region has a great opportunity to leverage its highly engaged Councillors via social media, and reach greater numbers of constituents and other target audiences. However, both parties must ensure that any material presented online reflects a Council that is working to improve the community.

Specifically:

- Posts from Councillors that highlight events, community groups or other non-political issues should be shared and leveraged by the RQM.
- Councillors should not post on behalf of the Region. As a result of their elected position, the opinions that Councillors post on their social media accounts is perceived by the public and in the eyes of the law as being the opinion of the RQM. While Councillors may have opinions on issues that are not yet resolved, care should be used when posting on social channels as those opinions and statements are perceived as being that of the RQM, and may have legal ramifications or cause concern among residents.
- Both the Councillor and Region should post regarding successes to demonstrate both the unified perspective, and the Councillors specific perspective. For example, if a new policy is implemented that was brought forward by a particular Councillor, the Councillor can post that this is a project that he or she was excited to lead or support, and is proud of the complete Council for the work they've accomplished.

Content Strategy ... KEEP IT INTERESTING, TIMELY AND OF USE TO THE AUDIENCE

The kind of content the RQM creates is the most important thing to consider with social strategy. If the RQM ensures that the content it produces or shares is interesting to its audiences, they will be more apt to trust the organization, share your story and information, and engage with you online.

This document outlines several things to bear in mind when creating content that works:

- Content themes
- Editorial calendar
- Style and tone

Broadly, there are two types of social content the Region should develop. By using both Stock and Flow content, the content will be diverse, interesting and tell the story of the community.

- **Stock Content**

Stock content is defined as durable, long-term content that serves your audience and mission and will be the same in months as it is today. These are stories about the Region's history and the Municipal Council's mandate, local regional statistics that may be of interest, as well as frequently asked questions and business information. This type of content is found online via search and is the foundation of your online reputation. Stock content is contained in web pages, but also pointed to in social media posts and updates.

- **Flow Content**

Flow content is curated content, and is the daily feed of posts and updates that will keep your audience engaged and interested. This is not necessarily content you create (but it often is). Rather, this is content that links to other areas of the web that support your overall story. Flow content is reactive, can be completely spontaneous and could include content like answering questions from constituents, sharing events and community initiatives, or relevant newsworthy information. An important part of flow content to consider is leveraging other content that is found online via your social channels. The sharing of other content (e.g. linking to an event's webpage or reposting their post about an event) is an easy and efficient way for social profiles to be maintained and remain active.

Themes

Consciously developing key storylines through ongoing communications can act like glue, sticking your audiences to your website, social media accounts, blogs or other communications. The overarching themes align with your narrative pillars:

- Growing the economy and Population
- Delivering Desirable Municipal Services
- Governing to Best Municipal Practices

Content that is created should align with each theme, to ensure that the complete Region of Queens story is being told.

Editorial Calendar

An editorial calendar has been a trick of the publishing trade for centuries to help newspapers keep up with their publishing cycle. It is a simple and easy way to schedule who's responsible for writing what and to keep an eye on upcoming important events or programs to use in content.

For online content, an editorial calendar maps the creation of stock content. Specifically, it outlines:

- Dates for creating and publishing
- The topic of the post
- If approval is needed and received
- How many visits/shares

Style and Tone

A clear tone and style to any online content is critical to ensure that the RQM can remain strategic, consistent and confident in their online presence. To help develop style and tone, those writing should consider the personality of an employee you'd want to represent the RQM -- someone community-minded, enthusiastic and friendly, as well as forward-thinking and open to new ideas.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

It is critical to note that participating in online communications is a method to genuinely connect with constituents, other Nova Scotians and municipalities, and potential visitors and businesses. The Region of Queens should strive to create an environment where people feel they can express themselves, and then provide opportunities and encouragement to do so. In any social environment, the Municipality can reach out to their audiences and really listen and engage with them, which will ultimately give them extra value, and make their experience with you worth telling others about.

In spring of 2017, Operational Policy 83: Social Media Policy was developed (see Appendices section) to guide staff and Council in the use of social media. The Policy has two main purposes, which are to promote municipal transparency and accountability to the public and to provide staff and Council with clarity with regard to their roles and interactions on social media.

On occasion, there are posts made, either on the RQM pages or on personal or business pages that criticize the actions or decisions of the RQM. Policy 83 provides advice on management of those posts, as well. It is important for the Communications? To work cooperatively with the CAO in determining the response to those concerns expressed by external audiences, and to use caution when making changes in direction based on the opinions expressed on social media. The opinion of few is not always the opinion of the larger population, or may be made without access to all the information.

To be successful online, you must be responsive, courteous and authentic. For the RQM, this means that questions or concerns from the public must be dealt with in a timely, respectful way.

APPENDICIES SECTION

REGION OF QUEENS MUNICIPALITY

**Operational Policy No. 83
Social Media Policy**

General Statement of Policy

It shall be the policy of the Region of Queens Municipality ("Municipality") to provide clarity and direction respecting the use of social media for employees, volunteers and elected officials.

Policy Objectives

1. To establish a policy that promotes municipal transparency and accountability to the public; and,
2. Provides clarity to employees, volunteers and elected officials with respect to their role representing the Municipality, and their interactions and representations on social media.

Policy Directions

Municipality's Social Media Accounts and Postings

1. The creation and administration of social media sites, including but not limited to, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, representing the Municipality must be authorized in advance by the Chief Administrative Officer ("CAO").
2. Operation and administration of the Municipality's social media accounts and postings will be delegated by the CAO to the Communications Officer outlined in the Communications Strategy. Only persons authorized per the Communications Strategy shall post on behalf of the Municipality on any social media medium. Further, only content approved by the official spokesperson or their delegate shall be posted on behalf of the Municipality.
3. When the Municipality uses a social media site which allows public comments and posts, the following content will not be permitted:
 - Comments/posts not related to a posted article/topic/information;
 - Business solicitation;
 - Profane or inappropriate language;
 - Content considered to be defamatory, disparaging, disrespectful or insulting to individuals, including municipal staff or representatives;

- Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation or any other prohibited ground of discrimination under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*;
- Sexual content or links to sexual content;
- Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity; and
- Any content deemed inappropriate by the Municipality.

The Municipality reserves the right to monitor its social media sites and remove any content. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, if the Municipality finds any content on its social media site that offends section 3 herein, it will remove the content, or contact the appropriate administrator or network and request the content be removed.

4. User comments and messages posted to official social networking sites are considered transitory records and will not be kept as a permanent record by the Municipality.

Use of any Social Media

5. Social Media sites are public, regardless of the privacy settings. As such, any postings (content, statements, pictures or comments, etc.) by an employee, volunteer or elected official, regardless of whether posted on Municipality sites or otherwise, could negatively impact the Municipality, its reputation, workplace, other employees, partners/vendors or its customers/clients.

Employees, volunteers and elected officials are required to comply with the following guidelines when making posts or comments on **any** social media site, regardless of whether their social media interactions are during or outside of work hours:

- a. Conduct and represent themselves professionally;
- b. Posts, pictures, comments or any content involving the following will not be tolerated:
 - i. Proprietary and confidential municipal information, including internal information and activities, confidential information of municipal employees, businesses partners, customers or clients;
 - ii. Inappropriate content, including harassing, bullying, intimidating and discriminatory content or sexual innuendos regarding employees, management, volunteers, Council members or other elected officials, customers/ clients, corresponding organizations or vendors; and

- iii. Defamatory, derogatory or disparaging statements regarding the Municipality its employees, management, volunteers, Council members or other elected officials, customers/clients, corresponding organizations, or vendors.
 - c. No employee, volunteer or Council member shall purport to speak or post on behalf of the Municipality, unless they have received the authorization to do so, as outlined in this policy and the Communication Strategy (as amended from time to time).
 - d. Unless acting as the official or authorized spokesperson, the comments or postings of staff or elected officials do not represent the Municipality; however, all staff, volunteers and elected officials shall comply with this policy.
6. The use of social media in the workplace must not have a negative impact on that employee's productivity or efficiency, or the productivity or efficiency of others in the workplace.
7. Any communications sent over the Municipality's networks and computers are the Municipality's records. At any time without prior notice, the Municipality reserves the right to examine and analyze email, personal file directories, internet access logs, and any other information stored on the Municipalities computers. Such examinations support external and internal investigations, assure compliance with various policies, and assist in the management of information systems. Employees, volunteers and elected officials should have no expectation of privacy associated with the information they store in or send through these systems, whether encrypted or not. Employees, volunteers or elected officials using the Municipality's information systems and/or Internet access should realize that their communications are not automatically protected from viewing by third parties. Do not sent information over the Internet or internally that is considered sensitive or private without encrypting the message.
8. The Municipality will adhere to all applicable legislation regarding privacy and freedom of information, including but not limited to, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. In addition, the Municipality's records may be subject to subpoena by a court of competent jurisdiction. As such, employees, volunteers and elected officials should be aware that personal and other information contained in electronic correspondence (or printed versions thereof) which are directed to the Municipality or other information contained on the Municipality's networks and computers may be required to be disclosed under legislation or pursuant to a subpoena from a court of competent jurisdiction. The anonymity or confidentiality of the sender or author of any information contained within the correspondence or otherwise contained on the Municipality's networks and computers cannot be presumed or relied upon.

Failure to Abide by Policy

9. Any employee who fails to follow this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Any volunteer who fails to follow this policy, may face a restriction or removal from volunteer roles, activities or opportunities.

Council members who fail to follow this this policy may be subject to corrective action by Council in accordance with Policy 74 – Code of Conduct for members of Council and Public Committee Members.

Approved by Council: June 13, 2017

POLICY NUMBER – 24

Page 1 of 1

Policy Subject / Title – Use of Recording Devices

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY:

- 24.1 It is the Policy of the Region of Queens Municipality to have a series of guidelines for the use of recording devices during committee meetings of council and any council procedure in a public forum.

DEFINITIONS:

- 24.2 *Audio Recording* means: The use of a device that records the audio only.
- 24.3 *Video Recording* means: The use of a device that records the video and audio of a proceeding.

POLICY PROCEDURE:

- 24.4 The use of video recording devices shall not be permitted during any committee meetings of council or any council procedure in a public forum without the consent of council.
- 24.5 The use of audio recording devices during committee meetings of council shall be permitted.
- 24.6 When an audio recording device is to be used during any committee meeting, council meeting or public hearing in a public forum, (including by the media) other than the Region's recording system used by staff for purposes of minute preparation, the Mayor or Chair of the meeting shall be informed prior to the opening of the meeting of any audio recordings to be made at the said public session. The Mayor or Chair shall announce that such procedure is taking place.
- 24.7 Nothing in this policy shall preclude the media from using video or audio recording devices for interviews during any recess on public meeting proceedings.

Approved by Council: August 16, 2004

POLICY NUMBER – 51

Page 1 of 1

Policy Subject / Title – Release of Information to the Public

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

51.01 The Region of Queens Municipality wishes to establish a policy and procedure for the release of information contained in meeting packages to the public, including the media. As such, the following procedures adopted by Council shall be adhered to balancing the public's access to information and every citizen's right to be afforded confidentiality.

51.02 For the purposes of this policy, "Responsible Officer" means the Chief Administrative Officer or his/her designate.

POLICY PROCEDURE:

51.03 No part of any committee meeting package shall be released to the public until such time as the Responsible Officer has reviewed the material proposed to be released and he/she is satisfied that the information is allowed to be released pursuant to Section 20 of the *Municipal Government Act*, concerning Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP).

51.04 Verbal requests may be accepted by the Responsible Officer for information that is determined by the Responsible Officer to be background information, staff reports or a matter of public record and able to be released under FOIPOP regulations.

51.05 Prior to releasing correspondence or any information from external sources to the public, consideration shall be given to FOIPOP guidelines.

51.06 Any request for information contained in committee packages that is not considered background information must be received in writing by the Responsible Officer. After receiving the request, the information requested or portions of it, may be released to the applicant or denied within thirty (30) days provided all of the regulations concerning FOIPOP have been adhered to.

Approved by Council: March 20, 2000