

COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Policy Statement

The Town of Slave Lake is committed to providing residents, businesses and visitors with timely, clear and accurate information about the Town's programs, services, events, policies and emergency situations through proactive communications. The Town will use a variety of communications methods to reach and engage its diverse target audiences.

Policy Objective

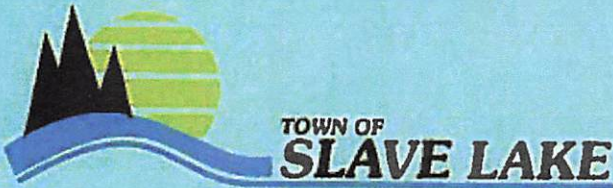
The purpose of the Communications Policy is to outline key philosophies and practices for communications undertaken by the Mayor, Council and administration, and to ensure that communications are clear and coordinated.

Guiding Principles

1. **Transparency:** to present the Town in an open, realistic and fair manner
2. **Resident focus:** to offer public service through information, promotion and engagement
3. **Proactive:** to identify emerging topics and issues and aim to provide timely information
4. **Quality:** to offer information and knowledge that is respectful, accurate and professional
5. **Legislative:** to adhere to applicable local, provincial and federal laws around privacy, storage and disposition

Responsibilities

1. **Official spokespersons**
 - a. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council. The CAO is the official spokesperson for Administration. They are supported in the delivery of the communications by the Town staff.
 - b. Council may determine that the Mayor is the only spokesperson for the Town on certain issues. Where Council has so determined, no Councillor may speak on that issue without Council approval.
 - c. The Mayor may designate another elected official to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue. When so designated, the elected official will represent official Council policies or positions.
 - d. Directors may speak on specific topics or issues that pertain to their department, subject to approval by the CAO.
 - e. Staff may respond to inquiries about programs and services, from the public. Where appropriate, specific staff may be designated to speak in an official capacity about issues or subjects for which they have responsibility or expertise.



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2. Communications Support

- a. A Communications Coordinator will be responsible for managing and coordinating the overall communications presence to ensure quality, consistency and timely response and for maintaining and updating the Town Communications Strategy and Town Identity Package.
- b. The Communications Coordinator will provide support to Council and administration in development and implementation of communications.
- c. The Communications Coordinator will provide updates to Council and staff on changing communications.
- d. Additional outside support may be secured for targeted communications efforts.
- e. In the absence of the Communications Coordinator, an alternative staff member will be designated to update the Town of Slave Lake Website, Social Media outlets, and Mobile Application in cases of emergencies.

3. Administration

- a. Departments, with the assistance of the Communications Coordinator, are responsible for identifying annual communications needs and creating approved content for their respective services and programs.
- b. Staff will adhere to the Communications Strategy and will ensure communications materials are consistent with the Town Identity Package.

4. Emergencies

- a. The communications plan will include strategies to raise awareness amongst residents of emergency procedures.
- b. In the event of a crisis or emergency, communications procedures as outlined in the Town Emergency Communications Plan will be followed.

Signature *Ben V...*

Date: *June 13, 2016*



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Procedures

- 1. Official source of information**
 - a. Council will adopt a Communications Strategy and will review and update the strategy as needed.
 - b. The Town will publish brochures, advertisements and informational materials about Town departments and services, and Council meetings.
 - c. The Town will maintain an online presence through its website, mobile application, and Facebook pages.
- 2. Consistent identity**
 - a. The Mayor and Council will provide leadership in establishing priorities for the Town of Slave Lake. These priorities will be reflected in Town communications.
 - b. The Town will present a consistent identity in its communications and will adhere to the Town Identity Package in its communication materials.
 - c. The Town Identity Package (TIP) outlines key visual and verbal elements of the Town's communications. The TIP will be updated as needed to reflect emerging trends and needs.
- 3. Approvals**
 - a. CAO approval of content must be obtained for media releases and information about topics that are deemed sensitive by the CAO, Communications Coordinator or Department Managers. The sensitivity of topics can vary based on the context and current local issues.
 - b. Director approval must be obtained for department-specific content. Directors may delegate content information approval to program staff.
- 4. Media Interviews**
 - a. The Communications Coordinator will be informed of all external media requests.
- 5. Use of Social Media**
 - a. The Communications Coordinator will monitor the Town's social media sites and respond in a timely manner to comments and questions. The Communications Coordinator will be responsible for posts and responses.
 - b. The Town of Slave Lake will remove any responses that are commercial offers, links to websites that are not within the stated purpose of the Town's social media account, illegal, and objectionable messages. Objectionable messages include, but are not limited to, messages that are a personal attack, cultural or racial slurs, lewd or obscene comments.
 - c. Council and staff are encouraged to promote the Town's social media content through personal social media.
 - d. Staff shall not respond to questions about Town programs, services, events, policies, and emergency situations on personal social media accounts. Responses shall come from the Town of Slave Lake social media account.
- 6. Social Media Response Times**



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- a. Moderating and posting comments to the Town of Slave Lake Facebook Page, and fielding questions from the Town of Slave Lake website is to occur during normal business hours, Monday to Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.
- b. Responses will be given to comments and questions, no later than 4:30PM the next business day.

7. Media relations

- a. The Town recognizes the important role of media, particularly the local newspaper and radio station, in sharing information about the Town and its initiatives and programs, and in portraying the perspectives of others on these.
- b. The Town will maintain a proactive relationship with the media, through media releases, interviews, news conferences, and by providing background information.

8. Crisis and emergency communication

- a. In the event of a crisis or emergency, communication processes will follow those outlined in the Town of Slave Lake Emergency Communication Procedures.

9. Privacy

- a. All sharing and collection of personal information will be in compliance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

10. Records retention

- a. Copies of communications material will be maintained in compliance with the Town's records management policy. Post and user content that is considered transitory may be deleted when no longer required.

11. Copyright and Town owned communications components

- a. Use of content and images in Town communications must be in compliance with the Canadian Copyright Act.
- b. Materials, images and other content created by and for the Town can be used freely in Town communications. External use will require CAO approval.

Other related policies and documents

B.0003 Proclamations Policy – *outlines how special proclamations are made*

B.006 Council Code of Conduct

3.11 – *Outlines confidentiality requirements for Council members after leaving office*

3.12 – *States the following:*

The Mayor, or designated appointee of the Mayor, shall be the official spokesperson to the media. No Councillor shall represent the Town to the media without consent from the Mayor

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and or designate. Councillors shall support the role of Council and support current policies, bylaws and resolutions of the Town of Slave Lake.

C.d.004 Record Management – *stipulates record management processes*

C.d.12 Public Service – *outlines objectives and procedures for responding to requests from the public*

Town Identity Package

Town of Slave Lake Emergency Communications Procedures

Communications Strategy 2016-2020