

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY
Council Policy No. 41/17

PURPOSE:

This purpose of the Corporate Communications Policy is to establish guidelines for the City of Fort St. John for communications, including the procedures, roles and responsibilities for all City employees and representatives when communicating or releasing information on behalf of the City. The purpose of this policy is:

- To ensure information is provided in a timely, consistent and appropriate manner;
- To provide guidelines and procedures that support transparent, consistent, and informative communications from the City of Fort St. John.

This policy applies to all City of Fort St. John employees and all contractors or partners who communicate with citizens, other agencies or the media on behalf of the City.

POLICY:

RESPONSIBILITIES

The City Manager is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy;
- Ensuring policy and procedures reviews occur.

General Managers/Directors are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to this policy and the procedures outlined in the related guidebooks;
- Ensuring employees are aware of this policy and related procedures;
- Review and amend this policy as required.

All City of Fort St. John employees are responsible for:

- Understanding and adhering to this policy.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

All communication activities conducted by the City of Fort St. John must adhere to the appropriate policies, guidelines or statutory requirements set out by legislation.

Communications activities must also reflect the City of Fort St. John’s Communications Principles:

1. Provide information that is timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive.
2. Consider the range of communication tools at our disposal and use those most appropriate to address the needs associated with each circumstance.
3. Work collaboratively across the organization to ensure that information is thorough, factual and timely.
4. Respect the access to information and privacy rights of citizens and employees.
5. Support opportunities for engagement to inform public policy.
6. Strive to achieve a culture of two-way communication and “communications excellence” practices.

PLAIN LANGUAGE

The City of Fort St. John will use ‘plain language’ for its external communications whenever possible. ‘Plain language’ can be broadly described as any writing designed to ensure the reader understands the message as quickly, easily, and completely as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, convoluted language and jargon and uses document structure and visual aids (such as graphics or charts) to guide the reader.

- [The City of Fort St. John Brand Identity Guidebook](#) includes a section on plain language use.

TIMELY RESPONSE

The City of Fort St. John provides residents, business, visitors, and other stakeholders timely, accurate, clear, accessible and responsive information. As such, City of Fort St. John employees must respond to enquiries in a prompt manner, either in person, by telephone or voicemail, by email, or through other official City channels such as social media.

Enquiries should be responded to or acknowledged within one business day.

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TIMELY RESPONSE (continued)

When the information requested is not immediately available, the message must be acknowledged as soon as possible. Information in the acknowledgement may include an estimated timeline for the response, alternate staff members or departments the enquiry is being forwarded to, or other information that informs the citizen their enquiry is being actioned.

ENGAGEMENT

The City of Fort St. John is committed to involving its citizens as part of decision-making processes. The City uses the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values as its foundation when considering public participation and engagement.

Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation (source: IAP2 Canada):

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

MEDIA RELATIONS

All media relations activities are coordinated by the Strategic Services Department. Unless otherwise authorized, the chief spokespersons for the City of Fort St. John are members of City Council or the City Manager. The Mayor or a Councillor is the authorized spokesperson to speak with media on behalf of Council-related to decisions and outcomes of Council business. The City Manager (or authorized delegate) is authorized to speak with the media on policy matters or on matters affecting the administration of the City.

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MEDIA RELATIONS (continued)

In addition to the City Manager, designated City employees may be called upon to speak to the media regarding specific areas of responsibility or subject matter.

City of Fort St. John employees who are not authorized to act as spokesperson will not respond on behalf of the City to any enquiry, or initiate communication with, the media.

All media enquiries must be referred to the Strategic Services Department in a timely manner for official response and follow up.

Media releases are used to communicate official City activities, decisions, projects or services, or for use as official statements during Emergency Operations. Media releases must be approved by a General Manager and/or City Manager prior to release (or EOC Director during Emergency Operations). All media releases are distributed by email to Council and published to the City of Fort St. John website.

Inaccurate media coverage should be brought to the attention of Strategic Services for correction.

PARTNERSHIPS AND THIRD-PARTY PROMOTION

A partnership is defined as an arrangement where parties agree to cooperate to advance their mutual interests in order to increase the likelihood of each achieving their mission and to amplify their reach.

A sponsorship is defined as a formal agreement in which cash and/or an in-kind fee is paid toward a program, service or amenity in return for marketing, advertising, public relations or other recognition.

The City of Fort St. John regularly as part of its day-to-day operation enters into partnerships and/or sponsorships with other organizations, governments, societies and businesses. As a course of business and transparency, the City of Fort St. John should acknowledge these partnerships as part of its regular communications. This may include short statements outlining the partnership or sponsorship arrangement, use of a logo on advertising materials, or another similar tactic.

The City of Fort St. John will not actively promote or advertise any third-party organization, society, entity or business over another similar organization, unless as part of an officially recognized partnership or sponsorship relationship.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

The City of Fort St. John uses social media as a communication and engagement tool to share information and encourage dialogue with a wide variety of audiences.

All social media accounts must first be recommended by a General Manager and the Strategic Services Department, and approved by the City Manager. All social media accounts must be branded in such a way as to reflect their official attachment to the City of Fort St. John and include appropriate contact information and a statement outlining the rules of use.

- See [Social Media Policy, Council Policy No. 121/10](#)

BRANDING AND BRAND ELEMENTS

The City of Fort St. John establishes policies, provides services, and maintains a variety of facilities. For its role and responsibilities to be clearly recognized, it must have a single and consistent visual identity.

The City of Fort St. John logo reflects the organization's role as the accountable and authoritative body and distinguishes the City from other organizations and groups. The logo is protected by copyright and trademark, and cannot be used without the expressed consent of the City of Fort St. John.

City logo use by outside organizations must reflect the City's official role or partnership in a program, service, or event. Logo use requests by outside organizations must be directed to the Strategic Services Department.

- [The City of Fort St. John Brand Guidelines](#) provides details on logo placement, colours, typography and other branding elements.

WEBSITE

The City of Fort St. John will maintain an official website (www.fortstjohn.ca) to provide the public with information regarding City services, Council decisions, Council and committee meeting schedule, minutes and agendas, bylaws, activities and events, and ongoing local government business.

Wherever possible, the website will provide links to other official information sources, rather than copying and pasting information directly to the website.

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WEBSITE (continued)

The website should be considered as the first point of contact when new or revised information regarding programs and services is established.

Department designates are responsible for content edits, additions and deletions for their Department's section, and designates may make routine edits and additions to their website content.

Non-routine, complex, or brand new content (for example, a new page or section, or a rewrite of an existing page) must be approved by a General Manager and the Strategic Services Department. Exceptions to this include recreation programs and event content. In some cases, Strategic Services may draft content prior to review and approval by the General Manager. Appropriate lead time should be considered when edits or additions involve more complex or technical content.

The City of Fort St. John website will not be used to promote an individual business, not-for-profit organization, or community organization over any other, and will not be used to promote an individual political philosophy.

- [The City of Fort St. John Brand Guidelines](#) provides website content standards.