

		CITY POLICY
SECTION: Municipal Government		NO: MU-CO-13 Date: March, 19, 2025 Next Review Date: March 2027
REFERENCE: Communication Policy		

TITLE: Communication Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

The City of Dryden is committed to open, transparent and honest communication with residents, businesses, City employees and visitors. This plan outlines the City's policy regarding meeting that commitment, for the well-being of its citizens. The following key assumptions are the basis for this policy:

- 1.1 Communication should be a priority in the development and planning of programs and services and is necessary to the successful completion and implementation of these activities. To that end, communication resources and efforts should be considered in each part of activity planning to guarantee the success and quality of City customer service.
- 1.2 All City of Dryden employees are involved in communication efforts on a daily basis; whether it is dealing one-on-one with customers and/or the general public, working with one another, or responding to the media.
- 1.3 The public receives clear, relevant and timely information from the City regarding what must be known, what should be known and what is nice to know.
- 1.4 Due to the growing complexity and volume of the City of Dryden communication activities, as well as the increasing interest in the City of Dryden by both internal and external sources, an organized and formal plan is deemed necessary in order to track, monitor and access messages that are being sent, and identify additional communication tools needed to adequately inform these customers and the public.

- 1.5 To have a mechanism in place to invite, receive and integrate input and feedback from the public into planning, management and evaluation of City policies, programs, services and initiatives. Through this process, citizens can be confident that their involvement in civic affairs is having a positive impact on the effectiveness of local government and the quality of community life.
- 1.6 Internal communication is a shared responsibility involving the Mayor and Council as well as employees at all levels. Effective policy and program development, organization and administration require co-operation and co-ordination throughout the City.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this Communication Policy is to create a formal plan for improving the overall communications function of the City. In order to be successful in this policy:
 - (a) All stakeholders should understand the process of finding the answer to any question;
 - (b) All stakeholders can easily receive and understand the information;
 - (c) All stakeholders are aware of City events, activities and issues that may be of interest to or could affect them and/or others;
 - (d) The City is proactive in combating misinformation and conjecture;
 - (e) All City communication functions meet legislated requirements.

3.0 External Communication

- 3.1 This section provides a brief description of the various methods used for external communication currently available to the City for disseminating information and policies relating to the proper management of that information. These methods include but are not limited to:
 - (a) Media Relations
 - (b) Email
 - (c) Internet
 - (d) Social Media

- (e) Advertising (Newspapers/Magazines)
- (f) Mail Campaigns
- (g) City Council Meetings including webcasting
- (h) Surveys

3.2 Other available tools:

- (a) Monthly Newsletter
- (b) Shaw Cable
- (c) City Meetings
- (d) Semi Annual Information Meetings
- (e) Annual Report to Taxpayers

4.0 Media Relations

To better serve our community, the City of Dryden needs to let the public know who we are and what we do. That message is often conveyed through the news media. City staff and Council need to be aware of how we can cooperate with the media to better serve the public.

Communication Goals:

- 4.1 Establish a uniform procedure for working with the media that will help ensure accuracy, City-wide coordination and a timely response to meet media deadlines.
- 4.2 Maintain a good working relationship with the media.

Policy:

- 4.3 All media contacts to a department and/or senior management should be reported to the CAO.
- 4.4 In the CAO's absence, the delegate and/or the City Clerk should be notified.
- 4.5 If the information requested is considered routine, as defined below, the contacted Senior Manager should proceed with giving the reporter the information.
 - (a) The CAO should also be notified by the Senior Manager before the interview takes place. The notification to the CAO can be via email, text, voice mail, page or phone call, whichever is easiest for the Senior Manager.

- 4.6 Routine information includes, but is not limited to: general questions about a department's function, items listed on a Council agenda or board/committee agenda, meeting times and locations, special events or news conferences planned by a department, questions about a particular program offered by a department, etc.
- 4.7 Responding to media inquiries at crime scenes, fires, hazardous materials alarms, and other emergency and/or public safety situations shall be handled differently. The responses shall come from the scene and from the designated spokesperson at the scene. In the case of Fire, Police or EMS, the designee is determined by the person in charge of the scene. Power outages or problems involving Water/Wastewater are also included in this exception. The CAO shall be notified in those instances where there is media coverage and will come to the scene when warranted.
- 4.8 The Mayor is the official spokesperson on behalf of Council and the CAO is the official spokesperson for all operational matters. It is recognized that Councillors are able to speak to the media in their capacity as individual Councillors at their own discretion. They will be honest and respectful of each other in their communications and will communicate accurately with the media regarding City business.
- 4.9 Ensure all communication with the media is consistent, well-informed, timely, appropriate and positive.
- 4.10 For any inquiries that require extensive research, involve multiple departments, deal with policy issues, are corporate in nature or may be controversial, the CAO shall be notified immediately via phone or text **BEFORE** a media interview takes place. A designee from Senior Management involved along with the CAO will be responsible for coordinating the response to ensure accurate and complete information is given to the reporter. The CAO, along with the Senior Manager, will determine who shall serve as a spokesperson to the media. This must be done in a timely fashion to meet the media deadlines.
- 4.11 The CAO will work with any City staff, City Council member or other City representative regarding obtaining media training.

5.0 Internet

The Internet has increasingly become a tool of choice for City employees, citizens and people, both nationally and internationally, to get information about the City of Dryden. The internet provides information and services to the public and serves as an interactive two-way communication and feedback tool.

Communication Goal:

- 5.1 Be accurate, consistent and timely with information that is published on the City's website. Additionally, ensure that the information published is accessible by all people regardless of their respective level of technology.

Policy:

- 5.2 The Communications Coordinator/Clerk will determine what information is highlighted on the City's home page.
- 5.3 The City website will contain up-to-date user-friendly information to assist citizens in their business with the City.
- 5.4 The Department Manager will ensure that information on their website pages regarding policies, programs, services and initiatives is regularly updated, accurate, easy to understand and accessible in appropriate formats for persons with disabilities.
- 5.5 The Department Manager will work with department heads to determine what information will be posted to their department's website pages.
- 5.6 Linking to an outside news source to promote City related information is prohibited. Exceptions to this would be in the case of a co-sponsored event.
- 5.7 The website will incorporate on-line service mechanisms for receiving and acknowledging public feedback.
- 5.8 Information posted to the Internet shall include a contact name with a phone number and an email address. This contact person shall be able to respond to requests for additional information in a timely manner.
- 1.1 The Brand Style Guide is responsible for determining what graphics standards might be appropriate for the City's website. The Communications Coordinator is a good resource for departments looking for branding help.

6.0 Social Media:

Though the website shall be the City's primary tool for sharing information, there are many other opportunities through social media to communicate with the public. Social Media – engaged conversation supported by online tools – has fundamentally changed the way our citizens discover, consume and share information and has enabled people and organizations worldwide to connect and communicate in new and innovative ways. This method of communication has created a way in which government must learn to participate in conversation with its audiences who demand transparency and immediate responses. It enables municipalities to become proactive, influence perceptions and address the needs and interests of their audiences. Social Media sites include Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and Twitter to name a few.

Communication Goal:

- 6.1 Social Networks are easily monitored and provide a mechanism for response. Social Networks provide a focus group of sorts and responses are often more honest and spontaneous. The City must be prepared to listen and respond accordingly. Used correctly social media can greatly enhance the City brand and can facilitate business development, job growth and community pride.

Policy:

- 6.2 Responses to social media must be accurate and professional at all times.
- 6.3 Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts for the City of Dryden are to be monitored by the office of the Clerk. This includes all department social media pages.

7.0 Newsletter/E-Newsletter:

This publication is a general interest newsletter focused on City news and initiatives and mailed to all utility accounts in the City. This newsletter, published by the office of the CAO, may include submittals from City departments. Additionally, or alternatively, the newsletter may be posted on the City website.

Communication Goal:

- 7.1 An effective, economical means to educate neighbourhoods, residents and businesses about City services and resources for neighbourhoods, and to promote City information to grassroots organizations.

Policy:

- 7.2 The CAO will establish a mechanism with which all relevant departments can have input into the current newsletter.
- 7.3 The newsletter will be mailed to each City utility account at intervals determined by the CAO and/or post the newsletter in its entirety on the City's website.
- 7.4 The editorial content shall reflect the policy goals of the CAO and City Council.
- 7.5 The newsletter will be distributed and promoted at all appropriate City facilities and related community events.

8.0 Advertising:

Generally, in display form and not required by law. Some advertising is done to meet legal requirements for notice of public hearings or proposed City action.

Communication Goal:

- 8.1 Provide information about upcoming events, programs, public hearings, etc. that are sponsored or offered by the City.

Policy:

- 8.2 A copy of any display ad, announcing a special event and/or upcoming public hearings or meetings shall be sent to the office of the CAO for information purposes prior to the ad being sent to publication.
- 8.3 All display ads shall include the City logo.
- 8.4 Legal notices shall follow standards that identify the notices as advertisements from the City of Dryden.

9.0 Mail Campaigns:

Mail campaigns use the postal system or the ad bag system to distribute City-related information to people's homes or businesses. This can also include door-to-door delivery of notices and door hangers.

Communication Goal:

- 9.1 Communicate the City's policies, services offered, events and other messages to the general public or to certain segments of the City, depending on the issue.

Policy:

- 9.2 Any communication sent to the general public to announce a special event, program, etc. will have the City logo included in the document.
- 9.3 The office of the CAO is responsible for determining what graphic standards are appropriate for direct-mail campaigns, door-to-door delivery or notices and door hangers.
- 9.4 A copy of any proposed direct mail piece shall be sent to the CAO prior to being printed or mailed.

10.0 City Council Meetings:

City of Dryden Council Meetings are conducted on the second and fourth Mondays of each month, in City Council Chambers. However, some meetings may be held on other dates. The CAO handles on-site media relations and serves a "gatekeeper" role by ensuring that all media requests are responded to by the most appropriate and informed City Staff representative.

Communication Goal:

- 10.1 Ensure City response to agenda items that will get media coverage through an awareness of issues. Promote unnoticed "good news" issues for the City.

Policy:

- 10.2 The CAO will work with department heads to identify agenda items for potential advance publicity.
- 10.3 The CAO will work with department heads to identify agenda items that will require research and ensure that any needed background material is made available to representatives of the media and the general public. Key

spokespeople shall also be identified prior to the Council meeting to assist the media in getting questions answered about specific agenda items in a timely manner.

11.0 Other Opportunities:

- 11.1 The Communications Coordinator will make every effort to provide updates after each Council meeting, on City activities that may be of interest to the public. These shall be sent to the media and posted on the City website.
- 11.2 The tax bill may contain an insert that outlines current municipal information.
- 11.3 City Council will seek opportunities to speak to local groups on City issues on an as needed basis.
- 11.4 Open Houses – may be held where members of the public can attend and discuss any matters they wish with their members of Council.
 - (a) The Open House will have an informal format allowing Council to meet face to face with local residents. There will be no agenda for these meetings, no formal minutes will be taken, and no public comments will be made by members of Council. Notice of public open houses will be published in the local radio media as well as municipal website.
 - (b) Matters brought forward at the Open Houses to members of Council that require further study or action will be referred to the CAO.

12.0 Internal Communications:

- 12.1 Open, two-way communication between Council and Administration and among Managers/Supervisors and Employees is vital to the effective operation of the Corporation and to achieve the mission and Goals of the Corporation. This section provides a brief description of the various methods of internal communication currently utilized by the City for disseminating information.

These methods are:

- (a) Bulletin Boards;
- (b) Email & SharePoint;

- (c) Staff Meetings; and,
- (d) Council and Administration.

13.0 Bulletin Boards:

Bulletin Boards shall serve as information centres and a place where employees can go for regular updates on issues.

Communication Goal:

- 13.1 A means for immediate information to promote a department's sense of identity.

Policy:

- 13.2 Department heads will encourage appropriate use of bulletin boards and ensure that access is available to all employees.
- 13.3 Content is internally focused by department personnel. If material is of a confidential nature or inappropriate for those outside the department, then other means of communication shall be used.
- 13.4 Each department shall maintain a bulletin board in a highly visible, highly trafficked area.

14.0 Email & SharePoint:

Emails can be City-wide, department-wide, to a group of employees, or to individuals. This can be a very effective form of communication and provides documentation of the message and when it was delivered. SharePoint is an effective City-wide method of internal communication that also provides documentation of the message and when it was delivered.

Communication Goal:

- 14.1 Content connects employees and promotes departmental policies and internal communication.

Policy:

- 14.2 All business-related emails and attachments shall be retained as per established City of Dryden records management and information management policies.

- 14.3 Department Managers are responsible for delivering information contained in emails or SharePoint to any appropriate staff without access to email.
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15.0 Staff Meetings:

Sessions shall be face to face on a regular basis, no less than monthly for departmental staff. Supervisors must communicate with employees openly, often and, whenever possible, before information is made public.

Communication Goal:

- 15.1 Provide forum for issues, policies and departmental expectations to be discussed in a two-way format for personnel.

Policy:

- 15.2 These meetings are open to City employees only and as such, they are not open to the media or general public.
- 15.3 Regular staff meetings will be held to provide up-to-date information, with an emphasis on person-to-person communication, as well as offering opportunities for immediate feedback and to encourage a common understanding.
- 15.4 Communication with staff may be through SharePoint, published materials such as notices, employee newsletters, electronic bulletins, and oral presentations or staff meetings. Needs of all employees shall be considered including outside workers who do not have access to electronic information.
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16.0 Council and Administration:

Staff Reports and presentations are the formal means of communication between Administration and Council.

Communication Goal:

- 16.1 Clear, concise, relevant Staff Reports and presentations provide members of Council with the information they need to make decisions on municipal policies, programs services and initiatives.

Policy:

- 16.2 Council Agendas, complete with staff reports and presentations, are available the Thursday afternoon before each Council Meeting as outlined in the Council Procedural By-law. For Special Council Meetings, reports and

agendas are to be available 48 hours prior to meeting. The CAO approves all Staff Reports and presentations for the final agenda for each meeting.

History			
Approval Date:	Sept. 18, 2017	Approved by:	4504-2017
Amendment Date:	Feb. 19, 2019	Approved by:	4612-2019
Amendment Date:	Feb. 12, 2021	Approved by:	CAO
Amendment Date:	Feb. 6, 2023	Approved by:	CAO
Amendment Date:	Mar 19, 2025	Approved by:	CAO