



# The Corporation of the TOWN OF MILTON

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Report To: Mayor G.A. Krantz & Members of Council

From: William Mann, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Date: May 26, 2014

Report No: ES-020-014

Subject: Communications Audit Report for the Town of Milton

**Recommendation: THAT Report No. ES-020-014 be received for information;**

**AND THAT the general findings and recommendations contained within the Summarized Communications Audit Report for the Town of Milton, as prepared by Kennedy Jones & Sweeney Inc. and attached as Appendix A to Report No. ES-020-014, be endorsed;**

**AND FURTHER THAT Milton Council support the concept of a "Corporate Communications Pilot Project Team," as outlined through Report ES-020-014, with the overall objective of improving the Town of Milton's Corporate Communications Productivity and its Overall Effectiveness.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, the Senior Management Team authorized a scoped exercise to review corporate communication challenges and opportunities. The results of that exercise are presented within Report ES-020-14 and the Senior Management Team is recommending that Council endorse the study's general findings and recommendations and support the formation of a "Corporate Communications Pilot Project Team", designed to increase the level of transparent, timely, public communications and interaction.

## REPORT

### Background

The initial communications review was undertaken by the Chief Administrative Officer in 2005 when Senior Managers noticed some negative media articles. At that time, a firm was commissioned to undertake a brief internal survey relating to internal and external communications. As a result, Council approved in the 2006 operating budget a number of initiatives that were intended to move the corporation towards a corporate communications strategy in order to assist with the positive dissemination of information to residents and to ensure up-to-date Town activities. An internal communications action plan was subsequently developed for the Senior Management Team that



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contained eight recommendations on how to improve the communications functions within the Corporation, including the sharing of a staff resource through the Region of Halton (Corporate Communications Specialist). This position was ultimately integrated into Milton's full time compliment in 2007 within the Executive Services Department (Economic Development Division).

Following these actions, in 2011, the Senior Management Team approved a 2012 pilot project to engage the Town of Milton through a variety of social media (upgraded Town website, facebook, twitter) to provide local residents with timely information about municipal programming, services and emergency communications. Resources for this project were distributed internally between the communications specialist and various marketing positions within community services. As a result, "The Talk of the Town" newsletter was disbanded.

Finally, in November 2013, during the work undertaken for the Community Services Community Profile, one of the major themes that came out of this profile survey was a perceived lack of public communication, which also formed the basis for many of the themes identified in the community profile. Given these survey results, and the upcoming Pan Am-Parapan games at the Milton Velodrome, the Senior Managers issued a Request for Proposal to engage a firm to undertake a corporate "Communications Audit", which provides the basis for this report.

## Discussion

Attached to this report as Schedule "A", is the summarized Communications Audit Report prepared by Kennedy Jones and Sweeney, dated March 21, 2014.

The final summary report recommends centralizing core strategic communication functions within Executive Services, aligning corporate communication activities with the annual budgets and corporate strategic plans, shifting mentally from output to outcome, focusing only on the six most successful communication tactics. Currently, responsibility for corporate communications lies within the venue of the Senior Manager, Economic Development. Although it has been determined that this position's responsibility better lies in the area of economic development, strategic initiatives such as the MEV and MEVIC and corporate property/real estate transactions.

The report also identifies a number of observations and positive opportunities that can be undertaken internally to improve corporate communications and maximize resources. The Town's Senior Management Team has reviewed the report and is recommending that the corporation move to implementing a number of the top recommendations as a pilot project, through a Corporate Staff Team, under the guidance of the Town Clerk. The overall objective of the *Corporate Communications Pilot Project Team* will be to improve the corporate communications productivity and overall effectiveness.



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The staff team will consist of the Corporate Communications Specialist in Executive Services, and an assigned 'communications lead' representing each department. The communications staff team will prepare a plan for 2014-2015 that identifies for each priority recommendation a planned approach to direct resources including strategies, tactics and evaluation plans. The corporate staff team will report quarterly to the Senior Management Team through the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will also monitor the public 'go to' sites for Town news and make recommendations to the Senior Management Team.

The Senior Management Team is also recommending that Marketing Staff in Community and Engineering Services review their communication tactics and bring forward the most 5-6 successful tactics for integration into the 2014-2015 plan. The Senior Management Team unanimously concurs that the new staff team approach will improve joint corporate communications and marketing effectiveness. The suggested organizational changes in the report will be reconsidered following the outcome of the Strategic Workforce Plan, which is currently being completed through the corporation; and, which will be considered by Council within the near future.

## Relationship to the Strategic Plan

Responsible, Cost Effective and Accountable Local Government: Provision of a high-level of transparent, timely, public information and communications.

## Financial Impact

There are no immediate financial impacts resulting from the recommendations contained within Report No. ES-020-14, in that the staffing resources currently exist within the corporation.

Respectfully submitted,

William Mann, MCIP, RPP, OALA, CSLA, MCIF, RPF  
Chief Administrative Officer

For questions, please contact:

Name: Bill Mann ext. 2101

## Attachments

Appendix A: Summarized Communications Audit Report for the Town of Milton, dated March 21, 2014, prepared by Kennedy Jones & Sweeney Inc.

CAO Approval

William Mann, MCIP, RPP, OALA, CSLA, MCIF, RPF  
Chief Administrative Officer



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***Summarized***  
**Communications Audit Report**  
For the Town of Milton

**March 21, 2014**

Prepared by  
Brenda Sweeney, MSc., APR

With assistance from  
Sarah K. Jones, APR, FCPRS and  
Theo Ellis, OCGC (PR)

## **Background**

In 2006, the Town of Milton (the Town) hired a Corporate Communications Specialist to provide media relations support to the organization. Since that time, the Town has developed a more open, transparent communications relationship with its many audiences, particularly residents.

More recently, with Milton's significant growth, and upcoming major projects such as the Pan Am Games and the new Velodrome, the Town commissioned a Communications Audit to receive a series of recommendations that would improve the productivity and overall effectiveness of the Town's Corporate Communications function. This audit ran from September 4, 2013 to October 11, 2013.

The Town's RFP specified that the audit would include interviews with specific Town management and staff, a content analysis of current communications pieces and a best practices review. The main phases of the project to meet these requirements were: Internal Interviews, Content Analysis, Best Practices Review followed by analysis, recommendations development and report writing. The final deliverables were a long form report for the SMT and a summarized version for broader distribution.

This project was successfully completed on-time and on-budget.

## **Research Results**

### ***Content Analysis***

For the content analysis, KJ&S looked at 120 individual communications pieces provided by the Town's departments. We then took a subset of these materials and evaluated them using the standard readability, language use and grade level analysis tools found in MS-Word.

### ***Observations***

As a general observation, the external communications pieces produced by the Town's departments are adequate.

- Language levels are usually within the target range (Grades 8-10) and they never go above Grade 12.
- Most departments use jargon, passive (instead of active) phrasing and have a tendency toward longer sentences – all of which combine to reduce readability scores.
- Many of the documents do not comply with a communications standard such as Canadian Press style.
- There are many samples where graphics would explain a topic more clearly, but were not used (e.g. Family Fireworks Safety Guide (Fire), Making a Claim (Corporate Services)).

### ***Internal Stakeholder Interviews***

During these 12 internal stakeholder interviews, we spoke with members of the senior management team, senior managers and employees responsible for communications and marketing from every Town department *except* the Fire and Planning Departments.

### *Observations*

It would have been helpful to speak with representatives from every department to receive a fuller picture of communications in the Town. Interviewees consistently said that they had a positive working relationship with Corporate Communications. They expressed concern that the demands for communications support outstripped the ability of one person to meet their needs and that it would be helpful to have common processes and practices developed by Corporate Communications that departments could follow on their own. There was some concern expressed about a lack of clarity around how advertising and media relations (especially related to public consultation) should be handled.

### **Best Practices Analysis**

This section looked at the operating environment for Corporate Communications including its tools, processes and operating practices within the Town of Milton and compares these with industry best practices for municipal corporate communications.

#### *Internal Communications Tools, Processes and Operating Practices Review*

The results of this research are as follows:

- The Town's communications support tools, such as style guides, are out-of-date and do not take into account the realities of social and online media. Only the Pan Am Games style guide is current, but it is incomplete.
- The Town's approved logo is not suitable for use in social and online media. To work around this situation, staff created a separate, unapproved online version of the logo.
- Current communications policies are inconsistent and do not apply a consistent industry standard such as Canadian Press style.
- Departments use the results of the Community Profile to select their communications tactics. Our research indicates that these results are not always applicable to departments other than Community Services.
- The Town does not have a clear branding standard that can be used by internal teams and external vendors to create print pieces. As a result, attractive results, such as *Milton This Way Up!* are created, but not readily recognized as coming from the Town.
- Community Services' approach to marketing planning and Corporate Communications' approach to communications planning do not use industry best practices.

### **External Comparative Review**

We compared the organizational structure for Economic Development and Communications with communities from the list of the Top 15 Fastest Growing Canadian Communities<sup>1</sup> that have more established communications teams.

### *Observations*

- Many communications teams are *initially* placed within the Corporate Services or Municipal Clerk's office as a service team to the organization.

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<sup>1</sup>Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. Downloaded Oct. 6, 2013.  
[http://www.auma.ca/live/digitalAssets/69/69706\\_Canada\\_s\\_top\\_15\\_fastest\\_growing\\_communities.pdf](http://www.auma.ca/live/digitalAssets/69/69706_Canada_s_top_15_fastest_growing_communities.pdf)

- As the strategic value of communications is recognized, and its role expands, the teams are *relocated* within the CAO's office.
- Predominantly, they report directly to the CAO/City Manager and if not directly, then to a senior manager member within the CAO's office (e.g. to the Director of Executive Services).
- The communications team is always the point team for all media relations.
- In most cases, the marketing teams that support recreation and cultural programming remain in the programming department and do not merge with communications.
- Instead, the communications and marketing teams work in close partnership and adopt similar planning tools and approaches.

## Analysis

### Gap Analysis

This analytical tool helps highlight the differences between how the Town is currently performing from a communications perspective and where it should be. It compares the best practices in strategic communications with current Town practices.

Points two to eight flow directly out of point one, a lack of consistent, strategic Corporate Communications and Marketing planning.

### Communications / Marketing Gap Analysis by Town Overall

1. Strategic Communications / Marketing Planning				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
	✓			

2. Appropriate Choice and Number of Communications Tactics				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
	✓			

3. Measuring Communications Success By Outcomes, Not Outputs				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
	✓			

4. Evaluation of Communications Results				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
✓				

5. Consistent Look and Feel for Town Materials				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
	✓			

6. Identifying Target Audiences				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
			✓	

7. Communications Plans Flow from Organization's Strategic Plans				
Never				Always
1	2	3	4	5
✓				

### ***Differentiate Between Marketing and Corporate Communications***

One of the key requirements for this Communications Audit was to define and differentiate between Corporate Communications and Marketing. During our research, we found that the Corporate Communications function at the Town of Milton is nearly identical to the industry term Public Relations, so we applied the standard definitions for Public Relations to this project.

#### ***Public Relations Is...***

Public Relations achieves its influence by community-building and developing an ongoing dialogue with an organization's internal and external stakeholders.

Typical functions include: Strategic Communications Planning, Media Relations, Internal Communications, Community Relations, Image Building and Reputation Management, and Issues and Crisis Management.

Public Relations measures success by setting program or campaign goals and then measuring the achievement of these goals using specific criteria. These criteria, Awareness → Knowledge → Perception → Behaviour, build on each other in progression.

Ideally, communicators measure success by evaluating at least one of these criteria in a campaign.

#### ***Marketing Is...***

Marketing achieves its commercial objectives by implementing the 6Ps – Products, Place, Pricing Strategy, Promotion, People and Process. Promotion also crosses over into the domain of Public Relations because it borrows some of PR's tools to share its product or service information.



Marketing uses a similar metrics process to Public Relations to measure success. The easiest metric is achievement of a commercial objective, such as a sales target. Similar to the Public Relations measurement criteria listed above, Marketing can also measure product or service awareness, knowledge, preference, and purchasing behaviours.

#### *How Could They Work Together – Successfully!*

Ideally, Public Relations and Marketing should work together to find synergies and leverage budgets to achieve common objectives.<sup>2</sup> While the outcomes of successful campaigns may differ, the strategic planning process behind these efforts does not.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations reflect the results of the research collected during the audit. The research results provided answers to the overarching goal for the project (improve Corporate Communications productivity and overall effectiveness), but they also uncovered inadequate communications and marketing planning processes. In addition, the research yielded some key concerns that we thought the Town should be aware of.

Given this additional information, we added two recommendations categories to the ones stipulated by the Town: a) Joint Corporate Communications and Marketing Effectiveness Improvements; and b) Suggested Organizational Changes.

#### **Improve Corporate Communications Productivity and Overall Effectiveness**

1. Centralize Core Strategic Communications Functions With the CAO's Office
2. Align Corporate Communications Activity with the Operating Budget and the Town's Strategic Priorities
3. Introduce the use of a Corporate Communications Annual Calendar
4. Update the Corporate Communications Project Plan Template

#### **Differentiate Between Marketing and Corporate Communications Functions, Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Develop streams for Media Releases as Sensitive or Non-Sensitive
2. Media Buying should remain the responsibility of the Corporate Communications Specialist
3. Develop a Public Consultation Toolkit

#### **Joint Corporate Communications and Marketing Effectiveness Improvements**

1. Shift From Output to Outcome Mentality
2. Focus on Six Most Effective Communications Tactics *Only*
3. Create Resident Preferred Communications Tactics Table
4. Develop Departmental Communications Capacity
5. Use a Common Strategic Project Planning Template
6. Use Similar Measurement Concepts to Track Project Progress

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.prconversations.com/index.php/2010/08/public-relations-should-embrace-not-deny-its-marketing-links/>

### **Evaluate Organizational Structure Including Work Flow**

1. Distinguish Between For Your Information (FYI) and For Your Approval (FYA)

### **Identify Strategic Opportunities to Leverage Current and Future Staff**

1. Address Staffing Issues To Reduce Bottlenecks and Boost Productivity
2. Review Economic Development Division's Role

### **Recommended Organizational Changes**

1. Town of Milton Homepage Content Managed by Corporate Communications
2. Refresh the Town's Logo
3. Update the Town's Writing Guide and Branding Guide

## **Conclusion**

As detailed at the start of this report, the overarching goal for this project was to produce a series of recommendations that would improve the productivity and overall effectiveness of the Town's Corporate Communications function.

Additionally, the Town specified that the results would need to:

1. Differentiate between marketing and corporate communications
2. Distinguish between roles and responsibilities for marketing and communications functions within the Town
3. Evaluate organizational structure including work flow
4. Identify strategic opportunities to leverage current and future staff

The results of our research – one-on-one interviews, the content analysis and the best practices analysis – highlighted a number of opportunities to improve productivity and effectiveness without adding a significant cost burden to the Town.