

Town of Gander Communications Plan



TOWN OF GANDER

I. PURPOSE

To provide a framework for the Town of Gander to enhance its two-way communication, improve stakeholder relationships and encourage public participation in the municipal process.

II. OUR VISION

An engaged and informed community and responsive employees, who work collaboratively to shape the Town of Gander's future.

II. OUR MISSION

To communicate efficiently and effectively with our residents, business community and all other stakeholders in an engaging, responsive and transparent manner.

III. OUR GOALS

- **Improved transparency**
 - Council will be transparent in its decision-making processes to allow stakeholders to understand its decisions and the process in which they are made.
- **An informed and engaged community**
 - The Town of Gander will share information and provide messages in a timely and effective manner. There will be informal and formal platforms for stakeholders to engage with the Town of Gander.
- **Professional, consistent and coordinated messaging**
 - The Town of Gander will be consistent in the timing, frequency, platform and language/writing of its communicative messages.

IV. OUR COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

- **Honest**
 - Communicate in a straight forward and matter-of-fact manner that supports Council's commitment to openness and transparency.
- **Clear**
 - Use plain language to deliver clear and concise messaging.
- **Responsive**
 - Be proactive in providing relevant and timely information.
- **Respectful**
 - Communicate in a manner free of personal or political bias while respecting residents' rights to accessibility and privacy.

V. SCOPE

This communications plan is applicable to the following:

- Community and special information and schedules
- Public notices – road closures, water or service interruptions
- Council minutes and reports
- Greetings, congratulatory and conciliatory messages
- Official Council position or statement on matters of public interest
- Official announcements
- Responses to inbound communications
- Election results

This communications plan is not applicable to the following:

- Information covered under the provincial ATIPPA
- Matters before the courts
- Labour relation matters
- Human resource matters

VI. TARGET AUDIENCE

Amongst Us

- Town employees
- Council

Gander

- All residents
- Youth and seniors
- Community organizations
- Businesses and business owners
- Local media

Newfoundland

- Regional communities and partners
- Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Provincial government
- Media

Canada

- Residents of Canada
- Federal government
- Media

International

- Tourists
- Media

VII. OUR STRATEGY

Strategy 1: Getting the Message Out

Goal

To effectively disseminate news, information and notices to all residents, businesses and other community stakeholders.

Methodology

The Town of Gander will use a range of tools to ensure information reaches it's intended audience. This may include, all or a combination of, the following:

- ***Council minutes and recordings*** - The Town of Gander will provide Council Meeting minutes and recordings in a timely manner through the Town's official website.
- ***Social Media*** - Social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, will be used with the intention to allow greater flexibility and immediacy in disseminating topical information.
- ***Website*** - The website will be the official internet presence and the main source of information for stakeholders. The website will provide stakeholders with need to

know information such as notices, regulations and policies. It will also provide stakeholders with historical, tourism, and event information.

- **Alert Me** - Subscribing stakeholders will receive “Alert Me” e-mail notifications for immediate need to know information such as water shut offs, road repairs/closures, traffic advisories and emergency/hazard information.
- **Newsletter** - The semi-annual newsletter will consist of seasonal information and regulations, updates on municipal projects, upcoming community events, and Town news and initiatives. The printed newsletter will include photos and graphics to create a friendly and intriguing look and will be mailed directly to residents.
- **Central Voice** - The Town of Gander will provide weekly content to the Central Voice which will include upcoming events and public notices.
- **Press releases** - The Town of Gander will use press releases as a written tool directed at members of the media for the purpose of announcing something newsworthy.
- **Press conferences/media interviews** - The Town of Gander will use press conferences/media interviews as a tool to communicate messages with the public when an announcement, statement or appeal is of importance or urgency. All local media outlets or representatives, as well as any special interest groups or organizations deemed likely to be directly affected by the business at hand, will be advised as early as possible of the time and location of the press conference.

Strategy 2: Engaging the Community

Goal

An engaged community that participates in addressing issues and contributes to initiatives.

Methodology

The Town of Gander will use a range of tools to ensure the community is given the opportunity to engage with the Town. This may include, all or a combination of, the following tools and methods:

- **Social Media** - Social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, will be used with the intention to allow greater flexibility and immediacy in interacting with stakeholders.
- **Report a Problem** - The Report a Problem system will provide an online platform for stakeholders to communicate their issues and concerns.
- **Planned engagement sessions** - The Town of Gander will organize engagement sessions for it’s stakeholders. When an issue, initiative or policy is of great importance and requires public opinion or feedback, the Town of Gander will organize in-person and/or online engagement sessions.

- **Surveys** - External surveys will be conducted as a means of gathering public input on issues, initiatives or policies affecting the community.
- **Youth Advisory Committee** - The Town of Gander will create a Youth Advisory Committee. The Committee will provide information and advice to Council on matters related to youth that intersect Town policies, programs and services, as referred to it by committees of Council, or as initiated by the Committee.
- **Age-friendly Advisory Committee** - The Town of Gander will create an Age-friendly Advisory Committee. The Committee will provide information and advice to Council on matters related to seniors that intersect Town policies, programs and services, as referred to it by committees of council, or as initiated by the Committee.

Strategy 3: Quality Internal Communications

Goal

Informed and engaged employees who work collaboratively to achieve organizational goals.

Methodology

Employees will be well informed about Town issues, initiatives, programs and news and well trained on the Town's communication practices. This will allow the Town of Gander to think as one, be professional, consistent and coordinated in their messaging. This may require the use of, all or a combination of, the following tools and methods:

- **Message templates** - The Town of Gander will develop and maintain formats and templates for messages that are frequently communicated to the public (public notices, press releases, advisories, job notices, etc.) so that messages are delivered in a consistent manner.
- **Breakroom news** - The Town of Gander will develop a slide show including information relevant to staff which will be displayed on televisions in break rooms. The slide show will be updated every week. The slide show will consist of news such as upcoming Town events, holidays/Town Hall closures, new Town initiatives/programs, departmental news, welcoming of new staff, and social club events.
- **Internal newsletter** - The Town of Gander will develop an internal newsletter to inform employees of departmental news and improve inter-departmental communications.
- **Delivery of need to know Town of Gander information** - Staff will be informed of all important Town of Gander information and decisions. Staff will receive post Council meeting updates to be informed of the decisions and discussions of the previous night's council meeting. The Council Highlights newsletter will be distributed to all employees. When a new policy is adopted, a copy of the policy will be sent to all staff by e-mail. A copy of all press releases and relevant media and news will be e-mailed to Council and all employees.

- **Staff meetings** - The Town of Gander will hold staff meetings such as management meetings, management & supervisor meetings, and departmental meetings. The Town will aim to hold regular semi-annual staff meetings for all employees. This will provide the opportunity to build interpersonal relationships, promote collaboration and networking, and to inform staff of departmental news, new Town initiatives/programs, reports and announcements.
- **A current Communications Policy** - The Town of Gander will revise and update the current Communications Policy to reflect the Communications Plan.
- **Create a Social Media Policy** – The Town of Gander will create a social media policy to ensure the Town’s social media platforms are used correctly and effectively to communicate with its audiences.
- **Create a Writing Style Guide** - In order to create and share information that is clear, concise, consistent, and accessible the Town of Gander will create a Writing Style Guide and explore the adoption of The Canadian Press (CP) Stylebook, CP Caps and Spelling and The Canadian Oxford Dictionary for use in the creation of all internal and external communications materials. By offering common spellings, abbreviations, capitalizations and numbers this will allow for staff to follow a consistent style and ensure materials are professional and easy to read.
- **Staff training** – Communications training sessions will be provided to employees to improve communication practices in the organization.

VIII. RESOURCES

- Dedicated communication specialist
- Experienced administrative support
- Design and communications programs/software
- Website (www.gandercanada.com)
- Social media presence/tools
- “Alert Me” notification system
- Semi-annual external newsletter
- Internal newsletters
- Communications Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Writing Style Guide
- Local media – Rogers, CBC, NTV , NBC, Central Voice

IX. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Information and Communications Coordinator will have overall responsibility to implement the Communications Plan. However, it will be important to the success of the plan that it be supported by Council, the CAO, all members of senior management and staff.

Roles and responsibilities are:

- Council should champion internal and external communications excellence, support policies and initiatives that enable this to occur, and role model behavior expected of staff.

- The Chief Administrative Officer should empower and encourage directors to be central communication drivers and emphasize the importance of good communications through clear directives and policies, enabling skill development and support, and role modeling expected behavior.
- Directors should recognize good employee and stakeholder communications as a priority. They should role model effective communications, abide by the Communications Plan and related policies, and support communication skills development sessions for their staff.
- All staff should become familiar with the Communications Plan and related policies. They should participate in communication skills development activities. All staff as individuals should learn how to become information agents and brand ambassadors, and work in an environment where customer service and information sharing are high priorities.

X. MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Goal

To confirm whether the Communications Plan is achieving its objectives.

Methodology

The Town of Gander will evaluate the results of its communication efforts. The Town will analyze each effort and understand whether the objectives were achieved or not.

- ***Reports*** - Once the Communications Plan is implemented, the Information and Communications Coordinator will provide semi-annual reports on the progress and succession of the Communications Plan to the Chief Administrative Officer and/or Council. Once the Town has reached a healthy and steady level of effective communications the Information and Communications Coordinator will continue to provide reports annually to the Chief Administrative Officer and/or Council.

Reports may include:

- Reports from departments, staff and Council
 - Increase/decrease in followers/subscribers on social media, Alert Me system, and Newsletter
 - Social Media feedback/activity
 - Feedback from internal/external survey
- ***Annual internal communications surveys*** - This survey will measure staff's satisfaction with internal communications of the organization. The survey could include questions regarding how informed staff feel of Town initiatives, programs and policies and how satisfied they are with inter-departmental communications.
 - ***Annual external communications surveys*** - This survey will measure stakeholders' satisfaction with communications from the Town. The survey could include questions regarding how well-informed stakeholders feel about Town initiatives, programs and policies. Stakeholders would have the opportunity to inform the Town of their preferred method of communication, how open they feel the lines of communication are and how easy and accessible engagement is with the Town.