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# Corporate Communications and Marketing Strategy

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## An Action Plan: Striving for Enhanced Communications and Public Engagement



Prepared by: the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division  
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, City of Cambridge

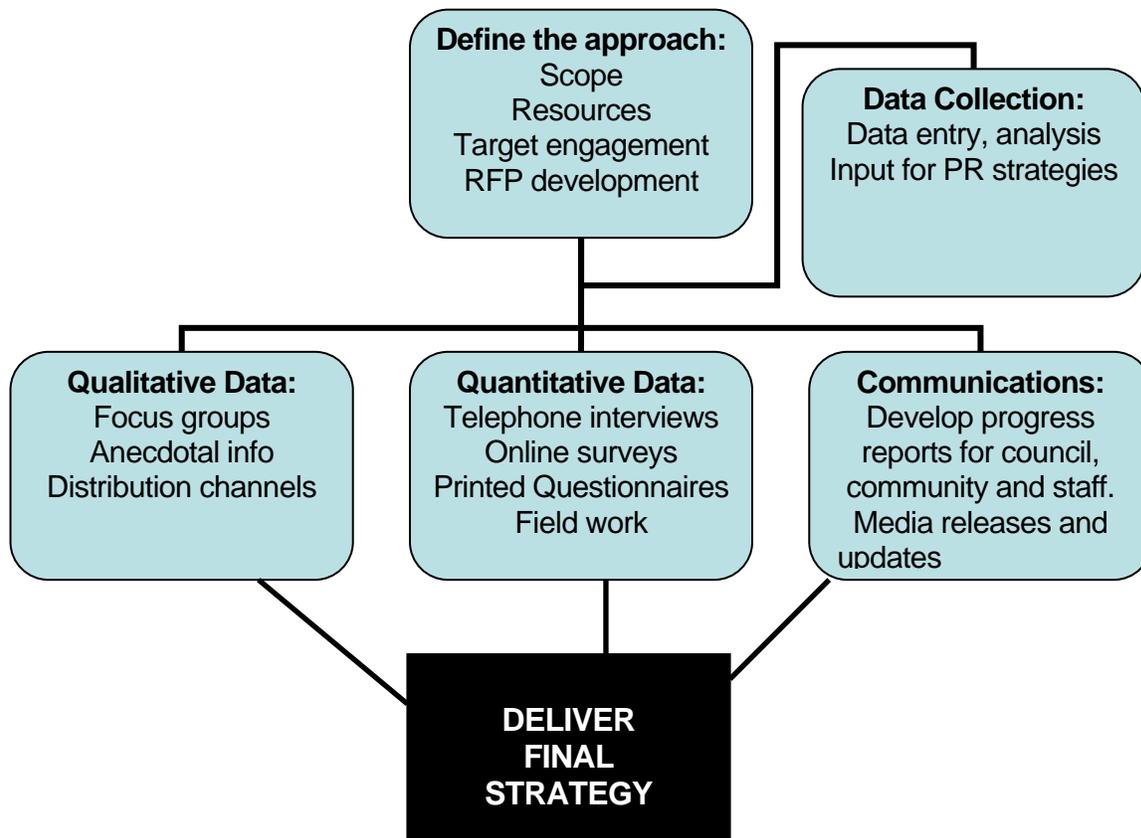
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## Highlights

*The Corporate Communications and Marketing plan is the result of several years of research, evaluation, audits and strategy development that incorporates current practices in the industry, world trends, emerging tools of communications, and best practices in the municipal world.*

Some of the highlights of this journey to deliver the very best communications include:

The **Communications Audit** evaluated existing marketing and communications materials within the City with a view to enhance them through consistent branding, and cross promotion opportunities within the organization. It also served to help increase distribution and awareness using the best tools available. There were also several external research projects undertaken. The research approach was both qualitative (descriptive, exploratory and provides insights) and quantitative (measured, numbers, form of final actions.) A **Communication Preference** survey helped define the listening/reading habits of residents and stakeholders to broaden the City's outreach to find fitting media sources for approaching editorial writers and for advertising placement. The **Branding Research** engaged over a thousand people in the process; citizens, external investors, media, council and staff. Findings of the "What's Your Take" survey garnered 600 responses and reaped a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 3.99%, an example of one measure for evaluation. The comprehensive process provided the corporation with new brand (visual identity) standards, a positioning statement with which to utilize for key messages, and the tag line, "It's all right here" - a slogan that touches every facet of our community from lifestyle, business opportunities, recreation, culture and of course, possibilities! It also gave valuable information on misperceptions or unknown messages about the community that the City can re-position to truly demonstrate the realistic facts and most importantly, the growth and opportunity. Steps included:



## Community Engagement

The people of Cambridge are passionate about the community and they gave of their time and energy to be part of the process of developing a strategic plan for marketing and communications. Businesses and community leaders came to the table through focus group sessions, committees of council and online research opportunities. While recognizing the great work that is being done by city departments and their dedication to providing customer service, there is a need to corporately support communications and marketing which will bring together the messages with a consistent voice, tone and City identification. This plan provides an integrated approach to communications, to obtain maximum impact with the right message and medium, and it utilizes market research to discern appropriate media positioning, best practices and lessons learned. It focuses resources in a cost-effective manner, a theme fitting with the City of Cambridge.



## Introduction

The purpose of this communications strategy is to provide an action plan for the corporate communications and marketing activities at the City of Cambridge. The strategy will serve as the map to guide the City's internal and external communications and marketing in the short, medium and long term.

The corporation has a variety of service offerings and hundreds of staff who work to deliver these services. This strategic framework will help align the various activities within each department with the overall corporate objectives to effectively communicate messages to target audiences while providing ways to measure the outcomes to enable staff to continuously build the corporation's two-way communications.

## Values/Guiding Plan Development

Guiding principles of the strategy that will govern its implementation include:



Direct - improves processes of direct communication to residents and employees with strategies around timing, plain language, and easily identifiable information.

Open and Two-way Communication - ensures that both the community and staff have an opportunity to share information and build channels for two-way conversations thus increasing transparent governance, improving stakeholder relationships, and facilitating effective feedback from constituents.

Proactive - identifies ways that the City has more opportunity to tell the story first hand to the audiences rather than being in a responsive mode that may change the interpretation of the information.

Community Engagement and Problem Solving - provides complete and timely information to educate, inform and seek engagement. This supports the decision making process for the City and enables our Council and staff to make the best decisions possible. It will help citizens and businesses reach conclusions and participate in civic affairs based on the most complete information.

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Comprehensive - as the community, staff and other target audiences obtain information from a variety of sources, this plan serves to put in place initiatives that support direct channels of communication. The holistic approach also recognizes that City staff has a major role to play when communicating with the public and the strategy supports corporate tools, such as centralized media releases, that aid this process.



Honesty/Integrity - continue to strive to share information with integrity while reflecting truth and honesty.

Consistent Messages - strong and consistent messages are key to building an effective communications strategy. This plan supports, reinforces and reflects the goal of City government as established by Mayor, Cambridge City Council and the City's senior management team. It must underscore the idea of a common goal and consistent and effective outcome.

Cost-effectiveness - The City recognizes that it must seek to communicate in the most cost-effective means available.

Inclusive Language - in addition to consistent and clear messages, the marketing and communications activities of the corporation must use inclusive language and strive to incorporate all segments of the population. This not only helps break through all the "noise" in the communications world, but it supports a supportive work environment for staff and partners working with the City.

## Corporate Vision/Other Strategic Plans to Consider

Our Vision (2011) Cambridge celebrates the uniqueness of its founding communities and is united by its heritage, rivers, cultures and common future.



Cambridge residents and visitors enjoy the natural environment, safe, clean, caring, sustainable and accessible neighbourhoods, with a wide variety of lifestyle and housing options and ample cultural and recreational opportunities.

Cambridge, as a community of opportunity, encourages business growth and transition, entrepreneurial spirit, strong leadership, efficient government and the provision of municipal services, personal growth and civic pride. Implementation of the plan will support the Vision.

Designing the Future (2008) - An Economic Development Strategy for the City of Cambridge- the communications strategy needs to build on the three primary pillars identified in the strategy - Education, Environment and Excellence. Our reputation as a community for retraining,

innovation, embracing environmental challenges and opportunities, and excellence in education needs to be part of the brand.

Master Plan for Parks, Recreation, Open Spaces (2002 - 2022) - The Master Plan is reviewed and updated every five years. The most recent update was approved by Council in early 2010. The plan seeks to produce a flexible strategy which can be used to make decisions that are equitable. It reflects general public acceptance, and is cost effective in guiding the delivery of parks, recreation and open space facilities and services.

Conservation Master Plan (2007) - The strategy outlines a plan for the Historic City Hall building and puts in place conservation measures.



Arts and Culture Master Plan (2009) - Include directional initiatives recognizing the importance of the arts and culture cluster here in Cambridge. The importance of community involvement is key to building on this message.

Heritage Master Plan (2008) - This plan focuses on the conservation of built out resources and demonstrates our commitment to heritage preservation.

Storm Water Management Master Plan (2009) - Recognizing the infrastructure needs and future direction in overall corporate messaging is vital.



Parking Master Plan (2008) - Demonstrating the overarching strategy for parking and accommodating future growth of the community is part of the objectives of this plan. Incorporating messages that will support the direction of the plan is important.

Corporate Sustainability Plan (2011) - The plan builds on the recently updated corporate Vision to provide an overarching strategy that guides the corporation's actions into the future.

## Part 2

### Objectives

The communications and marketing strategy is designed to provide immediate and longer term strategies to address the following objectives:

1. **Enhance understanding of City services**, communicate opportunities for participation programs and share the City's position on emerging issues and community needs.
2. **Communicate how the actions of the City's administration** are driven by and connected to the Mayor and Council's direction, City priorities and how they are addressing community needs.
3. **Brand (create visual identity of) the City's programs**, activities and overall image linking it to City priorities and community vision.
4. **Ensure the delivery of accurate, understandable messages** to the community, stakeholders and staff.
5. **Make the best possible use of City communications resources** and align the resources with the activities and expertise of the organization.
6. Create a climate to promote **broader and more effective civic engagement**.
7. Increase **internal employee communications, support readiness for external communications** and build resources to support enhanced communications.

Initiatives executed from the corporate communications and marketing strategy will recognize the multitude of work and stated priorities of the organization including:

- Support strategic plans for facets of the organization such as Economic Development, Arts and Culture, Recreational Services, Public Works
- Mayor and Council priority platforms
- The Official Plan and long range growth management strategy development
- The Corporate Sustainability Plan
- Environmental priorities and emerging opportunities
- Inter-governmental initiatives

## Part 3

### Identification of Critical Issues

A number of areas are considered fundamental for the success of the program:

**Aligning divisional program communications** with overall corporate communications priorities is fundamental to the success of the strategy. The plan will set direction for the City to achieve specific corporate communications objects that will better enable overall understanding and alignment of the common goals. Incorporating vital elements of the

cross section of strategic plans within the corporation is a must. Strong themes verses scattered messages reinforces common purpose.

**Enhancement of staff communications** is a key area of evaluation to address current practices and offer other initiatives that will bring about further, interactive communications vehicles to address gaps in communications for the team. Early internal communications is essential to disseminate information internally that will ultimately free flow to the community. The plan will also recommend training programs for key staff that will improve their readiness to communicate; a successful brand is one that understands that staff play a critical role in actualizing an organization's objectives.



**Branding the organization and the City** is fundamentally important when addressing any messages and themes of communication. This process supports the many initiatives that bring prosperity to the community and builds on the access for both citizen engagement and international/national recognition. Branding enhancements were complete in 2010 and will foster key message development to impact local and farther reaching awareness.

**Budget constraints and limited resources** require a very targeted and phased in approach to new or enhanced communications. It impacts the ability to support staff needs and fully communicate information to the community.

**Media challenges** include the need to continue to build relationships with local media, but also tapping into the nearby Toronto market (the most saturated media market in North America), as well as other target geographic areas that align with economic development and other corporate objectives. In addition, it is vital that we have the ability to address main stream media as well as new media such as the social and digital platforms.

**Enhancement of community communications** offers the needed frequency combining fresh information with a two-way channel of communications while recognizing the limited resources and the high expectations of the corporation. Challenges of multi-lingual, multi-abilities, new social media channels will be addressed.

**Issues Management and Communications** strategies to put in place key evaluation tools to better identify potential issues and create a system-wide approach to addressing these needs.

## Key Stakeholders

- citizens
- council/staff
- community groups, advisory committees, inter-governmental partners, news media, businesses, associations, visitors and tourists, investors, investment intermediaries

## Laying the Groundwork: Research, Audits and Framing the Message

**Branding** - research was a key step to engage the community in the branding process. More than 1000 people participated in the process that was completed and approved by Cambridge City Council in early 2011. Overall strategic key messages were solidified by the branding process as the research and gap analysis offered the **right mix of messages** to address strengths, combat weaknesses and build awareness in areas where information is lacking.

The exercise defined the pillars of marketing that will support Mayor and Council and the priorities of the foundation of the City's overriding positioning that builds brand promise. These include: viable city, environment, stronger economy, safety and clean city, inclusiveness and diversity, nature in waterways, pathways and parklands, and efficiency, accountability and fiscally-responsible governance. Survey data resulted in five key areas of positioning based on current perceptions:

**Choice/Options** - where to live, work and play, neighbourhoods and opportunities.

**Accessible** - get anywhere in Ontario from here; easy to get around town; to markets; close to 401.

**Inviting** - community, stability, safety, affordable/cost-effective, not sacrificing anything.

**Personal** - talk to any councillor and neighbour, know everyone here; small town feel.

**Value** - you get more here and it's the best choice.

**Positioning Statement** - You meet the nicest people in Cambridge. It's a place that understands all about coming together. There is so much more to Cambridge than the beautiful lands created at the convergence of two rivers or its logistically perfect location in the heart of Ontario's economic corridor. Cambridge is the coming together of people from diverse, close-knit and proud communities. The people of Cambridge 'do



the right thing' by respecting history, family values, a sound work ethic, the arts, environment and advancement. A young city, Cambridge is a master of balancing the excitement and promise of the new with the historical significance and stability of the old. A place where coming together is just the start. Uniting together is what sets Cambridge apart. Undiscovered: Cambridge families and entrepreneurs get more for less, and sacrifice nothing.

**Communications Preference Study** - The City undertook a Communications Preference study in 2009 to evaluate the listening and reading choices of our stakeholders to best position our messages in the news and social vehicles that people are regularly engaging in. The study also served to tell us what types of information people want us to communicate. While the research confirmed a significant following of our local and regional newspaper and broadcasters (TV, radio), it also demonstrated that national media sources were a constant source of information for our community. Resoundingly, social and digital media were preferred with 100 percent of respondents selecting Facebook as a source they would value and use.

**Corporate Communications Audit** - between 2008 and 2010, Corporate Communications performed an audit of communications systems including: newsletters, public notification, public information areas for posting materials, corporation brochures, mailing lists and techniques to enhance outreach, and general advertising campaign approaches. This included an internal best practices review and assessment of other communications systems, vehicles and approaches to feed into the communications and marketing strategy.



Part  
**5**

**Action Plan/Next Steps**

**Short Term - Immediate Actions:**

Some of the items listed below require the right balance of resources to effectively execute the plan. Recognizing the budget constraints and base service adjustment needs in the forthcoming budget, the plan seeks to achieve many initiatives within current budget, but it does look to add one FTE in the near future to help with implementation and to support other master plan communications. It is important to note that current divisional staff is two and some actions require budget support to move forward. In evaluating the plan it is important to note the potential savings, and positive system impacts that will result in addition to striving for communications excellence.

## 1. Aligning communications throughout the corporation -

- a. Develop and coordinate a **decentralized model of communications** within the corporation in conjunction with the Corporate Communications and Marketing division with the creation of liaisons to enhance communications within the City. This will ensure effective inter-departmental communication and leverage economies of scale given the limited resources.
- b. Further **definition of internal processes** - key departmental and business unit contacts, website contacts, newsletter contributors, distribution protocols, and other related systems.
- c. **Coordinate marketing, advertising** activities corporate wide to share strategies, distribution dates and media channel utilization. While being sensitive to the target markets and timelines, this brings together the activities of each department that permits enhanced branding, defines roll out schedules and allows corporate marketing to inject messages that don't compete with others but rather enhance them.
- d. **Coordinate corporate wide research** which is important when communicating the big picture to media, the public and the world. For example, a national reporter is working on a story about development and needs some information. As the communications division, they address the need with support to bring the information together. It requires statistics from a few departments: planning, transportation, economic development, in order to be effective in answering the question in a timely manner. It also allows the team to collaborate through the process; something individual requests would not do. It requires a communications officer that can contribute by making the experience of working with a municipality positive, transparent and most of all, one that gives comprehensive information.

## 2. Branding the Organization -

- a. Now that the City has completed the branding and research exercise to define and position Cambridge, we need to **execute advertising and marketing campaigns corporately** to support the corporate identity and one that speaks to our current and future aspirations, unique attributes and amenities. This would include standardizing components of the message so that any department can plug them into their customized approach, communicating emerging priorities like sustainability, and reconnecting the services we deliver that are currently branded without the use of corporate elements (currently over 20 logos in play).
- b. Further coordination of graphic standards, **integrated review process** for all materials.

- c. **Continue supporting development** of individual marketing and communications strategies for various departments to provide expertise and assistance with execution.

**3. Supporting the Cambridge team: increasing readiness and problem solving throughout the corporation -**

- a. Provide a **complete set of tools** and templates to support and ensure more effective and consistent communications.
- b. Update the **corporate identity manual** and related policies.
- c. Develop **key messages** to support department and corporate goals to incorporate in the messages on behalf of the City of Cambridge.
- d. Enhance access to corporate information and priorities through **Merlin (Intranet)** and other communications vehicles.
- e. Host **learning sessions** on a by-annual basis to provide information sessions that touch on budget, priorities, new initiatives and 'need to know' information. Explore delivery methods including telecasting.
- f. Maintain the quarterly frequency of **City Line**, the employee news and notables newsletter. Offer additional "windows" into the departmental projects to foster understanding.
- g. Continue to share **media releases** with staff in advance of outside distribution.
- h. Investigate **video options** to webcast or have available on Merlin (Intranet) for staff to review when schedule permits. This opens access and builds stronger ties to staff at remote locations.
- i. Create an event to **re-launch Merlin** and offer tips on how to obtain valuable information. Encourage staff to post to Merlin to advance the information content. Add an analytics tool to the intranet to monitor areas that are popular in order to continue to build content.
- j. Based on the Media Protocol document approved by Management Committee in 2008, develop a **training module** to support the identified spokespeople and subject matter experts.
- k. Provide numerous training opportunities for employees to improve their awareness of new and effective communications techniques, contributing to overall communications skill improvement. Offer **media relations training** for council and key staff to enhance their understanding and skills related to news gathering, protocols, and processes that support the City of Cambridge's communications strategy.

- 4. Social, Digital and Online Opportunities -** Under the current budget commitment **enhance the website** by adding a greater presence of - video (already approved by Council), more interactive information,

online public input channels, surveys/polls, and additional options for electronic support.

5. **Enhance media monitoring** of social media and better understand the current “conversation” to enable the city to address the needs of the community. This includes using freeware tools that help build the awareness of the community’s point of view. The City of Cambridge launched its corporate Facebook site early in 2011. Visitors and interaction has grown. Automated content development is in place to complement the personal posts made by Corporate Communications and Marketing. The Corporation requires a ‘Social Media Policy” to support this development and provide guidelines for staff and access for key employees to post and monitor.

### **Medium-Term Actions:**

1. Establish and engage in a full - goal oriented **social media** campaign using key tools that enhance our traditional communications.
2. Refine and develop **website for accessibility**, multi-lingual and ease of navigation for the users to meet legislative requirements. Undertake training for the internal website content providers utilizing in-house resources in the corporate communications and marketing division. Review the analytics tools and create a long-term strategy going forward that looks at the overall architecture.
3. Continue to review internal communications: frequency of newsletter, news alerts, intranet with a view to enhancing existing processes. Consider **employee profiles**, online presence, coordinated resources, wiki feedback forum and other new media technologies to team build and enhance operations.
4. Report on **best practices for media relations**, internal systems and support for proactive verses reactive media communications. This includes year over year analysis and effectiveness of conveying the message.
5. Refine and enhance the **advertising of notices**, community happening and other key messages using traditional and non-traditional media. This includes revamping the “City Pages”, evaluating new legislative protocol for legal and statutory notices, and building templates and standards around City identification to include in all advertising.

### **Longer-Term Actions:**

1. Evaluate the need for a **council update** for the community on new direction, outcomes from Council and General Committee meetings, and key issues management.

2. **Annual Report to the Community** - consider this in addition to the Mayor's state of the City report as a formal way to engage council and create a document that shares the vision and strategic plan for the corporation. It will update the community on process against plans, celebrate key accomplishments and good news, share financial strategic direction and define the key goals for the year ahead.

### **Highlights of Progress and Budget Impact for Next Steps**

Initiative	Description	Budget Impact	Timelines
<b>COMPLETED TO DATE:</b>			
<b>Secure a Communications and Website Assistant</b>	A support position approved by council to help with day to day communications activities, website training and administration and general duties.	\$40,000 approved in 2009 budget	October 2009
<b>Branding Initiative</b>	Develop the RFP and tender a modest contract to undertake research to help define the pillars and brand message and promise.	\$25,000 used for branding RFP work.	Completed branding research and recommendations - Feb 2010
<b>Engage community</b>	Though the branding review, engage key stakeholders in the development of the strategy. How do they want to hear about things? Prominent sources of information. What's important, key values, etc.	N/A covered in the branding and internal research component	November 2009 to January 2010
<b>Research</b>	Undertake further internal research to incorporate strategic outcomes of key departmental	N/A	November 2008 - January 2010

	initiatives		
<b>Opportunities</b>	Flowing from the above research and branding develop opportunities through a situational analysis to determine.	N/A	March 2010
<b>Recommendations</b>	Present a series of tactics and outcomes to council demonstrating the timelines and budget impacts.	Utilize \$15,000 in capital Strategy account for priority initiatives	April 2010
<b>Digital Media</b>	Develop a corporate facebook page and integrate it within the corporate website functionality	N/A utilized the existing web maintenance budget	January 2011
<b>Employee Communications</b>	Redesign and develop City Line newsletter; add news flash or communiqués to supplement quarterly communications.	No Cost. This was tackled internally; savings were achieved by moving away from an all printed publication to electronic.	January 2009
<b>Media Communications</b>	One of the biggest needs coming from the research is that news media are relying more and more upon publication-ready communications. The City of Cambridge has increased its outreach over the last three years distributing an average of 5 media releases a month, as an example. There is great opportunity to	No additional costs, however, with the limited resources, there is an opportunity to build on this vital element of communications. The proposed position supports this direction.	

	expand in this area.		
<b>WHAT'S NEEDED:</b>			
<b>Communications Officer</b>	<p>Benchmarks have demonstrated that the corporate communications function is significantly under resourced compared to like cities. To support written communications, outreach and tactical delivery of plan and actionable items, a new FTE is proposed.</p> <p>This proposed role will also support the communications needs related to all strategic plans which call for added support, marketing and messaging. Additionally, the officer will develop proposals for awards, acknowledgements and funding opportunities.</p> <p>Additionally, the added resource will better align us to support communications with partners and free up the website assistant to also focus on content development for tourism, intergovernmental</p>	\$95,000	<p>Pending Council and budget approval -2013-14</p> <p>(Corporate Initiatives) *must compete with other departmental priorities identified in the Corporate Sustainability Plan.</p>

	and media. The division is currently posting to about 6 independent websites for promotion but the opportunities are far reaching. We fund partnerships such as Waterloo Region Tourism Marketing Corporations (WRTMC), Canada's Technology Triangle (CTT Inc) and others and we are limited to fully capitalizing on the partnership because of lacking content and resources.		
<b>Media Training Program</b>	For council and key spokes people within the corporation	\$12,000 (on-going annual investment)	Budget year 2013  (Corporate Initiatives)
<b>Media Monitoring</b>	Currently the communications and marketing division monitors media to share with staff and council, review for accuracy and re-connect if changes are needed. This proposal suggests freeing up this time of the lean division and contracting out this service to reach print, broadcast, online, social mediums.	\$14,000 per annum  (each area of monitoring has a monthly fee plus a per article cost)	Budget year 2013  * for office of the CAO, base service adjustment
<b>Website Enhancements</b>	The website has a growing viewership, more online payment	\$50,000 over three years  (Total \$150,000)	Budget year 2012-13-14  *capital budget

	<p>systems and significant content. This proposal serves to tweak navigation, add archiving functions, and make it easier for the public to find information. (Note: the website accessibility audit identified a number of modifications required to reach AAA standards and is in keeping with the new AODA legislation. This proposed resource also helps the division roll out these mandatory changes. The division has engaged in a new software tracking and work flow system to achieve this, however lack of resources will slow progress.</p>		request over three years
<p><b>Leveraging New Interactive Web Technologies (Web 2.0) - Website Tools for Users</b></p>	<p>Capitalizing on the digital environment, mobile applications, open data concepts and specialized programs/apps that deliver information, the proposal is to introduce custom applications for citizens. This approach also allows us to automate more information to lessen the load for</p>	\$10,000	<p>2012 budget</p> <p>*request for Technology Services Base Budget</p>

	existing staff while enhancing our level of communications to our stakeholders.		
<b>Website Training</b>	There are currently about 25 individuals that provide content to the website which is administered by the Corporate Communications and Marketing Division. These staff members have limited exposure to technology and particularly, require training to support their role. The training will also include accessing to corporate e-blasts, how to create and execute them, and the mailer distribution system. The training would also cover inclusive language and writing for website publication.	\$20,000 (ongoing requirement)  Covering data manipulation, photographic support, HTML programming at entry, basic and intermediate level depending on the person in the role.	Part of the funding is in 2011 budget for AODA  *\$10,000 existing in base service budget 2012 with requirement to secure another \$10,000 on an annual basis through the Capital training budget
<b>Advertising</b>	Currently the Corporate Communications and Marketing division has an annual advertising budget of \$9,7000. To reflect the research findings, the city needs to ramp up this commitment to enhance our messaging, use a broader platform of media, and	\$25,000 (per annum)  This is still significantly less than the investment made by surrounding municipalities which is between 3 -5 times our current investment level.	2012 base service adjustment *requires \$15,300 additional funding to bring to total of \$25,000  *ongoing per year

	<p>increase our opportunities for investment and build brand.</p> <p>The city also would benefit by delving into new markets such as online advertising, key word placements and interactive ads.</p>		
<b>Communication Tools</b>	Annual Report to the community, 4 corporate newsletters per year, quick facts for investment and associated limited printing costs.	\$15,000 (per annum)	2013 *Corporate Initiative
<b>Policy Development</b>	There are about 12 corporate policies that either require refinement or must be newly created to cover emerging trends such as social media, website, communications standards, and advertising. This includes investigating standards for levels of communication, timeliness and measurement of effectiveness.	No cost. Update Policies and Procedures for approval by Management Committee and Council.	2012-2013
<b>Logo Trade Marking</b>	The new, approved visual identity requires trade marking which is currently underway through Legal Services. The costs are modest and can be covered under the current budget.	No additional costs outside of budget.	2012

	The City still requires the trade marking of the shield/crest logo used by Mayor and for official business.		
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