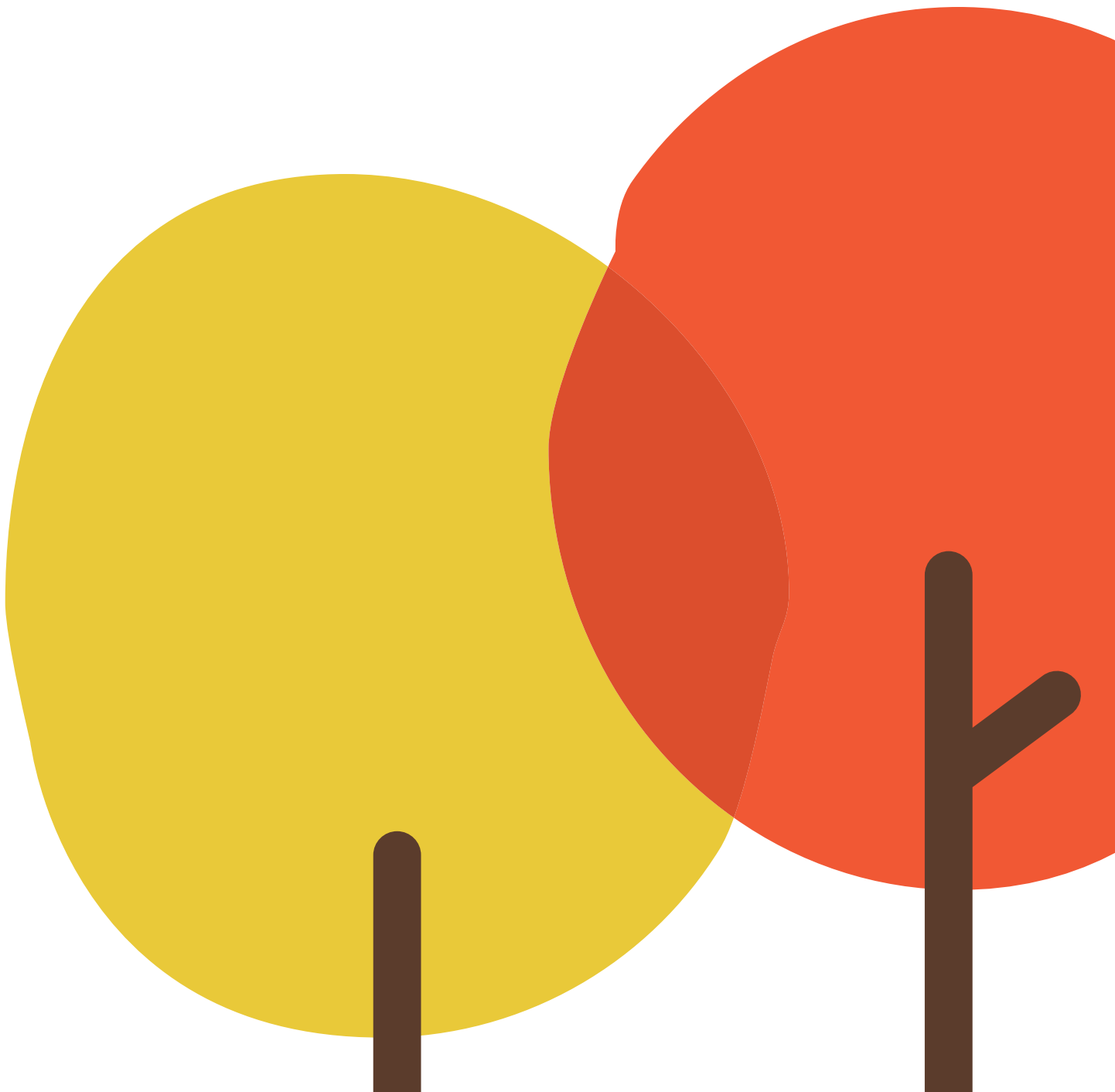




MUNICIPALITY *of the*
COUNTY *of* KINGS

A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

for the Municipality of the County of Kings



PURPOSE

To guide staff in the delivery of citizen-centric communications that fosters a sense of community, builds trust, and supports the Municipality's Vision, Mission and Values.

VISION

A community of communities where all people belong.

MISSION

To enhance the quality of life for all through the provision of municipal services in an inclusive, effective, and collaborative manner.

VALUES

Integrity ● Respect ● Excellence ● Transparency
Innovation ● Diversity ● Sustainability

This Communications Strategy will be reviewed every two years and amended as needed to reflect the evolving needs of audiences, emerging trends, and proven practices.

COMMUNICATIONS VISION

The Municipality's values will serve as guiding principles shaping all communications activities.

Effective external communications begins with sound internal communications. This strategy zeroes in on fostering a greater sense of unity between internal departments by creating more opportunities for two-way conversations, increasing the frequency of routine inter-departmental updates, and celebrating our wins – big and small – to repeatedly show how the collective day-to-day efforts of engaged and informed employees results in positive outcomes.

Collaboration is critical to meet the demand for trustworthy, timely, and accessible information in an ever-evolving digital world. The goals outlined in this strategy aim to empower staff to adopt and implement standardized, collaborative, and forward-looking approaches to proactive communications. Whenever possible, we will communicate early and often to build trust and respect to ensure audiences are receptive and responsive when the Municipality has important information to share.

The Communications Specialist will continually work to streamline routine tasks, prioritize the development of high-value content shaped by the needs of diverse target audiences, and advance innovative communications campaigns directly aligned with the priorities established by Municipal Council in Strategic Plan 2021-2024.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS (EXTERNAL)

GOAL 1

Elevate the Municipality’s reputation as a trustworthy source of relevant information for citizens, stakeholders, businesses, communities, and media organizations.

OUTCOME

Increased consistency, engagement, and compliance from citizens and communities receiving Municipal messaging.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Develop and implement an efficient Communications Plan process to guide the proactive co-creation of accurate, trustworthy, and effective content and media releases informed by subject matter experts.
- 2. Introduce and manage an opt-in e-newsletter offering monthly updates from the Municipality.
- 3. Compile data measuring performance of social media accounts and Municipal website.

GOAL 2

Foster a greater sense of civic pride through human-centered storytelling and content raising awareness of how municipal services and facilities support citizens and communities in the Kings Region.

OUTCOME

Improved organic reach of social media posts and an increase in loyal followers engaging with compelling, relatable, and timely content instilling heightened sense of community and belonging.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Tell more “good news” stories to celebrate successes, boost positive engagements on social media, and encourage social media audiences to get involved in spreading the Municipality’s stories, advisories and announcements.
- 2. Increase the frequency and variety of content produced, and track performance metrics.
- 3. Develop Municipal Minute video series to “show” how the Municipality serves the Kings Region and highlight the “beating hearts” of our communities. Timelines will be established in individual Communications Plans designed with specific audiences, objectives, and subjects in mind.

GOAL 3

Establish best practices for reaching and serving target audiences with diverse information needs.

OUTCOME

Improved accessibility standards for all Municipal communications channels, including the website.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Develop an interactive Communications map identifying communities impacted by limited digital connectivity, or other barriers hindering accessibility to information, and produce a list of the best communications channels for these areas. The map could potentially be modelled after the Kings Public Atlas apps, but could also include a list of key contacts, effective methods of communication, engaging social media pages devoted to specific communities, popular bulletin board locations, effective advertising platforms, and willing community groups open to sharing Municipal messaging.
- 2. Explore cost-conscious, environmentally-aware, and sustainable approaches to addressing barriers impeding access to information.
- 3. Collaborate with diversity staff and resources to support the co-creation of respectful and welcoming communications materials.
- 4. Adopt accessible communications guidelines that will enable staff to continually assess and address barriers limiting the reach of Municipal communication materials.

GOAL 4

Increase the use of multimedia content, innovative forms of storytelling, and performance analytics.

OUTCOME

Increased traffic on the Municipality’s free digital communications channels capable of delivering both instant and innovative messaging to external audiences via emerging and time-tested platforms.

STRATEGIES

- 1. Employ a varied approach to content creation to appeal to a broader audience and increase the number of loyal followers regularly visiting the Municipality’s social channels.
- 2. Create a catalogue of reusable Municipal Minute videos (with captions) to raise awareness of Municipal services and Strategic Plan progress by “showing” rather than simply “telling”.
- 3. Continually review the Municipality’s website with the goal of increasing the use of e-services and improving the user experience for audiences with diverse needs.
- 4. Develop and manage year-at-a-glance Content and Marketing Calendars providing an overview of annual timelines/deadlines relating to known or anticipated campaigns.
- 5. Continually explore the potential for cost savings related to advertising with traditional versus digital channels.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS (EXTERNAL)

GOAL 5
Raise awareness of the role of a Councillor and Municipal Council.

OUTCOME
Increased understanding of how the work of Municipal Council impacts citizens and communities.

- STRATEGIES**
- 1. Invite social media followers to tune in online or attend Council and Committee of the Whole meetings.
 - 2. Produce timely and transparent overviews of what happened at regular monthly meetings of Council for the Municipality’s social media accounts and continue posting links to agenda packages and minutes.
 - 3. Broadcast and promote videos of Council meetings to make it easier for members of the public to follow the meetings in an accessible and convenient manner.
 - 4. Plan and host annual District Meetings to create opportunities for citizens to receive face-to-face, in-person updates from the Municipality and converse with members of Council in the community.
 - 5. Explore innovative approaches to regularly offering multimedia features and virtual check-ins with members of Council.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS (INTERNAL)

GOAL 1
Strengthen the role of the Communications Specialist through efficient operating practices, policies, and procedures.

OUTCOME
Streamlined approaches to routine tasks, more consistency throughout the organization, shorter response times, and more time for high-value, innovative projects .

- STRATEGIES**
- 1. Implement a Standard Operating Procedure for internal requests for communications support.
 - 2. Develop, implement, and manage a comprehensive Communications Hub that serves as a one-stop shop housing the following: toolkits assisting staff with the development of communications materials, shareable content calendars, active/closed Communications Plans, templates, updates, and Strategic Plan reporting. Given the anticipated shift away from internal drives, a Microsoft Teams channel for Communications is the best option.
 - 3. Implement operating practices that align with recommendations shared at Nova Scotia EMO’s Public Information Officer’s Course regarding regional emergency management communications.

GOAL 2
Open new lines of two-way, conversational communication between various departments and worksites.

OUTCOME
Improved workplace culture through peer-to-peer recognition, open invitations to regularly provide constructive feedback in a safe space, and increased collaboration.

- STRATEGIES**
- 1. Empower staff to connect with colleagues outside of their departments by establishing accessible forums for inter-departmental conversations and updates.
 - 2. Explore the benefits of developing an internal peer-to-peer recognition program allowing colleagues to formally commend the work of others and share a “Kings County Kudos”, or an anonymous suggestion box function to encourage feedback, idea sharing, or the expression of concerns.

COMMUNICATIONS GOALS (INTERNAL)

GOAL 3
Increase staff’s awareness of what’s happening throughout the organization.

OUTCOME
Improved internal communications rankings in annual employee engagement surveys.

- OUTCOME**
- 1. Share weekly Media Mentions (when applicable) and monthly summaries of what happened at Council.
 - 2. Produce a quarterly internal newsletter for electronic distribution to all staff.
 - 3. Create and distribute visual reminders of the Municipality’s Vision, Mission, and Values.

GOAL 4
Foster a collaborative approach to proactive internal and external communications.

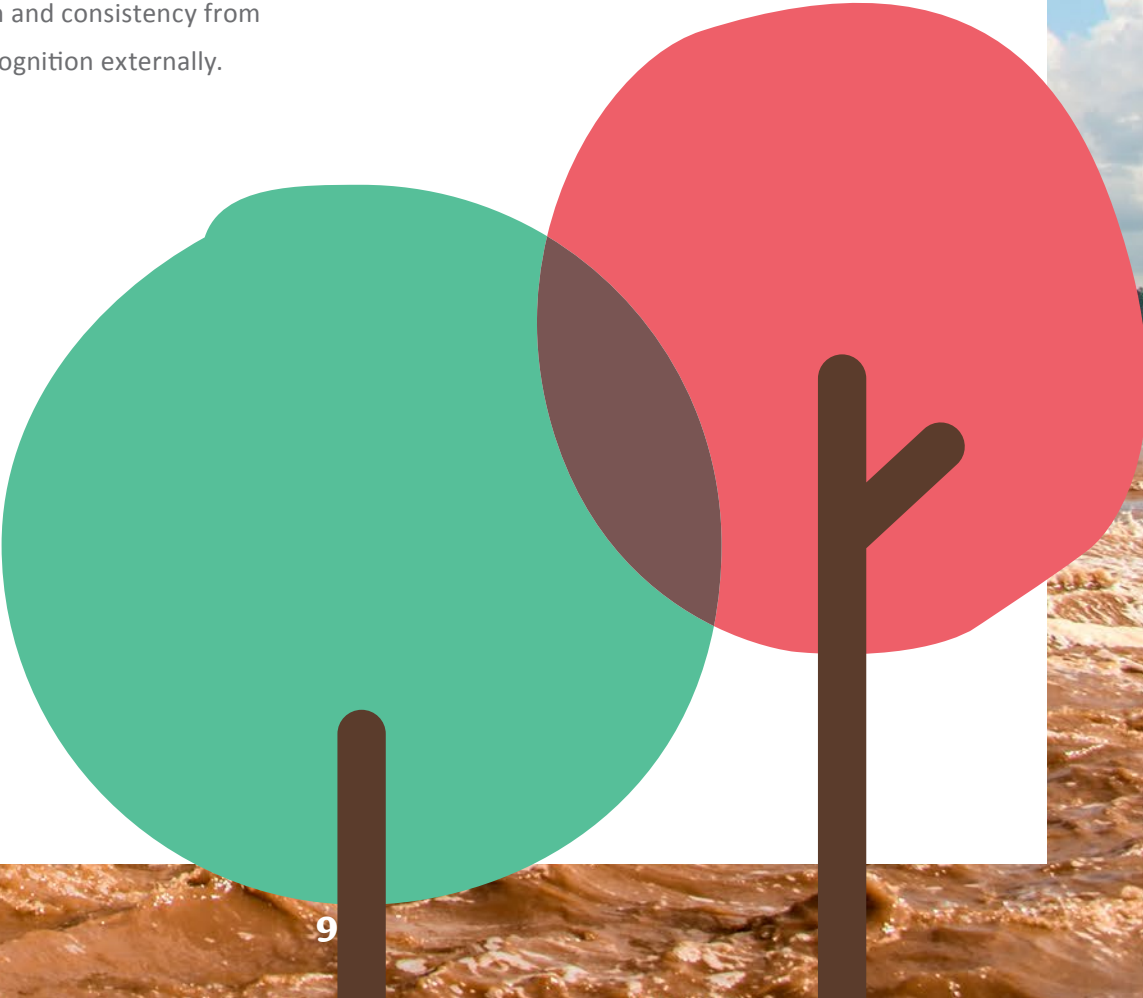
OUTCOME
More lead time and collaboration supporting the development of efficient, effective, and innovative communications plans informed by subject matter experts in all departments.

- STRATEGIES**
- 1. Establish a network of Communications Champions to ensure one member of every department is routinely looking for opportunities to spread the word about the important work underway at the Municipality, including departmental success stories.
 - 2. Communications Champions would support the work of the Communications Specialist by sharing ideas for: improved communications methods, content, graphics, media releases, website updates, Public Service Advisories, story pitches, Strategic Plan updates, and newsletter submissions.
 - 3. Support subject matter experts in the dissemination of public-facing information.

GOAL 5
Equip all departments with the tools required to complete the rollout of the new Municipal brand.

OUTCOME
Increased credibility and awareness supported by the consistent use of Municipal branding according to established guidelines.

- OUTCOME**
- 1. Populate a toolkit with templates and brand guidelines promoting the consistent use of logos and designs in Municipal operations.
 - 2. Engage professional graphic designer for support on an as-needed basis.
 - 3. Achieve 100% cooperation and consistency from staff to improve brand recognition externally.



ROUTINE COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Bi-annual	As needed
Social Media	<div></div>					
Municipal Website						<div></div>
Media Releases						<div></div>
Council Recaps			<div></div>			
Public Service Announcements						<div></div>
Storm Updates						<div></div>
Valley Wire Column			<div></div>			
Tax Newsletters					<div></div>	
Opt-in External E-Newsletter			<div></div>			
Municipal Minute Videos				<div></div>		
Media Mentions		<div></div>				
Internal Newsletter				<div></div>		

ADVERTISING

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to reaching everyone, or every community, in the Kings Region.

The Municipality continues to rely on local radio stations and print products - newspapers, regional magazines, posters, event pamphlets, flyer mail-outs, and community-based newsletters - to deliver need-to-know information through credible channels that are accessible offline.

The Municipality also recognizes the importance of relaying important information through free communications channels, such as radio stations and select print products available at no charge.

Statutory advertising is handled in accordance with the Municipal Government Act. When there is room for discretion relating to non- urgent matters supported by digital campaigns, the Municipality will prioritize boosted social media posts to reach well-defined target audiences in the most cost-effective manner.

AUDIENCES

BY THE NUMBERS

47,404 residents, according to 2016 Census*

23,036 residential tax accounts*

1,089 commercial accounts*

723 Greenwood Water Utility accounts*

80 Municipal employees*

10 members of Municipal Council

The Municipality of the County of Kings is divided into nine polling districts, each populated with communities with a range of information needs based on geographic location, population density, amenities, and internet connectivity.

Staff work out of a number of locations: the Municipal Administration Building, Engineering and Public Works Operations Centre, sewage treatment plants, water utilities, the Municipal Lab, and the Aylesford Lake Beach recreation site.

*These figures are based on information available as of Nov. 29, 2021.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Municipality primarily uses Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to share information and content with external audiences on social media. Social media practices and platforms will continually evolve in response to emerging opportunities, technology, trends, and best practices.

MEDIA

The media plays an important role in telling the Municipality’s stories, supporting transparency, building a sense of community, and disseminating important information throughout the Kings Region.

The Municipality’s Communications Specialist is responsible for media relations, media events, media monitoring, and media releases.

All interview requests received by staff should immediately be forwarded to the Communications Specialist for review. The Communications Specialist can, in turn, offer the following support on an as-needed basis:

- 1. Identification of the appropriate spokesperson or subject matter expert for an interview.
- 2. Assistance with the development of key messages or responses.
- 3. Assistance with interview preparation and backgrounders.
- 4. Development or sourcing of supplementary multimedia elements.
- 5. Verification of a reporter’s credentials.

It’s always best to prepare for an interview rather than try to answer questions right away. Ask reporters to provide a deadline and list of questions on the initial point of contact, and work with the Communications Specialist to ensure the deadline is met.

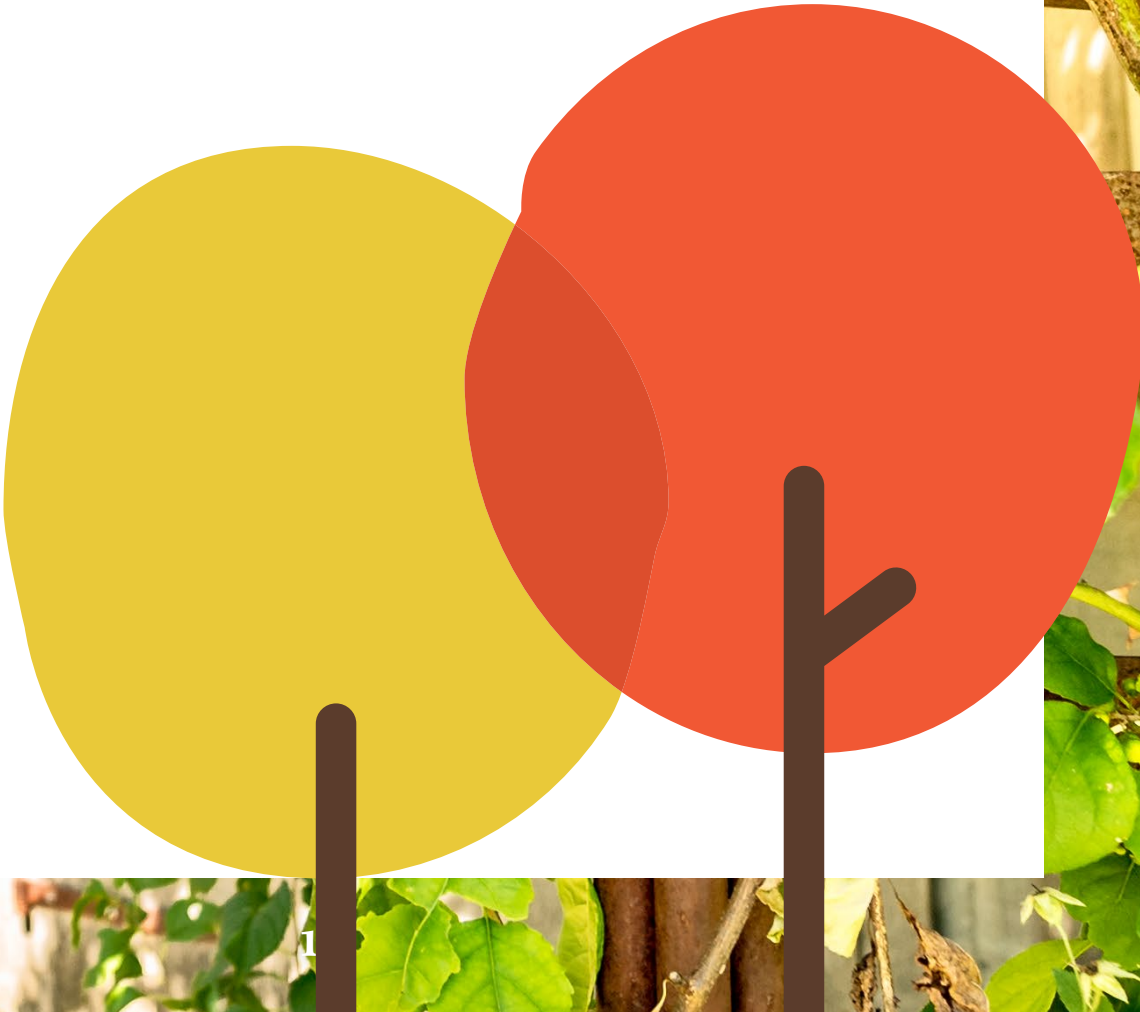
In accordance with the Municipality’s Communications Policy, entitled Policy COMM-02-005:Communications, the Mayor will serve as the chief spokesperson for Council unless another Member of Council is designated.

The policy further states that while the Chief Administrative Officer is the Administrative spokesperson for the Municipality, service area managers, supervisors, and designated departmental spokespersons are permitted to speak on behalf of the Municipality when the topic relates to programs, services, initiatives, and policies within their responsibilities or areas of expertise.

REQUESTS FOR COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT

According to the Standard Operating Procedure for Communications Requests, staff can file a ticket through the “Helpdesk Requests” button on the Kings Municipal Intranet site and select “Communications” in the drop-down menu for service options. Requests from a member of Council are first directed to the CAO, or the CAO’s designate.

The Communications Specialist is responsible for the following: emergency external communications, news-letters, communications and marketing campaigns, social media management, editing, template support, media relations, public service announcements, brand monitoring, supporting multimedia content creation, basic graphic design, organizing annual district meetings, developing special interest stories, assisting with elections communications, and coordinating funding announcements.





MUNICIPALITY *of the*
COUNTY *of* **KINGS**

Contact Information for Communications Specialist

Ashley Thompson (She/Her)

athompson@countyofkings.ca

Desk: (902) 690-6105

Cell: (902) 680-8574

