

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE – MAY 11, 2009

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Recommendation

The City Manager and the Director of Corporate Communications recommends:

1. That Sussex Strategy Group's presentation with respect to the proposed City of Vaughan Strategic Communications Plan be received, and
2. That based on comments received by Committee, that a further report on the Strategic Communications Plan be provided at the Council on May 26, 2009.

Economic Impact

N/A

Communications Plan

Various communication options will be considered as elements of the communications plan are implemented.

Purpose

To present the City of Vaughan Strategic Communications Plan for feedback from the Strategic Planning Committee.

Background - Analysis and Options

Sussex Strategy Group was retained in July 2008 to develop a communications strategy for the City. The objective of their review was the following:

- to develop a Communications strategy
- to assist the City in implementing the strategy to reposition the City of Vaughan
- to assist the City of Vaughan with public relations and issues management

The Strategic Communications Working Group met with Sussex Strategy Group on April 22, 2009 to discuss the Strategic Communications Plan. This plan is being presented for input from Strategic Planning Committee members. The plan highlights recommendations in the areas of issues management, media relations, a number of proactive communications and public relations initiatives. Highlights include:

- Enhancing the issue preparedness function of the City
- Conducting individual strategic communications review sessions with City officials
- Using proactive communications to support and promote the Council Action Priorities Plan 2009
- Support a Public Relations component in the Corporate Communications department dedicated to promoting new strategic initiatives, measuring the results of all communications activities and strengthening the City's connection with its residents.

In addition, it proposes public relations campaigns that could support the Council Priorities Plan and Corporate initiatives, including:

- Developing proactive communications activities in support of the Council Plan Priorities

- Developing an overarching theme such as "Vaughan: A City Working for You"
- Developing a communications plan to position the rebranding and benefits of living, working and investing in Vaughan
- Developing a strategic communications campaign to promote the City's green initiatives

Other key recommendations and initiatives include:

- Issues Management Policies-review the City's issues management protocol and expand issue identification capabilities
- Evaluate what communications products are sent to what media and when
- Determine the best use of new social networking and communications tools
- Develop a strategic communications plan to engage the residents, and a specific page on the city's website to involve residents in the engagement process

Upon review of this report at the Strategic Planning Committee and Council approval at its meeting on May 26, 2009 an implementation strategy will be developed. Sussex Strategy Group will work with staff to implement components of the strategy and will report back on progress to a future Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

The development of a Communications Strategy is listed as strategic initiative number seven in the Vaughan Vision 2020 strategic plan. It is linked to the strategic objective, Demonstrate Leadership & Promote Effective Governance.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

The Strategic Communications Plan is being presented for review and feedback from the Strategic Planning Committee.

Attachments

Presentation – Strategic Communications Plan and Recommendations 2008-09

Report prepared by:

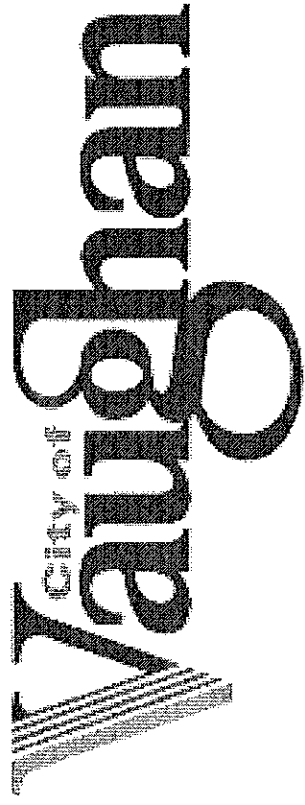
Thomas Plant MBA, MPA
Senior Manager of Strategic Planning

Madeline Zito
Director Corporate Communications

Respectfully submitted,

Michael DeAngelis
City Manager

Madeline Zito
Director Corporate Communications



The City Above Toronto

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Plan and Recommendations 2008-09

SUSSEX | STRATEGY | GROUP

The Sussex Task

1. Determine and implement a strategy to “address any reputational damage to the City resulting from recent events”
2. Assist in formulating a longer term strategic communications plan

The City's Terms of Reference

1. Review and assess media coverage, public perceptions and related issues that impact the City's public image
2. Address any concerns of Vaughan residents about the City's perceived negative image
3. Identify opportunities to improve media coverage
4. Provide advice and assistance for immediate response to issues as they arise
5. Develop practical recommendations to be delivered to the Strategic Communications Working Group Sub-Committee for review and approval
6. Assist in the timely implementation of the recommendations, as approved

Summary of Activities

Media Relations

- Reviewed past media coverage for patterns and development of recommendations to address negative perceptions
- Continue to conduct ongoing media monitoring
- Conducted reporter outreach
 - Met with key reporters and editors to provide candid feedback to the City, assist in development of communications strategy

August 2008 – April 2009

Summary of Activities

Issues Management Support

- Provision of strategic advice concerning various contentious issues
- Development of numerous documents for Council use - key messages, Q&As, letters to the editor and strategies to minimize negative attention
- Sussex on call 24/7
- August 2008–April 2009

Strategic Communications Review

- Sessions held with each Councillor
- February–April 2009

Summary of Activities

Proactive Communications

- Developed recommendations in support of Council Action Priorities Plan 2009
 - Series of recommendations awaiting approval for further development
- Recommended strategic activities around the 2009 Federal Budget

Communications Objectives

- Earn public acceptance of Vaughan as a City that works for its residents
- Reduce the current negative focus of media attention
- Ensure City has tools and protocols to deal with issues
- Build acceptance and support of the City's re-branding

Communications Strategy

What must the City do to achieve its objectives?

- Improve the City's issue preparedness
- Develop greater message discipline
- Conduct individual strategic communications review sessions with City officials
- Develop proactive communications to support Council's Action Priorities Plan 2009
- Develop a public relations component in Corporate Communications

Tactics and Timelines

- Original Sussex drafts had tactics divided into the Short, Medium, and Long-Term
- More recent versions of the Sussex Strategic Communications Plan now show tactics divided into sections:
 - Issues Management and Media Relations
 - Communicating Council's Priorities
 - Other Communications Initiatives
 - The role of Corporate Communications

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

MANAGING CURRENT ISSUES

Recommendations

- Prepare issue notes with messaging and Q&As, that address possible outcomes – distribute to Council
- City representatives should refrain from statements or actions that drive negative media coverage

Timeline

Recommendation made: August 2008

Implemented: Notes prepared beginning in August. Council messaging showing improvement in 2009.

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

ISSUES MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Recommendations

- Review the City's issues management protocol
- Expand issue identification capabilities
- City Manager and Communications Director should represent Vaughan on contentious issues
- All contentious issues should be referred to the City Manager and Corporate Communications

Timeline

Recommendation made: August 2008

Implemented: Fall 2008 and improving

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

KEY MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations

- Use messaging that negates the issue and stops feeding additional media attention
- Use messaging that demonstrates the many good things that are happening in Vaughan
- Use positive messaging in all communications products

Timeline

Recommendation made: August 2008

Implemented: Fall 2008

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

Recommendations

- Sussex has conducted individual sessions with City Officials
- Emphasis on tools to bridge from negative to positive messaging
- Focus on messaging to emphasize Council's priorities for 2009

Timeline

Recommendation made: September 2008

Implemented: February, March, April 2009

Strategic Communications Plan

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

WHEN THE MEDIA CALL PROTOCOLS

Recommendations

- Review City policies
- Provide media coaching to anyone who deals with media
- Reinforce protocols with all departments
- Include Corporate Communications contact information on all media communications
- Corporate Communications should be aware of all interview requests

Timeline

Recommendation made: September 2008

Implemented: February, March, April 2009

Strategic Communications Plan

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

CITY SPOKESPEOPLE

Recommendations

- City Manager and Communications Director should represent Vaughan on contentious issues
- Council Committee Chairs should be lead spokespersons for committee work

Timeline

Recommendation made: August 2008

Implemented: Fall 2008

Strategic Communications Plan

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

MEDIA MONITORING

Recommendations

- Continue tracking coverage including messaging of critics
- Evaluate tone, placement, and frequency of articles to aid response strategy

Timeline

Recommendation made: September 2008

Implemented: Fall 2008

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS

Recommendations

- Evaluate what communications products are sent to what media and when
- Evaluate relevance and strength of the news "hook"
- Post all advisories and announcements on the City's web site
- Determine best use of new social networking and communications tools

Timeline

Recommendation made: September 2008
Implemented:

Strategic Communications Plan

Tactics and Timelines - Issues Management and Media Relations

REVISING MATERIALS AS APPROPRIATE

Recommendations

- Monitor success-level of communications materials
(Did the information get reported?)
- Modify materials as appropriate to reach objectives

Timeline

Recommendation made: September 2008

Implemented:

Strategic Communications Plan

Council's Action Priorities Plan 2009

- Develop proactive communications activities in support of Council's 10+ priorities
- Develop an overarching theme such as **"Vaughan: A City Working for You"**
- Further planning and budget consideration needed (upon Council approval)

Other Communications Initiatives

Rebranding Vaughan

Recommendations:

- Develop a communications plan that will positively position the rebranding and the positive elements of living and working in Vaughan. This will include:
 - Creation of a communications plan to support the program and engage residents
 - A specific page on the City's website to promote, inform and engage residents in the process

Other Communications Initiatives

A Green City Getting Greener

Vaughan has had incredible success with increasing recycling rates. In the spring there is normally a greater focus on recycling, with yard cleanup etc.

Recommendations:

- Develop a communications campaign promoting the City's green-initiatives perhaps as part of Earth Day in April
- Underline Vaughan's recycling success to date and other environmental initiatives

The Role of Corporate Communications

- Corporate Communications provides the key link between the City and residents
- It acts as a promoter, supporter and defender of the City's interests
- It manages the flow of communications with both internal and external stakeholders
- It develops and manages communications protocols for City employees and provides communications support for the Mayor and Council

Strategic Communications Plan

The Role of Corporate Communications

Public Relations

Establishing a public relations component in Corporate Communications will allow the City to:

- Develop proactive campaigns based on Council initiatives
- Engage the public through a variety of communications vehicles
- Provide key media with positive hooks and messages supporting city initiatives
- Measure the results of communications activities

Recommendation

- Determine and approve appropriate resources to establish a public relations function within Corporate Communications

Strategic Communications Plan

The Role of Corporate Communications

Using Technology and the Internet

The web combined with portable technology is providing new and faster ways for people to communicate

- Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, others

Recommendation

- Evaluate the use of new technology, internet and social networking sites on a case by case basis

Sussex approvals required

- 1. Conduct issues identification and management seminars with key departmental staff**
- 2. Conduct media training with key staff. Will reinforce corporate “When the media call” protocols and help staff with consistent implementation**
- 3. Develop budget and plan for each of five proposed proactive communications campaigns to support and promote Council’s 2009 priorities**
- 4. Work with Corporate Communications to determine best uses of new social networking technologies (Blogs, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, etc.)**

Sussex Strategy Group

101 Yorkville Avenue

Suite 203

Toronto, Ontario

(416) 961-6611

www.sussex-strategy.com

SUSSEX | STRATEGY | GROUP