

DATE: February 13, 2014

TO: Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua, P.C., Mayor
Members of Council

FROM: Gary Williams, Director of Corporate Communications

RE: **COMMUNICATION – SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING, FEBRUARY 18, 2014**

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COMMUNICATION
SPECIAL COUNCIL
February 18/14
ITEM - 1

BUDGET INFORMATION

Working closely with the Finance Commission, the Corporate Communications department has implemented a variety of tactics with the goal of proactively engaging and educating the public about the 2014 budget and 2015-2017 plan process.

Tactics implemented to achieve this goal include enhancing the budget website content, engaging the public on Twitter and Facebook, distributing posters to City facilities to promote the public meetings, holding an Ask the Budget Expert session on Twitter to answer residents' questions in real time, creating educational videos for the City's YouTube page, and sending out blog messages and eNewsletter updates, among others.

Corporate Communications has measured the success of these tactics since the first budget meeting to ensure the City is achieving the goal of educating and engaging residents in the budget process. Here are some of the key findings:

- **Website:** The budget webpages have been enhanced and increased to six main pages. The site views on the budget webpages have increased almost 60 per cent when comparing to last year's budget process. For this year's budget process, we had 5,812 page views from November to January.
- **Twitter:** By the beginning of February, there had been 71 budget comments and questions posted by the public on Twitter, 56 tweets by the City and 50 retweets of City posts for a total reach of 225,082.* (*Reach refers to the number of unique accounts that received a tweet/post, which means it represents the size of the potential audience.)
- **Facebook:** By the beginning of February, the total reach of the City's 22 budget-related posts on Facebook was 2,769.
- **YouTube:** Corporate Communications created two educational videos – the first on budget engagement and the second on how tax dollars are spent/city services. To date, they were viewed 430 times.

- **Social media activities:** Corporate Communications provided live Twitter coverage of the Nov. 12 public meeting, which included 17 corporate tweets. These were retweeted 15 times during the meeting for a total reach of more than 7,000.
On Jan. 16, Corporate Communications and Finance held an hour-long Ask the Budget Expert session on Twitter, allowing residents to ask questions that were answered live. In total, 24 questions were asked and the total reach of the tweets was more than 5,600.
- **Media coverage:** To date, there have been 11 pieces in the local media related to the budget.

This approach to engaging and educating residents about the budget process is in line with the Corporate Communications Strategy, which focuses on two-way communications and promoting citizen engagement. These tactics successfully broadened the awareness of the budget process and engaged many residents in discussion about the budget. Compared to last year's budget process, there was a 60 per cent increase in website views, live Twitter coverage of a budget meeting, and more than 70 comments/questions posted by the public. The measurement of this year's budget communications provides a strong baseline that will be used to enhance the communications approach taken with future budgets to successfully educate and engage the public in the process.

Sincerely,



Gary Williams
Director of Corporate Communications

cc: Barb Cribbett, Interim City Manager
Senior Management Team
Tim Simmonds, Executive Director, Office of the City Manager