

MEETING DATE: February 26, 2024

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REPORT TITLE: Communications and Marketing Q4 2023 Update

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fourth quarter of 2023 and year-as-a-whole were busy and successful for Communications and Marketing Services. Overall, the unit supported an increasing number of projects from the divisions, maintained strong channel performance, attracted a growing audience, increased media mentions and positive news coverage for the City. The team also made progress on key department initiatives, including website strategy development.

BACKGROUND

Divisional Support

- Since 2022 CMS has been tracking the number of divisional projects it supports. The way projects are categorized and reported on has shifted and will continue to evolve as we fine-tune the process. Overall, we believe the number of projects, from all divisions combined, increased by 7% in 2023 over 2022. This, however, is not an ideal metric to report on; staff hours would be a more meaningful metric and one we plan to explore and better understand in 2024.
- Projects tied directly to the City Strategic Plan and Corporate Business Plan included the Urban Centre Area Redevelopment Plan, City Awards, Public Art Installations, **Speed Change, Municipal Census**, Organics AI Program, SeeClickFix, 65 Avenue Interchange, Movie Filming, Workshops and Information Sessions, **Budget 2024, Not the Plan, Pride, Maclab Centre for the Performing Arts Performance Seasons**, Emergency Preparedness Week, Transportation Master Plan, Municipal Development Plan, Arbour Day, Construction and Capital Growth, **Westside Off-Leash Dog Park, Summer Events, 40th Anniversary of Incorporation**, Environmental Plan Update, Open for Business, Treaty Truth and ReconciliACTION, and the City's **Wildfire Response**.

Typical communication goals are focused on reach and engagement. Communication plans with notable success in these areas are bolded above.

Channel Performance

- **Website:** Users on Leduc.ca increased in 2023 from 2022 by 6.9% while pageviews remained the same (-0.01%), likely meaning people were able to find the information they needed without hitting irrelevant pages. From a quarterly perspective, fewer users visited the site in Q4 2023 than during the same period in 2022 (-7.5%).
- **Social media:** Performance continues to trend upwards. In 2023 we saw significant growth across our channels by adjusting the type of content we share on each platform. Our follower count grew by 9.98% from 23,330 to 25,659 people. LinkedIn follower base grew by a greater amount (+23.63%) than any other channel; the team dedicated more time to posting important news, updates and organizational achievements on the platform in 2023 than any other year. A strong effort has been made to improve our written and visual content, resulting in

strong project communication outcomes and broader organizational storytelling (+7.8% impressions; stable engagement) despite sharing 334 fewer posts than last year.

Of note in 2023 over 2022:

- Engagement on Twitter increased by 54% despite 60% less content shared on the platform. By posting tailored content to our Twitter audience (regional partners and media sources) we are increasing engagement and reducing content irrelevant to our audience. We will continue this approach in 2024.
- Instagram impressions increased on our feed (+49%), stories (+82%) and reels (+78%).
- LinkedIn engagements increased by 111.89%.

When comparing Q4 2023 to Q4 2022, we saw an increase in social media engagement of 107% and increase in social media impressions of 48%. Recognizing much of our municipal content is cyclical in nature, this tells us the content shared on social media in Q4 2023 was more interesting and appealing to residents than similar content shared last year.

- **Email marketing:** At year-end there were 1,403 subscribers to the city email distributions, representing 38% growth in 2023. Month-to-month growth occurred in Q1 and Q4 and can primarily be attributed to subscribers interested in news related to snow and parking bans. In Q2 and Q3, the growth rate trended downwards. This tells us residents may be interested in subscribing to targeted communications and creates an opportunity for us to 1) build targeted categories for residents to subscribe to and 2) attract new subscribers through a proactive subscription campaign. This will be a focus in 2024.

The average open rate (65%) on emails is well above industry average (36.48%) and higher this year than last by 7%, indicating the City is providing information residents want and value.

News

- **External media:** The City received 714 mentions in the news media this quarter (-23% from Q3) with 498 million (-11% from Q3). This is not unexpected given the coverage in the previous quarter was strongly influenced by Leduc's involvement in wildfire support. Most coverage was neutral in tone (70.7%), in the remaining coverage, positive coverage slightly outweighed negative (16.9% vs 12.3%).
- **Leduc.ca news:** Our own website continues to be a key source of information for residents – there were 7,824 views on news pages in Q4 (-33% from Q3). As seen in external media, this is not unexpected given the coverage in the previous quarter about wildfire support. Managing this space well is key to establishing trust with our residents and becoming the number one source for news about what the city is doing for residents.

Communications and Marketing Projects

In 2023, Communications and Marketing led several projects within its own portfolio and accountability to the organization, including:

- **CMS 2024–2026 Strategic Plan:** CMS presented the plan, which outlines priorities and actions for the CMS unit to Executive on Jan. 9, 2024.
- **Implementation of the Public Engagement Framework:** The primary work in Q4 was related to planning a workshop for City Council (scheduled for early 2024). Internal staff training will also be provided in 2024 to team members involved in public engagement projects.

COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE

- **Promotional Item Strategy:** In cooperation with Procurement Services, CMS interviewed select business units in November 2023. Results from the engagement will be shared internally in 2024. Policy research will also begin in Q1 2024.
- **Website Redevelopment:** The anticipated completion date for the strategy is the end of January. We have completed the current state analysis, personas and journey maps, and outlined the vision and project goals. As part of the project, the advisory committee provided input into the audit of 432 web pages through 13 workshops, on the information architecture and the content strategy.

NEXT STEPS: NA

ATTACHMENTS

- Executive Summary – Communications and Marketing Q4 2023
- Communications and Marketing Q4 2023 Report