City of Winnipeg Communications Function Review: Final Report

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Executive Summary

Argyle Public Relationships was retained by the City of Winnipeg in 2014 to perform a comprehensive review of their communications function. The City was aware that technology was transforming communications, raising public expectations and creating new opportunities for public organizations or municipal communications. This report is grounded in extensive research and provides strategic direction and tactical recommendation for improving the City's communications function.

The information gathering phase of the project included interviews, surveys, workshops, meetings and independent research. Internal stakeholders engaged included the current Mayor and Council, executives, senior management in departments and communications staff. The public, members of the media and staff from across the organization were invited to participate through an online survey. The project was governed by a Steering Committee and directed by Corporate Support Services. The Cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, Montréal, Regina, Toronto and Vancouver all deserve thanks for the information and, in some cases, staff time contributed.

Key strategic shifts:

- Improve communication to the public and media and enhance services to City departments by expanding the Corporate Communications Division. It should become a centre of excellence, providing support to City departments in all aspects of communications management.
- Serve the public through communications. Recognize the wide range of ways in which the public consumes information by realigning priorities to focus on new and owned communication channels and reducing the focus on media relations. This includes increasing attention to social and digital communications, generating more content as well as proactively making information available to media and the public.
- Become a resource to the entire organization by reflecting and articulating the City's strategic priorities. This means ensuring important issues receive the attention they deserve, Council and the Mayor have suitable communication support and departments have access to expertise and strategic advice.

Introduction

Argyle Public Relationships was retained through a competitive process to perform a comprehensive review of the City of Winnipeg's corporate communications function. The Corporate Communications Division supports City of Winnipeg departments in communicating with media and the public about the many programs and services the City provides. It manages the City's website - Winnipeg.ca – and oversees the City's social media presence. It also provides translation and interpretation services for City departments.

Our mandate was to perform a comprehensive communications review for the City of Winnipeg to:

- Shape and guide the mandate of Corporate Communications;
- Identify and balance resource allocation between communication and engagement needs;
- Provide insight into all aspects of innovative, forward-focused public sector communications;
- Recommend a governance model for Corporate Communications;
- Compare Winnipeg's organization structures with peer organizations and provide advice on best practices;
- Advise on technologies and media to implement the recommended changes and optimize communication with residents, City Council, the media and other stakeholders; and
- Review the Emergency Public Information Plan and advise on the City's crisis communications preparedness.

This document includes the outcomes of our research and analysis, as well as our recommendations for the Communications function.

Background

We work extensively with municipalities and are fascinated by the distinct character and history of each – but few are as rich as Winnipeg. From furs to grain, from railways to aerospace, it has always been a trading city. It was an aboriginal meeting and trading place for millennia before the arrival of European traders in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It has continued to be a locus for dialogue and occasional conflict between different cultures and peoples. The Community Trends and Performance Report (2014) provides a compelling image of a city in transition:

- **The city is experiencing a return to growth.** After years of declining population, Winnipeg has enjoyed modest, stable growth for the past several years due to a reduction in emigration combined with increased inter-provincial and international immigration. It is projected to continue growing at a 1% annual rate for years into the future.

- **It has extraordinary potential for renewal.** Long periods of stability and benign neglect have left the city with many historic buildings in the charming, if not universally loved, downtown, along with parking lots and extensive redevelopment potential. A series of significant investments (the Forks, the MTS Centre, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights) and a vibrant cultural life have added to the city's allure and could help spark comprehensive rejuvenation.

- **It remains affordable and accessible.** Housing prices remain moderate, rental vacancies are at a reasonable level and new housing stats are climbing. Unemployment is below the national average and the diverse local economy is projected to continue experiencing modest growth.

- **It is among the most diverse cities in Canada.** The city's visible minority population is pegged at 20%, three quarters of which are of Asian descent. Aboriginal Canadians represent another 10% of the population. This makes Winnipeg the third most ethnically diverse city in Canada after the Toronto and Vancouver urban regions.

- **Its resources have been constrained.** The last decade has seen a steady 27% increase in operations spending (which includes streets, parks and community services among others) and a 75% increase in spending on police, fire and emergency services. Public transit operations are extremely efficient with a high cost recovery ratio. The City's corporate services and organizational support, corporate and governance (which includes communications), has seen spending *reduced* by 3% over the same period. Given inflationary costs and salary increases, this modest reduction is effectively a significant cut to service levels.

During a period of cuts to the City's capacity, the world is experiencing a dramatic increase in the volume and speed of communication. With smart phones, the Internet and social media putting global power in everyone's pockets we are seeing a massive decentralization in communication power . The City has recognized the need for a change in approach and investment in communicating.

The emergence of highly interactive technology and web-based social networks has both reduced the "hard costs" of communicating with the public and has also empowered the public to respond to the communication – instantly and publicly. This can mean reputational risk in an era where any citizen can be, in effect, a reporter with an audience. Retreating from this environment is not an option; we are fast approaching a time when a public service organization's failure to respond on social media will become as unthinkable as not answering a telephone.

The opportunities for Winnipeg far outweigh the risks: with a commitment to leadership in communication, the City can make its public engagement more effective, transparent and authentic. This in turn improves the quality and delivery of public services while building the City's reputation and brand.

Methodology

Research for this assignment included a series of meetings and interviews with City of Winnipeg elected officials, corporate leadership, department managers and communications staff and directors. The public, City staff and members of the media were also engaged through an online survey. This work was supported by online research into peer municipalities, direct email and telephone contact. We also performed a social media audit, the results of which are appended, and include our final recommendations.

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SWOT Analyses

In the research phase of our communications evaluation, we undertook interviews with the Mayor, members of Council, City executives and key staff members. We also met with the Communication Review Steering Committee and held a workshop with staff in the Corporate Communications Division. These discussions, along with other observations, helped us to identify some key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the City of Winnipeg's current communications efforts.

Communications Staff and Steering Committee

Strengths

Media relations

There is general consensus that the City of Winnipeg is very responsive to media relations. Given the city's size and the number of people working in communications, the scope of work is very broad. There is also agreement that the communications team is able to accomplish quite a bit given the resources at their disposal. They are able to do this through careful daily, weekly and monthly planning, anticipating issues before they arise and deftly stickhandling what some have admitted is a "phenomenal" number of issues.

The Corporate Communications staff are constantly on the go—and responsive. They are creative under challenging conditions, making good use of their time and efforts. There are effective systems and protocols in place that are generally adhered to by City employees. For instance, there is a process for taking calls, assigning them, advising relevant stakeholders promptly and responding. There is an overall sense that the communications team is fairly nimble in this regard, despite the official protocols, ensuring that the process does not get bogged down.

Why does it work so well? There is reasonably wide agreement that the current mix of centralized and decentralized functions is beneficial given the volume of work handled under the current budget. Communications officers have "portfolios." Each employee has strong departmental links and contacts. Staff members appreciate that Corporate Communications has done a very good job implementing organizational alignment to ensure departments provide relevant information and responses in as timely a fashion as possible.

Overall, there is a sense that despite an exceptional volume of work and limited resources, there are efficiencies. Communications are most effective when departmental leaders understand and advocate for communications goals with their teams.

The communications team sends a daily digest to internal clients of what has been communicated during the day.

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Technical skills
The City has linked 311 to Corporate Communications which has helped the team to develop a social media program. In terms of personnel, there are some definite strengths on the social and digital fronts. Interns in the Aboriginal Relations Division have good video production skills. Graphic design, while in the print shop rather than part of Communications proper, has a good relationship with the communications team.

Public engagement
Over the last year, there has been a greater focus on public participation and engagement. For example, until recently, it was up to the local area planner to do public outreach, fulfilling statutory requirements such as open houses. Communications would be briefed, a media release would be prepared and spokespeople would be available if there was media interest. Some departments now have dedicated public engagement people, but the situation is "uneven".

Weaknesses
Internal communication
There is variation between departments with regards to their level of communication capacity and understanding. We heard there are some who are proactive and keep Corporate Communications "in the loop," and others who do not.

A frustration expressed by some is that the process sometimes bogs down and bottlenecks—and sometimes there are particular departments that can slow things down. There were suggestions that a better integrated overall communications plan might help in this regard.

One problem individuals have encountered is finding the right "subject matter expert" at the right time. For instance, they may need a particular engineer, only to find he/she is not available. Sometimes, it can take a day to track down the appropriate individual.

Some employees estimated that somewhere between 50% and 70% of the issues that Communications team has to deal with via media inquiries come as a complete surprise. This is because they have not been alerted or given an appropriate "heads up" from the departmental level. A better plan, as well as a sense of when it is appropriate to brief the communications team, it was felt, might be helpful. In addition, some identification of recurring issues and a protocol with how to deal with them could also be beneficial.

Some of the many issues that Corporate Communications has to deal with "on the fly" are:
- Fires
- Downed trees

- Faulty traffic lights (sometimes caused by rain)
- Unexpected disclosures
- Police scanners
- Departments having more information than what has been conveyed to the communications team

Others have heard concern from senior officials that they have been "surprised" by some issues they have had to address. Better contingency planning, pre-screening and internal processes could have minimized these concerns.

This issue speaks to what is perceived by many to be an overall lack of communication coordination and integration between departments, something that some would like to see addressed in a co-operative fashion.

Overall, there is a concern that many City employees have a poor understanding of Corporate Communications. They do not always know when the communications team should be brought in or consulted. Sometimes the communications team is not looped in and may be caught off guard by issues, at other times they are asked to support things that fall outside of their current purview.

Resourcing
Communications at the City is managed by two distinct groups: the Mayor's Office and Corporate Communications. There is a concern that there are too few staff members to handle the 30 to 35 inquiries that come in on an average day. Some team members feel that this creates stressful situations that are not always conducive to a team environment.

Technical skills
There is a sense that there is not enough video production capacity. The police have their own videographers, but by contrast, the City of Winnipeg team has to produce videos on an ad hoc, almost just-in-time basis.

One of the biggest concerns is the lack of overall brand consistency. Visual guidelines, it was felt, should be better used across communications channels.

From a human resources perspective, the City has faced a personnel challenge: While it has been able to hire a number of staff from Red River College, the communications team has been challenged to find qualified candidates focused on public relations and communications. This may have contributed to an overall "media relations" approach to communications, in which a quick response to news media

overtakes strategic planning, preparation and public and stakeholder communication. Another problem resulting from this approach is a general lack of what some have called a "customer service focus." Another issue cited was a general lack of time to participate in professional development opportunities within the team.

Opportunities

Strategic planning

The communications team felt it would be highly beneficial to develop strong strategic communications plans "up front" so that they were not rushing to prepare messages and create something new each time they are approached.

More proactive strategic planning with City departments, many felt, would be highly beneficial. A suggestion was made that departments might even have a presence at strategic planning meetings by helping to better integrate efforts. Participation in these sessions could present a much wider appreciation and understanding of what is happening. Furthermore, by assigning one dedicated person in each department to help identify stories, the narrative is broadened beyond what the media are reporting.

Skills and training

There was a feeling by some that the scope of public participation could definitely be expanded. Some City staff have taken the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)'s course, but they are just beginning to get trained in this area. Statistically, however, there is higher than average social media engagement with the public—although there are still steps the City can take to make these even more robust. Some conceded that the current "open house" format used for many events often draws the same people to every meeting. More IAP2 training, many felt, would be highly beneficial. Another challenge for the communications team is that the City outsources engagement work when it could have greater consistency in-house.

While Winnipeg is officially a bilingual city, there is not enough engagement and outreach in French. French is basically confined to the Riel District.

Resourcing

There is fairly wide consensus that the City's Corporate Communications team needs to "staff up"—that too few people are juggling too many tasks.

Owned media

There was also agreement that the City might benefit from a corporate rebranding—taking on a new, "fun" corporate voice. Opportunities to connect with people—especially youth—some felt, could be better exploited through owned media. Internally, there are fresh, young people coming to work for the

City all the time who, as one team member put it, are "bursting with ideas." The problem is that they need support to do a better job on the social media and outreach fronts. People with ideas, it was suggested, need to be encouraged to produce engaging content to help identify and tell compelling stories about the great things the City of Winnipeg is doing. There are not enough people working on blogging for the City. There are only six in City departments overall, compared with many, many more in Edmonton, which was identified as a good example to follow.

Threats

Resourcing

Budgets, internal services and other resources are cut year after year, making it especially challenging for the communications team to operate at full capacity. In 2008, Corporate Communications was cut and moved to the City Clerk's department. It moved to the CAO Office and, in 2010, to Corporate Support Services where three positions have been restored. In early 2015, Corporate Communications was moved to the CAO Office.

There is some sense that frontline services are now a higher priority—"police, pipes and pavement," as one team member said. There is political support for efficiencies and that is understandable—but there has also been a view that there are some who still see communications as a waste of money. That mindset is changing and there is a strong desire to keep this momentum alive.

There has been some disagreement about where communications responsibility should reside. Some departments want to provide their own spokespeople, while others have really welcomed communications support. Prior to 2005, every department had its own communications point person; some really miss this arrangement.

One big threat is that given resources and timing, people are feeling stretched to the maximum. As well, there are many City employees who simply do not relish being interviewed by the media; some feel they have been treated unfairly n the past and they do not want to take a risk.

City news is front-page or the lead broadcast item most of the time. Winnipeg news media focus a lot on City issues, ask a lot of challenging questions and want a high level of service from City communicators. The City communications team works hard to accommodate them, but the 24/7 news cycle is placing more pressure on everyone.

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City of Winnipeg's internal perception of its communications:

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City Executives and Elected Officials

Strengths

There was a strong sense from both elected officials and staff that the City is in a period of transition. Changes in the composition of Council and the election of a new mayor create a change environment that welcomes new approaches to communications.

Corporate Communications

We heard that the individual people in communications are very good at what they do, but that they lack the tools and resources to do their jobs. This is true in Corporate Communications as well as across the organization to some extent. Prior to centralizing the function, there were communications staff in departments across the corporation. Many individuals still work for the City in non-communications roles and have been able to provide some communications capacity within departments.

Corporate Communications is seen to focus mostly on media relations, which it does quite well. They are seen to do well at writing news releases, news conferences and the like. In the case of routine business, such as communicating street closures or a noise issues, it does a good job.

The emergency response from staff is generally considered very good. When there were events such as floods, snow storms and wind with power loss, communications people did a great job – but they place other things on hold to complete this.

Public Engagement

The City has some public engagement capacity. There are many areas outside the mandate of Corporate Communications where there is strong dialogue, especially those that do it frequently. Departments report strong working relationships with interested stakeholder groups such as organized associations, land developers, community groups and industries. For example, following a sewage spill, there was a hearing that led to a requirement to do more consultation with the public and with regulators. Because of that, they have a position that does public consultation and business communication. While the speed and quality of communication could improve, there are good working relationships in place.

The public wants City information. The transit system especially attracts "tens of thousands of hits" to its website on a daily basis. Twitter and Telebus also receive a lot of traffic. This suggests there is an audience that wants information, is engaged with the City and could be reached to provide information and drive behavioural changes.

Councillors describe the different communities that make up Winnipeg as having affection and pride. They report strong community social networks throughout the city. In many cases, there are community

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groups such as historical societies, "friends" of parks and trails, that approach the City but to whom the City rarely reaches out. It was suggested that there could be even more proactive and regular engagement with stakeholder groups.

Owned Channels

The Winnipeg Minute is seen to be well-produced and effective. There were some questions about the opportunity cost of investing in a single channel as well as concerns that it was not being extended as effectively as possible within the organization but, in general, it is very well-regarded.

While it was acknowledged that the website could be improved, there was a general sense that if someone is willing to spend some time on it a tremendous amount of information could be extrapolated. The City is working hard on providing open data and being transparent, including live-streaming meetings.

Weaknesses

Strategic perspective

There is a sense among several Councillors that the City could use a stronger strategic plan. This would allow staff recommendations and activities to align with the City's priorities. For communicators it would provide a stronger sense of the issue magnitude and importance as they emerge.

Above all, they would like more strategic communication and leadership on key issues from the City. One example provided was the frozen pipe issue. Politicians thought Corporate Communications should have increased public-facing announcements with information about dealing with frozen pipes ten feet underground.

There is a sense that communication is poorly coordinated. One telling anecdote was when the city was hit with a severe weather event and communities were flooded. In the midst of this chaos, the Corporate Communications Division sent out a news release about butterflies at the zoo.

The relationship between the City and the media is the subject of a difference of opinion. Some felt that City provides very detailed responses to media inquiries. Others were more critical of the City but credited media with excellent facts and analysis.

Internal Coordination

The centralization of the communication function in the past was raised repeatedly. Many departments feel that their capacity was reduced and experienced staff were lost to retirement.

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There was some confusion about who represents the City at official events. The division of public speaking responsibility between the Mayor, Executive Policy Committee members and Councillors, came up repeatedly as an area that could use clarification.

Across the organization, people raised concerns about poor access to information. Councillors often do not know who to call in each department for specific information. They felt that departments worked in isolation from each other and did not communicate with Council or other departments as well as they could. In many cases, energy is wasted trying to find routine information that should be easily available.

A few councillors expressed concern about their peers being unfairly critical of the City.

There is poor alignment between the public service and elected officials on messaging. Councillors expressed concern that they are often late to know about projects in their wards.

Technical skills

Subject matter experts are relied on heavily to speak on behalf of the City. It is not clear how many have media training.

The City of Winnipeg logo is used unevenly. If a Community Council invests City resources in something, it is not clear if the logo should be used. The design quality in City advertising in general was also criticized. More emphasis on City brand, visual identity and look and feel would be welcome.

Councillors and departments could use more corporate support with technical skills such as writing, design, digital and social media. One department reported relying on a draftsperson to design posters and use basic desktop publishing to produce its newsletter. Local subject matter experts are also writing press releases, having them approved by former communications staff in the department and only then sending them to Corporate Communications.

Concerns were raised regarding official reports, specifically that they were not written at a suitable reading level for external consumption. They should also include visuals, especially in cases where land and streets are involved.

Low service levels

The lack of resources available was a common theme. Many years of fiscal restraint have left weakened capacity in all functions that are not directly service related, including research, communications, service planning and policy support.

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In general, communications are not timely and do not adapt to public expectation and the realities of social media. For example, one early morning power outage caused water pressure to be lower than normal for fifteen minutes before 7:30 AM. There was a news release in time for the 9:00 AM news followed by a media conference, but the issue was resolved, and the communications opportunity was lost by then.

Opportunities

Elevate importance and perspective

Overwhelmingly, interviewees see opportunities for the City's communications function to be expanded and improved. Fundamental to this is to elevate how it is perceived. Thinking about how information is communicated was widely seen to need a more prominent role in decision-making earlier in the process.

There were a few calls for a clearer strategic planning process and direction. In general, participants would like to make it easier for staff to identify key projects and issues that require communications and issues management support. This could include changes to policy or projects that would naturally generate interest. It also includes less glamorous issues (long-term strategies, budget priorities, success stories) that may need more effective storytelling to gain attention. They would also like clearer triggers and better responses in crisis situations. There were also calls for improving understanding of communications and training across the organization.

Most members of Council would welcome more communications support. With social media and websites, they are finding themselves called on to communicate more often and in greater detail. While the distinction between political and public service communications must be respected, they would all welcome more briefing notes, issue backgrounders, talking points and prepared content as well as easier access to information in general. They expressed an interest in establishing clearer protocols on what events involved the Mayor, members of the Executive or Councillors. Above all, they would like more information about City projects in their wards. Several expressed frustration about being blindsided by construction issues or project delays that only came to their attention when the public was informed. Admittedly many of these issues are more related to processes and protocol than communications.

Unmediated communication

Faced with the dilution of the power of mainstream media, the City has a huge opportunity to tell its own story through its own channels. Corporate Communications could shift away from media relations to become a centre of excellence in communication skills serving all City departments. Many interviewees would welcome assistance with content generation, design, plain language writing, video

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editing, social media and digital support. Councillors could also make good use of prepared content in the newsletters and websites.

We heard that right now different City departments are creating and managing its own online content. It was suggested that Corporate Communications could play a stronger role in improving and standardizing copy, style and branding.

Increasing transparency and openness is one of Mayor Bowman's key priorities and was echoed by many participants. One goal that was articulated is to make information so easily available to the public and the media that staff resources are not required to track it down. The principle was expressed that everything that is not legally required to be confidential should be easily available to the public.

One suggestion for making information more accessible is improving and sharing standard messaging. There are many evergreen issues, such as mosquito management and snow clearing, where information could be made available to media and Councillors (for their newsletters and websites) in advance. This could also include implementing clearer protocol for communications in the case of routine, but unforeseen, events such as power outages or waste collection delays.

There is an overwhelming sense that the City could do more on social media but there is not necessarily clear direction on what steps to take.

A few called for better coordination of the City's digital assets. The library system, 311, garbage and recycling, golfing and parking all have mobile apps but transit does not have one yet. There may be an opportunity to better combine all of them and create a single home for all digital channels, including both social media and apps.

It was expressed that it would be helpful for internal communication if all City staff had access to email.

Public engagement and responsiveness
Interviewees were asked directly about communities that could be more effectively engaged. The overwhelming number of responses included young people, immigrant communities and seniors.

- For youth, this could mean everything from opportunities for employment to helping them with perceptions and awareness of the City and what kinds of services exist to improving young people's perception of the city they live in.

- There is a strong demographic argument for doing more to reach out to seniors. This could include providing more information about what services are available. For example, the City will

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plow a street and make it difficult for seniors to leave. It may be possible to engage more effectively and identify loading zones for seniors in front of their houses.

Winnipeg is home to many new immigrants to whom the City could reach out to more. It was suggested that more work could be done translating City information (Punjabi, Tagalog and Portuguese were mentioned) to inform new immigrants as to what services are available. Helping find recreation classes, using a leisure guide, joining the library were all mentioned. It was also suggested that placing City advertising in ethnic papers could be useful.

People living in poverty were also mentioned as having less access to social and digital media, and, therefore require more direct outreach through community centres, quarterly community forums and more printed and delivered information.

Several interviewees suggested that the City can be using existing committees more effectively. There are stakeholder committees for many projects, such as the recycling and diversion plan, bio solids master plan, as well as for communities, such as First Nations. Support for these committees is managed within departments which would welcome more communications and organized support. Depending on the committee, this function could touch on the Clerk's Office as well as communications and public engagement.

> **Councillors on communications between politicians and staff:**
>
> "Half the time they are out of the loop, half the time we are. Sometimes they have information we don't, and sometimes we do and they don't."
>
> "We may not have the same message as Corporate Communications, but we still need information."
>
> "Sometimes there is a major story in our ward and we will only find out about it through the media. I should not be finding out about a public open house in my ward through the media."

There is a sense that the City could bring a stronger customer service orientation and focus on improving the public's experience accessing services. It was suggested there could be more focus groups, market research, secret shoppers and customer feedback to test service quality, especially 311. This has been accomplished to some degree by providing better tracking of public requests, such as the work order on a pothole repair: someone calling in the issue could be able to track the work status, and subsequent callers could be informed that work was underway.

Threats

The loss of key personnel was mentioned. In some cases, existing policy, or knowledge of the history, reasoning and decision-making process behind it, resides with a single person and is lost when they leave or retire.

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While Winnipeg remains a self-contained and significant media market, a lot of communications power has shifted away from local media to Internet and satellite-based providers. This has eroded local media's influence to some extent.

One interesting insight is that, as the capital of Manitoba, the City is competing with the Province for public attention and column inches. It's not a threat, but an external factor.

There is a sense that there is little trust between the City and the media. There is a lot of interest in the City from all the major papers and radio stations. Lack of control of its message leaves the City exposed to misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

Adapting to a 24-hour world is a challenge. Councillors report hearing from the public on issues before they have heard from staff. Someone picks up the information and uploads it to social media so quickly that Councillors have to have the information in a timely manner in order to respond.

There is a sense among many parts of the City's public service that allowing messaging to appear too political poses a significant threat to the Government's credibility. This was supported by feedback from the media.

Resourcing & organization

In our interviews we saw strong consensus on the need to invest in expanding communications. The online surveys provided similar conclusions. Even the media, while occasionally expressing frustration, signalled strongly that they see Corporate Communications to be understaffed. In general, the basics are being done reasonably well given the lack of resources, but it is felt that communications need to do a little more promotion of some of the information and work that is happening at the City. For example, Winnipeg residents are making use of the services available and have access to the basic information, but are unaware of what those services contribute to their overall quality of life and the work that goes into making it happen.

However, the City is missing an opportunity to become more proactive, to tell its story across different platforms, to connect with the public in new and innovative ways, and to take control of its brand and reputation. There is a strong consensus that Winnipeg needs a structure that has appropriately staffed corporate communications that is supported by departmental communications.

Media Relations
While media relations are relatively strong, the City lacks the coordination to respond to and manage misinformation. Operational communications are, in general, competent and effective. In the case of an urgent event, the media know exactly where to go for information – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In general, the City is seen to be reactive, probably defensive and under-resourced. The coverage of City initiatives in the media is , in general, perceived to be overwhelmingly, and unnecessarily, negative.

Owned media
Winnipeg has long been the centre of its own media market but the public is increasingly looking beyond local sources for information and entertainment. One common suggestion for addressing the reduced power of local media, as well as the negative media coverage, was to make better use of media that the City owns and controls. This includes the website and social media, as well as owned content such as the Winnipeg Minute, City publications, and videos. The website was singled out for both praise and criticism. While it is perceived as an excellent source of information, it is being underused by the public. More effort needs to be made to help the public use it, and connect with the tools and information they need as well as ensuring that information is kept up to date.

Owned media also offers the ability to tell the City's story in a direct and unmediated way. From blog posts to printed publications, the City has many ways it could be establishing its reputation and explaining the value of services and rationale for decisions. One powerful example was offered about public pools; the public is informed when and where they can swim, but they are not told how the pools fit into social inclusion, public good and improving the lives of our residents.

Fiscal constraint

Due to the past several years of fiscal restraint, all services that are not frontline services have been significantly reduced; this includes research, communications, service planning, and policy support. This structural constraint is seen to be preventing citizens from getting the best communication, as well as depriving them of opportunities to get involved in decision-making. The Speak Up Winnipeg online presence that led to OurWinnipeg was a great model but the resources did not exist to continue it. Too often the communications resources are linked to a project. This means that there is no support to continue even the effective programs. Some City Councillors expressed concern that the fact that the budget was balanced every year belied the severe underlying fiscal stress and gave the public an impression that underfunding is less severe than it is.

Departmental capacity

Many departments expressed a desire to increase their internal communications capacity. The centralization of communications several years ago reduced capacity by eliminating positions. The impact of this has been that managers and subject matter leads have assumed responsibility for communication – often without sufficient training, background, or expertise. City planners, for example, often handle meetings by themselves. They participate in neighbourhood open houses and talk about zoning issues and by-laws that affect neighbourhoods. However, they do not really reach out to the public outside of official process.

Departments are drafting press releases, with subject matter experts drafting and the former communicators within departments reviewing them before they are sent to Corporate Communications. There is also no formal media training support for people who move up in the organization and end up having to face the media. There is an acknowledgement that Corporate Communications staff are doing well with limited resources. Departments would strongly welcome investment in communications both locally and centrally. There is also a strong feeling that everyone in a leadership position at the City need to be: trained to be comfortable speaking to the media, and briefed to know that the subject matter experts are there to support them. There were a few calls for a catalogue of information for responding to routine questions.

Our research identified a desire for more support in specialized areas such as:
- Graphic design
- Video
- Writing for the web
- Media training
- Strategic communications
- Stakeholder engagement
- Media relations
- Corporate marketing

- Web strategy
- Content management system on the web
- Social media
- Preparation for emerging issues coming forward, such as policy reports or capital project announcements.

Council Support

In our research we noted many cases where the City was seen to undermine its own message by failing to align all of its stakeholders. In our research we heard that many staff were concerned that the messaging coming from individual elected officials is often different from the public service's message. Committee Chairs and Councillors have a responsibility to speak up on behalf of their constituents. City employees have a responsibility to provide background information to all spokespeople and to convey the approved message within the policy direction set by Council. While the Mayor has the prerogative to be the political spokesperson, in cases where the Mayor is not present the responsibility should be formally delegated to a member of Council. On major policy topics or issues of city-wide significance the Mayor could recommend a Committee Chair or Deputy Mayor. On local issues the ward Councillor could be invited and acknowledged, and considered for a speaking role.

Elected officials would welcome increased communication support. Social and digital media have increased demands on their time, and they are increasingly expected to make more information available to the public 24 hours a day. One of the key strategic shifts recommended by this report is to ensure the Mayor and Councillors receive suitable communication support. To achieve this we recommend several measures to ensure the Corporate Communications Division is more closely aligned to the City's strategic priorities. This means that important political issues, as articulated through official channels, get the attention they deserve. When implemented, the Mayor and Councillors can expect communications plans to support issues and initiatives, including talking points, briefing notes and speeches for official events.

It is the role of staff to deliver the facts, to the best of their ability, in a compelling and authentic way. It is the role of political leadership to provide context, meaning, support, or criticism at their discretion. In the words of legendary newspaperman CP Scott "Comment is free, but facts are sacred." Achieving this balance requires trust, respect, and, above all clarity of roles. It is inappropriate for staff to provide communications support to elected officials who are not speaking on behalf of City policy. We understand that Councillors can draw on their office budgets for communications support, but that is outside of the scope of this study. Having different, ideally complementary, voices on a City issue adds texture and reach to a story. In order to best align the different communications channels, our research explored ways of providing clarity to the roles while offering a higher level of service.

Our suggested approach to addressing this issue is:
- Respect and reinforce the independence and professionalism of the public service
- Provide elected officials the information they need in a timely, responsive and proactive way
- Distinguish public service communication from political communication
- Align public service communication with the policy direction provided by City Council
- Enhance communications capacity in the Mayor's Office

Survey Results and Analysis

Argyle's in-depth research with internal stakeholders was complemented by surveys of external ones. Three separate surveys were performed to capture the opinions of the public, City staff and members of the media. Participants were asked questions to gauge their awareness, engagement, attitudes and opinions about Corporate Communications at the City. They were invited to participate through media coverage, social media posts, the City website and direct email. City Councillors were also invited to include the information in their public communications.

Public Survey
The online public survey was completed by 249 participants.

The participants were self-selected and therefore do not represent a statistically random sample. The City of Winnipeg distributed a news release that encouraged city residents to participate in the online survey and share their feedback. The results are not statistically valid for the purposes of comparison; however, the results do provide a sense of what sentiments are widely held as well as a benchmark for future research.

Key public survey findings include:
- While newspapers are the largest single source of information, channels outside of the conventional news media (such as the City website and social media) are relied on by roughly half of respondents.
- The public considers the City's communication, in general, to be rather poor but they agree that information is available although it could be easier to access.
- The public would welcome more engagement on City projects and programs.

Staff survey
The online staff survey administered by Argyle was completed by 1,348 participants. Respondents were asked questions to gauge their awareness, engagement, attitudes, and opinions about corporate communications at the City.

The participants were volunteers, rather than a random sample, and have regular access to email. The results, therefore, are not statistically accurate within a specific margin of error. Nor do they reflect the sentiments of all City Winnipeg employees. Instead the results provide a sense of what sentiments are widely held. They also provide a benchmark for future research.

Key staff survey findings include:
- Winnipeg.ca is the most frequently used channel for information, and most staff find it to be informative, but poorly organized and difficult to navigate.

- There is a lack of awareness among staff around Winnipeg's vision, and a lack of connection to the City by a small but significant number of staff. In their written responses, staff indicated that these issues of awareness and connection are related to a perceived lack of effective communication by the City/Corporate Communications.
- Staff currently hold a negative assessment of current City communications, describing them as reactive, vague and incomplete. There is a demonstrated lack of understanding of the role of the Corporate Communications team.

Media Survey

The online media survey administered by Argyle was completed by 20 participants. They were asked questions to gauge their awareness, engagement, attitudes, and opinions about Corporate Communications at the City.

The participants were invited through email by the City of Winnipeg. The participants were media in the city hall press gallery who are closely related to city government. They cover all issues in the media with no specific area of focus. The results do not reflect the sentiments of all City of Winnipeg members of the media; however, the results do provide a sense of what sentiments are widely held. They also provide a benchmark for future research.

Key survey findings include:
- Members of the media generally respect the individuals in Corporate Communications and appreciate the challenges they face in their role.
- There is a sense that the basics are well managed. News releases, press conferences and social media are all competently delivered.
- There is an overwhelming desire for easier and better access to City information and spokespeople. While they do not want to be pitched stories, the media want deeper background on City issues, including increased transparency and plain language documents.

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Peer Organizations

Based on input from the City of Winnipeg, we selected a handful of Canadian cities to compare staffing levels. There is a huge variation in the number of staff, with Alberta cities enjoying extraordinary communications investment. All of the numbers are based on the published 2015 operating budgets which, while not officially approved, are largely consistent with 2014 numbers. The official documents were supported by phone calls and emails with the communications staff in the cities being studied.

City (population)	Communications Lead	Central staff complement (FTEs)	Budget ($M)
Calgary (1,096,833)	Manager, Engagement and Communication Partner Services	60.7 (2015)	8.5
Edmonton (812,201)	Branch Manager	82.8	8.4
Hamilton (519,949)	Director of Communications	9.5 (6 funded from department budgets)	n/a (3.5 of 15 staff in CMO, budget $1.1M)
Regina (193,100)	Director of Communications	5	2.9
Winnipeg (663,617)	Manager, Corporate Communications	7	1.05

Calgary

Calgary is home to an exceptionally well-resourced communications function.
The Customer Services and Communications business unit resides within the Corporate Services department. It informs the public about City programs through "communications, marketing, social media, media relations, mobile apps and 311 support," and is divided into five areas:

- 311/Citizen Services
- Corporate Marketing & Communications
- Corporate Web Services
- Creative Services
- Engagement & Communication Partner Services.

Aside from 311 staff, the overall communications team has 158.4 FTEs and is projected to grow to 185.4 by 2018. There are more than 60 FTEs in the central communications business unit alone. There are another 116 communications positions identified throughout the organization. They include communications strategists, advisors, specialists, consultants and team supervisors, in departments

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across the organization. It also included specialized skills such as web and digital editors, information technology, public affairs, media relations and public engagement. The Engagement Resource Unit (ERU), which provides public engagement services and expertise to the City, as well as leading the "engage!" program, is alone home to 12 full-time positions.

There are very clear practices in place to embed communications best practices in all City activities, including: research, citizen engagement, creation of content, graphic design, web and digital development, campaign evaluation and measurement.

Edmonton
The City of Edmonton has a very well resourced communications department of more than 80 staff. It is headed by a Branch Manager supported by Directors of Internal Communications, External Communications and Image and Reputation. The department is divided into seven teams supporting different service areas as well as areas of expertise. There are also teams organized by areas of expertise, including Media Relations, Ad and Creative Services, City Hall services such as protocol and events, and Public Engagement.

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They use an extremely cordial, friendly and familiar tone. For example, the City's communications policy documents refer to staff by their first names. Similarly, they post video profiles of staff, including communicators.

Hamilton

In Hamilton, Ontario, the Strategic Communications (Internal and External) business unit is part of Corporate Services in the City Manager's office. The Director of Communications reports directly to the City Manager/CAO.

<table>
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Twitter Guidelines

Teresa, Jason, Brian, Laura and other communications staff tweet for the City. We're active in business hours, but please call 311 with weekend and evening concerns. We tweet to bring you the latest updates on City of Edmonton news, events and activities.

Source: www.edmonton.ca/city_government/news/social-media.aspx
</td></tr>
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Hamilton uses a hybrid model where almost all communications staff report to the director but are not necessarily located in the communications department. Team members with specialized or corporation-wide responsibilities, such as internal communications, social media, government relations, and media buying, are physically in the communications office. Other staff are in locations close to the client departments they serve. While the base budgets are funded by the departments – work plans, performance and human resource type matters are all at the discretion of the director. Regardless of the location of their desk, all communications staff except for police, fire and library report to the Director of Communications.

A strategic objective in 2015 is to improve employee engagement. To do this, Hamilton plans to develop and implement an internal communication strategy.

Regina

Regina has its communications function more deeply embedded in the city's overall administrative function. The communications business unit is part of the Governance and Strategy Department of the City Manager's Office. The Director of Communications reports directly to the City Manager, and the department is responsible for communicating to both Council and the public, specifically informing the public of the legislative process as well as monitoring and tracking council meeting.

Communications are responsible for leading "the development of strategic communications and marketing/branding programs and activities to inform the public about the City's programs and services and how to access them." The department also provides a central point of contact for stakeholder and intergovernmental relations. It also provides a strategic function, including coordination and facilitation of the development, deployment and performance reporting of the corporate strategy, and providing expertise in strategy, policy, critical thinking, and change management as well as research and thought leadership.

2015 priority: "Public Communications and Engagement: The development of a corporate communications strategy to encourage public and stakeholder participation in the municipal process and enhance communications about City programs and services to the community. This strategy will assist the City in achieving its goals and objectives."

There are other communication positions in transit and fire. Regina Transit is home to a Business Development Branch that is responsible for marketing and communications to residents about transit programs and services as well as route and service planning. The Regina Fire and Protective Services Department is home to an Administration and Communications business unit that is responsible for "emergency communications services to internal and external customers" as well as planning, research and development.

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Public Engagement

In our research and interim report, improved stakeholder engagement was universally identified as an area where more support is needed. There is a sense that, while many departments work closely with community stakeholders and there are often external working groups that collaborate on major projects, they are struggling to get important information out to stakeholders in a timely and effective way. Newly elected Mayor Bowman also made one of his top priorities the "establishment of the new Office of Public Engagement that directs public consultation activities of major city projects with the improved engagement expectations of the community."

We understand that Winnipeg's Office of Public Engagement has been created. It will be a centre of expertise providing advice to all city departments and, based on our research, we expect City departments to welcome this. They are currently in the formative stages, working with local process managers in departments, setting up basic standards, and capturing all public engagement activities at the City (there are about sixty projects underway). Key to success will be to ensure that their internal clients involve City departments early and often so that they can provide a consistent approach to all consultations. The long-term staffing levels depend on the level of demand placed on the unit by departments, as well as the expertise and support available to them.

Cities across North America are investing in public engagement (or public participation) and consultation practices. The discipline is evolving rapidly, with a philosophical shift among publics from 'tell me' to 'ask me' to 'involve me.' Governments are responding to this shift by moving to a participatory model of policy development based on transparent public and stakeholder engagement processes. Senior public sector leaders are learning that effective public participation improves decisions by bringing all perspectives to the table. With this in mind, governments at all levels are examining outdated modes of public consultation and are embracing new strategies and tools – including digital engagement.

Like Winnipeg, many Canadian municipalities are introducing dedicated public engagement units with specialists who oversee public participation efforts at the corporate level. The City of Vancouver, for example, has a department that advises and directs engagement. They are a centre of expertise and adapt their level of involvement in projects depending on the needs of the department being supported. They offer design and technical support to City departments and are responsible for the social media strategy for the entire City. They are responsible for the excellent "City Bird Competition" where different species vying to be the official bird are given Twitter accounts and the public is asked to vote for their favourite. The program is fun and popular, and it raises awareness of local species to support the City's goal of creating a habitat for indigenous species to flourish.

The City of Calgary's public engagement office, the Engage Resource Unit, is under Customer Service and Communication in the CFO's office and supports communications staff in departments. It runs the City's

"Engage!" program through which every capital program is run. It is well-resourced with a manager, team lead, a couple of supervisors, consultants (a strategic role focussing on program design), advisors (who help implement programs) and specialists (who work mostly on the ground). Calgary has enjoyed success partnering with stakeholder groups to collaborate on engagement programs. For its cycling plan, for example, they partnered with Momentum Magazine, an "urban cycling lifestyle publication" who ran stories about who riders are and why they ride. Finding ways to tell human stories can be very effective at making policy and technical debates accessible as well as humanizing an issue to bring people with conflicting perspectives into dialogue.

In Toronto, the Public Consultation unit supports Cluster B, which includes transportation, infrastructure, licensing, planning and other "hard" services that were once delivered by the metropolitan government. Social or "soft" services are responsible for their own public engagement. Some areas with intensive engagement programs, such as City Planning, also maintain their own staff and expertise though they collaborate with the Public Consultation unit.

Calgary's "Engage!" program includes a web portal where the public can learn about and get involved with City initiatives.

The City of Montreal has an Office of Public Consultation (*Office de consultation publique*) that enjoys an astonishing level of independence and freedom. They support City projects within their mandate, which includes real estate, institutional projects, historic and natural features, plans policies and strategies, and citizen initiatives. This last area is unique to Montreal, where a "right of initiative to public consultations" is written into the City charter. By getting a sufficient number of signatures (15,000 are required for a subject under central jurisdiction) the public can trigger a consultation on any topic. The petition requirement prevents frivolous requests as well as ensuring that any initiative begins with a significant stakeholder group already engaged. The first public initiative was on urban agriculture. There is also one on carbon reduction strategies. When petitioned, the Office builds an engagement program from the ground up based on their expertise and experience respond constructively to the request.

The Office is overseen by a 29-member commission, Commission Chair, eight employees and its own budget beyond the direct control of City Council. It sees itself as a tool at the service of citizens and a communication channel to politicians. It provides expertise, knowledge and ideas to bring different viewpoints together. In their words, they provide a "transversal analysis," or detailed study of data from the population gathered from a single point in time. They search for consistency with existing policy, identify and analyze tensions, and find solutions.

They provide upstream consultations on projects before any development applications are received. They also hold Commission meetings that are formal hearings where members of the public can present their views and submit briefs. The website provides guidelines on how to write a brief and the number has increased 138% in the last eight years. Interestingly, 7% of the briefs come from Council's opposition party.

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Crisis Communications

To explore the City's crisis communication preparedness, Argyle reviewed the *City of Winnipeg Emergency Public Information Plan*. The plan is complementary to the *City of Winnipeg Emergency Plan* which was not included in this review. Our analysis, therefore, may raise questions or issues that are addressed elsewhere.

Overall, the plan provides a very clear outline of the communications team's roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency. Our recommendations and the areas we explored are mostly suggestions for supplementing the plan, making it easier to implement and ensuring it is socialized into the organization.

The chain of command is very clear and communications well integrated. The Chief Emergency Coordinator is the incident commander. They sit on the Emergency Control Committee with the City's elected leadership and corporate executives and are in complete charge of the Emergency Operations Control (EOC) Group. Communications is led by the Public Information Coordinator who is part of the EOC Group. They report to the Chief Emergency Coordinator, who they must consult and obtain concurrence from on communications decisions. The position and role of the communication function in the emergency response is very good.

Suggestions for supplementing the plan

- **Stakeholder relationship management and advance preparation**. In any scenario, it's important to liaise with local officials and responding agencies to share information. Establishing working relationships with local agencies, officials and the media *prior* to the disaster is also important. This lead time provides a golden opportunity to gain goodwill which may be needed during the actual event.

- **Guidelines for decision-making: Communication values**. In an emergency, decisions are made in a hurry. Often communicators need to balance timeliness and accuracy under intense pressure. This is why we end up delivering careful statements about "what we are hearing" or "what we know right now" when the need to say something becomes urgent but the facts are still unclear. It helps, therefore, to have clear and established direction on what the priorities are and how to make decisions. This may be the subject of supplementary guidelines of which we are unaware.

- **Two-way communication.** The title is an "information" plan, implying one-way sharing of facts from within the City to the public. The world of communication has changed and information alone is not enough. Active listening to social media and monitoring mainstream media is vital to

success, as well as responding and reacting to questions and requests. The team may be responsible for many other dimensions of information management and stakeholder engagement, so we recommend exploring changing "information" to "communication" in the plan title and main copy where appropriate. The importance of listening and reporting to the EOC is captured in the duties of the Public Information Coordinator, but is not clear in the overall plan. With this in mind, an emergency social media protocol should be developed, if it is not already in place.

Sample Social Media Emergency Protocol

When an emergency occurs, there are key steps that could be taken on the Media Monitoring PIO's checklist for any situation:

1. **Remove any scheduled content**
It's common practice to schedule editorial social content that has been preapproved. In an emergency, it's imperative to ensure that fun editorial content is not posted while you're dealing with a crisis as it may come off as being insensitive. This includes any promotional or branded content from the City. Regardless of whether or not you're having an event or running a communications campaign at the time, with many eyes likely to turn to your social media accounts you want to stick to a clear message that you are in the process of dealing with the issue at hand.

2. **Change your profile picture to something generic**
If you have a "festive" or "fun" profile picture when an emergency arises, it's important to change your profile and cover pictures on social channels to something generic so as not to appear insensitive to the budding situation. On Facebook, this change will also appear in your timeline and in your followers' news feeds as an announcement from the City of Winnipeg. Be sure to "hide this story" from the newsfeeds. The change should be subtle.

3. **Alert your community**
Let your community know that you're in the process of dealing with an emergency. Keep statements brief but ensure that there is enough information to satisfy your audiences. You want to ensure that the public knows that you're in the middle of a situation and this is not the time where you'll be answering questions about any routine matters.

- **The language of crisis.** The plan is very clear and well-written. A few areas, however, used the word "control" in referring to emergency response and other aspects. In setting the tone for the City's emergency response teams, it is important to stress "manage" as opposed to "control." In an emergency, control is impossible and use of this word sends a message that "control" is a goal of the plan which is unrealistic and unattainable.

- **Silver lining thinking.** An emergency often presents golden opportunities to inform and educate audiences who are highly-motivated to learn during the event. These positive messages need to be prepared in advance – ready for use when the opportunity presents itself. Sample messages could be prepared and included in the appendix. The Public Information Coordinator can provide guidance on when to use these messages.

- **Start-up checklists**. Quick deployment checklists could be developed for each position so staff can easily and efficiently begin to put the necessary functions in place. They would expand on the Standard Operating Procedures included in the plan. Depending on how the *Emergency Public Information Plan* is used (training or training/deployment), then these checklists should be located at the front of the plan or provided separately. At the very least, they should include instructions for suspending all planned communication and assuming control over all City channels (including social media).

- **Location**. Emergency information personnel are required to report to the Emergency Operations Centre in the basement of City Hall when they are alerted. The document is silent on the means of communication prior to arrival at the EOC. Is a conference call triggered immediately when notification is sent (we assume the means of notification is captured in the *Emergency Plan*)? Is there a back-up or virtual location in case City Hall is inaccessible (due to a bomb threat for example)?

- **On-site support**. The list of primary emergency roles includes a "PIO – On-site" that is not accompanied by a description of duties. It is likely, even probable, that an emergency will happen far away from City Hall. While Site Intelligence Officers are the eyes and ears of the Emergency Public Information Team in the field, the communications team must be ready to deploy Public Information Officers to work with and speak to media.

- **Logistics**. In the early stages of a disaster, crisis planning must assume there will be no power or limited access to power (even though this may not occur) that may also cause a breakdown in communications capacity. Depending on the crisis, infrastructure may be damaged and methods of transportation impacted. Staff should be prepared for alternate travel methods such as walking or biking. The plan should address alternate means of communicating and/or

functioning without power for a short time. As an example, hand-written press releases can be delivered in person to key locations and media. Satellite phones are essential for senior team members. We also recommend a Logistics Officer position be explored for inclusion in the plan.

- **Personnel.** Large scenarios may require a Crisis Communications team to cover up to a three-week period for about 14 hours per day (sometimes 24 hours per day). Burn-out is a real problem and can jeopardize the City's success due to spokesperson and team fatigue. Rotating shifts may be necessary which requires a large enough team to meet this need. The responsibilities of each role are well-defined. We assume that individuals within the City have been identified and trained for each role. The plan identifies seven core functions for managing public information in an emergency as well as 14 unique positions – to be filled by a department with seven staff, supported by IT, web and customer service staff. We recommend exploring the addition of a spare role on the team to fill in for an incapacitated team member and thorough cross-training of staff in different roles.

  Protecting staff is one of the most important elements of business resumption. Have staff been provided with first aid training? Have muster stations been identified for staff in the event that the disaster occurs during work time? Have staff been provided personal work station disaster kits? (BC government provides personal kits for its staff.) Have staff been trained in emergency response? Keeping staff alive and uninjured are key.

  Depending on the nature of the disaster, staff may decide not to deploy, preferring to remain with their families. Hurricane Katrina saw this problem with many of its first responders choosing to not to show up for work and, as a result, many organizations now recognize this as a human factor that needs to be addressed. In response, the City of Calgary has prepared for this possibility by guaranteeing that family members are looked after so that critical teams can deploy without worry. In the City of Calgary plan, buses will pick up family members and take them to a safe location at the immediate onset of a disaster response. The City of Winnipeg may want to consider the options available to help staff respond when they are forced to leave family behind in a disaster zone.

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Risk Assessment

The plan is expressly to support emergency control in the case of a calamity or situation involving loss of life, danger to people, the environment or property. These are situations requiring an operational response. In communications, emergency management can be approached with a wider, more holistic, perspective on risk and reputation. There are many different crisis situations, not covered by the plan, that require a communications response. This could include police investigations, ethical lapses, privacy breaches, or crime and malfeasance by employees. Even something as routine as an audit has the ability to create a crisis. The communications team can add value to the organization by working with departments and the central risk register to help prepare the City of mitigate and prevent risks before they emerge.
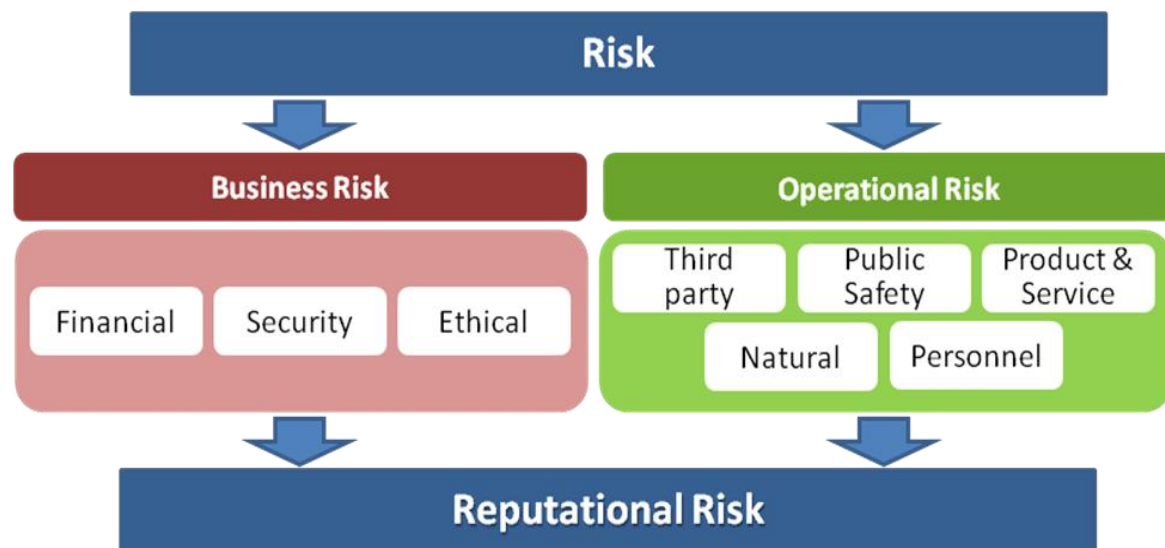
A broader perspective on risk is an important area where communications can provide value to the City in preparation, identification and response.

Staffing Levels

Based on the input received to date we believe that there is a strong need for investing in communications – both centrally and in the departments. We explored three conceptual options.

- The first, centralized, option is the status quo, where most communicators reside within the department and there are a few pockets of communications expertise (Police, Water and Waste, Mayor's Office) that function with varying degrees of independence.
- The second, decentralized, only adds new communications people and resources in departments where they are needed. It has the advantage of bringing the communicators closer to the subject matter, decision-makers and stakeholders allowing them to respond to the public more quickly.
- The final, hybrid, option that we are recommending adds staff in the departments but reporting to Corporate Communications, while also investing resources centrally to manage the existing workload and add areas of relevant expertise.

The following table ranks the options equally regardless of its importance so it should be taken as a guide, not a definitive result. Each option is given one, two or, three dots according to its rank.

Activity	Centralized	Decentralized	Hybrid
Media relations	•••	•	••
Social media	•	••	•••
Content creation (such as videos or publications)	•••	•	••
Public engagement	•	••	•••
Employee communication	•	••	•••
Issue and Crisis Management	•••	•	••
Brand and Reputation	•••	•	••
Media training	••	•	•••
Media buying	•••	•	••
Specialized skills (such as graphic design or writing)	•••	•	••
Corporate marketing	••	•	•••
Total	•••••••••• •••••••••• •••••	•••••••••• ••••	•••••••••• •••••••••• •••••••

Recommendations

Many of the challenges identified in our research reflect ongoing and persistent under-resourcing of communications at the City of Winnipeg. Not only are service levels below those expected by departments, they are significantly below other comparable cities. Our strongest recommendation is to increase staffing, offer more services, and increase service levels – in a prudent, cost-effective and targeted way. We understand the City is in the process of hiring a new manager for the Communications Division. This position will need to align the specific positions and responsibilities included here as recommendations.

In the interim report we recommended thirteen strategic directions. Several recommendations have already been implemented and others have been revised or completed in subsequent research. Some of the recommendations no longer included are investing in a Public Engagement Unit and exploring the relationships between elected officials and public service communications.

This plan aims to lay the groundwork for communication that is open, timely, accurate, relevant and credible. However, laws, rules and, in this case, recommendations are a floor not a ceiling to what can be achieved. The Communications Division will have to retain a high level of message control while simultaneously offering a higher level of service to City departments and elected officials. To be successful, the communications function needs to work in a culture of collaboration, positivity and partnership. This means leading the City by adding value to its work, being engaged, positive and forward-looking, and working closely and respectfully with the rest of the City. The entire City will also need a deep commitment to engaging the public on their terms, engaging in a meaningful way on important issues and being open and responsive to input and questions.

Argyle's strategic directions:

1) Improve communication to the public and media and enhance services to City departments by expanding the Corporate Communications Division. We recommend maintaining the existing hybrid model for the communications function, where expertise and leadership are provided from the centre, but day-to-day communications are delivered in departments where there is enough work for full time staff. The Corporate Communications Division should become a centre of excellence, providing support to City departments in all aspects of communications management.

Specific recommendations:

Expand and enhance services
a) Make the head of communications a Director, reporting to the CAO. This is consistent with industry best practice and reflects the increasing importance of communicating effectively. It

also brings the head of communications as close as possible to organization's central leadership so that they understand and articulate business goals and objectives.

b) Expand the Division by six to seven people to support communications across the organization and generate original content for the City's owned communications channels. Roughly half of communications resources should be focussed on owned channels (see Recommendation 2). These positions, therefore, shall have technical skills, such as:
   i) Writing for publication, the web and speeches
   ii) Graphic design and brand management
   iii) Social media
   iv) Online and digital media (such as web content or apps)
   v) Audio and video production

Internal collaboration

c) Have departments with significant communications responsibilities maintain their own staff but report to the Communications Division, similar to the reporting relationship that already exists for other internal services functions. Every department has a person identified as the communications contact. While we have not explored workloads within departments, based on their functions and current practice, departments that require professional communications staff may include:
   i) Transit
   ii) Water and waste
   iii) Public Works
   iv) Fire Paramedic
   v) Assessment and Taxation
   vi) Planning, Property and Development

Elected Officials

d) Increase the number of staff to three or four in the Mayor's Office responsible for political communications. They will be able to provide communications support to Councillors.
   i) Issues management and internal communications
   ii) Media and stakeholder relations
   iii) Social and digital media
   iv) Events and protocol, including liaising with Council and staff to provide backgrounders, speaking notes and proclamations

Public Engagement

e) Continue to expand public engagement by embedding it in all service areas and have it collaborate closely with Corporate Communications:

   i) We understand that the unit has been established. For the first year we recommend three to four staff, but that the number be revisited after the first year.

   ii) Require all major capital projects be brought to the Office of Public Engagement for their input into the public process.

   iii) Provide IAP2 training to staff in the communications division, public engagement and in departments.

   iv) Plan for new ways to communicate with the public based on experience and feedback.

Emergency Communication

f) Have communications staff participate in existing risk identification and management processes.

g) Deepen Corporate Communications' preparedness for emergency communications by:

   i) Developing comprehensive, user-friendly guidelines including: a vision statement for emergency communications excellence, checklists and response protocols.

   ii) Committing to regular training, continual improvement and annual simulations.

   iii) Assigning all central and departmental communicators as members of the Emergency Public Information Team.

2) Serve the public through communications. Recognize the wide range of ways in which the public consumes information by realigning priorities to focus on new and owned communication channels and reducing the focus on media relations. This includes increasing attention to social and digital communications, generating more content for newsletters, email and other direct channels as well as proactively making information available to media and the public.

Specific recommendations:

Open government

a) Commit to total transparency by expanding the Open Data portal and continuing to systematically ensure that all non-confidential information is easily and routinely available online.

b) Explore ways to improve public tracking of the budget and capital projects. This includes developing messaging and narratives to promote public understanding of the challenges faced, decisions needed and investments made as part of the budgeting process.

Communication tools

c) Develop detailed brand guidelines and implement them across all public facing materials and all digital channels (including website and social media platforms) to ensure consistency. These

guidelines could be a formalized set of rules based off the current Winnipeg branding, or could involve a total brand refresh.

d) Develop social media content calendars and create a social media identity. Social media accounts require full-time administrator(s) who can own and execute the online brand. Social media platforms should feature more frequent posts, more visuals and more video.

e) Implement a weekly, City-wide internal newsletter. It could be curated by departments in turn and drive traffic back to Citynet. Content could reach beyond City business to human stories: awards, retirements, reflections, city history and so on.

Regular review

f) Continue the practice of identifying active, resource-intensive communications that could be moved to passive, cost-effective tools. Inquiries about transit routes and schedules are an obvious example, where calls to the call centre could be replaced by visits to the existing Navigo and Telebus services.

g) Review the City's online properties to ensure it is well-adapted to mobile communications. This includes ensuring all websites are adaptive, and coordinating and standardizing City apps.

3) Become a resource to the entire organization by reflecting and articulating the City's strategic priorities. This means ensuring important issues receive the attention they deserve, Council and the Mayor have suitable communication support and departments have access to expertise and strategic advice.

Specific recommendations:

Strategic planning

a) Expand on existing message coordination by expanding the media inquiry database to become a comprehensive internal knowledge base of approved responses, briefing notes and key messages on current and ongoing topics. This could include routine matters such as waste collection calendars as well as the official City policy on complex policy matters. The knowledge base should be available to elected officials and their staff.

b) Collaborate with the Mayor's Office and the City Clerk to implement and manage an internal database that tracks issues and opportunities such as future committee agenda items, major capital programs, city service announcements and major partnerships and investments.

c) Develop a calendar of key events and prepare communications plans, messaging, briefing material and, where necessary, issue management plans in advance. Provide support to the subject matter experts from City Departments as well as elected spokespeople.

d) Develop and implement a Council Relations Policy including clarity on the services and support available as well as protocols for the local area Councillors to be briefed on issues in their wards.

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Training

e) Implement communications training throughout all departments to improve skills, consistency of messaging and understanding of the value of communications. Training should be coordinated by the Corporate Communications Division and provided through the Employee Development Branch to all staff who may have to address the media, be made available annually, and be offered automatically to any staff promoted into positions facing the media. Presentation, public speaking and facilitation training would all be worthwhile for staff in various public-facing roles.

f) Provide social media training, advice and guidelines for staff across the organization. Material could be made available to elected officials.

Monitoring and reporting

g) Implement regular media monitoring, internally or by employing a service. Make these daily reports available to elected officials and senior management, work to provide detailed analysis of issues and coverage as needed.

h) Report back to the rest of the organization on the outcome and results of communication work by establishing metrics for success, tracking them and reporting regularly, specifically:

   i) Review and improve the annual survey to provide deeper insight into attitudes to the City, its service and priorities and its communication

   ii) Track media impression and coverage quality for communication initiatives.

   iii) Track rate and type of issues raised through 311. Aim to reduce number of inquiries and quality of comments by making more information available and easy to access.

   iv) Adopt social media monitoring on the reach, quality of comments and engagement rate of both City initiatives and broader discourse around City issues. Provide weekly updates to City leadership on all social media activity.

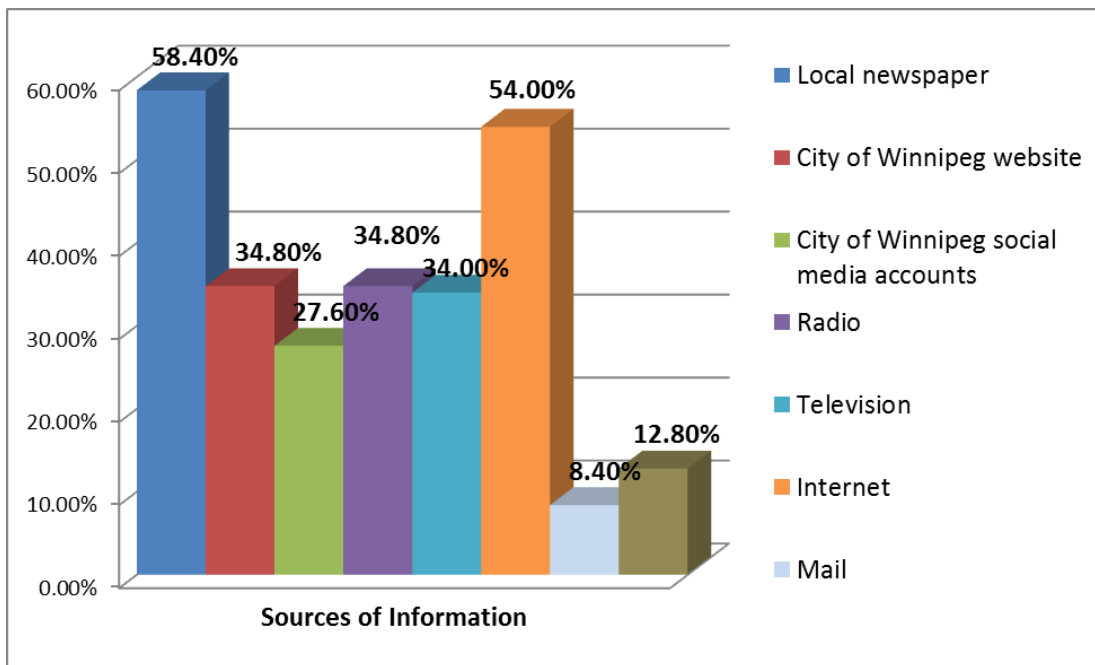   v) Provide an Annual Report on communications activities, insights, trends, best practices and results.

Appendix A: Detailed Survey Results

Public Survey

The survey was not sufficiently random or large enough to draw statistically valid conclusions. The numbers are represented as strongly or widely held opinions – not facts.

Sources of Information

The local newspaper was the most popular channel through which respondents receive their information about the City, with 58.40% identifying this as their primary resource. However, the Internet ranked a close second, with 54.00% relying on it for information. While the City of Winnipeg website ranked as the most popular channel for employees, it fell in the middle of the pack with 34.80% of the public relying on it. Less popular channels include traditional mail, with only 8.40% of respondents selecting it. Notably, respondents are divided evenly with roughly half relying on conventional news media and half relying on a combination of the City's owned channels (social media, website and direct mail) and the Internet.
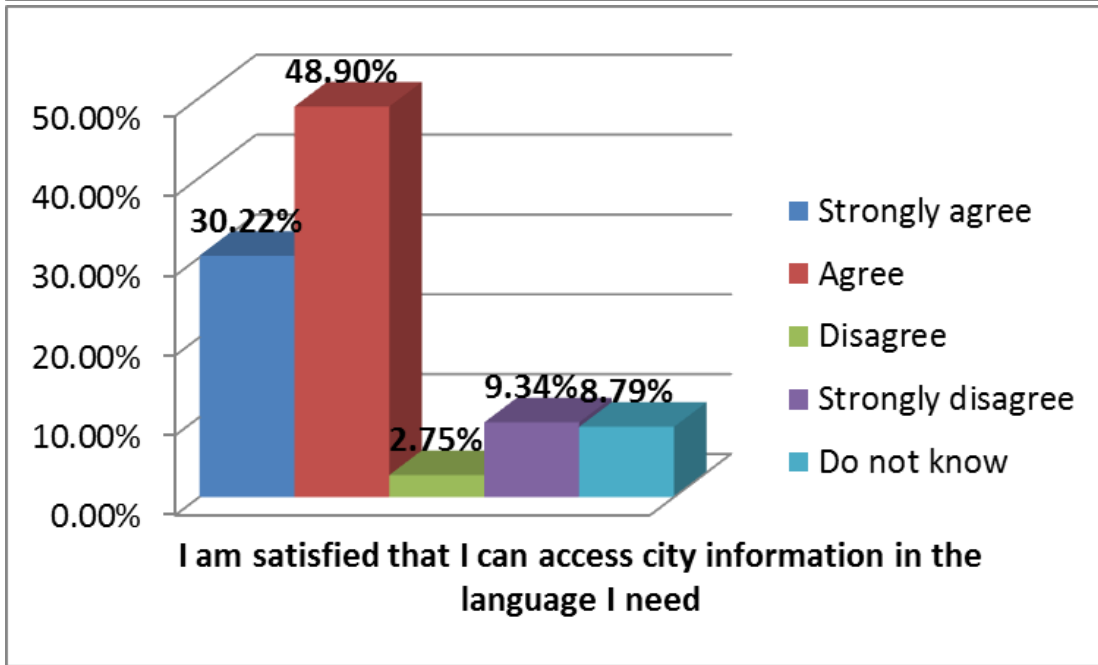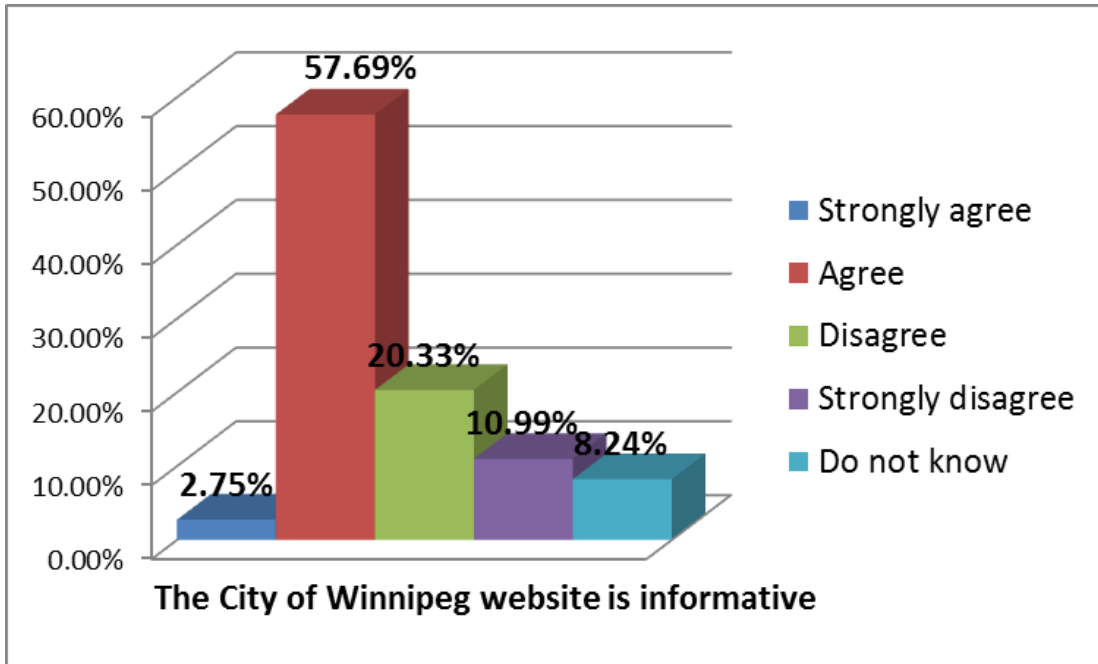
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Topics of Information

Respondents expressed that the most popular municipal topic to receive information about is planning and development, with 68.80% of respondents sharing this sentiment. Other highly ranking topics about which the public indicated they would appreciate receiving information included taxes, recreation and parks, as well as City Council matters. Overall, no single topic stood out as one about which the public is indifferent.
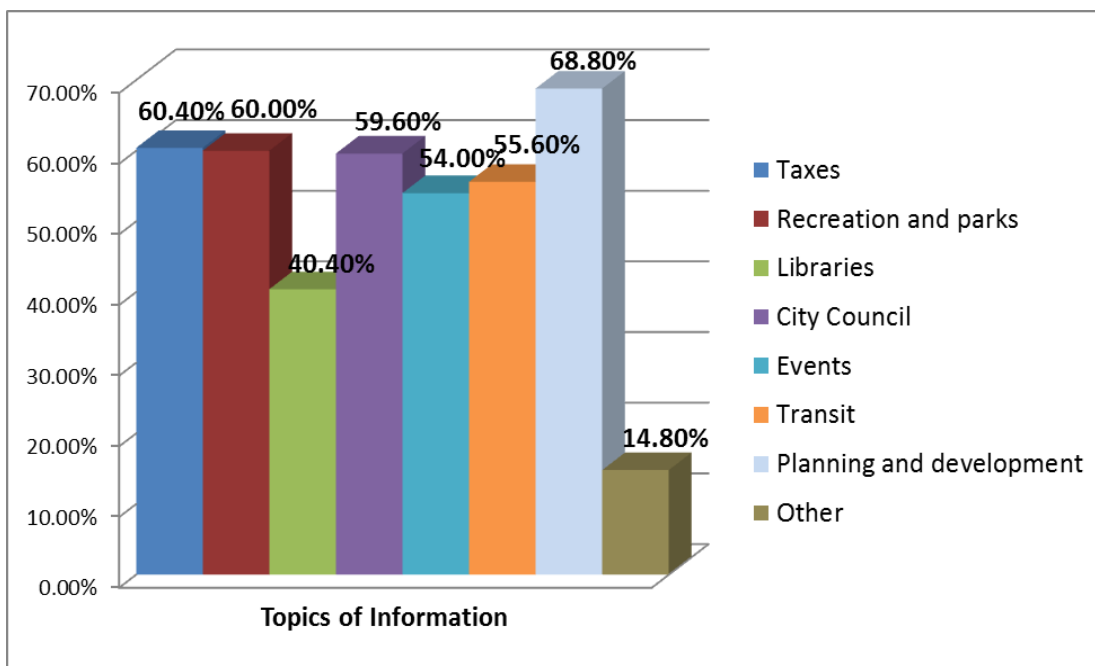
Attitudes

The survey included several questions exploring the extent to which the public feel informed about the City's communications activities. A majority of respondents **strongly agreed or agreed** that the City of Winnipeg's website was informative. Also, 79.12% **strongly agreed or agreed** that they can access city information in the language they require.

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The City of Winnipeg website is informative

- Strongly agree: 2.75%
- Agree: 57.69%
- Disagree: 20.33%
- Strongly disagree: 10.99%
- Do not know: 8.24%

I am satisfied that I can access city information in the language I need

- Strongly agree: 30.22%
- Agree: 48.90%
- Disagree: 2.75%
- Strongly disagree: 9.34%
- Do not know: 8.79%

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However, 71.98% of respondents felt that the City of Winnipeg did not do a good job communicating information to the public. These results demonstrate that, while City information is available on the website and is accessible in terms of language, the way things are presented in could be improved. It also came across in the survey that overwhelmingly, respondents don't understand the vision of the City of Winnipeg. The suggestion that City information is available but difficult to access is consistent with what was heard in the interviews.
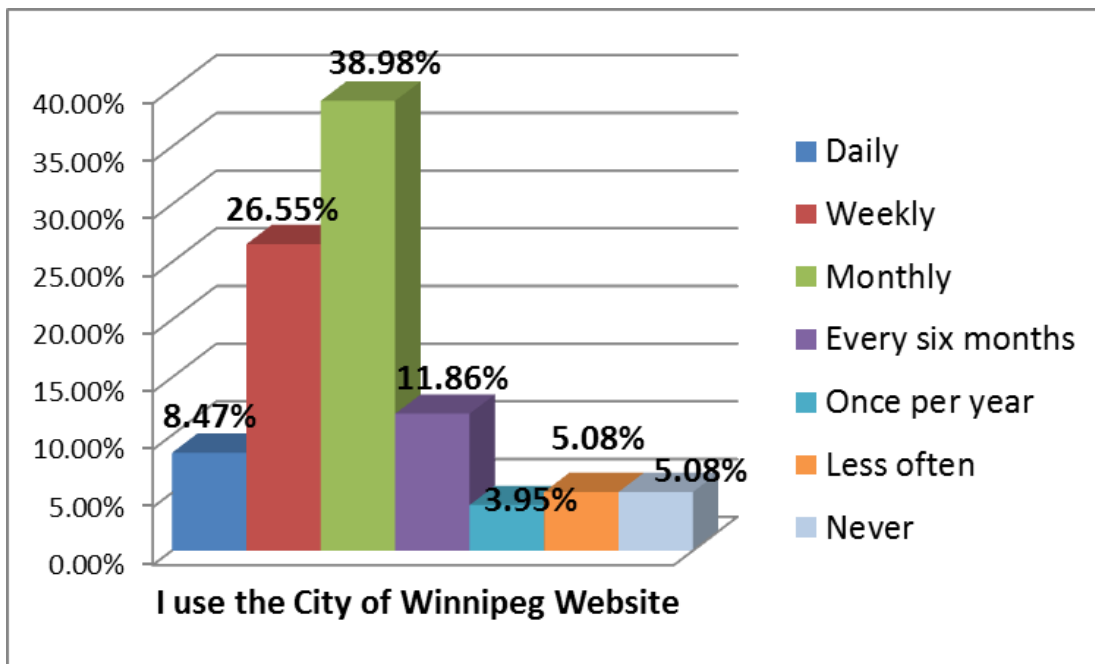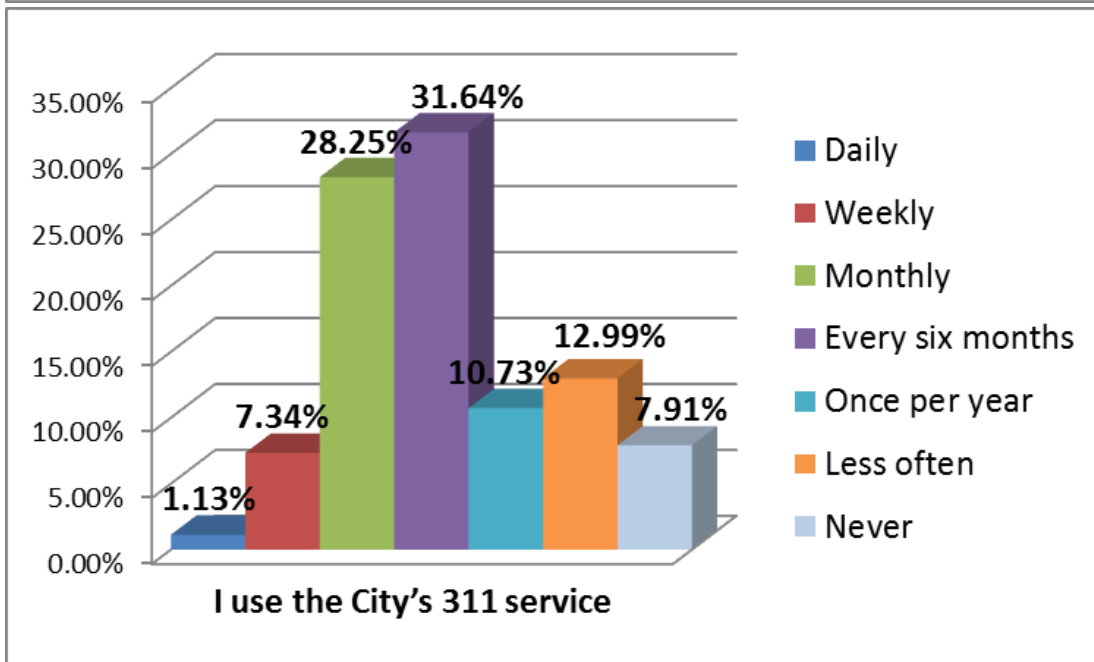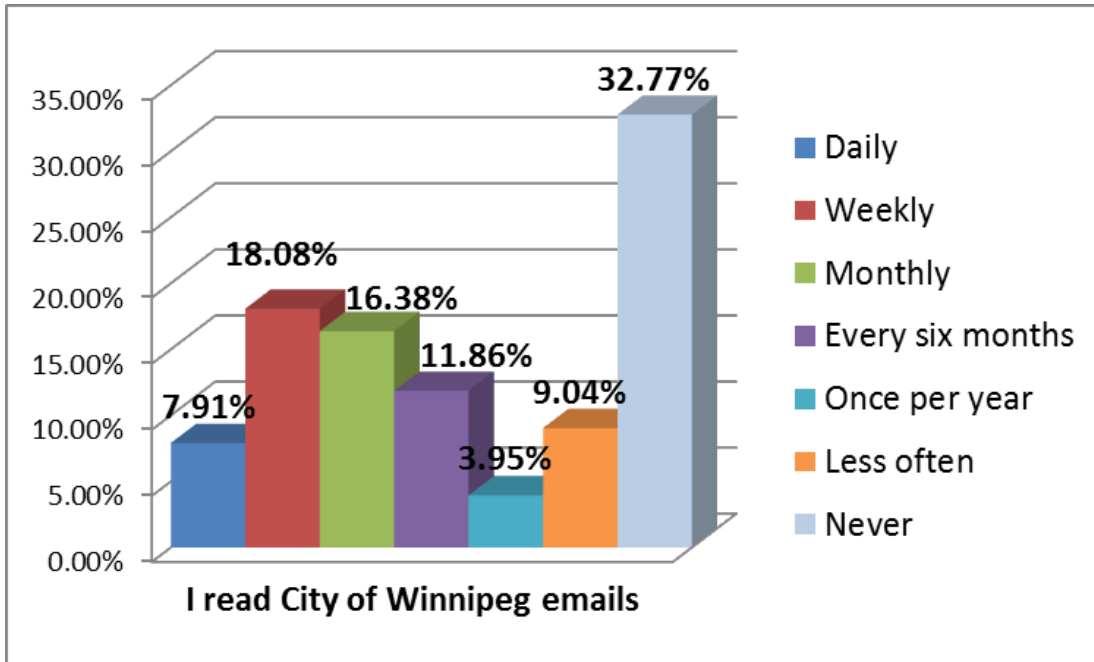
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argyle public relationships
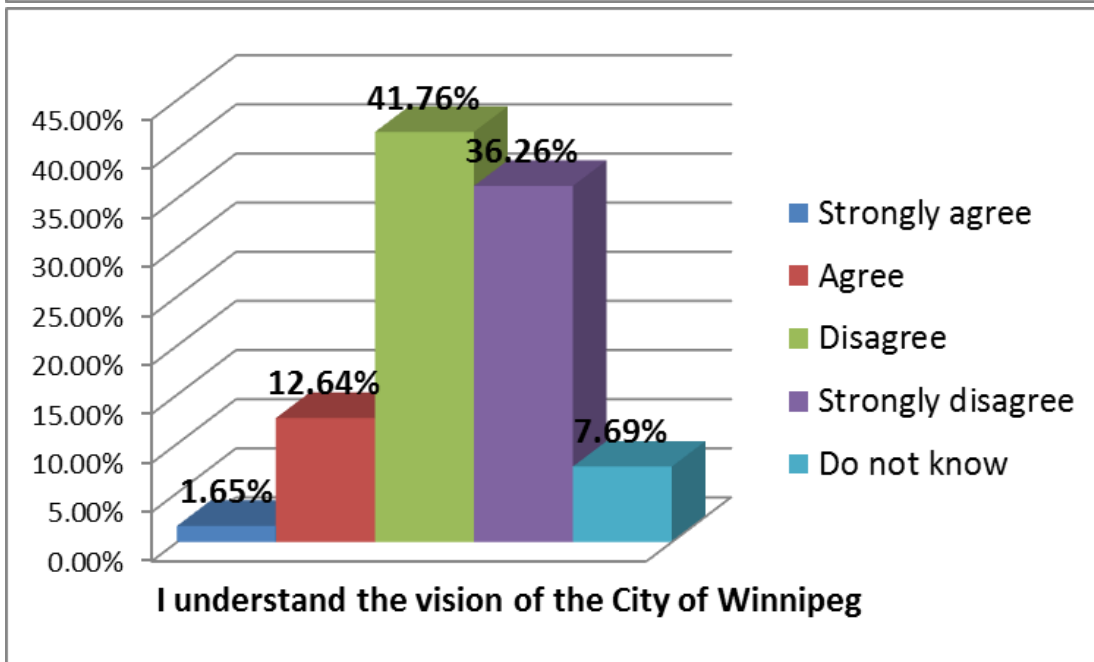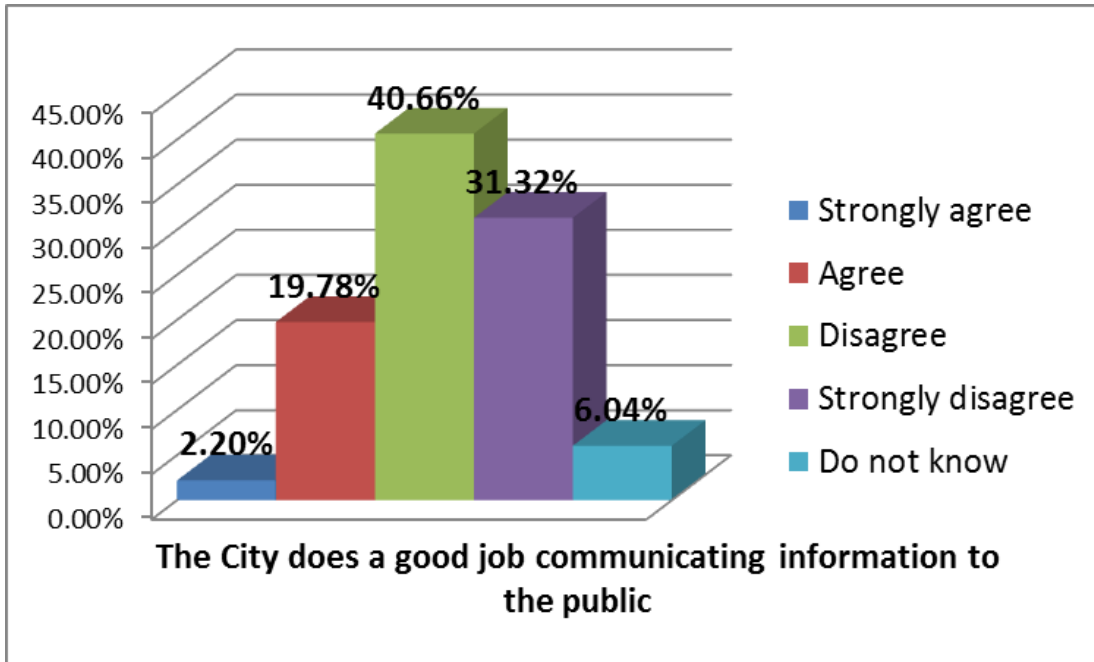
Respondents were asked to provide three words for how they would describe the City of Winnipeg's communications with the public. Communication was described as bureaucratic, adequate, slow, poor, unclear and transparent. This reinforces the suggestion that the information is available but could be more clear, concise and understandable.

Public perception of City of Winnipeg communication: In their words:

Communication Factual Bureaucratic Social
Reactive Inconsistent Haphazard Follow
Adequate Forced Needs Delayed
Poor Dishonest Transparent Inadequate
Slow Obtuse Late Terrible Unclear Difficult Cautious
Money Job Inaccessible Transit Bland Incomplete
Clear Untimely Hard to Understand
Reactive Misleading Poor Late Services
Vague Citizens HALF Public Defensive Vision
Frustrating Limited
Factual Efficient Slow Arrogant
One-way Communication Late
Secretive Infrequent Political
Inconsistent SELF Serving Lacking
Proactive Necessary Unclear Clear Hard
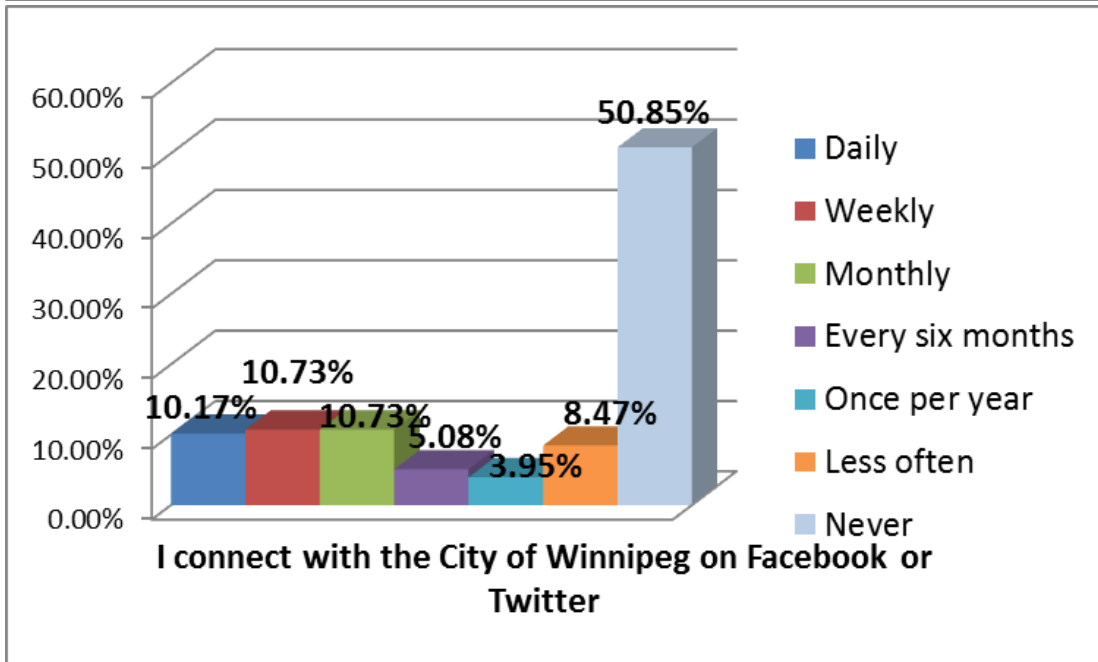
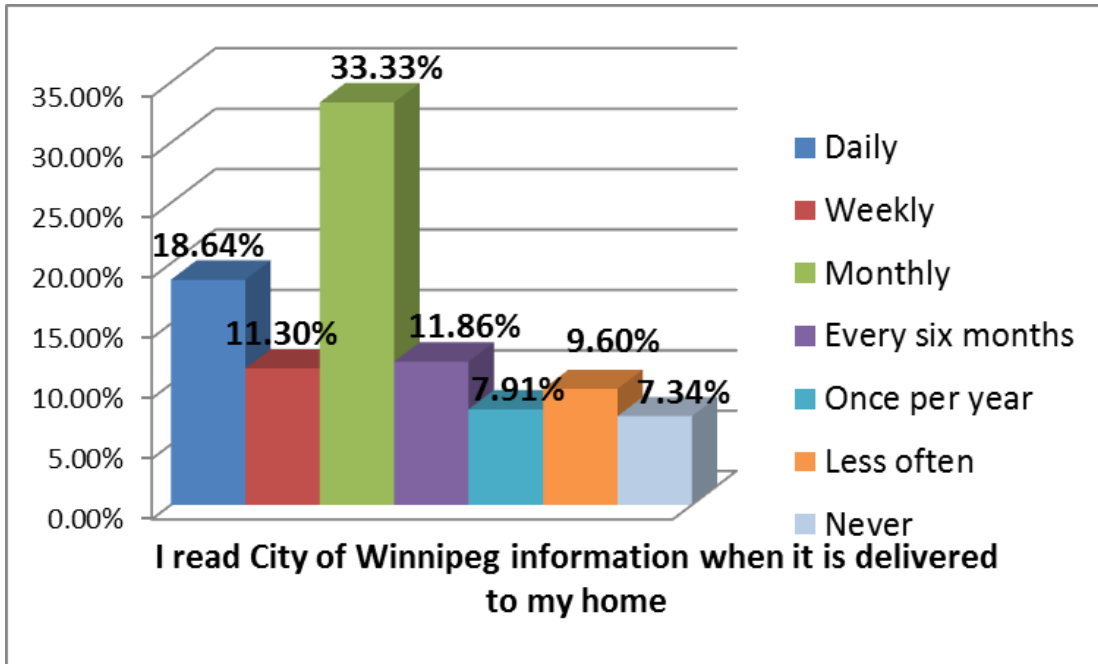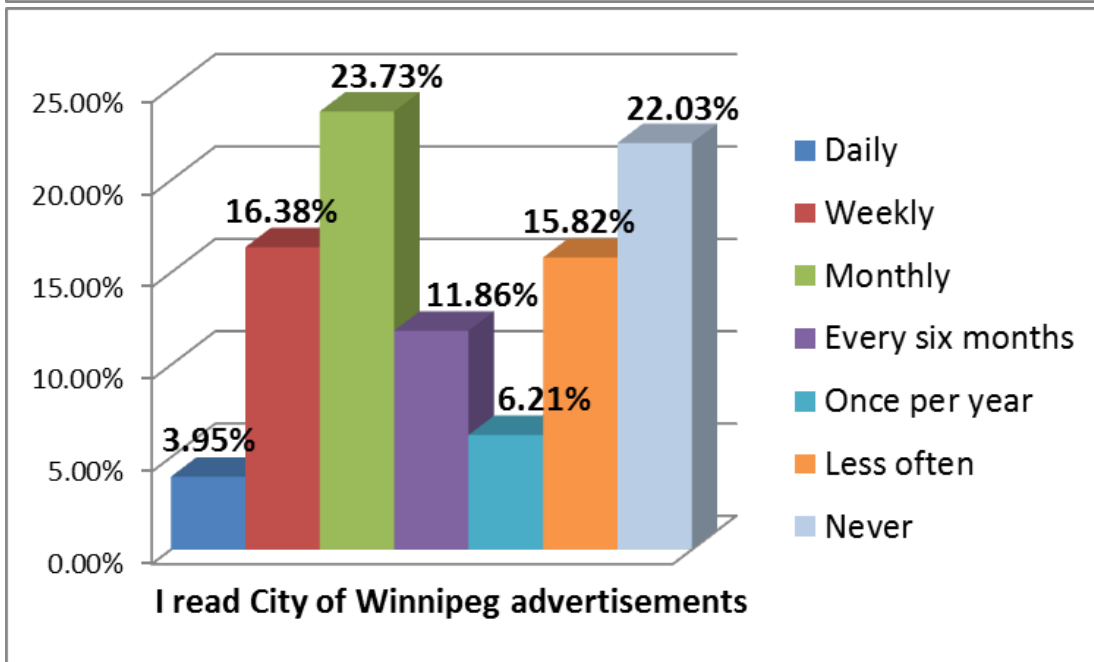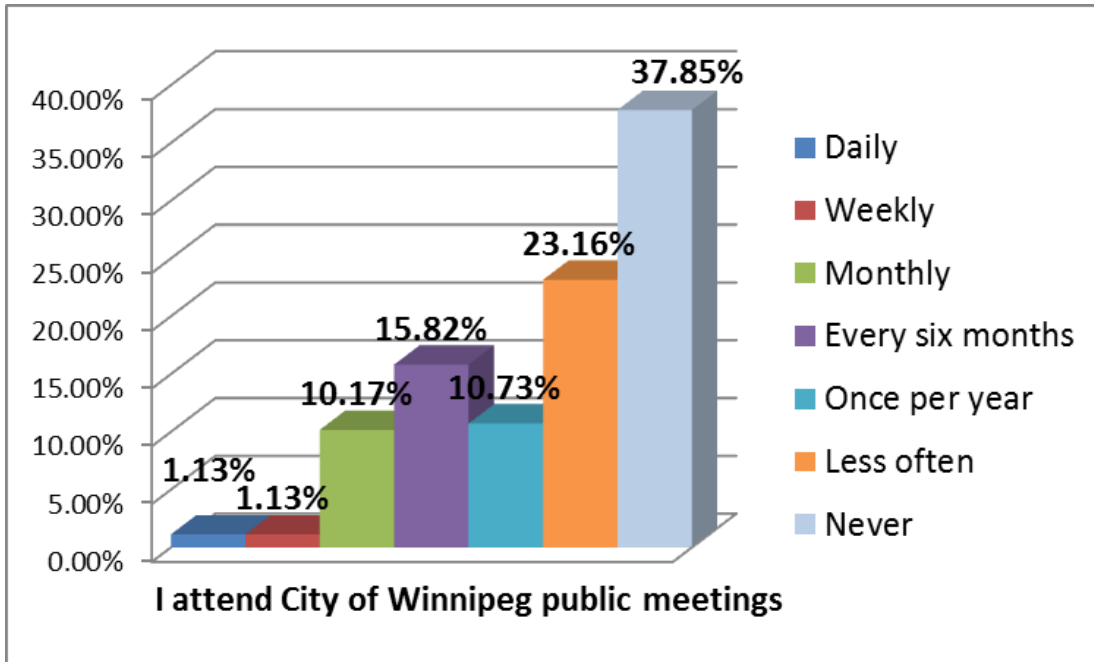*Note: size indicates frequency with which word occurred.*

Interactions and Impressions with Winnipeg's Public Communications

The survey results indicate the City's website is well used by almost all respondents, with 80% visiting it once a month or more. City emails enjoy a high rate of use but do not reach everybody, with a third of respondents indicating they are not signed up to receive any. The 311 service is also a very useful communication tool with widespread occasional use. An interesting finding suggested that more than 60% of respondents read information monthly or more when this was delivered to the home. In fact, 311, the website and home delivery stood out as the most universal of tools, with less than 10% never using them. The results also showed that more than half of respondents do not connect with the City on Facebook or Twitter but more research would be needed to determine if they are on social media at all. More than 60% of respondents attend a public meeting less than once a year or never. Advertising was demonstrated in the survey as moderately effective.

I read City of Winnipeg emails

- Daily: 7.91%
- Weekly: 18.08%
- Monthly: 16.38%
- Every six months: 11.86%
- Once per year: 3.95%
- Less often: 9.04%
- Never: 32.77%

I use the City's 311 service

- Daily: 1.13%
- Weekly: 7.34%
- Monthly: 28.25%
- Every six months: 31.64%
- Once per year: 10.73%
- Less often: 12.99%
- Never: 7.91%

I read City of Winnipeg information when it is delivered to my home

Daily: 18.64%
Weekly: 11.30%
Monthly: 33.33%
Every six months: 11.86%
Once per year: 7.91%
Less often: 9.60%
Never: 7.34%

I connect with the City of Winnipeg on Facebook or Twitter

Daily: 10.17%
Weekly: 10.73%
Monthly: 10.73%
Every six months: 5.08%
Once per year: 3.95%
Less often: 8.47%
Never: 50.85%

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I attend City of Winnipeg public meetings

Daily 1.13%
Weekly 1.13%
Monthly 10.17%
Every six months 15.82%
Once per year 10.73%
Less often 23.16%
Never 37.85%

I read City of Winnipeg advertisements

Daily 3.95%
Weekly 16.38%
Monthly 23.73%
Every six months 11.86%
Once per year 6.21%
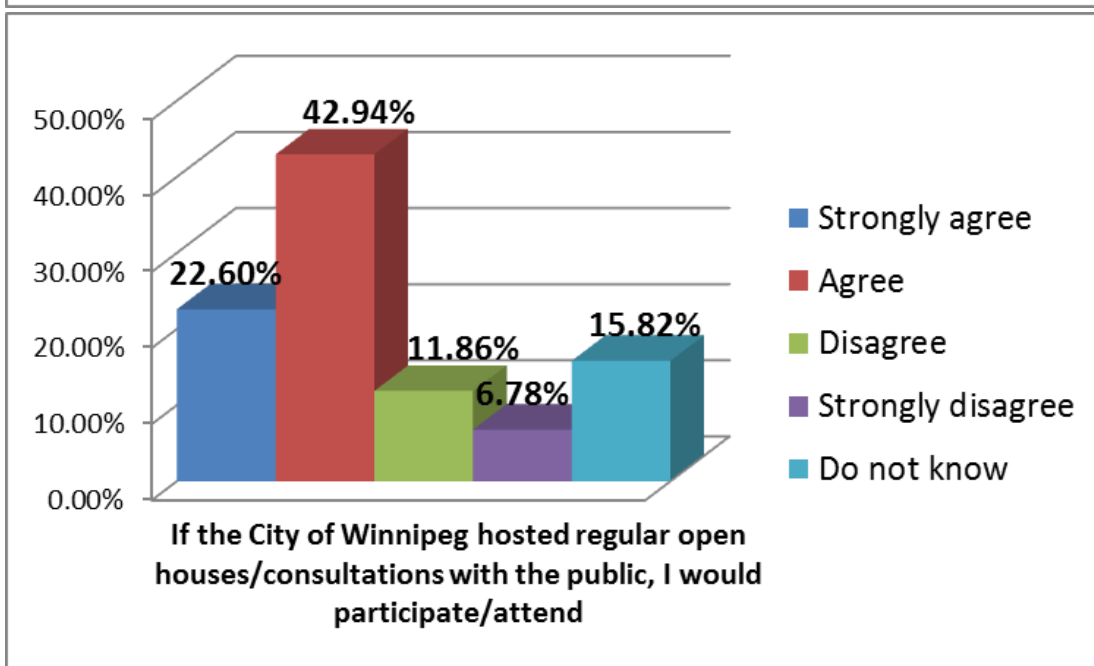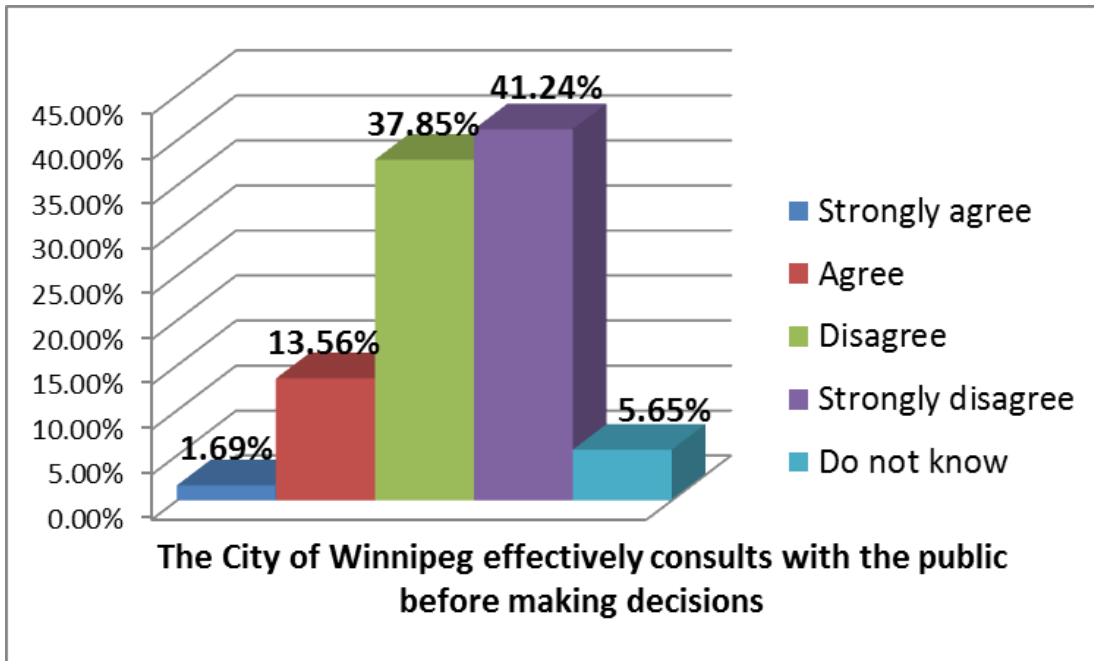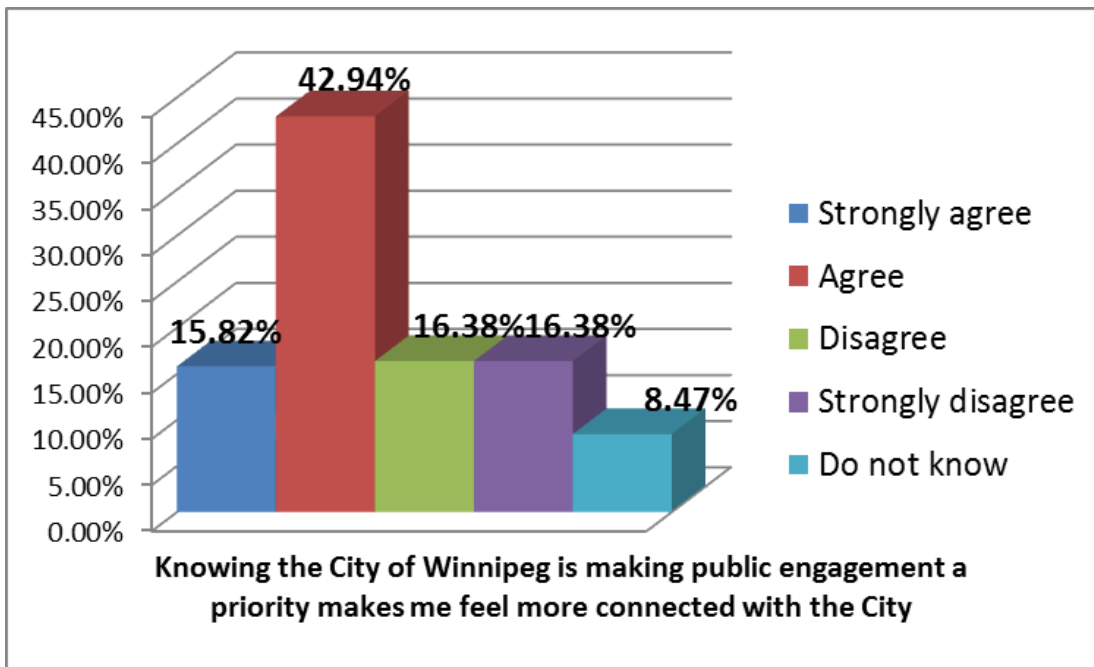Less often 15.82%
Never 22.03%

Given the emphasis on improving public engagement, respondents were asked about the effectiveness of public consultations. The results showed a total of 79.09% **disagreeing or strongly disagreeing** that the City effectively consults with the public before making decisions. To test demand for engagement, we asked whether the public would be interested in attending open houses/consultations. Fully 65.54% of respondents **agreed** they would participate if there were an opportunity.

The most popular topics for consultation include: planning and infrastructure, transportation and transit, and programming and services. These results tell us both that there is room for improvement in the City's public engagement, and that the public would like to be involved. These findings reinforce the value of a public engagement unit. Members of the public do not feel connected to the City, but have expressed they want to be.

The City of Winnipeg effectively consults with the public before making decisions

Strongly agree: 1.69%
Agree: 13.56%
Disagree: 37.85%
Strongly disagree: 41.24%
Do not know: 5.65%

If the City of Winnipeg hosted regular open houses/consultations with the public, I would participate/attend

Strongly agree: 22.60%
Agree: 42.94%
Disagree: 11.86%
Strongly disagree: 6.78%
Do not know: 15.82%

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Knowing the City of Winnipeg is making public engagement a priority makes me feel more connected with the City

- Strongly agree
- Agree
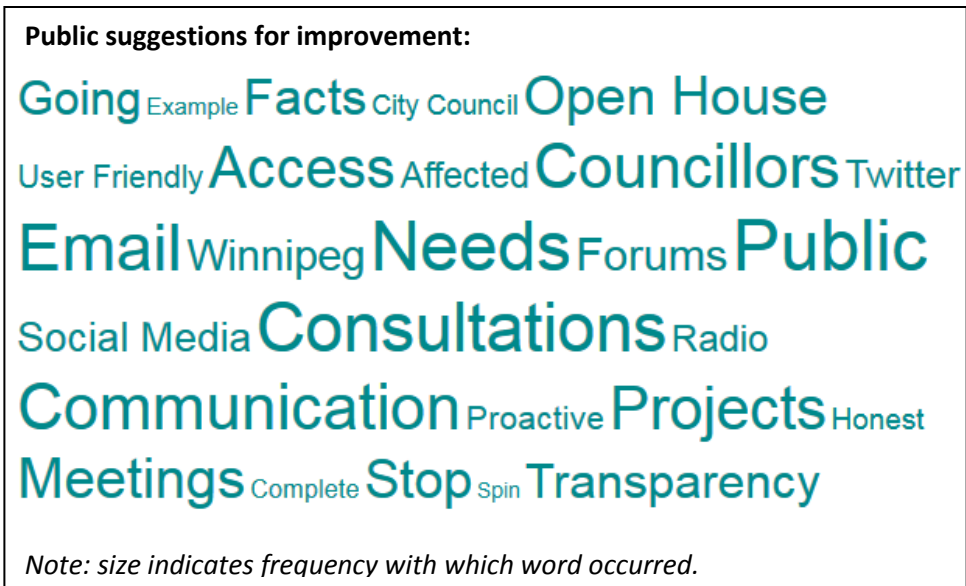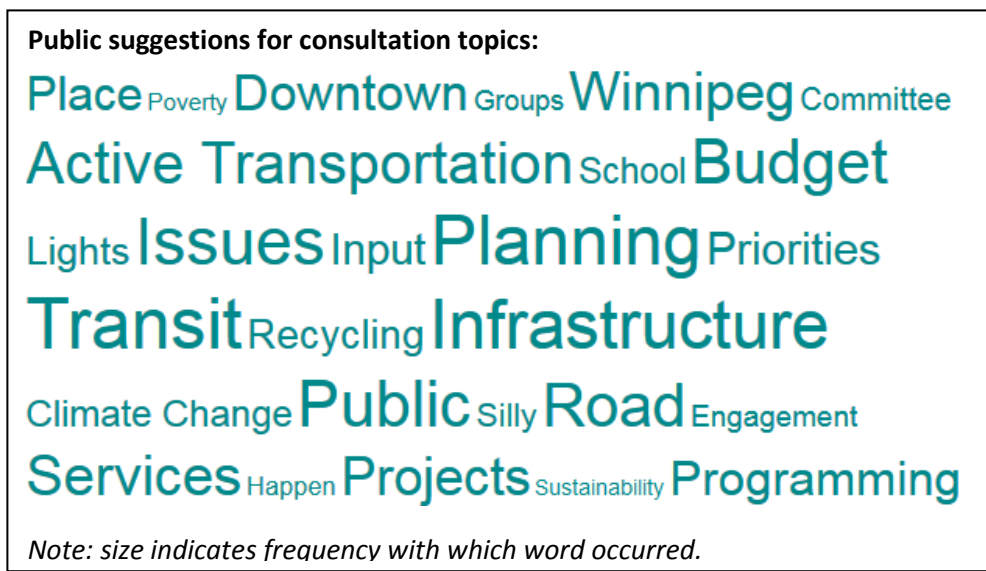- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Do not know

Respondents indicated the City does well managing social media accounts. However, a challenge for the City is the existing profiles have limited reach. This suggests it may be worthwhile to actively attract people to follow their social media accounts. The City of Winnipeg's 311 website was also well regarded by respondents. Survey participants stated that "the 311 website and response is very good," and that, "The 311 service has worked well in answering questions and providing info."

Public perception of website:

Programs Send Little Platforms Police Advance
Leisure Guide Emergency Situations
Releases Great Job Service Insect Control
Twitter Cbc Radio Social Media
Garbage Pickup Public Open Houses
Mosquito Response Water Going

Note: size indicates frequency with which word occurred.

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Respondents were asked, "How can the City of Winnipeg better inform and engage the public?" They indicated a need for more engagement, sooner, and free of political interference. One respondent noted, "We need to be involved in the process before it is finalized!!"

Public suggestions for improvement:

Going Example Facts City Council Open House User Friendly Access Affected Councillors Twitter Email Winnipeg Needs Forums Public Social Media Consultations Radio Communication Proactive Projects Honest Meetings Complete Stop Spin Transparency

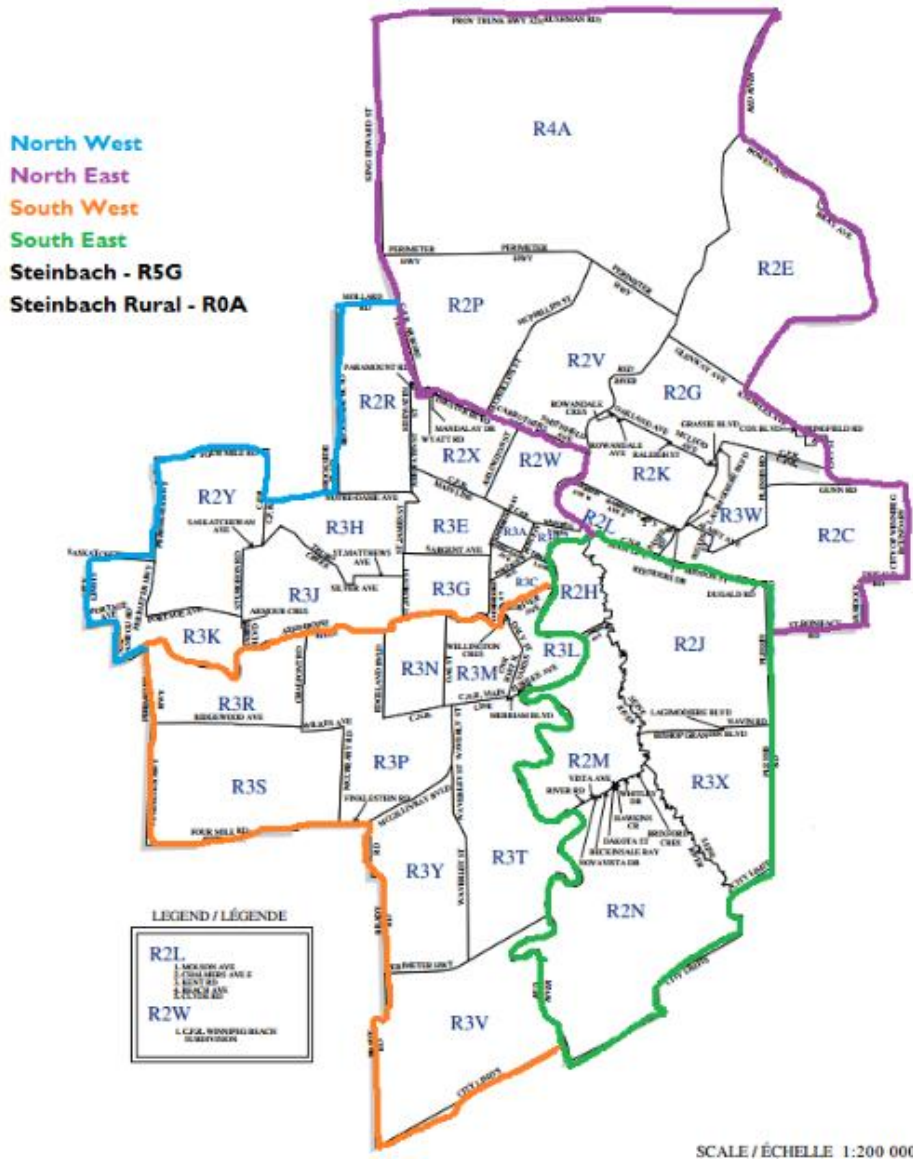*Note: size indicates frequency with which word occurred.*

Given an opportunity to suggest topics for consultation, suggestions included: planning, infrastructure, transportation and programming. This was supported by statements such as: "Planning active transit, use/impact of limited/natural resources, sustainable development, and community centres." Respondents did not indicate that they would want to consult on taxes; but instead, focused on infrastructure.
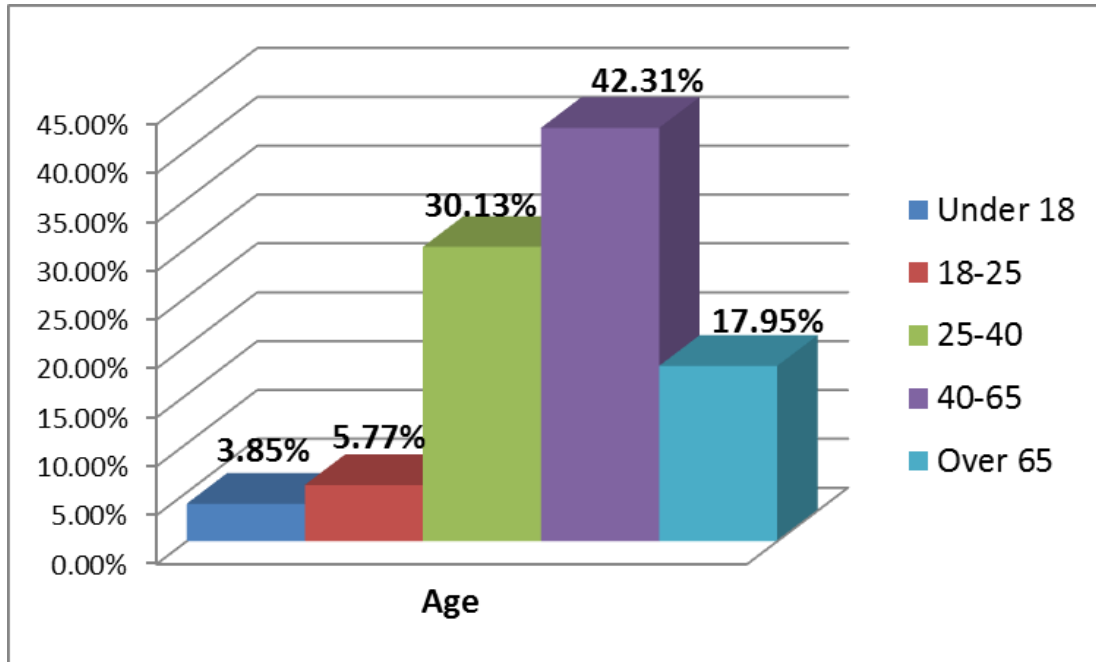
Public suggestions for consultation topics:

Place Poverty Downtown Groups Winnipeg Committee Active Transportation School Budget Lights Issues Input Planning Priorities Transit Recycling Infrastructure Climate Change Public Silly Road Engagement Services Happen Projects Sustainability Programming

Note: size indicates frequency with which word occurred.

Postal Codes

The most respondents came from the postal code areas R3L and R3T. This is the south end of the city.

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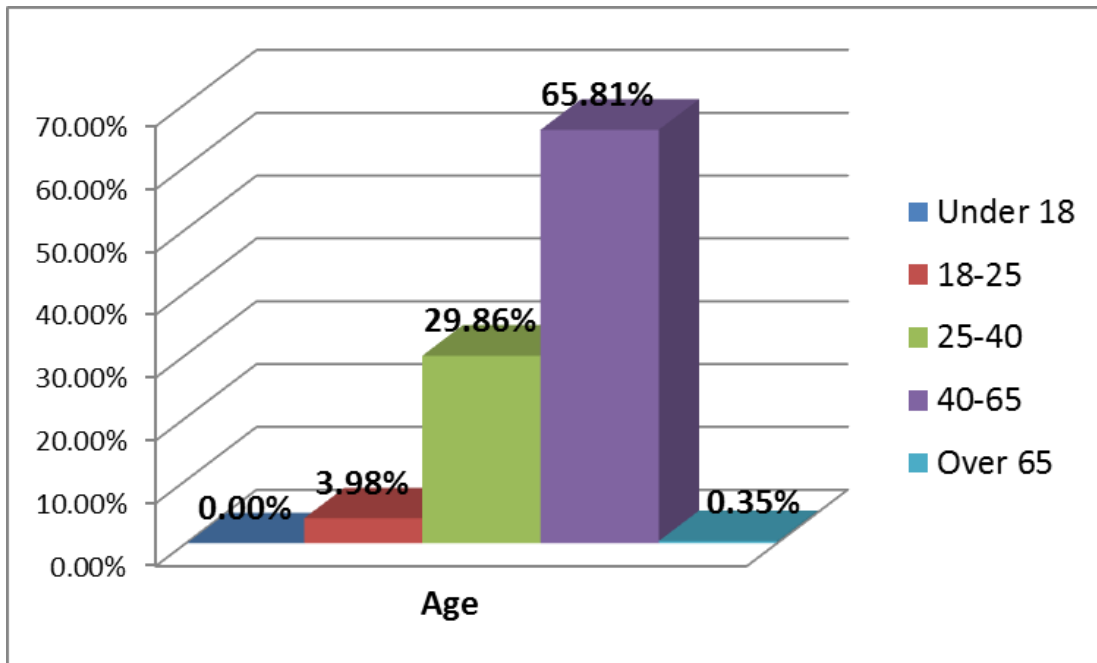
Demographics - Age

There were 156 respondents from the pool that chose to answer their age. From this group of respondents 90% were over the age of 25.
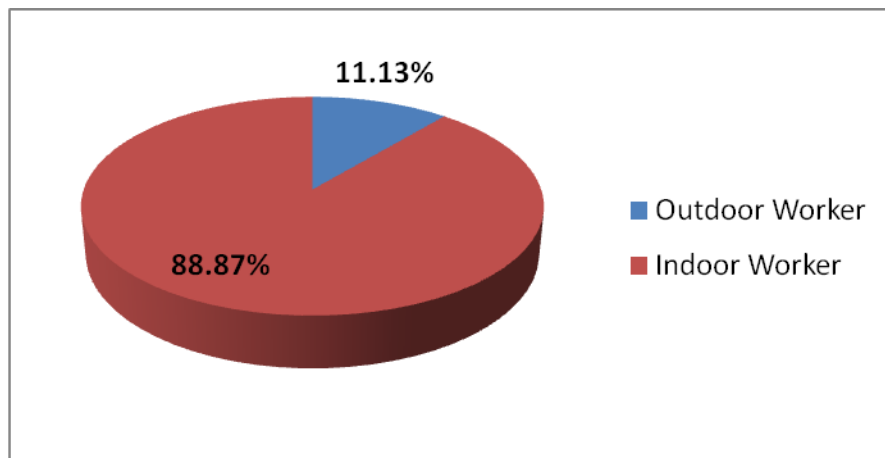
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Staff Survey

Demographics – Age

Area of work

Departments

Respondents to the survey represent a great diversity of departments, as evidenced by the small percentages of each division. The overwhelming response by indoor workers reflects the fact that employees were invited to participate by email. The top ten most popular departments of respondents are:
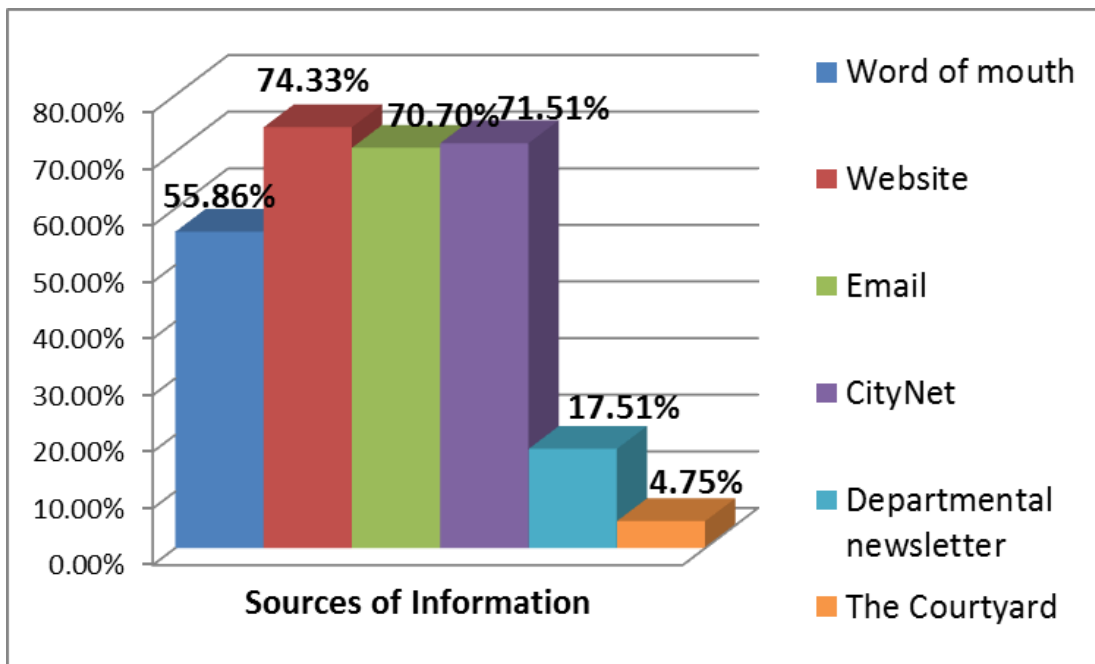
- Community Services – 11.63%
- Water and waste – 10.75%
- Public works – 7.7%
- Police – 6.82%
- Transit – 5.85%
- Corporate Support Services – 5.53%
- Property and Development – 5.21%
- Assessment and Taxation – 3.21%
- Fire/Paramedic – 3.13%
- Corporate Finance – 2.89%

Interaction with the public

When asked about their interactions with the public, 46.81% indicated that they regularly interact with members of the public. Another 16.32% indicate this interaction is occasional, while only 7.49% indicated that they never interact with the public. With a majority of respondents having some sort of interaction with the public in their roles, their feedback represents not only their own personal opinions, but in many cases the opinions they've received from the general public in Winnipeg. These staff are an untapped channel to communicate the City's vision more effectively to the public.

Sources of information

The City of Winnipeg **website** was the channel through which most respondents receive their information about the City's policies and activities, with 74.33% identifying this as their primary resource. Other frequently used channels include **CityNet** (71.51%), **email** (70.7%), and **word-of-mouth** (55.86%). Less popular channels include the departmental newsletter, which only 17.51% rely on for information, and **The Courtyard**, which only 4.75% rely on. Respondents were also asked whether they use **any collaboration tools** like Courtyard or Sharepoint, and over three quarters (76.46%) do not currently use these tools.

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Awareness

Participants were asked whether they understood the vision of the city of Winnipeg, leading to mixed results. Although just over half (52.9%) of participants either **strongly agreed or agreed** that they understood this vision, over a third (36.04%) either **disagreed or strongly disagreed**. Furthermore, 11.06% indicated that they were **not sure** if they knew the City's vision. This demonstrates a great deal of work remains to instill the City's vision amongst its employees; while a percentage near 50% would be a positive achievement among residents in this category, among employees that number should be much higher.
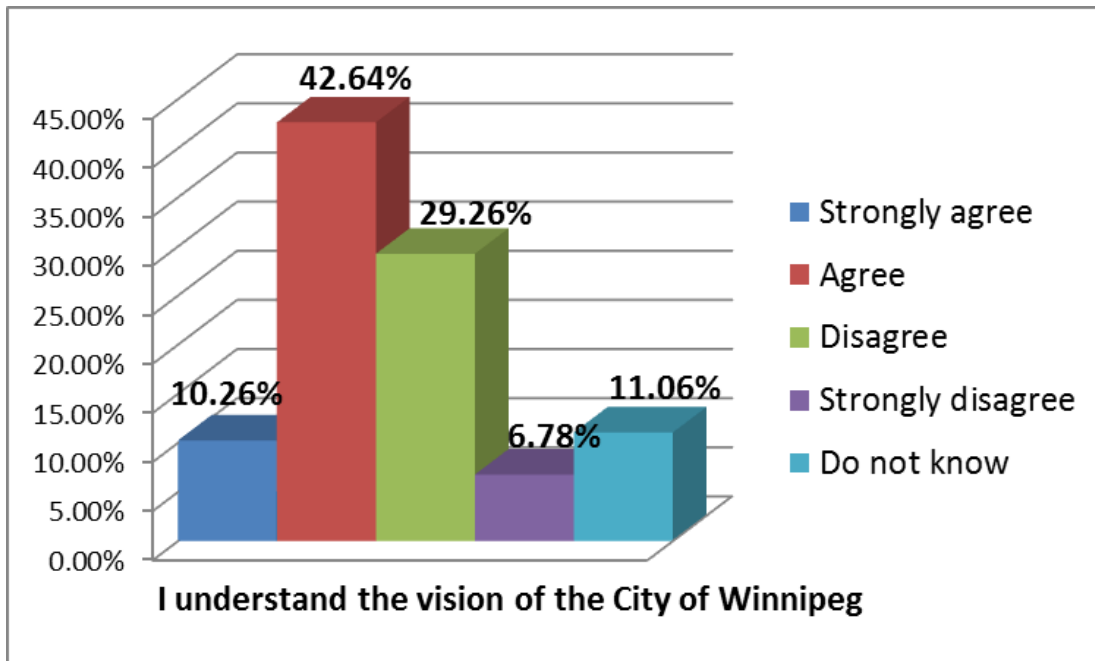

Quality of Communications

Participants were asked several questions pertaining to the quality of communications they currently receive from the City overall and from the Corporate Communications division specifically.

Participants generally agreed that the City of Winnipeg website is informative, with 86.16% either **strongly agreeing or agreeing** with this statement. This demonstrates that the fundamentals of web design are being properly observed at the City of Winnipeg.

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The City of Winnipeg website is informative

Strongly agree: 11.06%
Agree: 75.11%
Disagree: 8.56%
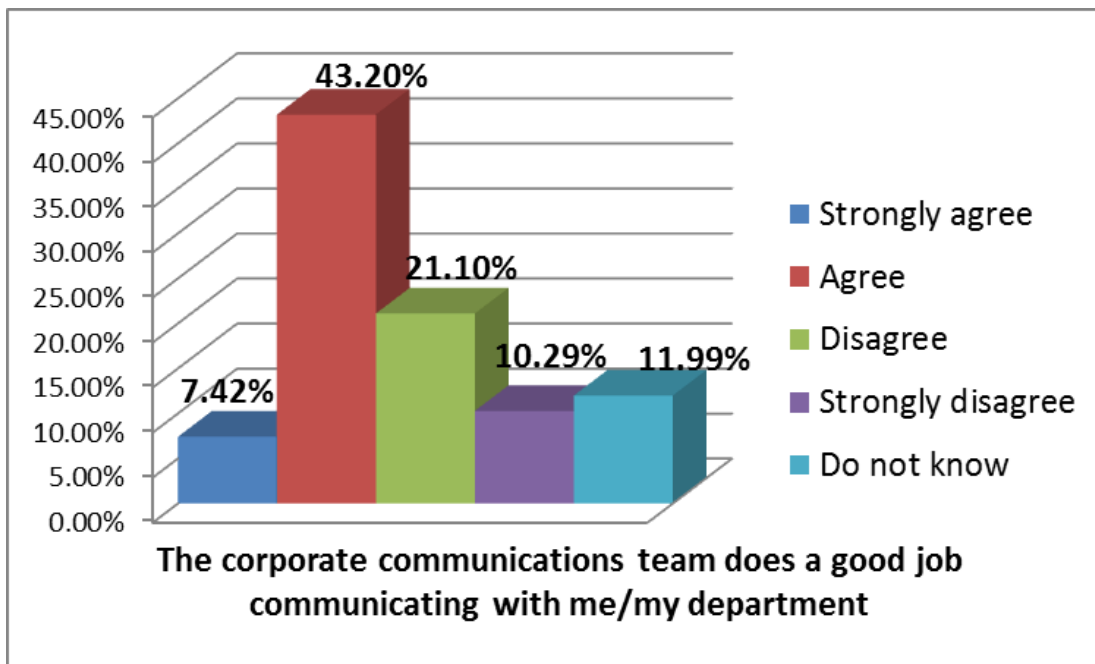Strongly disagree: 2.59%
Do not know: 2.68%
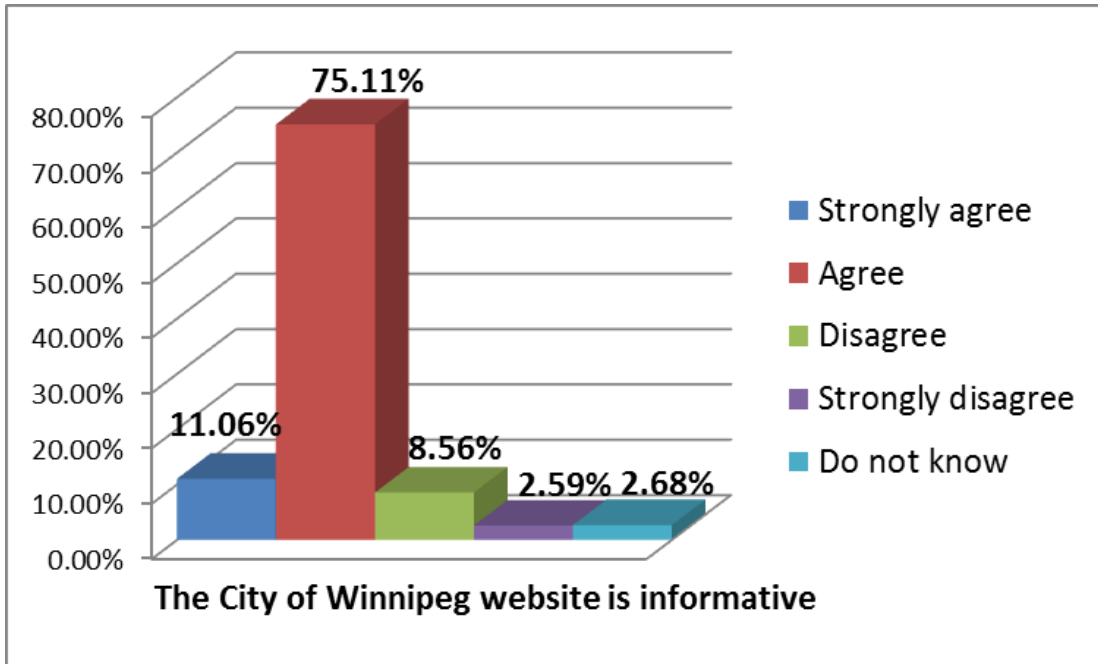
When asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the City does a good job communicating information, responses were mixed. Although 52.41% either **strongly agreed or agreed** with this statement, 41.34% either **disagreed or strongly disagreed**. This shows that the City is only currently meeting the communications needs of half of their relevant stakeholders, and should consider digging deeper into what each stakeholder group expects and desires from their municipal communications.

The City does a good job communicating information to the public

Strongly agree: 5.18%
Agree: 47.23%
Disagree: 32.32%
Strongly disagree: 9.02%
Do not know: 6.25%

62
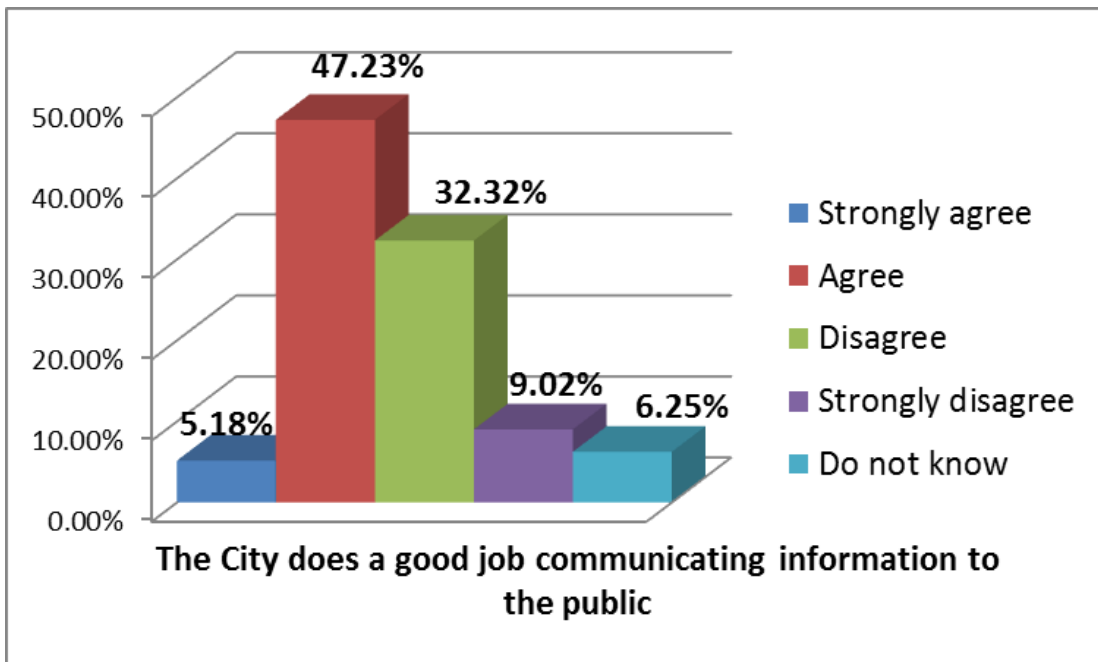
Finally, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that the Corporate Communications team does a good job communicating with them specifically. While 50.63% either **strongly agreed or agreed** with this, a significant 37.39% either **disagreed or strongly disagreed**. Furthermore, 11.99% indicated that they simply **didn't know** whether communications was effectively reaching them.

The relatively large percentage of those who didn't know could indicate that many employees are unaware of the role Corporate Communications plays in the information they receive for the city. With a significant portion indicating disagreement with this statement, it is advisable for Corporate Communications to dig deeper into what could make their communications more relevant and helpful for various members of the public, perhaps through a public survey or through stakeholder meetings.
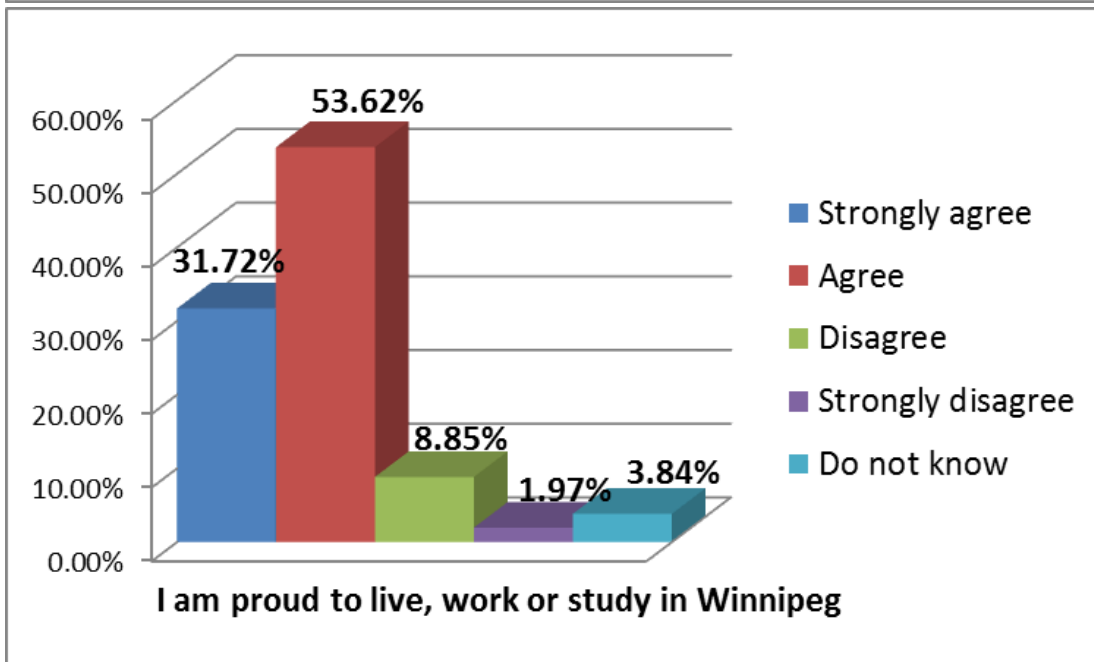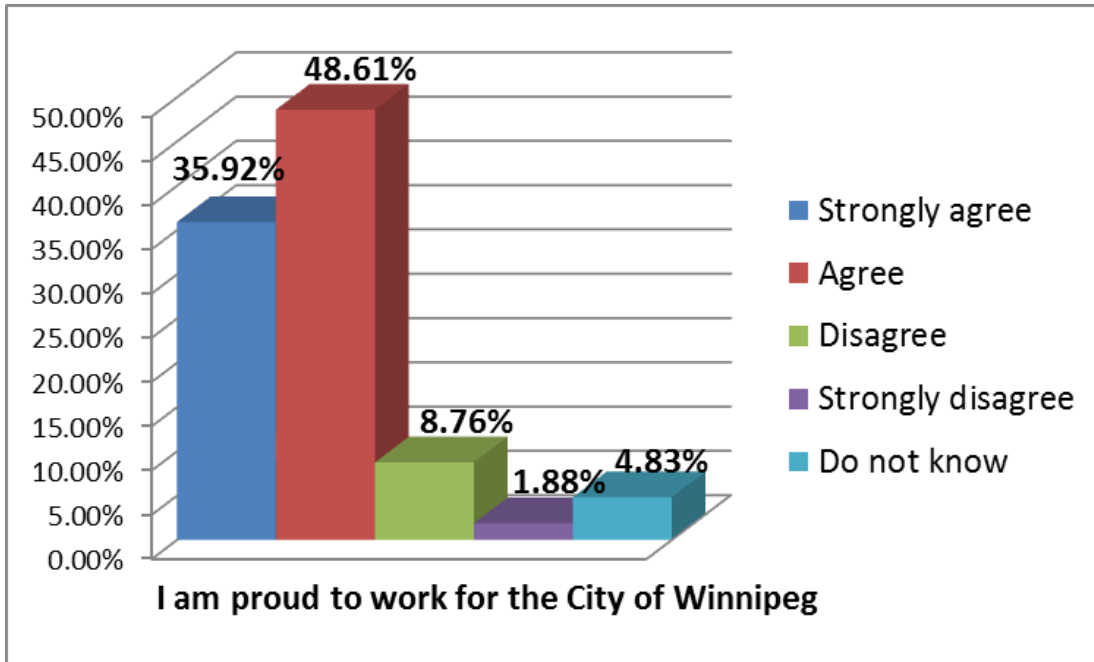

Attitudes

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In several questions, the survey explored employee attitudes towards their careers and their City. Almost a quarter of respondents (24.39%) indicated that they either **disagree or strongly disagree** with the statement "I feel connected to my City." As with an understanding of Winnipeg's vision, the 70.22% who indicated they **strongly agree or agree** with this statement would be a very healthy number among the general public, but among City staff it is fairly low. More attention is needed for employee engagement, and may necessitate a dedicated member of the Corporate Communications team for internal communications.
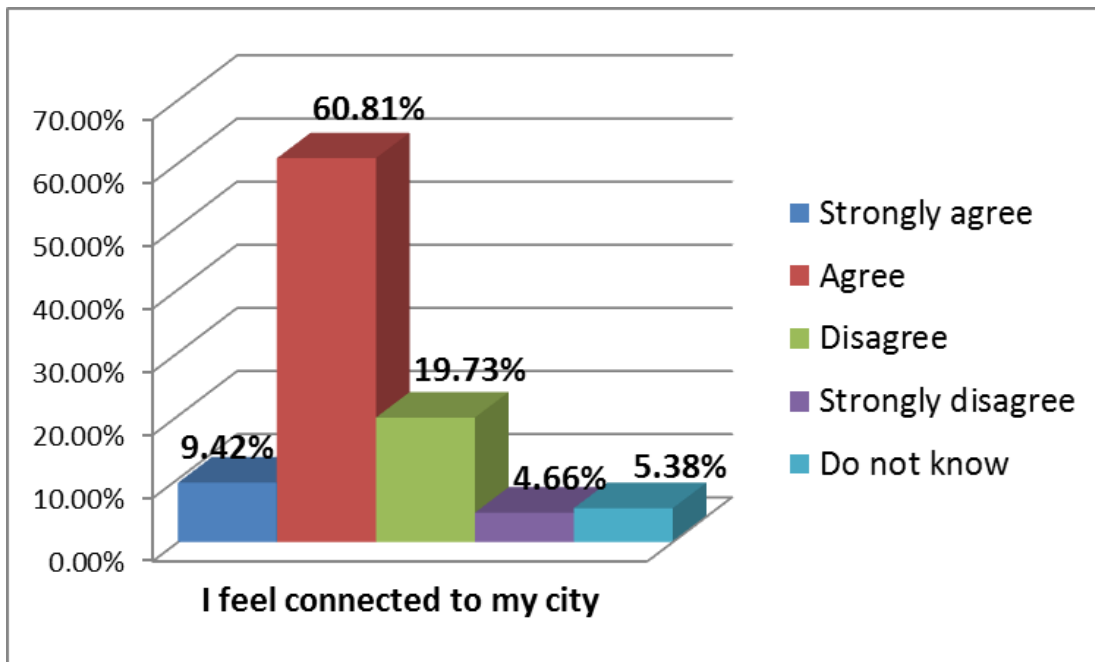
When asked about their pride in living, working or studying in Winnipeg, respondents were far more positive, with 85.34% either **strongly agreeing or agreeing** that they are proud of this. Respondents were also generally positive about working for the City, with 84.54% either **strongly agreeing or agreeing** that their role with the City is a source of pride. This pre-existing pride will simplify the work of Corporate Communications, in that there is no need to "sell" Winnipeg to staff; participants take pride in their city and in serving their city, and communications should reinforce this pride to help create "brand ambassadors" among staff. The finding that employee are proud to work for the city could be further examined in relation to recruitment communication, and the communications/human resources divisions should further research what elements of their careers generate the most satisfaction.

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I am proud to work for the City of Winnipeg

- 35.92% Strongly agree
- 48.61% Agree
- 8.76% Disagree
- 1.88% Strongly disagree
- 4.83% Do not know

I am proud to live, work or study in Winnipeg

- 31.72% Strongly agree
- 53.62% Agree
- 8.85% Disagree
- 1.97% Strongly disagree
- 3.84% Do not know

Impressions of Winnipeg's Public Communications

In order to test employees' impressions of City of Winnipeg communications, respondents were asked to describe the City of Winnipeg's communications with the public in three words.

The top 10 most frequently occurring words were:

- Confusing (66 responses)
- Reactive (65 responses)
- Poor (62 responses)
- Vague (44 responses)
- Clear (41 responses)
- Slow (37 responses)
- Accurate (36 responses)
- Limited (34 responses)
- Lacking (34 responses)
- Incomplete (28 responses)

Although some participants highlighted the clarity and accuracy of communications, more indicated that the communications were confusing or vague. Assessments such as poor and lacking are value judgements of a distinctly negative tone, while slow, limited or incomplete are an assessment of the delivery of information. The term reactive, while not specifically negative, indicates a lack of proactivity that is ideal in all communications. These findings validate what the Corporate Communications Division had already suspected, that the unit is in need of a revamp, increased resources and a more defined vision.

Stakeholder Groups

Participants were asked to identify stakeholder groups with whom the City should communicate. Some of the stakeholder groups identified include:

- LGBT groups
- Indigenous groups
- Ethnic groups
- Feminist groups
- Community groups
- Community centres
- School divisions
- Seniors and seniors groups
- Developers
- APEGM
- Bargaining groups
- Tax payer associations
- Aboriginal groups
- Local media
- Employees
- Youth and youth groups

Media Survey

The response rate for media survey was too low to draw any statistical conclusions. The survey was, in effect, a questionnaire.

Sources of Information

All communications channels are valued by members of the media with each serving a different purpose. Respondents expressed they were happy to use every channel, with no real preference outlined. The City of Winnipeg website did not seem to be used as frequently by this group of respondents. The media want information on all aspects of city business, but did mention specifically information on insect control and fires.

The media indicated that the City of Winnipeg is good at the basics. This includes posting agendas online, developing news releases, sharing announcements and managing press conferences. Though it was expressed that the information is thorough, it was not necessarily timely.

> "We've noticed a change since the new mayor took office. For example, the boil-water advisories of last winter were exceptionally handled."
>
> "They do their best, but are obviously insanely overworked."

Attitudes and Interactions and Impressions with Winnipeg's Public Communications

The respondents indicated the City of Winnipeg communications team is reasonably accessible and social media was mentioned as an area where they are responsive and effective. The media expressed they overwhelmingly want better and easier access to subject matter experts and departmental heads. The desire for a francophone spokesperson was also mentioned. Demonstrating more transparency, open data and being more up front with cost over runs, delays and sensitive issues was an area of improvement the media suggested. The media do not like being made to go through the freedom of information process.

Respondents indicated they primarily work through Corporate Communications, rather than the website or other primary sources. Their difference of opinion is in regards to the timeliness of response, though there is an acknowledgement that the City's communications division is under-resourced.

Media indicated they do not want to be pitched with story ideas. As professional journalists, they see it as their responsibility to identify and tell the story. However, more backgrounders and more detailed well-articulated information

> "News releases work well via email but there needs to be someone to answer questions and do interviews for radio to give context, clarify details and give background more frequently."
>
> "Property and planning is a lawyer-speak nightmare."

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would be welcome. They would also like real-time information about traffic, road construction, infrastructure planning, as well as better tracking of major infrastructure projects.

In the case of a major incident (fire, traffic or personnel issues were mentioned), media would welcome better information sooner. They would also welcome ongoing, transparent disclosure of public information.

There is a strong sense that there is a lack of trust between the City and the media. Over recent years, the City has become increasingly protective and closed. They feel a need for better and more candid background information on complex issues. Media reported having difficulty connecting to subject matter experts and spokespeople in departments. Increasing the speed of information coming fromdepartments would be a form of improvement. Overall, the City of Winnipeg needs stronger dialogue and relationships. This would lead to more "even handed coverage."

There is an acknowledgement that the individuals in Corporate Communications are hardworking, capable and professional, but they recognized the division is under-resourced and they are in a difficult situation.

Much like the public, the media see the website as informative. They find information about City programs and services somewhat difficult to find. There is a strong sense that the media do not understand the City's vision and they don't feel that overall the City does a good job communicating.

In terms of the quality of communications, the only areas where they see the City doing a good job are in the factualness and relevance of communications. The City receives poor reviews for comprehensiveness, clarity, timeliness and accessibility, with a failing grade on transparency.

> *"I enjoy dealing with all the communications staff. When I deal with them, they're polite, calm and courteous. I just wish they were a little more forthcoming with information."*

When it comes to public consultations, the City does a fair job, but the media would strongly welcome improvements.

Appendix B: Social Media Audit

To provide a deeper understanding of Winnipeg's communications context and public discourse we performed a social media audit. The most common search terms used are "Winnipeg" and "Winnipeggers". Winnipeggers is used significantly less frequently, but is used more for community news, sports, weather and conversations relevant to the city. "#Winnipeg" is used in conversations about the city, but these get drowned out by the sheer number of mentions using this hashtag, making it difficult to revolve a community around it. #YWG is not used very often, and is mostly associated with travel and the city's shoe-loving community.

Gauging sentiment on social media is notoriously difficult as each mention has to be looked at individually. General sentiment analysis on social media using automatic tools is primarily neutral. Negative posts about "Winnipeg" and "Winnipeggers" usually reflect sports losses, bad weather, news stories or the boil water advisory of January 2015. Positive posts mostly reflect sports wins, the economy and job postings.
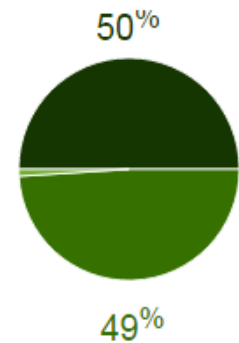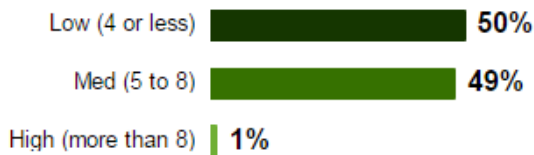
"#Winnipeg"

When "Winnipeg" was searched, overall blog post sentiment was 92% favourable. On Twitter, the most common hashtag or mention in association was "#Winnipeg", used in 76% of almost 600,000 tweets about "Winnipeg" in the past year. "#Jobs" or "#job" appear in 74% of tweets about "Winnipeg." Other commonly used topics in relation to "Winnipeg" include:
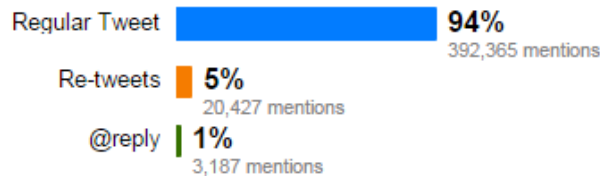- Jets
- NHL Playoffs
- Temperature/Weather
- FIFA Women's World Cup
- Specific news stories
- Jobs, job fairs, job postings

"#Winnipeg" was mentioned 415,954 times by 34,183 different users in the past year. Of tweets using "#Winnipeg" 94% are original, meaning that the content containing this term is new each time it appears and is not the same content shared over and over. Of the mentions about "#Winnipeg" 88% come from Twitter users who have used that term less than five times, demonstrating that it is a widespread term and is not just the same small community using it regularly and heavily. The authority level of Twitter users using the term "#Winnipeg" are mostly low or medium, showing that it's mostly regular Twitter users, and not very many users with a high number of followers, like news stations or celebrities.
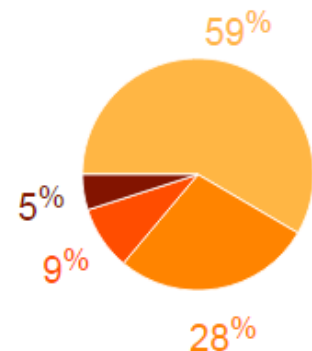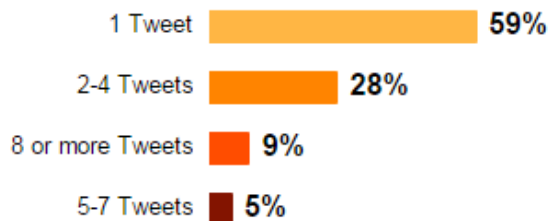
Authority Breakdown of users mentioning
"#Winnipeg"

Low (4 or less) **50%**
Med (5 to 8) **49%**
High (more than 8) **1%**

50%
49%

Type of mention for posts including "#Winnipeg"

Regular Tweet **94%**
392,365 mentions
Re-tweets **5%**
20,427 mentions
@reply **1%**
3,187 mentions

94%
5%

Engagement level, or the number of times the same user tweeted about "#Winnipeg"

1 Tweet **59%**
2-4 Tweets **28%**
8 or more Tweets **9%**
5-7 Tweets **5%**

59%
5%
9%
28%

"Winnipeggers"

When "Winnipeggers" was searched the overall sentiment on Twitter was 92% neutral out of 11,232 mentions in the past year. The most commonly associated hashtags are "#Winnipeg" which was used in 2.6% of tweets and "#CBCMB", used in 2% of tweets. Twitter users are using the term "Winnipeggers", but not using it as a hashtag. "Winnipeggers" is mentioned frequently on Twitter, while "#Winnipeggers" only has 199 mentions, so there is no unifying hashtag to link similar conversations about "Winnipeggers" together.

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The most common topics surrounding "Winnipeggers" are:
- NHL/Jets
- Community events
- News
- Mental health
- Boil water advisory of January 2015
- Election in early January
- Supermoon

Like "#Winnipeg", the search for "Winnipeggers" shows that the term is mostly being used by medium authority with some low authority Twitter users. 87% of the mentions using this term are regular or original tweets.
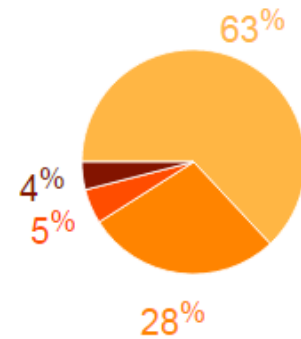
Authority Breakdown of users mentioning "Winnipeggers"
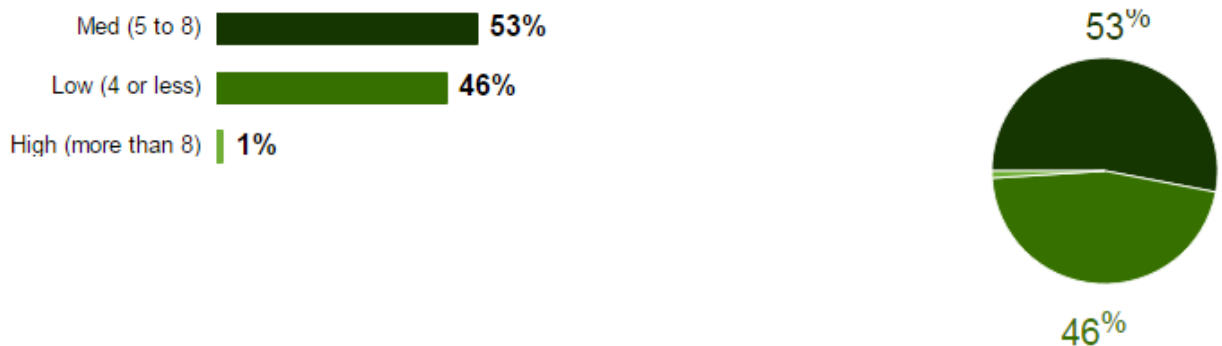
Type of mention for posts including "Winnipeggers"
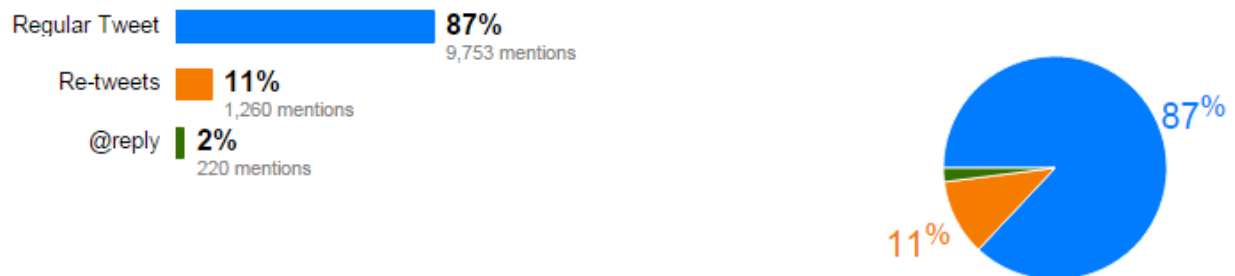
Engagement level, or the number of times the same user tweeted including "Winnipeggers"

1 Tweet		63%
2-4 Tweets		28%
5-7 Tweets		5%
8 or more Tweets		4%
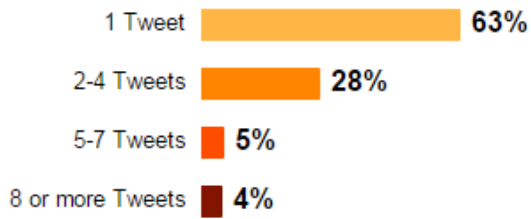
Other Hashtags

"#cityofwinnipeg" is used occasionally on issues related to the City, mostly service delivery.
"#Winterpeg" is a frequently used hashtag to discuss weather trends and storms, winter activities and life in Winnipeg during the winter. "ThePeg" is another local hashtag but it has low reach and usage.

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Appendix C: Social & Digital Media Analysis

Our social and digital media audit included a review of the following public-facing platforms, analyzing their overall strengths and weaknesses, and identifying possible opportunities for enhancements. We also completed a "peer" assessment of platforms used by other comparable cities: Regina, Calgary and Hamilton, Ont.

This study analyzed the following social media channels:

- **Facebook pages**:
    o City of Winnipeg main Facebook page
    o Speak Up Winnipeg Facebook page
    o Winnipeg Animal Services Facebook page (volunteer-run)
    o City of Winnipeg 2014 Election Facebook page
    o Winnipeg Public Library Facebook page
    o Booked (Winnipeg Public Library) teen Facebook page

- **Twitter accounts**:
    o City of Winnipeg main Twitter account: @cityofwinnipeg
    o Additional Twitter accounts:
        ▪ @SpeakUpWinnipeg
        ▪ @wpg2014election
        ▪ @transitalerts
        ▪ @wpglibrary
        ▪ @winnipegtransit (they have two – one for messaging, one for alerts)

- **YouTube channels:**
    o City of Winnipeg YouTube channel
    o Speak Up Winnipeg YouTube channel
    o Winnipeg Public Library YouTube channel
    o Winnipeg Police Service YouTube channel

- **Blogs and other sites:**
    o Speak Up Winnipeg: http://speakupwinnipeg.com
    o Winnipeg Public Library Reader's Salon: http://winnipegpubliclibrary.wordpress.com
    o Winnipeg Public Library Inspiring Ideas: http://insipiringideas.wpl.winnipeg.ca
    o Winnipeg Public Library Booked (Teens): http://wpl-teens.winnipeg.ca/views/default.cfm
    o Water and Waste: http://wwdendgage.winnipeg.ca
    o Winnipeg Police Service, Just Slow Down: http://justslowdown.ca

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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The City of Winnipeg digital public interface has some demonstrable strengths. Overall, there is a decent level of public engagement, as well as timely and relevant content, presented in a relatively accessible manner.

However, we will review the sites one by one below, identifying some of weaknesses, as well as some further opportunities that the Communications Steering Committee may want to consider or implement.

FACEBOOK PAGES

1. City of Winnipeg main Facebook page
Joined Facebook: Oct. 5, 2009

Strengths:
The City of Winnipeg's main Facebook page has a solid base of 9,854 likes (as of 6/11/15). The page includes a branded profile picture (the City of Winnipeg logo) and cover photos. Cover photos include timely events, as well as calls to action. There is also consistent posting in terms of frequency.

The page includes engaging images of community events, providing relevant visual content. Amid the relevant and useful content: recreation programs; traffic delays; employment opportunities; community events; and a useful summary of various services offered. Another strong content feature is the inclusion of links to YouTube videos, which can provide engaging visual content.

The page includes detailed "About" information, a clear statement of the City's mission, and provides links back to the City's main website and other social platforms. It also features a specific tab to direct users to career/job opportunities that is easy to find and navigate.

Weaknesses:
There often is not enough of a branded "voice" or "personality" of the City expressed. The current tone of the content is often neutral.

Some of the visuals used look dated, and are not as engaging as they could possibly be. In some cases, they, as well as graphic content, could benefit from a refresh or updated look.

There is definitely a missed opportunity to use more third-party input, or other forms of external documents as educational resources. As well, the images and graphics used are not always optimized or properly sized for the platform. More, better optimized images and graphical elements would definitely help boost engagement.

Opportunities:
There is a great opportunity to grow the City's Facebook community via promoted profile for minimal spend. The inclusion of a greater number of more compelling images and visuals to accompany any text would definitely optimize the appeal of the page.

We recommend that the City develop an approach to how its content is visually populated in status updates to allow members, upon quick scan, to distinguish service updates from community announcements from entertainment This would make the platform much easier to navigate—and more friendly.

There has been minimal effort to develop an overall "brand tone" or "voice" for the City of Winnipeg, which would help it better engage in social. People like to hear from real people, as well, rather than abstract entities. Some consideration may be given to allowing select City ambassadors to connect to followers through this platform.

Recommendations/action points:
- o Better visuals
- o More branded "tone"
- o More real people
- o Friendlier navigation/delineation
- o More "personality"
- o Consider paid promotion to help attract more likes

2. Speak Up Winnipeg Facebook page
Joined Facebook: April 16, 2009

Strengths:
The Speak Up Winnipeg Facebook page includes the City logo as a profile picture and a cover image.
The page includes a detailed "About" section and a link to the main website.

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Weaknesses:

The page's thumbnail loses context in newsfeeds when left alone as "Up" within a talk bubble. By simply adding the word "Speak" to the profile image, it could potentially evoke curiosity, intrigue and engagement with a stronger call to action.

There is a noticeable lack of visuals associated with this page. Posts are infrequent, and the content is sometimes limited to public meetings taking place.

Despite the imperative promise of the page, very little actual "conversation" takes place on this Facebook platform. Fully 95% of the content drives people externally to the core website or other offline initiatives.

Opportunities:

With such a promising name, containing a clear call to action, the City could leverage this platform as an extension of the core website to further engage, crowd source and carry on ongoing "conversations" with the community.

One possible way to achieve this is to reduce the frequency of outbound links, encouraging a higher volume of engagement within the Facebook environment itself. The addition of more appealing visuals to the platform could also drive additional participation.

There is a clear chance to provide compelling content that would engage comments and feedback. As well, additional resources beyond just public meetings could be shared. External resources could also be looped in.

This platform provides a clear opportunity to give back to the community, to engage and strengthen participation. Most of the content is a call or link to provide an opinion, but the feedback loop does not really close. There is a chance to proactively share updates and outcomes, no matter how small—and to really invite feedback.

Recommendations/action points:
- Used the platform to genuinely engage community feedback/input
- Engage in regular "conversations" on the site, and encourage others to do so as well
- Use compelling visuals more often
- Post more frequently
- Extend content that would generate greater community interest
- Reduce frequency of outbound links and encourage higher engagement levels on the platform

- Share resources beyond just public meetings
- Loop in some external resources
- Actively engage and close the feedback loop

3. **Winnipeg Animal Services Facebook page**
Joined Facebook: February 9, 2009 (administered by Animal Services volunteers)

Strengths:
The Winnipeg Animal Services Facebook page includes a profile picture and a cover photo with a call to action.

The site also features a detailed "About" section and provides links to the website.

There is good use of photos for posts communicating which animals are available for adoption. There are also frequent posts on the platform.

Weaknesses:
There is no specific City brand presence. As well, the content is currently limited almost exclusively to dog adoption, although the language often refers to "pets." This could be a potential point of frustration for a new page member or visitor.

Opportunities:
There is a real opportunity to provide useful, original content for both animal lovers and pet owners alike. Expanding the content strategy to include "utility" could help create stronger bonds with Animal Services. For instance, there could be tips for living with an adopted animal, what to expect, advice on training, how to deal with animals on your property.

There is also a chance to increase brand presence, by including the Animal Services and City of Winnipeg logos in the profile picture or cover photo.

Recommendations/action points:
- Provide "utility" through original content for animal lovers/pet owners/homeowners
- Increase brand presence with logos
- Expand imagery and content from dogs to other pets (or rename the page)
- Provide external resources on pet care, pet adoption, training

4. **City of Winnipeg 2014 Election Facebook page**
Joined Facebook: April 2, 2014

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Strengths:
Like other City platforms, this page includes a profile picture and call to action in the cover photo.

There is very helpful content, including voting registration resources.

The page also includes a detailed "About" section, along with a website link.

Weaknesses:
The posting on this platform is very infrequent and there is a lack of variety in the content. As well, there are few visuals and not much attention to creative design on what could potentially be a very engaging tool for voters/citizens.

Opportunities:
Integrating more visuals into the content would make the page more compelling.

The goal is to become the primary non-biased resource for elections in the city, enabling further education and information.

Recommendations/action points:
- More frequent postings
- More variety in content
- Loop candidate material (e.g., bios) into content strategy
- Include more video debates
- More compelling visuals needed
- Become go-to source for election information, e.g., results, candidates

5. Winnipeg Public Library Facebook page
Joined Facebook: February 8, 2010

Strengths:
The Winnipeg Public Library Facebook page is strong. It includes a profile picture and cover image, as well as an "About" section that includes contact information. It links to the website and additional social channels.

The site posts frequently and shares interesting and compelling content, including contests taking place at the library. There is good use of visuals and the content often has a "fun" tone. The platform also shares community events.

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Weaknesses:
Strengths far outweigh weaknesses on this Facebook page. However, images do need to be sized appropriately for the platform in some instances. For example, some text in the cover image was covered.

Opportunities:
There is clearly an opportunity to visually categorize content in more user friendly ways to help distinguish elements from one another during a quick scan (e.g., book reviews/recommendations from announcements from events).

There is an opportunity to provide greater structure and consistency within the overall content strategy to help guide community expectations: for example, the site might want to consider introducing some "theme days," such as Book Review Monday, Wednesday Staff Pick of the Week, and Weekend Reading Suggestions on Fridays. This could help draw people to the site with increased frequency.

There are also additional ways in which the site may want to engage the community better. For instance, it could invite followers to start a conversation by asking them to share some feedback on their latest good book read, the latest eBook they downloaded, some reviews of current books (almost in an Amazon-like fashion),.

Recommendations/action points:
- Ensure images are sized to fit the platform and do not cover text
- Categorize content more visually to distinguish elements quickly and easily at first glance
- Opportunity for some timed and/or themed content, e.g., Weekend Reads on Friday
- Engage audience more with feedback, reviews, recommendations, "book clubs," or discussion groups

6. Booked (Winnipeg Public Library teen) Facebook page
Joined Facebook: unknown

Strengths:
Like the Winnipeg Public Library page, this platform is well executed. There is a profile picture and cover page, there are frequent posts, and there is a nice variety of content.

Useful content includes library events, as well as external links to interesting articles/sites. There is an "About" section and navigable links not only to the website, but also additional useful platforms.

Weaknesses:

The library page lacks City of Winnipeg branding. As well, there is not a really clear connection that this is targeted to the teen demographic/younger generation once the page is called up. There is an opportunity to make that alignment clearer.

The timeline is not regularly cleansed of activities that were amended or reversed. For instance, the cover image was uploaded twice on Sept. 3, 2014, but both the chosen image and the rejected image were still visible in the timeline feed.

Opportunities:

There is an even greater opportunity to revisit the content strategy and make it even more relevant for teen/youth engagement through content categories, filters and guidelines.

The overall "tone" of the site could also be tweaked slightly to better connect with the youth target. This could be done by "turning up the volume" on lifestyle and trending content, and through the increased use of visuals and images. Other sites that manage this well include: Virgin Mobile, MTV and Netflix. They could potentially provide some inspiration.

Recommendations/action points:
- More City branding
- Better identify to whom the page is targeted
- Regular cleansing of timeline to make sure that it is current in all cases
- Greater opportunity to engage with a more "teen-oriented" content strategy
- "Turn up the volume" on overall tone
- Engage even more through use of visuals and images and more lifestyle and trending content
- Invite more participation and feedback to create a tighter, more active community

CONCLUSIONS: CITY OF WINNIPEG FACEBOOK PAGES

Based on Winnipeg's current population and the number of Facebook users from the city (approx. 500, 000), there is ample opportunity to connect with more citizens. The current average growth rate for the City of Winnipeg main Facebook page, for instance, is only 1,000 people per year. This number could be significantly boosted through more compelling content, including visuals, and by consciously inviting greater engagement and participation.

It is not enough simply to put content out there; people need to feel that it is useful and that they are part of an online "community." They want to connect—and will—provided you invite and encourage them to participate and provide their opinions.

Existing Facebook platforms lack consistent "City of Winnipeg" branding. This is a missed opportunity and makes it difficult for the public to know that these pages are connected to and funded by the City. The biggest strength common to all Facebook profiles is the use of a call to action in the cover image, even though, in some cases, actual text has been covered by other content elements. All pages include detailed "About" sections that provide relevant information. They also typically include links to other social channels and direct people to websites for additional information.

The tone of voice and "personality" of many of the pages, however, is fairly neutral, slightly "corporate," and lacking in emotion. There are opportunities to engage, be more fun and make the content more human, not only through tone but also by adding some "real people" to the content. Social engagers like to engage with other people rather than with organizations.

There is a real opportunity to include more posts that have clear, singular calls to action. While calls to action can currently be found in the cover images, they should be further integrated into ongoing social content, inviting greater levels of participation. Content updates, in some cases, should be more frequent. Some Facebook pages share more useful external links than others. These are all factors that could be enhanced.

Above all, the City should not be afraid to invite greater participation and input on its pages.

TWITTER: CITY OF WINNIPEG MAIN TWITTER ACCOUNT AND OTHER ACCOUNTS

1. **@cityofwinnipeg**

Strengths:
This account is doing reasonably well. It is following 675 others and has over 34,000 followers (growing daily).
There is frequent tweeting. Minimally, the account tweets about three times per day on average.
Tweets include a wide array of content: everything from community events to traffic information.
Recreation programs and emergency preparedness information has also been shared.

Weaknesses:

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From time to time, the material is somewhat bland. There is a chance to develop an even greater "brand personality," where appropriate and to sound less "official" and more "conversational."

There is some use of images and visuals but certainly not as much as there could be.

Opportunities:

There is no need to sound "official" at all times. There is a chance to have more fun, be more casual and conversational and to engage more. There is also an opportunity to use more calls to action or to engage with prompting questions that invite people to share. (E.g. "Please RT if you agree," "What do you think?")

Even more compelling visuals and infographics could be used. People love visual content, whether it is video, interesting pictures or useful information presented in novel ways. There is definitely an opportunity to include more shareable content.

Recommendations/action points:
- Be less "official" whenever appropriate
- Engage more through shareable visual content, compelling photos, infographics
- Invite people to RT and share or to provide feedback; get more discussions going
- Include calls to action whenever possible

2. @SpeakUpWinnipeg @wpg2014election @transitalerts @wpglibrary

Strengths:

These accounts are definitely a move in the right direction to engage with greater numbers. They share information about events and get the word out that they are happening. Accounts do include small "About" descriptions.

Weaknesses:

These accounts are not nearly as active as the main City account. They have significantly smaller followings and do not share information as often.

The page design is very simple and not as aesthetically developed. As well, there is a lack of consistent City of Winnipeg branding across platforms to help people connect.

These Twitter accounts do occasionally retweet some information, but they are not particularly active. They could engage with stakeholders and partners more by retweeting often, sharing interesting information with their target audiences, and by inviting even more feedback and conversation.

Recommendations/action points:
- Share and post more frequently
- Enhance look of profiles
- Incorporate consistent City of Winnipeg branding
- Don't just "push out information." Engage more. Invite participation and retweets.
- Tweet more visual content

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS: CITY OF WINNIPEG TWITTER ACCOUNTS

Sharing more frequently and engaging even more with audiences presents an exciting opportunity to grow. The tone does not always need to be "official." Official is fine, where appropriate, but it can also be fun to establish some personality and to invite people to share, retweet and engage with the City. The overall lack of City of Winnipeg branding is another missed opportunity here.

YOUTUBE

1. City of Winnipeg YouTube profile

Strengths:

Overall, this is a solid offering. A wide range of video content is offered, including careers, budget information, committee meetings, educational information, winter parking regulations and safety information from fire and police services.

Branding is also included in the videos. The header is well used and incorporates clear City of Winnipeg branding and links. Videos are uploaded relatively frequently, keeping the content fresh, relevant and up-to-date. "Featured channels" include Winnipeg Police Services, Speak Up Winnipeg, Winnipeg Public Library and Winnipeg Parks.

Weaknesses:

Some of the committee videos have no information. In some cases there are blank videos. These should be removed.

Opportunities:

There is an opportunity to continue to engage with even more, fun, creative videos that can be shared. There is also an opportunity to encourage people to contribute some of their own material, which could be vetted and posted online.

Recommendations/action points:
- Review all links and make sure they are active and relevant
- Continue to "push the envelope" with creative content
- Continue to use appropriate tone depending on messaging and audience
- Invite greater public participation

2. Speak Up Winnipeg YouTube profile

Strengths:
This profile provides an excellent opportunity to educate, inform and engage. In fact, there is a discussion featuring public input on the YouTube profile.

Weaknesses:
For the most part, the videos are quite dated. Most are two to three years old. The content is less engaging than some of the main City content. A profile header is not used; instead, there is only a profile image alone and a single link to the website rather than links to other social profiles.

Video uploads are not categorized via playlists. Most importantly, however, there is no distinct City of Winnipeg branding. And although there are some comments, there is no discussion/engagement.

Opportunities:
This profile could use updating with compelling content. It would also benefit from more links, as well as playlists. The lack of City branding is a missed opportunity—as is the failure to acknowledge comments and engage in discussion.

Recommendations/action points:
- City of Winnipeg branding needed
- Fresher, updated material required
- More engaging content possible
- Provide links to other social profiles
- Categorize video uploads via playlists
- Engage in more acknowledgement and discussion—encourage comments, feedback

3. Winnipeg Public Library YouTube profile

Strengths:
There is a strong showing from the Public Library. A variety of content is featured across playlists, e.g. speakers presenting "inspired" ideas, what the library is about (a very strong video), and useful information on how to download e-books from the library. There are also videos directed at teens and youth, as well as aboriginal communities. Community events at the library are also featured, such as Family Literacy Day.

Weaknesses:
The header image copy is cut off or not sized appropriately for the dimensions. Links to additional social channels or websites are not included.

Opportunities:
There is an opportunity to continue to engage, educate and delight through the creative use of video. Cleaning up the technical problem cited above, as well as linking to other vehicles is recommended.

Recommendations/action points:
- Fix header image and size appropriately
- Continue to engage diverse audiences through compelling, creative video
- Educational videos are especially strong

4. Winnipeg Parks YouTube profile

Strengths:
This is a great platform to inform people about the parks of Winnipeg and how people can enjoy the parks system.

Weaknesses:
The content is very dated. In fact, there are only two videos, from two to three years ago. The current videos are not particularly engaging; in one case, shots of playground equipment are featured. There are no events shared, nor is there an overview of what Winnipeg's parks offer. A header image is not used.

Opportunities:
This channel should be revisited to determine if a content strategy can be funded or if the channel should be shut down. As it is, it is not serving anyone. There is a definite opportunity to inform the

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public about the park system and to share ideas of what they can do there. There is also an opportunity to invite people to share their own videos of the enjoyment they get from the parks.

Recommendations/action points:
- Determine if content strategy can be funded
- Create new videos to engage the public on the many things Winnipeg parks offer
- Invite others to share videos of their experiences in parks
- If there is no interest in tapping into the value of this profile, it should be shut down

5. **Winnipeg Police Service YouTube profile**

Strengths:
This profile contains a customized header image with a link to Winnipeg Police Service and Google Plus. It includes an interesting variety of content, which is well-organized in different channels (e.g., safe driving, missing persons, crime prevention and public safety, recruitment and careers, community messages surrounding statutory holidays, Winnipeg Crime Stoppers, news briefings or news conferences regarding missing persons and homicides)

The material is very relevant and interesting.

Weaknesses:
No general City of Winnipeg branding is present. And although much of the content has been uploaded recently, other videos are dated.

Opportunities:
There is a need to vet the profile and remove or archive material that is dated. There is an ongoing opportunity to present fresh, new material aligning with police goals. This is an ideal vehicle for public education and engagement.

Recommendations/action points:
- Vet all content to determine what can be archived or removed
- Include general City of Winnipeg branding
- Continue to present fresh, compelling content that aligns with police goals

BLOGS AND OTHER WEBSITES

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we will provide a quick point-form synopsis, commentary and analysis on some blogs and other digital assets related to the City of Winnipeg.

1. **Speak Up Winnipeg - http://speakupwinnipeg.com/**

Pros

- Demonstrates clear connection to the City of Winnipeg; includes city logo + branding
- Easily accessible link to all social channels
- Easy to navigate; simple tabs
- Includes some calls to action, e.g., Join Our Mailing List
- Includes a slider image on the home page (includes images + YouTube video); could improve by adding additional calls to action

Cons

- Destination is really a website with no blog or blog-like content (i.e., articles or posts)
- Purpose is to act as a community forum, but structure/layout does not encourage conversation
- Could improve aesthetics and visual appeal; some white text is difficult to read
- Placement of search bar on home page not best practice; scrolling to find location not ideal

2. **Winnipeg Public Library Reader's Salon - http://winnipegpublibrary.wordpress.com/**

Pros

- Blog posts are frequent; content stays up to date and present
- Content posted includes book reviews, as well as the technology surrounding reading (e.g. read on an iPad, read via eBook)
- Helpful links in left hand column, e.g., ask a Librarian, Award List, Bestsellers, Book Clubs
- Allows user to look up the latest books at the library, a helpful and interesting feature
- Search bar located on top right hand side in an easily visible location

Cons

- Could improve visuals and website aesthetics; basic word press site, text and link heavy

- Posts can be lengthy at times; best practice is to keep lists to five maximum, or total length to 250 words
- Includes links to library social channels; however, they are not in a visible spot on the blog and are currently located in the left hand column blending into the page. There is an opportunity to differentiate these links with Facebook and Twitter logos, and move them to the top of the page, making them easier to find
- No City of Winnipeg branding

3. Winnipeg Public Library Inspiring Ideas - http://inspiringideas.wpl.winnipeg.ca/

Pros

- Includes social channels in top right corner; easily visible and accessible
- Includes City of Winnipeg branding in banner at the top
- Includes clear calls to action, e.g., 'Sign Up for our newsletter!'
- Changing banner on home page with a few visuals demonstrates integrated thinking
- Different navigational tabs are consumer friendly and interactive
- Simple and clean website design; could improve on aesthetics and design to make the site "pop"

Cons

- Visually very neutral; information is there, but it could be presented in a more creative way
- Articles are short and digestible– though in some cases so short that they lack context or "story"

Winnipeg Public Library Booked (Teens) - http://wpl-teens.winnipeg.ca/views/default.cfm

Pros

- Includes City of Winnipeg branding
- Includes an event listing tab

Cons

- Blog is part of Booked website; referral link from City of Winnipeg site does not take user directly to Blog tab but rather to homepage, breaking the experience
- Could move social channels up to the top of the page, so users don't have to scroll down; currently located further down, where less visible

4. Water and Waste - http://wwdengage.winnipeg.ca/

Pros

- Includes consistent City of Winnipeg branding and provides link back to the City of Winnipeg main website
- Features current projects on home page
- Includes calls to action on right hand side, e.g., Join Our Mailing List
- Search bar is easily accessible in the top right hand corner

Cons

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- Navigation labeling does not make clear what are "current projects" and visitors learn that from the homepage contents
- Suggest revisiting structure and naming of main navigation menu to optimize user experience and comprehension (i.e., public-facing language, not internal language)

5. **Winnipeg Police Service, Just Slow Down - http://justslowdown.ca/**

Pros

- Includes City of Winnipeg logo
- Shares informative materials in an engaging format, e.g. YouTube video series on safe driving, collision stats map (provides interactive map of areas with the highest level of collisions)
- Tone is educational and assertive, emphasizing drivers should slow down on the roads

Cons

- Homepage lacks welcome message or context copy to webisodes, potentially leaving visitors to wonder "Why am I here?" "Why should I watch?" and "Why should I help spread the message?"

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT BLOGS/WEBSITES

Strengths

- Helpful content and information on specific areas of interest to citizens of Winnipeg
- Educational and informative

Opportunities

- Improve visual aesthetics and structure of some sites for easier to scan content organization and a more appealing user experience
- Introduce parameters or guidelines for use of City of Winnipeg logo on sites should be communicated – i.e., logo always to appear in X location, white or black version only.
- Include calls to action to engage with citizens
- Ensure social icons are consistently placed in footers as a best practice; however, if the social profiles play a strategic role, then it's important to consider placing them as close to the navigation as possible (top of page)