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Subject: Communications Policy	Effective Date: August 20, 2008
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Communications Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide communication that is transparent, accessible, clear, open, accurate and timely. Communication, both incoming and outgoing, is vital for the successful management of the Municipality of French River's policies, programs, services and initiatives.

The Policy provides a platform where citizens will know where to find information on their local government and ensures that all municipal communication, both online and in print, has a clearly recognized, unified and consistent identity.

2. Policy Overview

The Mayor is the official spokesperson on behalf of Council, and the CAO is the official spokesperson for all operational matters.

Co-operation and co-ordination between departments, between Council and the Administration is necessary to better serve and inform the public and ensures that municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives are consistently reflected in the information and messages communicated to the public.

3. General Communication Guidelines

Information on the Municipality's policies, programs, services and initiatives should be available to the public in a variety of formats, ways and means of communication, subject to the available resources and as follows;

- a) The Corporate Logo will be displayed on all external and internal communications;
- b) Information is provided to the public by trained and knowledgeable employees;
- c) Service is timely and within 48 hours of the date and time of the event and that it is courteous and efficient for the majority of the public to locate;
- d) Published information is provided in plain language;
- e) Provided in both official languages (English and French) as a courtesy to residents when practical;
- f) A record of any published information is maintained in accordance to the records retention by-law and the published information includes the publication date.

The Administration, depending on the type of communication, will provide approved information in the following forms: print communication as a tax bill insert, poster posted in local businesses and agencies, brochures, published in the local newspaper, mail-outs, online on the website and on the available social media resources and mass electronic distribution.

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Confidentiality

In all communications, spokespersons and departments must comply with all legislated requirements regarding access and disclosure of information. The *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* extend access and privacy principles to Ontario municipalities.

Copyright

Departments must comply with the *Copyright Act* and ensure that the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected in all communications.

4. Municipal Website and Social Media

The primary source for official information for the citizens of the Municipality is through the Municipal Website www.frenchriver.ca.

The Website is utilized to access information on the Municipality’s policies, programs, services and initiatives, and will:

- maintain up to date information to assist citizens in their business with the Municipality;
- contain information to facilitate communication between the public, Council and staff;
- contain a calendar of municipal meetings and events open to the public;
- contain Council information such as agendas and minutes of official meetings;
- provide news and announcements relevant to the community;
- not be a forum for commenting on municipal issues and services, it is a tool to share information.

Specific individuals of the Municipality, as assigned by the CAO will utilize social media in an official capacity to insure that, as with all communications activities, communications through social media channels are accurate, consistent and professional. The primary goals for the use of social media are as follows:

- increase the awareness of municipal policies, programs, services and initiatives;
- increase existing corporate communication methods and processes;
- provide an additional means through which the Municipality communicates with citizens and stakeholders;
- distribute time-sensitive information quickly;
- promote/increase awareness of information, news, announcements, events, services, programs.

Currently, the Municipality of French River has a presence on Facebook and Twitter:

Facebook Page: Municipality of French River

Twitter: @French_River

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Third Party Links

The Website or Social Media pages may contain links to other websites to provide convenience of the visitor; inclusion of the link does not imply endorsement by the Corporation and the Municipality. If the Municipality allows to post a third party link it must open in a new web browser.

The Municipality will consider posting external links or information on its Website or Social Media pages if the information is:

- An official government website (municipal, regional, provincial, federal);
- A government-funded agency or board;
- A French River affiliated organization;
- An organization receiving Municipal or Community funding;
- Service clubs operating in the Municipality who perform services, or work that benefits the community;
- A charitable organization with a registered charitable number and operating within the Municipality;
- A business;
- A major community attraction as determined by the Municipality;
- A professional association;
- A business, organization or association with an agreement under the Sudbury East Chamber of Commerce;
- A company that has tendered to do work in the Municipality;
- Artist-in-residence, and artists commissioned by MFR to create and/or display public art;
- Regulatory authorities (e.g. Ministry postings, Provincial and Federal advertising).

The Municipality will not consider posting external information on its Website or Social Media pages to:

- Business websites that are not part of the Sudbury East area.
- Political parties and campaigns

The Municipality reserves the right to post the criteria listed above, or refuse to post any external links on its Website or Social Media pages or to delete links already posted on its site at any time, without notice.

Removing External Information:

External links will be removed by the Municipality without notice if, but not limited to, any of the following conditions apply:

- The site's original information has been altered and the context of the information has changed;
- The site no longer meets the conditions listed above for acceptable external links;
- In the municipality's sole opinion, the information on the site becomes inaccurate and/or not trustworthy;

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- Page formatting, lengthy download items or intrusive advertising make accessing information difficult;
- The link returns a "not found" error for more than 72 hours;
- The link promotes, exhibits, illustrates or manifests hate or obscene/pornographic/sexual content of any kind;
- The site and content does not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.

Requesting External Link Information:

Requests to add an external link to the Municipality's Website or Social Media pages, according to the criteria listed above, are to be submitted by email for consideration through webmaster@frenchriver.ca or in person at the municipal office.

- All sites may be reviewed by municipal staff to ensure that, in the sole opinion and discretion of the municipality, there is no harmful information, slander or incorrect information displayed.
- The decision on whether or not to add, remove or deny an external link on the municipal website will be made by the CAO.

Community Calendar of Activities and Events

Municipal staff will post information regarding activities, programs, meetings, events and festivals organized by the municipality on its Municipal Website Calendar. The Municipality reserves the right to post any additional events it deems to be in the community's best interest.

The Municipality will consider event submission to the Municipal Website Calendar if the event is open to the general public, occurs within the boundaries of the Municipality and meets one of the following criteria:

- Organized or funded by another order of government;
- Organized by a government-funded agency or board;
- Organized by a Municipality's affiliated group;
- Organized by an organization identified as eligible for the Municipality community grant;
- Funded in full, or in part, by the Municipality;
- Organized by a charitable organization with a registered charitable number and operating within the Municipality.
- Organized by a service club operating within the Municipality performing work that benefits French River residents.
- Organized by a business improvement area for general promotional purposes.
- Located in a facility owned or leased by the Municipality.

Event submissions are to be made directly through the calendar itself, must be accompanied by a name and contact information of an individual from the event organizing committee. Anonymous postings of events will not be published.

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Events submitted by the public will not be published on the Municipal Website Calendar if they:

- Are commercial in nature and, in staff's opinion, are attempting to advertise, promote or sell products or services of an individual or an individual business.
- Promote, exhibit, illustrate or manifest hate or obscene/pornographic/sexual content of any kind.
- Do not comply with municipal, provincial or federal legislation.

5. Newsletters

Municipal Newsletters may include items of general interest as deemed appropriate by the Municipality including, Council information, news, new or information related to policy, program, service or initiative, or to promote a special event and more.

The CAO shall review and approve any newsletter before distribution.

Municipal Newsletters shall be mailed twice (2) per year to ratepayers with the tax bills. An electronic version of the newsletter will also posted on the Municipal Website and Social Media pages as deemed appropriate.

6. Media Relations, News Updates and Press Releases

Corporate communications and/or departmental communicators shall ensure that media requests, particularly for interviews or technical information, are directed to knowledgeable employees designated as spokesperson(s) for the municipality. Any media requesting information for interviews must submit questions prior to interview.

News updates and press releases shall be posted on the 'Public Notices' section found on the homepage of the Website regarding municipal announcements, services, policies, and/or other information deemed acceptable by the Administration.

The media play an important role in providing information to the public on matters of civic interest; therefore news or a formal press release may be sent to local media as deemed appropriate by the Administration. The issuance of a press release does not guarantee publication.

Council and related staff may have the opportunity to see media releases in advance prior to submission to the local news outlets; however, in the event of an urgent situation affecting public health, safety or danger to persons or property, staff will make every attempt to distribute the media release as soon as possible, as outlined in the Municipal Emergency Plan.

7. Emergency Communications

The Emergency Plan details the protocol for Emergency Media communications.