

CURIOUS PUBLIC



Clarence-Rockland 5-Year Communications and Marketing Strategy

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Insights Report

Introduction

Framing the project

Clarence-Rockland is growing fast. As a bilingual municipality with both rural charm and urban aspirations, it's at a critical moment in its development. Recognizing this, the Municipality issued an RFP to help shape a **comprehensive, multifaceted, strategic, city-wide Communications and Marketing Strategy**.

This work is about helping Clarence-Rockland tell a more cohesive story reflecting its identity, building trust, clarifying services, supporting growth, and strengthening the connection between the Municipality and the people it serves.

Curious Public was brought in to support this effort to help Clarence-Rockland communicate with clarity, consistency, and confidence. Our job is to create a communications and marketing strategy that's grounded in the community's lived experience, tailored to local needs, and built for future growth.

Challenges and opportunities

Clarence-Rockland is balancing two realities: it's one of the fastest-growing municipalities in Eastern Ontario, and it's a community still shaped by its small-town character, local identity, and distinct blend of rural and urban values.

This rapid transformation brings several **challenges**:

- **Managing growth without losing identity**, particularly as development expands and demographics shift.
- **Limited local services and commercial amenities**, driving residents to shop and access services outside the community.
- **Inconsistent communication**, that can make it difficult for residents to stay informed and feel connected to their City.
- **A changing population**, including more Anglophone residents, newcomers, and aging households—each with distinct information needs.
- **Perceived gaps between rural and urban services**, contributing to tension and a sense of imbalance among residents.

But this moment also presents **significant opportunities**:

- Clarence-Rockland's **proximity to Ottawa** and location on the Ottawa River make it highly attractive for new residents, businesses, and visitors.

- A growing, diverse population means **fresh energy, civic pride, and potential for stronger engagement**.
- The Municipality benefits from **an established sense of community**, which can be amplified through clearer storytelling and better communication.
- **There is momentum and leadership buy-in**—using a new Strategic Plan, a clear set of values, and senior staff ready to think differently.
- The Municipality now has the chance to **build a more confident and unified voice**, helping both residents and outsiders better understand who Clarence-Rockland is and where it's going.

The Process: How we gathered insights

At Curious Public, we believe that curiosity drives connection. Understanding who your audience is and what they want is key to creating a successful marketing and communications strategy.

For Clarence-Rockland, this meant engaging in deep conversations with the people who know it best. We held a series of consultations with a diverse group of stakeholders—including elected officials, senior staff, front-line workers, and media—many of whom are also residents.

Through these conversations, we gained a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities Clarence-Rockland is navigating as it evolves into the next phase of its development.

This report shares the findings from those consultations. It provides an in-depth look at what we heard, what it means, and how those insights can shape a new direction for communications and marketing in the Municipality.

We've also reviewed key background materials, including the Municipality's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan, completed a communications audit to assess current tools and tactics, and we will be launching a resident survey to ensure community voices continue to shape this strategy.

By grounding our work in the experiences of real people—residents, staff, and stakeholders—we will deliver a strategy that reflects the true character of Clarence-Rockland, meets people where they are, and helps everyone feel seen, heard, and informed.

Communications Audit

The team performed a communications audit including Clarence-Rockland's social media channels, website, and bciti+ portal. The findings are summarized below:

Social media

Our team conducted a 90-day social listening scan from November 2024 to February 2025. We also reviewed Clarence-Rockland's Facebook and Instagram analytics for the 90-day period from December 18, 2024-March 17, 2025. Our findings are summarized below.

Conversations: Where, what, and who

Currently, there are not many conversations about Clarence-Rockland on digital channels. Topics on social media about "Clarence-Rockland" reached 2.56M people with 1.25K engagement. This means the few conversations that are happening are resonating with people and prompting them to engage.

Where are conversations happening?

Where conversations happen seems to depend on what the conversation is about. Interested in Francophone communities and identity? Reddit is where it's happening. Want to know about local news, follow local radio personalities, or get the latest updates from local businesses? Then you want to be on X. Want to see what's trending with local influencers? Check out Instagram Reels—especially if there's content from local influencer [@Chantsy](#).

What are conversations about?

Discussions are largely driven by politics, finance, and Francophone identity. Key topics revolved around Bonnie Crombie's campaign, personal income taxes, and local economic issues. These topics are timely and expected during the first couple months of a new year alongside an election.

The conversation reaching the most people (1.03M) happened on Reddit and was centred around Francophone communities. This reinforces the relevance of language and cultural identity in local discussions. Clarence-Rockland's anglophone demographic is increasing, but there is still a need to keep its francophone roots.

What does it mean?

Understanding the conversations happening within Clarence-Rockland audiences is an important part of responsive communications, but should be treated separately from the Municipality's overarching communications goals. Likewise, it's a helpful thermometer for how communications activities are landing.

Strong Facebook presence anchors current efforts

Clarence-Rockland's social media activity is currently centred on Facebook, where the Municipality maintains a steady and consistent posting cadence. This platform is used effectively to share municipal news, updates, and public service announcements with residents in French and English. The content is timely, informative, and aligned with the needs of the Municipality's core Facebook audience, which skews older. Audience analytics show that Clarence-Rockland is effectively reaching seniors on this platform, and the regular cadence of posts helps build trust and reinforce the Municipality's visibility online.

Opportunity to expand and diversify across platforms

While Facebook remains a strong foundation, Clarence-Rockland's limited presence on other social platforms, like Instagram, represents a missed opportunity to engage a broader and more generationally diverse audience. Instagram content is currently posted infrequently, in part due to time and resource constraints. The platform's visual nature also presents creative challenges, as the Communications team has expressed uncertainty about what kind of content would resonate most effectively.

Social media audience data tells a compelling story: Instagram has a younger, highly engaged user base that is not being reached through Facebook; Facebook has an older audience demographic that can cross-over to Instagram. On Instagram, approximately 20% of Clarence-Rockland's audience is aged 25–35, another 20% is aged 35–44, and nearly 10% is 18–24. In contrast, the Municipality's Facebook reaches less than 2% of the 18–24 demographic and less than 15% of users aged 25–34. Instagram's algorithm also allows content to travel further—even to users who don't yet follow the Municipality—based on location and interest. This makes it a powerful platform for both community engagement and tourism-related messaging.

Clarence-Rockland's internal Communications team recognizes the opportunity and has expressed interest in growing the Municipality's presence on Instagram. A more strategic, audience-first approach—tailoring content by platform—would allow the Municipality to connect with multiple generations more effectively.

Content that connects: Tailored formats and community collaborations

There shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all approach to content. While the Communications team notes that image-based content currently performs better than video on municipal channels, this may be reflective of the type of video content shared rather than a broader trend. Local creator [@Chantsy](#) who has a strong audience in Ottawa and Clarence-Rockland, regularly sees high engagement on her video content. Likewise, the Municipality's own collaboration videos have shown strong reach and resonance like the [Reel](#) with Rockland Community Garden. This suggests that format effectiveness depends on the message, the platform, and the audience—not the format itself. The same message might be best delivered through a short-form video on Instagram, a photo post on Facebook, or a story collaboration with a local partner.

Building more partnerships and collaboration opportunities with community members and businesses is also a practical way to address the Municipality's limited internal resources. Community collaborations allow Clarence-Rockland to co-create and share content, extending reach and building stronger local connections at the same time. These partnerships have already proven successful and should be prioritized in future content planning.

Website

Clarence-Rockland's website is accessible, functional, well-organized, and visually consistent and has a clear focus on customer service. However, there are opportunities to improve visitor engagement, and mobile experience.

What's going well

The website is well organized and easy to navigate, helping people quickly find what they need. It's available in both English and French, which makes it accessible to more residents. The design looks

polished and consistent across all pages. The site does a great job focusing on the community, with helpful sections like News & Notices, Upcoming Events, and links to online tools like the bciti+ portal. It's clear that residents come first—essential services like garbage and recycling, permits, and recreation programs are easy to find. The “I'd Like To...” search feature adds a useful shortcut for common tasks—including an online payments system to make it easy for residents to pay property taxes, buy dog licenses, and rent municipal facilities. Content is kept up to date, showing that the site is regularly maintained and actively used.

Opportunities

The website has a solid foundation, but the mobile version needs to be optimized. Some homepage elements, like image blocks with text overlays, have minimal contrast and are difficult to read on a smartphone, for example.

Optimization for mobile is crucial because most of Clarence-Rockland's website users (61%) are on a mobile device. The website would benefit from more interactive features like quick polls or surveys to encourage resident engagement and support public consultation. Live social media feeds from Facebook—and Instagram if content is published consistently—can help make the site feel more current and connected.

The bciti+ portal is positioned as a key service showcased on the homepage header image, but there's no link to sign-up, login, or learn more attached to the message. There is a dedicated page with information about bciti+ but the link to join is buried within the text instead of clearly displayed.

The overall website experience would be enhanced with more visually engaging elements like images, image sliders, and videos that bring the content—and the Municipality—to life.

bciti+ Portal: Bridging a gap

Clarence-Rockland launched its bciti+ portal in early 2024. Bciti+ is a centralized portal for Clarence-Rockland residents and stakeholders to reliably access and report on key municipal communications—news, alerts, events, and service requests—in one place. Bciti+ fills a critical gap as major platforms become less reliable for public service communication. While not all residents have subscribed to the portal yet, there is an onboarding event scheduled in May 2025 to raise awareness and increase subscribers (which would likely support future public survey participation).

Purpose, potential, and value

Instead of relying solely on Facebook or other social media to amplify messages, Clarence-Rockland can take ownership and control over its communications and reach a broader audience more effectively with bciti+.

Bciti+ doesn't compete for attention with unrelated content or algorithms like social media. It provides a central source for accurate, timely municipal information—critical given that some residents report not hearing about events until after they happen. Bciti+ also gives subscribers the ability to add their own events and submit requests to the Municipality. The portal enhances message consistency and reach, giving the Municipality the ability to issue emergency alerts and promote local news and events. All bciti+ content can be accessed with an app or web browser, and subscribers can be notified with updates by email, SMS, or push notifications to meet residents where they are.

The analytics dashboard in the bciti+ portal backend collects insights into user demographics, like age, features used, and platform notifications. Clarence-Rockland can monitor and use this data to

improve messaging and communication formats to suit user preferences and identify areas within the Municipality that are less engaged.

Adoption and reach

There are approximately 2,060 users to date. Adoption is strongest in the core but steadily growing in outlying areas. The Municipality wants to register one user per household—approximately 11,000 accounts. Promotional pushes have proven successful in increasing subscribers: more than 500 users signed up during February and March 2024, with another spike in new users during the April 2024 flood. This shows when people are made aware, and see an immediate need, they will subscribe.

Opportunities ahead

Clarence-Rockland’s communications team is planning to launch new bciti+ features and create opportunities to onboard more users, including:

- ***Event calendar*** improvements and community contributions to encourage participation.
- ***Request portal automation*** and status tracking to provide transparency to residents about how their concern is being addressed.
- ***Expanded outreach*** to underrepresented areas (e.g., Clarence Creek) to engage all residents regardless of location in the Municipality and make sure they feel like they have equal access to service.
- ***A full launch campaign*** tied to a major community event in May 2025 to promote awareness and adoption of bciti+ with staff on-site to assist residents with onboarding.
- ***RSS and API integration*** which will improve the content that is automatically populated on the website and newsfeed so more information can be seen in one place.

Though still in early days, the bciti+ portal is evolving into a foundational piece of Clarence-Rockland’s communications toolkit. It has the potential to drive long-term savings, improve access, and increase resident engagement.

Consultations

What We Heard

Over the course of several weeks, our team met with Clarence-Rockland representatives in small groups for informal conversations about how communications are currently perceived in the community, as well as illuminating “get to know you” dialogue. In this section, we share an aggregated summary of what we heard. We would like to thank the following people for spending time with us:

Interview Panel

Council

Mario Zanth – Mayor, Clarence-Rockland
Stéphane Fournier – Councillor
André Lalonde – Councillor
Diane Choinière – Councillor

Staff and leadership

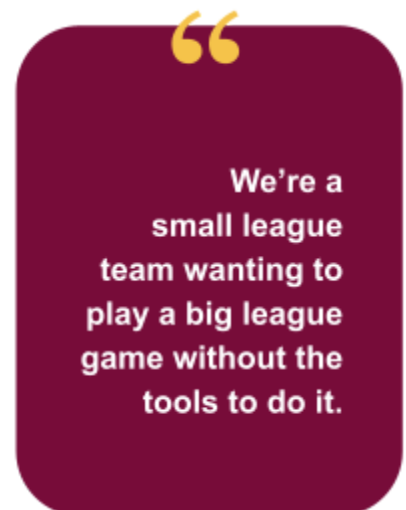
Pierre Voisine – Chief Administrative Officer
Julian Lenhart – Director, Community Development
Martin Irwin – Manager, Community Development
Ali Riel – Manager, Economic Development
Jean-Luc Jubinville – Director, Operations
Denis Longpre – Manager, Waste Management
Alain Hupe – Manager, Parks and Buildings
Martin Saumure – Deputy Fire Chief
Yves Roy – Manager, Enforcement and Construction
Michel Cousineau – Director, Corporate Services
Monique Ouellet – Clerk
Lindsay Doucet – Manager of Communications and Public Relations
Julie Chartrand – Communications Officer

External stakeholders

Chantal Sarkisian – Influencer ‘@chantsy’ (fashion, local flavour)
Joe Coppolino – Editor in Chief, *The Vision*

Growth and Identity: Balancing expansion with small-town character

Clarence-Rockland is navigating a period of intense growth that presents both opportunities and challenges. The community is evolving quickly because of new housing developments, shifting demographics, and an influx of residents from other urban centres (Ottawa, and beyond). Many residents appreciate the Municipality’s natural beauty, friendly atmosphere, and proximity to Ottawa, but there is growing concern that the rapid pace of change could undermine the very qualities that make Clarence-Rockland appealing.



Residents shared a desire to preserve small-town charm while embracing growth that brings improved amenities, services, and job opportunities. Some people highlighted the importance of long-term planning that aligns land use, infrastructure, and economic development that has a clear vision of what the community wants to become. Meanwhile, other people noted the need to reinforce a shared sense of place across urban and rural areas, particularly given lingering tensions around amalgamation.

Rural residents often raised concerns about uneven service delivery and a perception that new investment is concentrated in the urban core. Conversely, some newcomers expressed frustration that the Municipality does not yet offer the breadth of services or amenities they expected upon arrival. These differing perspectives point to the need for a unifying narrative and a community-wide approach to identity-building.

A shifting linguistic landscape also emerged as an issue in several conversations. Clarence-Rockland has long been a predominantly francophone community but an increasing number of anglophone and bilingual residents are making it their home. This cultural transition has implications for community programming, public engagement, and how the Municipality tells its story.

Infrastructure and transportation challenges

Transportation infrastructure emerged as a pressing concern across all consultations. Highway 17, in particular, was cited as a critical barrier to growth. The highway is often congested, and its condition discourages investment, complicates commutes, and hinders efforts to market Clarence-Rockland as a destination for business and tourism. Some stakeholders described it as a structural bottleneck that limits the Municipality's potential, both economically and socially.

In addition to major transportation corridors, residents pointed to the need for improved local infrastructure, such as road maintenance, bike paths, pedestrian crossings, and accessible transit services (e.g., with no bus or train service, residents must rely on personal vehicles, forcing most households to maintain at least two cars). These gaps affect quality of life and contribute to frustration among those who feel underserved.

Environmental considerations also featured prominently in these conversations. Several people said that growth should not come at the expense of green space, natural habitats, or environmental stewardship. They called for thoughtful urban design and infrastructure planning that prioritizes sustainability and resilience, especially in light of climate change.

“
It still feels
like two towns
stitched together
— people in
Rockland don't
know what's
happening in
Bourget.

“
The 17 is a
real sticking point.
We can't grow
properly without
fixing it.

“
We need
sidewalks and bike
lanes, not just
more houses.

Communications and community engagement

Effective communication between the municipality and residents remains a challenge. While the Municipality has made strides in digital communication and public engagement, many feel that important information is either hard to find, overly technical, or delivered too late. Social media platforms are widely used to share news and updates, but they also serve as channels for misinformation and speculation, especially during times of service disruption or controversy.

Residents expressed a desire for more consistent, transparent, and proactive communication from City Hall. This includes not only clear information about decisions and policies but also meaningful opportunities to participate in shaping them. Some questioned whether the Municipality is truly listening to feedback or simply informing residents (and occasionally councillors) after the fact.

Longstanding and new residents alike called for a broader public education effort—one that demystifies municipal processes, explains how decisions are made, and encourages civic involvement. Several suggested hosting (or bringing back) regular open houses or town hall meetings to build trust and foster a more collaborative relationship between government and community.

Others highlighted the need for a single, go-to communications hub—one centralized platform that makes easy to find everything from garbage schedules and council meeting minutes to community events and emergency notices.

Economic development and local business support

Economic development remains a top priority for Clarence-Rockland, especially in light of its residential growth. While the Municipality is actively building out its economic development and tourism strategies, participants noted that commercial growth continues to lag behind population growth. This has created a mismatch between what residents expect and what is currently available—especially when it comes to dining, shopping, and entertainment.

Some small business owners expressed optimism about the Municipality's potential but also voiced concern about limited foot traffic, uneven marketing support, and ongoing competition from Ottawa. Others pointed to the need for more coordinated promotion of local businesses and events,

“
Some of the biggest communication issues come from people simply not knowing where to get information.

“
By the time we hear about it, the decision's already made.

“
We have a major housing boom but limited job growth — businesses aren't keeping pace with the number of new residents.

“
Why are we still driving to Orleans for everything?

it

as well as clearer incentives for entrepreneurs to invest in Clarence-Rockland.

There is also a growing recognition that economic development must be more than just real estate or retail. Participants spoke of the importance of cultivating a diverse local economy—one that includes light manufacturing, innovation, tourism, and green industries. Some suggested that strategic partnerships and investment in high-speed internet and flexible zoning could make Clarence-Rockland a more attractive place to do business.

Service delivery and resident expectations

As Clarence-Rockland grows, its residents are expecting more from municipal services. For many, this includes everything from snow removal and garbage collection to customer service and bylaw enforcement. Newcomers, particularly those relocating from larger centres, often arrive with expectations of faster service, broader offerings, and more direct lines of communication with local government.

At the same time, long-term residents are increasingly concerned about affordability and the sustainability of service expansion. Several acknowledged that taxes have risen and questioned whether those increases are reflected in better services. Others noted that staff are doing the best they can with limited resources, and warned against overburdening city departments without providing them with the tools to succeed.

Municipal staff and leadership also spoke openly about morale and burnout. Constant criticism, often fueled by misinformation online, takes a toll on frontline staff. Some leaders expressed concern that staff are being pulled in too many directions without adequate recognition or resources. This emotional strain underscores the importance of setting clearer priorities and communicating the Municipality's limitations with honesty and transparency.

Public safety and emergency preparedness

Clarence-Rockland's public safety infrastructure is unique, relying heavily on a volunteer-based fire service. While the dedication of these volunteers is widely respected, many residents are unaware of how the system works or what it means for response times. As a result, there is often confusion—and sometimes frustration—about what to expect during emergencies.

Notably, the fire department has a robust presence on social media separate from the Municipality's account with helpful information such as reminders to change detector batteries and other prevention/preparation tips.

“
People expect the service levels of a big city, but we don't have the resources to match that yet.”

“
We don't mind paying taxes — but we want to know where the money is going.”

“
Many residents don't understand that our fire service is mostly volunteer-based, which affects response times.”

“
I didn't even know who to call when the power went out.”

Emergency preparedness more broadly was raised as an area for improvement, particularly in rural areas where communication infrastructure is limited. Power outages, road closures, and weather events highlight the need for better coordination and more reliable methods of alerting residents.

Participants also pointed to the importance of public education campaigns that clarify roles and responsibilities, explain safety protocols, and increase understanding of what the Municipality can and cannot do. These efforts could help reduce panic and misinformation during critical events.

Recreation, culture, and community life

Clarence-Rockland offers a wide range of recreational amenities, from arenas and trails to community events and cultural programs. However, there is a sense that more can be done to support community life—especially for teenagers, single adults, and newcomers who may not yet feel a strong connection to the Municipality.

Participants shared a desire for more diverse programming, including arts and cultural events, indoor recreation options, and activities that cater to different age groups. Some lamented the absence of a movie theatre, more dining options, or a local venue for live music or performances. Others pointed to the need for safer walking and cycling infrastructure that connects neighbourhoods to parks, schools, and commercial areas.

There is also untapped potential in promoting Clarence-Rockland as a cultural destination, celebrating its bilingual heritage and building stronger relationships with local artists, Indigenous communities, and youth leaders. Several participants stressed that community engagement is about creating opportunities for people to come together, feel included, and take pride in where they live.

Tensions at play

Throughout the conversations, a number of underlying tensions emerged—many of which reflect the growing pains of a rapidly changing community. These tensions are not necessarily problems to be solved, but dynamics that must be acknowledged, understood, and managed as Clarence-Rockland shapes its future.

- **Rural vs. Urban:** Residents in rural areas often feel overlooked, while people in the urban core advocate for more investment to support higher density. This divide continues to influence how people perceive fairness and attention from City Hall.
- **Longtime Residents vs. Newcomers:** Long-established residents may value self-sufficiency and slower-paced change, while newcomers bring expectations shaped by life in larger urban centres. These different starting points influence how people interpret growth, services, and community life.

“
There’s not much for teenagers or single adults here. Most activities are family-oriented, which leaves a gap.

“
I’d love to see more events that reflect the diversity of the people living here now.

- **Growth vs. Preservation:** There is enthusiasm for progress—but also concern that unchecked development could erode the natural beauty, community spirit, and small-town feel that define Clarence-Rockland’s identity.
- **Expectations vs. Capacity:** Many residents want faster, broader, and more personalized municipal services, but the Municipality’s financial and staffing capacity must catch up to demand. This gap fuels frustration on both sides.
- **Strategic Vision vs. Political Pressures:** Staff and leadership recognize the need for long-term, coordinated planning, but this is often at odds with reactive politics or short-term expectations from residents. Balancing vision with pragmatism will be critical as the Municipality moves forward. It’s not enough to communicate about what services you are providing—all communications need to support the vision and answer “why” you are doing what you are doing.

Rather than avoiding these tensions, Clarence-Rockland has an opportunity to use them as guideposts—signals that point to where communication, investment, and trust-building are most needed.

What it means

What has emerged from consultation is a snapshot of current sentiment, as well as a series of guideposts for the future. This is a community in transition: growing, diversifying, and seeking clarity about what comes next. The themes that surfaced are instructive for how Clarence-Rockland can approach communications and marketing over the next five years.

A mandate for clarity and connection

Residents are calling for transparency, inclusion, and coherence. They want to know what’s happening, why it matters, and how they can shape it. Communications must shift from reactive to proactive—anchored in a commitment to building trust and making municipal life easier to navigate. There is an opportunity to educate people about what the municipality does – and does not do, as well as some “mythbusting” misconceptions around planning and service delivery.

A unified but flexible identity

Clarence-Rockland’s identity is no longer static. Communications must support a new narrative—one that bridges rural and urban perspectives, honours the Municipality’s bilingual character, and includes its changing demographics. That story must feel authentic and accessible whether you're a newcomer from Ottawa or a lifelong resident of Cheney.

A communications infrastructure built for growth

As the Municipality grows, so must its communications tools. Residents are looking for centralized, user-friendly platforms where they can reliably find updates, ask questions, and engage with their local government (bciti+ could be this platform). This infrastructure should support both information delivery and public engagement.

A strategy that matches ambition with realism

Perhaps most importantly, the Municipality needs a communications and marketing strategy that acknowledges both its potential and its constraints. Expectations are high. Resources are finite. The next phase of communication must balance optimism with clarity, and vision with transparency.

Alignment with the Strategic Plan

The insights and recommendations captured in this section directly support and reinforce the Municipality of Clarence-Rockland's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan. The themes residents raised—balancing growth with identity, improving service quality, and strengthening community cohesion—mirror the plan's three strategic pillars:

- **Balanced Growth:** Residents expressed a desire for clear, long-term planning that considers both the pace and character of development. Communications can help manage expectations, explain policy decisions, and support more inclusive conversations around future growth.
- **High-Quality Services:** The need for improved transparency, municipal literacy, and centralized access to information directly aligns with the goal of expanding and enhancing municipal services and infrastructure. A robust communications ecosystem is foundational to service quality.
- **Community Cohesion:** Many participants called for deeper community connection and civic engagement—particularly in light of demographic shifts. Strategic communications can promote civic pride, inclusivity, and a shared sense of belonging.

These consultations bring the Strategic Plan to life by grounding it in the everyday realities of residents. The recommendations that follow at the end of this report provide a communications and marketing roadmap that supports the Municipality's aspiration to shape its growth and respond to a changing environment—while remaining connected to its people.

Conclusion after consultations

Clarence-Rockland stands at a pivotal point in its evolution. The Municipality's strengths—its natural assets, bilingual character, and strong sense of community—provide a solid foundation for the future. However, sustained growth brings complex challenges that require thoughtful planning, responsive service delivery, and inclusive engagement.

Across all consultations, residents expressed a shared interest in shaping the community's future, not just reacting to change. They want to be part of the conversation, to understand how decisions are made, and to feel confident that growth is being managed with intention and care.

The insights captured in this section reveal both the hopes and anxieties of a community in transition. They serve as a call to action—for clearer communication, stronger partnerships, and more opportunities for residents to contribute meaningfully to the life of the Municipality. Using a coordinated, community-driven approach, Clarence-Rockland can continue to grow while preserving the values that define it.

Public Engagement + Consultation

Clarence-Rockland's 2024–2028 Strategic Plan identifies three interconnected priorities: balanced growth, high-quality services, and community cohesion. Public engagement and consultation are essential to achieving these goals—ensuring residents are informed, heard, and invited to shape the Municipality's future.

The Municipality has already taken a forward-thinking approach by launching two integrated platforms—**bciti+** and **Cocoriko**—in early 2024. These tools allow Clarence-Rockland to communicate directly with residents, gather input, and build stronger civic relationships. The opportunity now is to use these platforms together, strategically and consistently, to support ongoing two-way engagement.

Insights from Clarence-Rockland community survey

The recent community survey offers valuable insights into how residents of Clarence-Rockland engage with City communications, where they place their trust, and what motivates them to participate in civic life. These findings provide a strong foundation for refining the City's communications strategy to better meet the needs and expectations of its residents.

Trusted Channels, Strong Foundations

Residents overwhelmingly rely on the City's official communication channels. The City's social media (36%) and website (32%) are the top two sources of information, far outpacing community-led platforms and traditional media. These channels are especially critical for high-priority updates, such as road closures, emergencies, and waste collection—where 8 in 10 residents turn to City-managed platforms first.

Trust mirrors usage: nearly 7 in 10 residents completely trust the City's website, and nearly half say the same about its social media. While usage of platforms like Bciti+ and local media is lower, those who use them report relatively high levels of trust, suggesting opportunities for growth. For proposed neighbourhood changes, residents prefer written notices (63%), followed by Bciti+ (46%) and City social media (45%).

Room to Strengthen Engagement

While many residents have not yet interacted directly with City staff or elected officials, those who have report mixed experiences. Staff are seen as slightly more accessible than elected officials (60% vs. 49%), but only about half of residents feel their concerns are addressed quickly or that they are truly heard. This signals a need for more consistent, empathetic, and responsive communication across all touchpoints.

Performance Perceptions Vary by Topic

Residents give the City high marks for communications around community events (80%), waste services (76%), and elections (74%). However, ratings are lower for more complex or technical topics like tax information (54%), utility maintenance (56%), and major projects (51%). These areas present opportunities to improve clarity and relevance in messaging.

Understanding City Hall: A Confidence Gap

A significant majority (77%) of residents are not confident they understand how decisions are made at City Hall. Perception of a lack of transparency can be a barrier to trust and engagement. Clearer

explanations of processes and decisions will be key to building a more informed and involved community.

What Residents Want: Clarity, Relevance, and Impact

When it comes to communication style, residents are clear: they want messages that are short and clear (71%), show personal impact (75%), include visuals (64%), and offer a clear call to action (62%). Messages shared by trusted sources and delivered in their preferred language also matter.

Half of residents say they miss City messages entirely, highlighting the importance of making communications more attention-grabbing and accessible.

Participation Drivers: Make It Matter, Make It Easy

The strongest motivator for civic participation is knowing that input makes a difference (63%). Convenience is also key, with 43% saying they'd be more likely to engage if it were easier to do so.

Narratives That Resonate

The City's tested narrative statements received strong support. Nearly 7 in 10 residents say a vision of inclusive, transparent, and community-driven growth would make them more likely to get involved. Similarly, 73% agree that Clarence-Rockland's identity as a bilingual, rural-urban, and future-focused community reflects their experience. And 59% say that framing City work as "building trust and belonging" would improve their perception of municipal decisions.

Demographic Snapshot

The survey sample skews older (49% are 56+), female (66%), and long-term residents (63% have lived in Clarence-Rockland for over a decade). Most own their homes (87%), drive (95%), and were born in Canada (93%). This context is important for tailoring outreach strategies to ensure inclusivity and reach across all segments of the population.

Strategic priorities for engagement

1. Close the Loop

Residents want to know their input matters. To reinforce trust and accountability, the Municipality should release a "What We Heard" report summarizing survey results and commit to regular progress updates that show how public feedback is influencing decisions. Closing the loop turns participation into partnership.

2. Reach the Full Community

Clarence-Rockland's population spans languages, ages, and neighbourhoods. Engagement must reflect this diversity. Use bilingual, mobile-friendly formats and blend online and offline tactics to ensure inclusive participation. Promotion efforts should extend beyond bciti+ to include social media, local media, and in-person opportunities like community events.

3. Use the Right Tool for the Job

Leverage each platform's strengths: Cocoriko for simple, localized surveys and map-based feedback; bciti+ for timely alerts and centralized information. Using both tools in a complementary way supports seamless resident experiences and stronger data for City planning.

4. Build Internal Capacity and Confidence

Elected officials and municipal staff are essential advocates for engagement. Equip them with clear guidance, briefing materials, and talking points to support outreach. A short internal

orientation on bciti+ and Cocoriko—what they are, how they work, and why they matter—can help foster consistent, confident promotion.

5. Make Participation Easy and Worthwhile

To increase participation, reduce friction. Keep surveys short and visually engaging. Use plain language and provide clear incentives—such as prize draws—to encourage completion. Most importantly, communicate how participation will make a difference.

Maximizing engagement through a two-part strategy

Clarence-Rockland’s digital tools will succeed only if both internal users and external audiences are engaged. The table below outlines parallel strategies to support that success:

Internal: Staff & elected officials	External: Residents & community members
<i>Goal:</i> Champion and sustain platform use across departments	<i>Goal:</i> Encourage opt-ins and visible community impact
Recommended Strategies:	Recommended Strategies:
Develop a phased rollout to integrate platforms across municipal functions	Launch awareness campaigns across digital and physical channels
Secure leadership buy-in and departmental champions	Offer small incentives for sign-ups and survey completion
Provide training, demos, and help materials	Host “how-to” sessions at events like the Expo
Use staff feedback to refine and improve tool functionality	Solicit user suggestions and report back on changes made
Reinforce data privacy and information security standards	Prioritize accessibility across language, age, and device use

From consultation to collaboration

Clarence-Rockland is shifting from transactional communication to a more collaborative approach. The upcoming community survey represents a turning point. By actively listening, reporting back, and adjusting course in response to resident input, the Municipality can nurture a culture of dialogue and shared responsibility. This is how trust grows—through transparency, consistency, and a shared sense of purpose.

Comparative Communications Analysis

Hawkesbury, Ontario

Hawkesbury, Ontario is a short drive down the Ottawa River from the City of Clarence-Rockland. It has a stable and slowly shrinking population of 10,194 in 2021—down 49 from 2021. Since the pandemic, the town has seen more homebuilding and population growth. Like Clarence-Rockland, most of the population is bilingual, but unlike Clarence-Rockland, [more people work locally \(1,635\)](#), and more still (1,925) have a commute of [15 minutes or less](#).



The combined operating and capital budget for Hawkesbury for 2025 is \$45.7 million, and the communications budget, if there is one, is assumed to be part of the budget for the ADM-CAO. There is no indication of what is covered under that \$672,000 budget, including whether or not the town has any communications or marketing staff.

Public communications

The Town of Hawkesbury uses a bilingual approach (French and English) and multiple channels to reach residents. Its official website is a central hub for news, events, and notices, though it had become outdated in design and not fully user-friendly.

In [early 2024 the Town recognized](#) several issues – residents were using the site less, leading to more phone inquiries, and the site’s design was misaligned with Hawkesbury’s visual identity and not compliant with provincial accessibility laws. In response, a complete website redevelopment was launched to modernize the interface, improve navigation, and ensure the site reflects the Town’s branding. Hawkesbury’s Communications Coordinator [presented this plan to Council](#), emphasizing the need for a simpler user experience and alignment with the 2019 visual identity.

The Town maintains a consistent brand image, guided by a 2024 communications policy that governs use of the Town logo and motto. All branding is kept uniform to avoid public confusion, and any use of the Town’s logo [requires approval from the communications department](#). Hawkesbury’s website also features a [secure online payments portal](#) from a company called Paymentus, so that residents can pay their bills online—even if they choose not to register for a Paymentus account. Beyond the website, Hawkesbury communicates through local media (e.g. sharing news with local newspapers) and a municipal newsletter residents can subscribe to. Overall, Hawkesbury’s public communications tone is polite and informative, if a little stiff and jargon-y at times. Bilingual delivery of information is a clear priority for Hawkesbury, ensuring both English and French speaking residents feel included in all announcements.

Public engagement

For a town of its size, Hawkesbury frequently invites citizens to participate in decision-making. The Town hosts public consultations on topics like urban planning, by-law updates, and its [Strategic Plan](#). The Town’s website has a dedicated [Public Consultations and Surveys](#) section listing current and past consultations. For example, as part of developing a new Strategic Plan, Hawkesbury launched a public forum and survey in August 2024 to “help shape the vision of your Town for the coming years”. These engagements often combine in-person events (open public forums or town hall meetings) with online tools such as surveys and questionnaires. To encourage participation, Hawkesbury sometimes

offers incentives; one July 2024 online survey about infrastructure offered a [chance to win a \\$100 gift card](#) for completing the questionnaire.

Just like Clarence-Rockland, Hawkesbury also uses a citizen engagement app, [bciti+](#), which lets residents ask questions, submit service requests or complaints, and receive alerts on their devices. This two-way communication tool makes it easier for the public to engage with municipal services. Public feedback mechanisms are built into various services (e.g. a web form for accessibility feedback, and an online **Ask your questions** portal on the website). Overall, while in-person engagement in a small town can be limited, Hawkesbury attempts to meet people where they are – whether at a public meeting or on their smartphone.

Social media analysis

The Town of Hawkesbury maintains an active presence on popular social media platforms. It has official accounts on Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and even LinkedIn, all updated regularly—in both languages. Content on these platforms ranges from town news (e.g. job postings, council meeting reminders) to community updates and emergency alerts. Hawkesbury’s Facebook page, which boasts 6,100 likes, shares announcements like special council meetings or service interruptions, often with a friendly explanatory note.

On X (Twitter), the Town has tailored its content slightly—posts there include job opportunity notices and brief news flashes. Social media engagement is modest. The tone across Hawkesbury’s social media is courteous, informative, and community-centric. Posts about community events or initiatives (like a fundraiser or holiday celebration) tend to be upbeat and accompanied by images or simple animations.

By maintaining these channels, the Town ensures that residents who prefer getting updates via social media are kept in the loop. To improve, Hawkesbury could continue to monitor which types of posts get the most response so they can refine their social media strategy, and work to tailor content so that it’s optimized for each social media channel instead of using the same format across all platforms.

AODA compliance

As mentioned earlier, Hawkesbury has been strengthening its compliance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) since the Town [openly acknowledged](#) that its previous website did not fully comply with provincial accessibility standards.

The Town’s new website was built to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. [Hawkesbury’s website](#) also lets residents know that the Town will do its best to remove barriers on the site and ensure content is accessible to all users. Alternative formats for documents are available on request – for example, a resident can ask for a PDF or Word version of a report if the web content isn’t suitable, a large-print copy, or to have the content read aloud over the phone.

In addition, the Town put out a call for members to [join its Accessibility Advisory Committee](#), which shows its commitment to ongoing AODA compliance and engagement with persons with disabilities. In practice, Hawkesbury’s communications are increasingly accessible: images on the website have text alternatives, the text resizing function is available, and videos of council meetings (when posted) include captions. The Town has set up clear processes for feedback – anyone encountering an accessibility barrier can contact the Clerk’s Office or use the Bciti app to request improvements.

EDI best practices

In addition to its commitment to make its communications inclusive by making them accessible for those with disabilities and available in both English and French, Hawkesbury incorporates principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) into its communications in a few notable ways.

Hawkesbury is part of the federal government's new **Welcoming Francophone Communities** initiative, a pilot program encouraging Francophone immigrants to target communities across Canada by funding projects that make them even more welcoming to new Canadians. With the funding from this federal initiative, Hawkesbury has created a [dedicated website for French-speaking newcomers](#) moving to the Town, featuring Hawkesbury's history, guidance on finding a job and place to live, suggestions for activities, and support for newcomers.

The Town also celebrates its cultural diversity through events like the *Multicultural Festival of Hawkesbury*, which was founded to “discover and immerse oneself in the values of several cultures, thus creating a new synergy by using culture as a common point.” The Festival is promoted in communications to emphasize inclusion of Canada's many cultural groups.

In terms of imagery and content, Hawkesbury's communications try to represent the community's makeup. While Hawkesbury is a smaller community, it strives to be welcoming: the tone of messaging is polite and respectful to all audiences.

One area for growth in EDI could be more engagement with recognition of nearby Indigenous communities. Going forward, Hawkesbury may consider highlighting contributions of Indigenous and other diverse communities in its storytelling.

Other notable initiatives

Hawkesbury has launched a few creative communications and marketing initiatives in recent years. One key project is the [Citizens' Guide 2023-2025](#), a comprehensive handbook for residents that compiles helpful information about local services and living in Hawkesbury. This guide, available in an attractive print and PDF format, is part of a “new identity” effort to provide high-quality, transparent communication supporting the Town's vision. By distributing a Citizens' Guide, the Town ensures that everyone – including those who may not follow the website regularly – has a go-to reference on waste collection, recreation, contacts for services, and more.

Opportunities for improvement

While the Bciti+ app is a great tool, its long-term success will depend on awareness and widespread adoption amongst residents before the program shows its true potential value. Another opportunity for small towns to improve their redundancies is to cross-train staff to backstop the small communications team. Being a small municipality, the Communications Coordinator wears many hats. Having backup or cross-trained staff (even part-time) could ensure timely communications even when the main communicator is unavailable.

Best practices

Hawkesbury's experience highlights several lessons that many small municipalities can relate to. One important lesson is the need for **continuous improvement** in communications tools: a website cannot be a one-time project. This underscores why it's important to check in with residents about how they're receiving important and helpful information from the Town, as well as if marketing and communications can be improved.

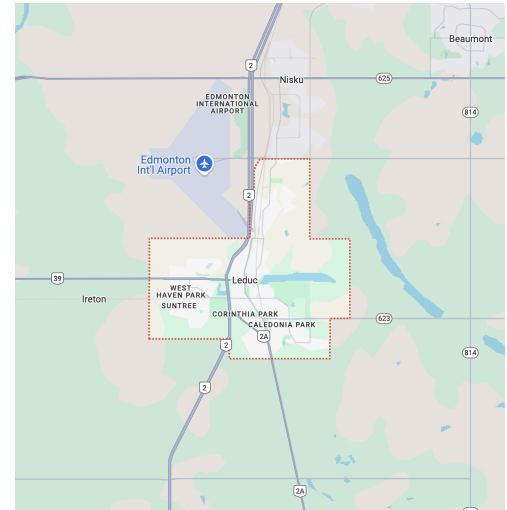
Another lesson is that offering information isn't enough – it must be **accessible and**

understandable, hence Hawkesbury's push for AODA compliance and clearer content. The success of the public surveys (especially when incentives were offered) taught the Town that residents respond better when engagement is convenient and rewarding; thus, mixing online surveys with traditional public meetings captures a broader audience.

Finally, by being bilingual in all communications, Hawkesbury reaffirms that understanding your community's demographics is key to effective outreach; this is a lesson in inclusivity that other municipalities can adopt.

Leduc, Alberta

Leduc, Alberta is a growing city just south of Edmonton, serving as both a regional hub and a commuter community for the capital. Its population reached 34,094 in 2021, up significantly from 29,993 in 2016—reflecting steady growth fueled by proximity to Edmonton International Airport and a strong industrial and logistics sector. Unlike Clarence-Rockland, Leduc’s population is primarily English-speaking, and a significant share of residents work locally or within a short drive. [Nearly 6,000 people commute less than 15 minutes](#), and over 4,000 work right in the city.



Leduc’s 2024 combined operating and capital budget totals \$202 million. The City has a dedicated Communications and Marketing department, with staff responsible for strategic planning, media relations, public engagement, social media, and internal communications. While the full breakdown of the department’s budget isn’t public, its activities are tracked through quarterly reporting and aligned with Council’s strategic priorities.

Public communications

The City of Leduc takes a very proactive and professional approach to public communications. It operates a dedicated Communications and Marketing department that plans communications in alignment with the City’s Strategic Plan. Leduc’s website is a rich resource for citizens, featuring a [News & Media](#) centre with frequent updates on everything from public hearings to community events (often posting multiple news items each week). Leduc also issues **Media Releases** to local news outlets and [invites media to subscribe](#) to their distribution list, ensuring important city announcements can reach a wide audience.

A notable strength in Leduc’s communications is its data-driven strategy. The City monitors metrics like website traffic and social media engagement closely and reports these to Council quarterly. For example, [in 2023 they observed](#) that users on Leduc.ca increased by ~7% over the previous year, indicating growing reach, and they interpreted steady page views as a sign that people are finding what they need more efficiently.

Leduc’s communications content maintains a **respectful, service-oriented tone**, often speaking directly to residents’ needs (“we need your perspectives to help shape our future” is a phrasing they used in a [budget survey notice](#)). They also experiment with modern formats: the City has a photo and video gallery and shares short video clips for announcements when suitable. Overall, Leduc’s public communications are multi-channel, consistent in branding (using the City logo and colors), and clearly focused on keeping citizens informed about both the “big picture” initiatives and day-to-day notices.

Public engagement

Public engagement is a cornerstone of Leduc’s strategy and is [treated as essential to good governance](#). The City has a formal [Public Engagement Policy](#) and a newly developed Public Engagement Framework to guide how and when the City involves residents in decision-making.

In practice, Leduc offers many opportunities for citizens to have their say. For example, each year the City runs a [Budget Planning Survey](#) to gather input on priorities – in 2025, they streamlined this by combining it with the broader Citizen Satisfaction Survey, making engagement easier and more

“timely” for residents. To boost participation, they entered everyone who took the survey into a draw for a \$150 local shopping gift card. Leduc also hosts in-person public engagement events, too, including open houses and workshops for major projects (like its Transportation Master Plan update and an Urban Centre Redevelopment Plan), and it actively advertises these on the website’s Engage section.

What sets Leduc apart is how it has built public engagement into every aspect of what the City does. For starters, the City website’s [“Get Involved”](#) pages explain *what public engagement is* and *why it matters*, emphasizing that feedback will be valued and can influence decisions. The City is also incorporating engagement into various projects over the next four years as part of its 2023–2026 Strategic Plan, meaning departments are expected to build citizen input into their workflows.

Additionally, Leduc nurtures engagement [through specific programs](#) – there’s a **Volunteer Leduc** program and a Youth Council to engage younger residents in civic matters. The City also recognizes public contributions via a Citizen Recognition Program.

These efforts indicate that Leduc doesn’t view engagement as one-off surveys, but as an ongoing dialogue. By providing feedback summaries (for instance, publishing **Council Highlights** after meetings and closing the loop by reporting what was heard in engagements), Leduc helps residents see the impact of their input, which in turn encourages future participation.

Social media analysis

The City of Leduc has a strong and strategic social media presence, actively managing Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and until recently, X accounts. Rather than posting identical content everywhere, Leduc customizes its approach to each platform.

For example, before it shut down its X account a month ago, the City shared more succinct, newsy updates, while forgoing some of the more community-focused content it posts on Facebook. They also used X to engage in two-way communications with regional partners and media. This targeted approach led to a [54% increase in Twitter engagement despite 60% fewer tweets in 2023](#). By focusing on relevant content (and cutting out posts that weren’t of interest), they achieved higher engagement per post.

On **Instagram**, Leduc takes a photo and video first approach, which has driven huge growth in impressions for the City on Instagram Stories and Reels ([up 82% and 78% respectively](#)), suggesting they use short videos and behind-the-scenes glimpses effectively to connect with the community. Leduc’s **LinkedIn** saw a [112% jump in engagements](#) as the team started sharing more City achievements and news on that platform, recognizing that a segment of their audience (professionals, businesses, other organizations) is active there.

Facebook remains the City’s dominant channel, and is used for broad community outreach. Posts there include event announcements, public notices, and human-interest stories (like highlighting local heroes or city staff during National Public Works Week).

The tone across Leduc’s social media is friendly, informative, and responsive. More importantly though, Leduc analyzes its social media metrics regularly to identify opportunities where they can improve. In 2023, for example, the [City’s overall social media impressions](#) climbed by 48% and engagements by 107%, indicating that their Q4 2023 content was “more interesting and appealing to residents” than the year prior.

This virtuous cycle of data-driven innovation comes not just from measuring and analyzing the results

of content across channels, but also from experimenting with content types (they might share a mix of quick news, longer narratives, Q&A segments, etc.) and then adjusting based on what resonates.

Accessibility and AODA Compliance

Although Alberta is not governed by Ontario's AODA, the City of Leduc is still committed to accessibility in communications in line with modern standards. The City's website, Leduc.ca, is designed using a [Google Translate](#) tool built-in (offering dozens of languages), which shows consideration for linguistic accessibility for newcomers or those more comfortable in languages other than English. Leduc's site is also user-friendly on mobile devices and provides features like adjustable text size and clear headers for screen-readers.

While Leduc isn't required to publish an AODA plan like Ontario municipalities, it adheres to the spirit of accessibility.

For instance, their online PDF reports (like council agendas or newsletters) are posted in PDF/A format when possible, and they welcome requests for information in accessible formats via their Contact channels. Public meetings in Leduc offer accommodations too – if someone needs sign language interpretation or other assistance, the City will arrange it on request. Moreover, Leduc's engagement practices strive to be inclusive: they might use plain language and offer multiple ways to participate (online, paper, in-person) to accommodate various needs. A specific example is how they present **Council meeting webcasts** with captions for the hearing-impaired (via their YouTube or webcast platform).

EDI best practices

Leduc has shown a growing commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in both its internal and external communications. One prominent initiative is the City's approach to Indigenous relations and reconciliation. Leduc created a program called "[Treaty, Truth and ReconciliACTION](#)," which outlines a year-round cycle of learning and actions toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Through this program, the City's communications include educational content about Treaty 6 territory (on which Leduc sits) and promote events like Indigenous Peoples Day and Orange Shirt Day.

Additionally, Leduc's communications around cultural celebrations have been notable. For example in 2023, the City's celebration of **Pride Month** was specifically listed as a [communications project focus](#). Leduc also emphasizes inclusivity in everyday content. City newsletters and social media often highlight stories of diverse residents (for example, newcomer entrepreneurs or multicultural festivals in the area).

Leduc made big changes to the way it approaches EDI after facing [workplace harassment allegations among Fire Services staff in February 2022](#). Following the allegations, the City invested in an **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy** (budgeting \$165,000 for it in 2022) to improve its culture. This move sends a message to the public that Leduc stands for a safe, discrimination-free environment—an important step to rebuild trust with residents following the allegations.

Moreover, Leduc's "[This is Our Leduc](#)" series (profiles of various community members) inherently supports EDI by showcasing people of different backgrounds and walks of life, reinforcing that everyone's story is part of the city's identity.

Other notable initiatives

The City of Leduc has launched several forward-thinking communications and marketing initiatives that set it apart. One is the "[This is Our Leduc](#)" storytelling campaign. This initiative collects and

shares local stories from residents and business owners, celebrating what makes Leduc unique. By nominating community members and featuring their stories on the City's platforms, Leduc strengthens community pride and humanizes its communications – residents see their neighbors featured and feel more connected.

Another initiative is Leduc's use of technology for service communications: the City implemented [SeeClickFix](#) in 2022, a digital platform that allows residents to report issues (like potholes or streetlight outages) via an app. Similar to the Bciti app used by Clarence-Rockland and Hawkesbury, SeeClickFix also streamlines how complaints/requests flow into City Hall, making it easier for staff to respond efficiently. Communications around the app's launch highlighted how easy it is to use, and likely contributed to residents adopting it to engage with the City on operational issues.

Leduc also runs **awards and recognition programs** like the [Leduc Achievement Awards](#), [Leduc's Influencer Awards](#), and its [Citizens of Distinction](#) awards to honor local achievements. On the economic development side, they have a "[Love Your Leduc](#)" or similar shop-local initiative (the navigation mentions "Love Your Leduc"), encouraging residents to support local businesses, which is marketed through social media and partnerships with local chambers of commerce.

Lastly, Leduc's dedication to sharing its annual "[Report Card](#)" – a dashboard of key indicators on city performance – is an initiative that boosts transparency. Publishing data on how the City is doing (for example in community satisfaction, or environmental targets) and communicating it in plain language helps build trust and shows confidence in the City's work to serve residents.

Opportunities for improvement

Leduc's communications and engagement practices are quite robust, but there is always room to refine and innovate. Another area to consider is introducing a centralized online engagement portal, mobile app or platform (similar to some cities' "Engage [CityName]" sites) where all consultations, surveys, and discussion forums are housed together.

Additionally, while Leduc already excels at measurement, a recommendation is to share some of those metrics publicly in an annual "Communications Report Card" alongside its annual report card for citizens, highlighting what's working (e.g. "social media engagement up 107% this year") and what the City plans to improve.

Lastly, as the City grows, maintaining a **personal touch** will be important – initiatives like "This is Our Leduc" (stories from residents) should continue, and perhaps evolve into short video stories or a podcast, keeping communications feeling community-driven rather than institutional.

Best practices

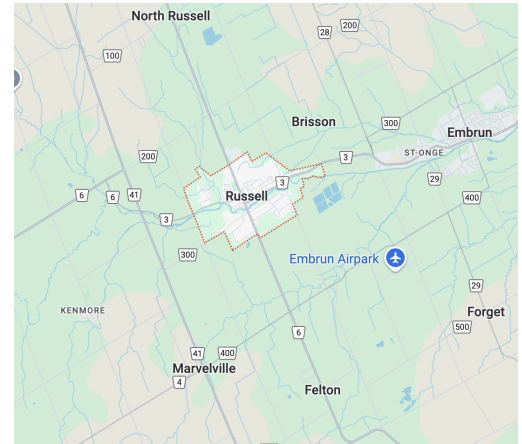
From Leduc's experience, several best practices emerge that could benefit other municipalities' communications. A major lesson is the power of **strategic content management**: Leduc learned that tailoring content to the right audience yields better engagement than a one-size-fits-all barrage of posts. Their decision to post less frequently on X but make each tweet more pertinent [led to a big spike in engagement](#), teaching that *quality over quantity* can be a winning strategy in social media.

They also saw how experimenting and measuring results using data leads to communication innovation. For instance, the City discovered residents were very interested in snow-related updates and parking bans via email, as [evidenced by subscriber growth in the winter](#). This insight led them to consider segmenting email topics and doing targeted subscription drives, a lesson in meeting people's specific information needs rather than just general updates.

Another best practice one can take from Leduc is the importance of **closing the feedback loop**. Leduc's practice of sharing what they heard (e.g., summarizing survey results or council decisions) builds trust, and by visibly valuing input, they build more engagement – a virtuous cycle. An important example of this is that when Leduc faced challenges around its internal culture (with the harassment allegations), it showed City leadership that communications isn't just external – it must be consistent with how the organization conducts itself internally. The accelerated rollout of an EDI strategy following that incident shows that when a crisis of trust occurs, prompt and transparent communication is critical.

Russell, Ontario

Russell, Ontario is a fast-growing township in Eastern Ontario, just southeast of Ottawa. It is part of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. The bilingual community numbered **19,598** people in 2021, up a whopping 18.6% from 2016. Russell has a mixed rural-urban character—there’s local farming and a small industrial park—but many residents commute for work. In fact, **68% of residents commute to jobs in the City of Ottawa**, while only ~21% both live and work in Russell. Despite the commuter flow, Russell has been recognized for its high quality of life and its 'unparalleled quality of place,' ranking among the top small communities in Canada.



The Township’s total communications and public relations budget for 2024 **was \$540,062**. As an officially **bilingual municipality**, Russell emphasizes communication in both English and French, maintains a friendly but professional tone in its messaging, and strives for accessible, citizen-focused engagement in all its initiatives.

Public communications

Russell Township takes a multi-channel, **bilingual approach** to public communications, similar to its Eastern Ontario peers. The official website (russell.ca) is the central hub for news, service information, and resources. In April 2021, the Township **launched a new website** with an improved search function, mobile-friendly layout, and enhanced subscribe option so residents can sign up for news, notices, and page updates—all aligned with the Township’s brand guidelines and built to comply with Ontario’s latest accessibility regulations.

To help the public transition to the new site, Russell also hosted **bilingual webinars** to demonstrate the website’s new features and help establish it as the Township’s “main channel of communication with residents.” The site is fully bilingual, with content available in French and English at all times (the municipal logo itself reads “*Municipalité de Russell Township*” in both languages). Residents can also access online services like an events calendar, an e-Services portal for forms, and a “Report an Issue” online form for service requests. For those who prefer in-person or print, the Township still produces materials like an annual waste collection calendar and posts public notices on local bulletin boards, but digital is clearly the focus.

Beyond the website, Russell’s communications department (a small team within the CAO’s office) ensures consistent messaging and branding across all its own channels. The overall tone of Russell’s communications is informative and community-oriented. Notices and press releases are written in plain language, and content focuses on positive news (new park openings, budget investments) and practical information (road closures, garbage pickup changes).

Public engagement

Russell puts significant effort into public engagement. The Township routinely seeks resident input on plans and policies. As part of its budget process, **Russell conducts a public survey on strategic priorities and holds public consultations**. The Township **includes the results of the survey and its consultations in the preface to the budget** each year, showing residents how their feedback impacted the decision-making process.

Russell is also currently developing a formal **Public Engagement Policy**. To develop the policy, the Township used an engagement survey that could be filled out online or using a printed copy (picked up and returned to Town Hall or a local library) and hosted an open house to gather resident input. On an ongoing basis, residents can engage through several standing **advisory committees**. For example, Russell's **Community, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** invites citizen members to advise Council on [making the township more welcoming and inclusive](#). There is also an **Accessibility Advisory Committee**, a **Youth Advisory role**, and other committees for recreation, the environment, etc. All committee meetings are open to the public, and the [schedules and minutes are published online](#) for transparency. Russell encourages residents to **volunteer** for these committees or attend public meetings to voice their opinions.

Opportunities for improvement

While Russell's communications and engagement practices are solid for a township of its size, there are a few areas where the municipality could improve or take inspiration from best practices elsewhere. One opportunity is to invest in more **two-way digital engagement tools**. The website forms and surveys work well, but a dedicated engagement platform (such as Bang the Table or a mobile app for service requests) could further streamline interactions.

Neighbouring towns have introduced citizen request apps or online idea forums to good effect. Russell could explore something like a **“report-a-problem” smartphone app or a centralized engagement portal** to complement its website. This would particularly help engage younger, tech-savvy residents on the go. It would also lighten the load on staff by funneling input directly into a tracking system rather than individual emails.

Finally, Russell could improve how it **measures and reports on communications outcomes**. Right now, success is measured mostly anecdotally (e.g. “we had a good turnout at the open house” or observing social media comments). Implementing simple metrics—website analytics, social media engagement stats, survey response rates—and reporting them (even internally or in an annual public report) can help identify what works best.

Social media analysis

The Township of Russell maintains an **active presence on social media** to reach residents on the platforms they frequent. It has official accounts on **Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube**, all linked from the [municipal website](#). Content across these channels is kept **bilingual** whenever possible.

For example, the Township's Facebook page (which has roughly 5,900 followers) often posts announcements in both English and French within the same post, or as separate posts, to ensure the message hits the whole community. Typical posts include local news (e.g. council meeting dates, roadwork notices, job postings), community updates (like holiday schedules, COVID-19 vaccination info when relevant), and celebration of local events or achievements (for instance, photos from the Russell Fair or updates on a new park opening). The tone on social media is **friendly and civic-minded**, which can be felt in its approach to graphic design for social media as well.

On **Facebook**, engagement is relatively strong for a township of this size. Residents frequently comment or ask questions on posts, and the Township is generally responsive, providing answers or directing people to the right resources. Important alerts (like a snowstorm parking ban or a boil-water advisory) are “pinned” to the top of the Facebook page and shared widely.

On **X (Twitter)**, the Township's account (@MunRussellTwp) is used for quick news bites and reminders – for example, [safety tips for pedestrians](#) or notice of a fire ban during dry weather. The

Twitter audience is smaller, but the platform is useful for real-time updates and for interacting with regional partners (like the County or local OPP police).

Instagram is a newer avenue for Russell. The Township’s official account features photos from around the community and eye-catching [graphics for its programs](#). The Township also uses Instagram Stories to post reminders, like deadlines for surveys.

YouTube is used mainly as a repository for recorded council meetings and the [occasional promotional video](#). The Township began live-streaming council meetings during the pandemic, and those recordings are accessible for residents who want to watch proceedings after the fact.

AODA compliance

Russell Township is strongly committed to accessibility in its communications, in line with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). As noted, the Township’s 2021 website overhaul had a major goal of meeting WCAG 2.0 Level AA web accessibility standards. The site features tools like adjustable text size (there are “A- / A+” buttons on every page for zoom), high-contrast readable fonts, and clear navigation cues.

All images on the site include alternative text descriptions for screen readers, and online forms are designed to be usable by people relying on keyboard navigation or assistive technology. The Township also makes it known that [alternative formats](#) of documents are available on request—for example, if someone has trouble with a PDF on the site, they can ask for a Word document, a hard-copy printout in large font, or having staff read information aloud over the phone.

In compliance with AODA, Russell established an **Accessibility Advisory Committee** that reviews the [municipality’s progress on removing barriers](#). This committee, which includes persons with disabilities and community representatives, advises Council and even makes budget recommendations.

City Council and Committee meetings in Russell are also held in accessible locations. If someone requires accommodations to attend or participate in a meeting (such as ASL interpretation or accessible seating), the Clerk’s office will arrange it upon request. This is noted in meeting notices. The Township’s commitment to accessibility extends to customer service as well—front-line staff follow an Accessible Customer Service Policy to assist residents with disabilities (for instance, reading forms aloud or helping fill them out if needed).

EDI best practices

Russell Township incorporates **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)** principles into several of its communications and community initiatives. One notable step was the formation of the [Community, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee](#), which is made up of residents and chaired by a Council member. This [committee’s mandate](#) is to promote the development of a “modern and progressive community in which all residents and visitors are welcome and comfortable, as well as valued and respected”.

Russell has also embraced **Indigenous reconciliation practices** in its civic routine. Since 2022, the Township [offers an Indigenous land acknowledgment statement](#) at the start of each Council and Committee meeting.

The Township’s communications around **cultural events and diversity celebrations** are growing as well. In 2023, for instance, Russell organized its first official **Pride Month** event, which included a [Pride flag raising ceremony](#) at Town Hall, complete with speakers, performances, and a community

art project. This event drew more than 120 people, and the messaging around the event was very inclusive.

Russell's Mayor and Council also officially acknowledge days like **Orange Shirt Day** (National Day for Truth and Reconciliation) and **Black History Month** with proclamations or events, ensuring these messages are shared in both official languages to reach everyone.

In terms of **language and representation**, Russell practices inclusion by providing information in French and English. Beyond language, the Township tries to ensure its communications **represent the community's diversity**. Recent recreation guides and social media posts feature photos of not just one demographic, but a mix—families of various ethnic backgrounds at the park, seniors and youth together at events, etc.

Internally, after some national discussions about systemic racism in 2020, the Township reviewed its hiring and outreach practices. Job postings in Russell now include statements about being an equal opportunity employer and encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds. This indirectly flows into communications: a more diverse staff can bring new perspectives to how the Township communicates externally.

One area where Russell is making strides is **youth engagement**. The Township has started to communicate more directly with younger residents—for example, through library youth councils and by leveraging Instagram for announcements relevant to teens (like summer job opportunities or a call for youth volunteers on committees).

Other notable initiatives

The [Citizen Recognition Program](#) formally recognizes residents (and sometimes non-residents with local impact) for various achievements or good deeds. For example, individuals who have made “exceptional contributions” to the community can be nominated to receive the [Community Award](#) and are honoured with a medallion presented by the Mayor. Others who have brought honour to Russell on a national or global stage might receive the [Key to the Township](#), a ceremonial key awarded for representing Russell with pride outside the community.

These honours are usually accompanied by stories shared on the Township's website and in local media, turning them into positive communications products. By publicizing the recipients and their stories, the Township celebrates those individuals and provides content that highlights community values. It's a win-win: residents feel appreciated, and the broader community hears uplifting news. On the digital innovation front, another notable project is the introduction of a [Virtual Town Hall portal](#)—sometimes referred to as “Virtual Russell”. This online portal allows residents to manage property taxes and utility bills online. russell.ca. It was communicated as a way to “Manage your accounts online—anytime, anywhere,” emphasizing convenience.

Lessons learned

Russell's experience offers several **lessons learned** and best practices that can inform communications and marketing in similar municipalities.

Modernize digital platforms and bring the public along: Russell's proactive overhaul of its website in 2021 underscores the importance of keeping digital channels up-to-date and user-centric. Just as importantly, the Township invested effort in educating the public on using the new site (through webinars and Q&A sessions), russell.ca. The takeaway is that launching a new technology, be it a website or an app, shouldn't be done in a vacuum—helping residents navigate it can greatly improve adoption.

Humanize communications and celebrate community identity: Russell uses tools like its Citizen Recognition Program and social media spotlights on local stories to humanize its communications. Rather than just sending out dry notices, the Township often tells a quick story—whether it’s congratulating a local hero or thanking residents for coming to an event. The implicit lesson is that **municipal communications aren’t only about government delivering messages**; they’re about reflecting the community back to itself. By highlighting residents and shared values (safety, inclusivity, pride in place), Russell strengthens the emotional connection people have with their town. Clarence-Rockland might similarly benefit from weaving more local spotlights into its communications, which can boost engagement and local pride.

How does Clarence-Rockland stack up?

For starters—we can see from one of Clarence-Rockland’s peers a few similarities. Hawkesbury—a bilingual, 10,000-and-growing community East of Ottawa—hired its first communications coordinator just 6 years ago, creating its first visual identity and developing content of its own to communicate with residents.

They also—like Clarence-Rockland—have recently redeveloped their website to make it easier to navigate, more useful for residents, and to make it AODA compliant. Hawkesbury also uses bciti+ to engage its residents, using it to enable two-way engagement through public consultations and surveys, which supplement in-person public forums or town halls. **Clarence-Rockland should be proud of how it stacks up to its peers** with small-but-mighty comms teams managing the pressures that come with a bilingual, growing community.

If Clarence-Rockland wants to aim for best-in-class communications however, there are some great examples to emulate. Take Leduc for example—a fast-growing city of 34,094 in Alberta. They **measure as much as they can**—the reach, engagement rates, and other metrics of their communications. They also report those metrics to Council regularly. But, importantly, the purpose of the data isn’t to judge—it’s to **experiment and see what works**, like their **strategic content management** approach to social media.

That **data-driven accountability** also shows up in how Leduc engages with residents. For example, we wrote above how the City proactively gathers resident input to shape its budget priorities with a Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Then that **engagement is rewarded** with the chance to win a significant, but modest, prize. But most extraordinary is that Leduc then publishes the survey results on its website for all residents to see.

Leduc is able to do this, in our view, because the City’s leadership has made citizen input the heart of its strategic plan. Departments are *expected* to **build engagement into their workflows**. Having that kind of buy-in from the top is a ‘holy grail’ for municipal communicators, because it allows you to draw a direct line between resident input and the City’s action—**closing the feedback loop**.

Russell Township, another fast-growing bilingual neighbour, offers some additional lessons for Clarence-Rockland. Russell stands out for **weaving human stories and recognition into its communications**. Its **Citizen Recognition Program** turns local achievements into engaging content that reflects community pride, a strategy Clarence-Rockland could adapt by spotlighting residents, businesses, and volunteers more frequently.

Key Audiences

Clarence-Rockland's population is seeing significant growth quickly. The Municipality is anticipating an [18.2%](#) population increase by 2036. Its historically senior, bilingual and Francophone demographics are shifting to include more Anglophones, newcomers, and young families. The growth and change in demographics is presenting new opportunities and challenges for Clarence-Rockland in terms of services and offerings, community engagement, and messaging.

Key audience segments

1. Residents

There is a desire among Clarence-Rockland residents to find a balance between maintaining the small-town feel and embracing big city opportunities. Clarence-Rockland could focus on creating and communicating quality-of-life improvements and opportunities for engagement and participation.

2. Businesses and investors

There is a rising demand from residents looking for more local services. Clarence-Rockland could showcase economic growth and support services to encourage and bring in new businesses to diversify and expand local commerce.

3. Tourists and visitors

Clarence-Rockland could highlight attractions and cultural events to bring in visitors, either as a destination or a place to visit along the way.

4. Developers and stakeholders

Clarence-Rockland is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Eastern Ontario. It has over [25,000 square feet](#) of commercial and industrial development with space to set up a variety of processing plants. The Municipality could ensure it provides transparency, and encourages input and feedback from residents in planning decisions.

Current audiences

Clarence-Rockland's established demographic groups are a mix of seniors and retirees (age 55+), established families and professionals, and commuters working in Ottawa. Clarence-Rockland's [current audience](#) is mostly bilingual—knowing French and English (66%)—although there is a growing trend toward Anglophones (26%). The Municipality's residents' median age is 43, with married people representing 40% of residents, according to Statistics Canada, 2022.

Target audiences for growth

1. Young families and new homebuyers relocating from Ottawa

Clarence-Rockland offers more affordable housing options than large cities like Ottawa, making it attractive to young families and first-time home buyers. Housing supply in the Municipality is keeping pace with growth at an average of [175 new homes annually](#). Clarence-Rockland could host town halls, cultural festivals, and networking events to foster community participation and belonging.

2. Remote and Hybrid Workers

The rise of remote and hybrid work models has led professionals to seek communities that offer a better quality of life without compromising connectivity or career growth. Clarence-Rockland is

located 30kms east of Ottawa which allows remote workers to enjoy suburban tranquility while maintaining access to urban amenities. The Municipality could showcase hybrid work benefits, infrastructure improvements and connectivity to Ottawa alongside the small-town, close-knit community charm as an effective “best of both worlds” hook for this audience.

3. New Canadians and Diverse Communities

Clarence-Rockland has seen an [increase](#) in its visible minority population, reflecting border national trends. The Municipality is experiencing these changes at an accelerated pace compared to neighbouring communities, presenting an opportunity for Clarence-Rockland to embrace and support diversity through cultural programs and partnerships with local organizations.

4. Entrepreneurs and Small Business Owners

There is a rising demand for local services and products, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses to thrive. Clarence-Rockland is one of the fastest growing municipalities in Eastern Ontario. It has more than [25,000 square feet](#) of commercial/industrial development making the Municipality a supportive environment for businesses. Clarence-Rockland can showcase these opportunities to the public, encourage new business, and incorporate messaging for current residents that highlight the benefits that more businesses can bring to their community and quality of life.

Narrative Direction

As Clarence-Rockland considers its first core narrative for its first communications and marketing plan, it's worth noting why narrative-driven communications are a good approach to communications and marketing.

Our brains are hard-wired to understand things better when they're presented in a story. We take our observations and feelings and weave them together into a narrative that allows us to understand what's going on around us—and each other.

Stories are how we connect as human beings, and they're foundational to modern communications. That's because when you start to tell your story as an organization, it lays the guidelines for how you'll connect with your most important audiences, establishing your organization's brand and voice. With your narrative set, that brand story becomes like tomato sauce at an Italian restaurant—you put it in everything, and it defines who you are to your audience.

And because the secret's in the sauce, you don't mess with it. Keep your communications consistent with the narrative until it's time for that narrative to change—as all good narratives do, eventually. The narrative should be felt by your audience every time they have an interaction with your brand, whether it's visiting the website, calling City Hall, asking to get a pothole filled, or going to a city-sponsored event.

Building a strong brand makes a huge difference in today's media landscape, where competition for people's attention has never been more fierce. Smartphones, global news, social media, streaming platforms, and podcasts divide and divert the attention of audiences to the point of saturation. Narrative-driven communications help you punch through by forming a connection with your audience and building a consistent, recognizable brand. Based on our research, we believe that Clarence-Rockland's narrative should follow this direction:

- **Bold vision, clear voice:** Clarence-Rockland is changing quickly because of an influx of newcomers—young families and new homeowners, new Canadians, entrepreneurs, even remote and hybrid workers. Change brings uncertainty, and new audiences come with new expectations. Residents are looking for a bold vision from their Municipality that confidently addresses change, and they're looking for honest, clear information so they know what they can expect.
- **Welcome to our home:** Clarence-Rockland is more than a place to live—it's a place to belong. Whether you've been here for generations or just arrived, you're part of a growing, bilingual community where neighbours look out for each other, and where small-town warmth meets big-picture potential. Our story is rooted in connection—to each other, to nature, and to the values that make us proud to call this place home.
- **Your community, your future:** Growth isn't just happening to Clarence-Rockland—it's something we're shaping together. As we build new neighbourhoods, attract new businesses, and improve services, residents want to be part of the conversation. That means more opportunities to participate, more transparency in decision-making, and more ways to help guide where we're going. This is your community, and your voice matters.
- **Clarence-Rockland is for all of us:** We're a city of contrasts—and that's our strength. Rural and urban, Francophone and Anglophone, new and long-standing residents: we all bring something important to the table. The future of Clarence-Rockland is inclusive, collaborative, and community-driven. It's a place where diversity is embraced, and where everyone feels seen, heard, and represented.

Core Narrative

Tagline: “Growing Together, Staying Connected”

Clarence-Rockland is a city with a growing population and a growing reputation.

Growth means change — of course — but whether you’re new or you’ve been here for generations, whether you live in town or in the countryside, Clarence-Rockland belongs to you. To all of us.

Clarence-Rockland has never been just one thing. We’re bilingual and increasingly multilingual. We’re rural and urban. We’re proud of our small-town feel but ambitious about our future. And today, that blend of identities is one of our greatest strengths. Because as residents adapt to change, and new priorities surface, you want to know that your City will give you clear information when you need it, help connect you with your neighbours, and care for all of us equally.

Our community is changing from who we’ve been to who we’re becoming. And what we’re becoming is something pretty special. Because we are shaping our future, together.

We believe in building a city where growth doesn’t leave anyone behind — but where everyone is included. A city where municipal decisions aren’t hidden behind process — they’re explained with purpose. Where rural voices aren’t competing with urban ones — they’re building communities together. Where residents don’t just hear what’s happening — they understand why it matters and how they can shape it.

We’re here to make sure every voice has a place in the conversation. We’re here to tell the truth about challenges — and show our plan for progress.

That means we need best-in-class communications so we can talk about important decisions, listen to each other and act on feedback. We need communications that can give council the feedback they need to make decisions, businesses the information they need to invest, and residents the help they need to live better lives. And we need communications that bring our community together by celebrating each other and sharing our stories — both in-person and online.

Because in Clarence-Rockland, we’re not just filling potholes and ploughing snow. We’re building trust. We’re building a City where everyone belongs. And we’re not just dealing with growth — we’re shaping it, together.

This is Clarence-Rockland. Welcome home.

Sub-narrative themes

- Rural resilience and stewardship
- Urban energy and opportunity
- The bridge between past and future

Key Messages by Audience and Recommended Channels

1) Longtime rural residents: *Your community, your future.*

Goal: Reassure longtime rural residents that their voice, history, and way of life are valued while showing how growth can benefit rural areas too. The plan should bridge the rural–urban divide, highlight fair service delivery, and invite rural residents to help shape the future.

- Your knowledge of our community and history is essential to Clarence-Rockland’s future.
- Growth will be planned so our rural communities continue to thrive.
- We’re committed to fair, consistent services for everyone, no matter where you live.
- Rural infrastructure, from roads to parks, is part of our long-term investment plan.
- We will share clear updates on decisions that affect rural areas before they’re made.
- You can help shape City priorities by sharing your perspective in public consultations.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	Direct mail, City website
Secondary	City Facebook page, bciti+, print and radio ads

2) New suburban families: *Clarence-Rockland is for all of us.*

Goal: Show new suburban families they belong here, that services and amenities will grow with them, and that their participation can make Clarence-Rockland stronger.

- Clarence-Rockland is a place where your family can put down roots and grow.
- We’re working to bring more services, shops, and activities close to home.
- Safe streets, parks, and recreation are top priorities as our city expands.
- We’ll keep you informed about new facilities, events and opportunities in your neighbourhood.
- Grow with us—your ideas and feedback will help shape our programs and services.
- The bciti+ portal is the fastest way to get updates, report issues, and find local events.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	City website, bciti+
Secondary	Instagram, City Facebook page

3) Seniors: *Your voice shapes our future.*

Goal: Build trust with seniors by highlighting the City’s respect for their contributions, commitment to accessibility, and interest in making services easy to use.

- Your experience and knowledge are part of Clarence-Rockland’s foundation.
- We will keep you informed with clear, accessible updates in both official languages.
- Our services and facilities are planned with accessibility and comfort for everyone in mind.
- We are expanding programs, recreation, and cultural activities for seniors.
- You’ll continue to have direct ways to ask questions, give feedback, and receive answers.
- The bciti+ portal and City website make it easy to stay connected from home.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	City website, direct mail, City Facebook page
Secondary	bciti+, print and radio ads

4) Youth: *You belong here. Make your mark.*

Goal: Show youth that Clarence-Rockland values their voice, offers ways to participate, and is building a city with opportunities for them.

- You belong here, and you can help shape Clarence-Rockland’s future.
- We’re working to create more recreation, arts, and social spaces for youth and young adults.
- Your voice matters—get involved through youth programs and City consultations.
- Follow us on Instagram for events, contests, and local opportunities.
- We’re building ways to get around, including walking and biking, to give you more freedom and independence right here at home.
- Make your mark—share your ideas for what would make Clarence-Rockland’s future one you want to be part of.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	Instagram, bciti+
Secondary	City website

5) New Canadians and diverse communities: *Welcome to our home.*

Goal: Welcome newcomers and diverse communities, emphasize belonging, and provide clear paths to information and participation in community life.

- Clarence-Rockland is our home—and we’re glad you chose to make it your home, too.
- Our city celebrates many cultures and languages—yours is part of our story.
- We provide services and information in English and French, with friendly help to get you started.
- The bciti+ portal keeps you connected to local news, events, and services.
- Join community programs, festivals, and workshops to meet your neighbours.
- Your ideas and talents can help us make Clarence-Rockland stronger and more welcoming.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	City website, City Facebook page, bciti+
Secondary	Instagram, direct mail

6) Entrepreneurs, small business owners, investors: *We build Clarence-Rockland.*

Goal: Position Clarence-Rockland as an attractive, growing market with City support for business success and clear communication on opportunities.

- Clarence-Rockland is open for business and ready to grow with you.
- Economic growth is a priority, and your success helps our whole community thrive.
- Our location positions you close to more than 1.5 million potential customers in Ottawa and Gatineau.
- We’re committed to streamlining processes and making it easier to work with the City.
- Together, we build Clarence–Rockland, and your success gives all of us a bright future.
- Stay informed about local opportunities through the City’s website and bciti+ portal.

Recommended communication channels	
Primary	City website, Economic Development website, City Facebook page, bciti+
Secondary	direct mail

5-Year Communications and Marketing Strategy

Guiding Principles

Clarence-Rockland's future communications efforts will be anchored in five guiding principles: clarity, community, capacity, inclusion, and realism. These emerged consistently across consultations and now serve as touchstones as the City moves from insight to action.

Clear, consistent, and relevant communication

Residents want timely, easy-to-understand information they can trust. Whether it's an emergency alert, a service change, or an update on a community project, clarity and consistency help people feel confident and connected. To meet this expectation, the City will continue to invest in tools like bciti+ that allow for direct communication via email, text, and app notification—ensuring that residents hear about what matters before it's too late. Messaging will be purpose-built and platform-appropriate, using clear language and a consistent voice across departments and channels.

Community-focused and community-driven storytelling

People want to see themselves in their City's story. Communications should reflect the lived experience of residents—urban and rural, young and old, long-time locals and newcomers. This strategy prioritizes storytelling that highlights local voices, civic pride, and neighbourhood-level activity. That means growing the City's presence on Instagram to reach younger, more diverse audiences, and supporting local collaborations with creators, community groups, and small businesses. Social takeovers, co-branded campaigns, and behind-the-scenes content will showcase the vibrant and evolving identity of Clarence-Rockland.

Digital growth with equitable access

Digital tools are reshaping how people engage with their municipality—but only if they work for everyone. Clarence-Rockland's communications must be both future-forward and broadly accessible. This includes building out the City's social media strategy with platform-specific goals, investing in video content, and expanding the use of bciti+ beyond emergency alerts to include polls, event reminders, and user-submitted events. At the same time, planning must account for the connectivity gaps in more rural areas by maintaining a balanced approach that includes print, signage, and in-person outreach when needed.

Bilingual and inclusive by design

In a bilingual municipality with an increasingly diverse population, inclusion cannot be an afterthought. Every message—whether it's a social media post, community event notice, or public service announcement—must be crafted to reach residents in both English and French. Inclusive communications also go beyond translation. They involve making sure that the stories being told, the

channels being used, and the voices being amplified reflect the full range of people who call Clarence-Rockland home.

Ambition grounded in reality

This strategy is bold—but it’s also realistic. Clarence-Rockland is growing quickly, and with that growth comes rising expectations for responsive, engaging, and professional communication. Meeting those expectations requires more than good intentions. It requires capacity. The City will need to add staff, streamline workflows, and invest in tools and training to keep up with demand. It will also rely on partners—community members, business owners, content creators—to help carry the story forward. To support long-term success, the strategy includes a continuous improvement model: setting clear KPIs, monitoring impact, and refining tactics based on data and feedback.

Mission and Vision

Communications Mission Statement

To build trust and connection through clear, timely, and inclusive communications that reflect the lived experience of Clarence-Rockland residents.

Communications Vision Statement

A community where every resident feels seen, heard, and informed.

Voice and Tone

- Engaging
- Helpful
- Friendly
- Clear
- Proud
- Respectful
- Inclusive
- Collaborative
- Timely
- Story-driven

Communications Policy Framework

A formalized communications policy framework will ensure consistency, clarity, and accountability across all channels and departments. It will help staff navigate the growing complexity of Clarence-Rockland's information ecosystem while aligning communications practices with the City's values of community-centred governance, collaboration, and innovation.

1. Create standards for bilingualism, accessibility, and tone

Why: Clarence-Rockland's shifting linguistic demographics and diverse population make consistent bilingual service delivery a necessity. Residents expect to receive clear, accessible, and inclusive communication—especially as more Anglophones and newcomers settle in the community.

How: The communications policy will define minimum standards for bilingual output, using plain language, and ensuring compliance with AODA accessibility guidelines. It will include tone guidance aligned with Clarence-Rockland's identity: informative, service-oriented, and community-minded. A style guide will accompany the policy to support consistency in spelling, grammar, terminology, and formatting.

2. Define approval chains and escalation procedures

Why: As communication volumes increase and new channels are added, clear internal processes will help prevent bottlenecks, reduce errors, and minimize reputational risk—especially when dealing with time-sensitive, sensitive, or political content.

How: The framework will establish a chain of responsibility for content review and sign-off, including thresholds for when approvals escalate to the CAO, Communications, or Mayor's Office. It will also lay out rapid-response procedures for issues management and crisis communications, ensuring alignment and coordination across departments.

3. Establish media and social media engagement protocols

Why: Staff and elected officials often serve as the public face of the Municipality, and social media has introduced new reputational risks and opportunities. Formal protocols help maintain consistency, reduce risk, and empower spokespeople to communicate effectively.

How: The policy will include media engagement guidelines, outlining who is authorized to speak on behalf of the Municipality, how to prepare for interviews, and how to route inquiries. It will also offer social media guidance for corporate channels, individual staff, and elected officials—distinguishing between personal use, professional use, and official accounts. These protocols will build on best practices while tailoring guidance to Clarence-Rockland's specific platforms and needs.

4. Integrate bciti+ as an official communications outlet

Why: With its controlled environment, multilingual capacity, and opt-in alerts, bciti+ is emerging as a powerful tool for direct-to-resident communications. Its potential to complement social media, reach less-connected rural areas, and improve service transparency makes it central to the Municipality's future communications mix.

How: The framework will formally recognize bciti+ as one of Clarence-Rockland's primary communications channels for news, updates, emergency alerts, and engagement opportunities. It will define how and when bciti+ should be used, establish guidelines for content type and frequency, and embed it in departmental communications workflows. This approach will support broader adoption and allow the Municipality to better track and analyze engagement across platforms.

Strategic Recommendations

Approach to strategic recommendations

Our goal is to create a communications framework that supports transparency, growth, community connection, and inclusive engagement.

Framework for Strategic Recommendations

- **Integrative Approach:** Communications must connect internally (staff/departments) and externally (residents/partners).
- **Insights-Driven Planning:** Use feedback and analytics to guide actions.
- **Community Ownership:** Let residents contribute to stories, shape campaigns, and see themselves reflected.
- **Technology and Innovation:** Leverage bciti+, social media, and visual storytelling.
- **Sustainability in Execution:** Be realistic. Build tools, staff, and systems to succeed long-term.

Recommended Communications Service Offering

Continue offering the following services

1. Bilingual written and graphic content creation

The Municipality should continue producing clear, accessible content in both French and English across all platforms and formats.

This ensures all residents can engage with updates, notices, and promotional materials, and that communications reflect the community’s bilingual character.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Communications staff Translation services Graphic design software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per cent of content produced in both official languages Audience reach by language Engagement rates on bilingual content

2. On-demand strategic communications advice

Communications should remain available to provide responsive, strategic advice to departments, Council, and senior leadership.

This support helps address communications needs and challenges quickly while ensuring consistency with the Municipality’s overall approach.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Manager Time allocation from team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental satisfaction scores Volume of internal support requests fulfilled on time

3. Media relations

The Municipality should maintain open, responsive relationships with local and regional media, recognizing that coverage is limited but still influential in shaping public understanding.

Communications should focus on building personal connections with reporters and editors, providing clear, timely information, and proactively sharing stories that highlight City priorities and community impact.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated media contact Crisis comms playbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of media stories placed Tone/sentiment of coverage Average response time to media

4. Corporate advertising or paid commercial promotion

Paid advertising should continue to be used strategically to promote City services, programs, and initiatives.

Campaigns should be designed to maximize reach, engagement, and measurable results while making efficient use of the advertising budget.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advertising budget• Creative support (internal or contracted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ROI on campaign spend• Reach and impressions• Engagement/conversion rates

5. Speechwriting for Mayor's office

The Communications team should continue preparing speeches, remarks, and public statements for the Mayor's office.

Timely delivery and alignment with strategic messaging will ensure these materials support the City's priorities and maintain a consistent public voice.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experienced writer/editor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Timeliness of delivery• Mayor's office satisfaction• Alignment with strategic messaging

6. Media monitoring

The Municipality should continue tracking traditional and social media mentions, using practical, low-cost tools such as Google Alerts or built-in social media search functions.

Given the small size of the local media landscape, monitoring can be done manually and on an ad hoc basis, with a focus on identifying emerging issues and noting trends for follow-up.

Over time, a simple internal tracking tool could be developed to capture mentions and support consistent reporting.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitoring tools• Staff time to review and report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volume and sentiment of mentions• Issues identified and addressed

7. Centralized communications planning and coordination

The Municipality should continue coordinated annual and campaign-based communications planning across all departments, ensuring that efforts are aligned with both the City’s Strategic Plan and the Economic Development strategy.

Using a shared communications calendar and cross-department planning tools will help maintain consistent messaging, meet deadlines, and make efficient use of resources.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communications calendar• Cross-department coordination tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per cent of departments with aligned comms plans• Campaign delivery timelines met

8. Internal HR and recruitment

The Communications team should keep supporting HR in attracting top talent and strengthening employee engagement.

This includes producing recruitment materials and internal campaigns that reflect the Municipality’s values and work environment.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HR collaboration• Writing/design support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job application volume/ quality• Employee engagement scores

9. Narrative-aligned messaging framework for all departments

Departments should continue using a shared messaging framework to maintain a consistent voice and tone across City communications.

Ongoing training and reference materials will help staff apply the framework effectively.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Messaging guide• Training sessions for departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usage rate of framework by departments• Narrative alignment in sample audits

Add or expand the following services

1. Bilingual video content creation

The Municipality should review its current video content to understand where and how it drives engagement, noting that video performance can vary significantly by platform.

On Facebook, static images may outperform video, but live video tied to compelling events has potential.

On Instagram, short, visually engaging bilingual videos remain an opportunity to reach younger and more diverse audiences.

Expanding capacity should focus on producing the right type of video for each platform rather than increasing volume across the board.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Content Producer• Translation services• Video editing software (e.g., Canva, Adobe Express, Adobe Premiere Pro, CapCut)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of videos produced annually• Completion rate and engagement (views, shares)• Percentage of videos with bilingual versions

2. Engage stakeholders and support community-led initiatives/events that support the City's mission

Increase proactive support for local initiatives and events that align with the City's mission.

This can include promoting activities through municipal channels, providing on-site communications support, and equipping organizers with tools and guidance to extend their reach.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stakeholder engagement toolkit• Staff liaison time• Small promotional budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of community-led initiatives supported• Stakeholder satisfaction• Engagement on promotional content

3. More tracking and reporting of key performance indicators (KPIs)

Communications should systematically capture and report data on reach, engagement, and impact.

Regular reporting will help evaluate what’s working, guide future campaigns, and ensure decisions are informed by measurable results.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Analytics tools (e.g., Meta Business Suite, bciti+ backend)Staff time for reportingDashboard or summary templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quarterly reporting publishedInternal usage of data to guide campaignsIncrease in high-performing content

4. Communications and marketing training for local businesses and entrepreneurs

The Municipality should offer practical training and resources to help local businesses strengthen their marketing, branding, and online presence in ways that directly support the Economic Development strategy.

Workshops, guides, or partnerships with business organizations can help entrepreneurs promote their offerings more effectively, attract customers, and contribute to a stronger local economy.

By improving how businesses tell their stories, this training supports both community vitality and broader economic development goals.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Facilitator or partner organizationPromotion channelsSpace or virtual platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of businesses trainedSatisfaction or skills self-assessment post-trainingRepeat participation or referrals

5. Development of resident-facing explainers for improved transparency

Create plain-language explainers (e.g., “How Council Works”) to help residents understand City structures, processes, and services.

These should be available in multiple formats, such as video, infographics, and print, to maximize accessibility and engagement.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Writing and design supportInput from subject matter expertsVideo, infographic, and print formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of explainers publishedPage views and downloadsIncrease in resident understanding (measured via survey)

6. Strategic content support for complex topics to improve clarity and understanding

Provide narrative and visual support to make technical or complex municipal issues—such as taxes, utilities, or infrastructure—clear and understandable for residents.

This will help reduce confusion, improve transparency, and strengthen trust.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communications lead for coordination• Subject matter input (Finance, Ops, etc.)• Infographics, Q&A documents, videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement and comprehension metrics• Fewer clarification requests or complaints• Internal satisfaction with support

7. More robust tracking and reporting of comms KPIs—specifically engagement, reach, message visibility, and narrative alignment

Consolidate performance metrics from all platforms into a unified dashboard to assess engagement, reach, message visibility, and alignment with the City’s narrative.

This will enable consistent, long-term measurement and evaluation of communications performance.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unified KPI dashboard• Data integration tools• Evaluation framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative alignment score in content audits• Per cent increase in engaged users• Quarterly KPI reporting consistency

Out of scope: Communications activities not covered by this plan

- Economic Development and Tourism marketing campaigns
- Political or partisan messaging

Skills and Personnel Recommendation

1. Hire Digital Media Coordinator (part-time or full time)

As a long-term, best-case scenario, review the team structure with a view to adding a dedicated Digital Media Coordinator to strengthen online engagement and expand the Municipality’s presence across platforms.

This role would oversee digital content creation, website updates, and audience interaction, ensuring consistent, bilingual, and timely information that reflects Clarence-Rockland’s strategic priorities and serves all demographics effectively.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget for PT or FT role• Recruitment support• Onboarding and tools access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media output volume• Platform-specific engagement rates• Response time to community inquiries

2. Create Digital Content Producer Role

Over time, assess whether adding a Digital Content Producer would improve the Municipality’s ability to create high-quality visuals, video, and written content.

This position could help turn complex information into clear, engaging stories for use across digital and print channels.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget allocation• Multimedia equipment and software• Coordination with Communications team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volume of multimedia content created• Audience reach and shares• Bilingual content ratio

3. Create Communications Specialist role

Consider, as part of a future team review, a Communications Specialist position to support targeted initiatives within individual departments.

This role would help maintain consistent, audience-focused messaging while freeing senior staff to focus on strategy and major projects.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dedicated FTE• Departmental collaboration• Training on messaging framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department satisfaction• Volume of materials produced• Timeliness and consistency

4. Provide training in visual, plain language, and impact-driven communication

The Municipality should provide staff with training in visual storytelling, media relations, and plain language writing, placing particular emphasis on framing messages through personal impact.

Training should be supported with templates, reference guides, and dedicated time for practice so staff can strengthen their ability to create clear, engaging, resident-centred communications.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training budget or external facilitator• Internal time allocation• Example templates and reference guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff participation rates• Skills confidence pre/post training• Quality of content outputs post-training

5. Develop internal capability for data storytelling, leveraging survey and community insights

The Communications team should develop the skills needed to turn survey data and community insights into narratives that resonate with residents.

This includes training in data interpretation, providing access to survey results and dashboards, and offering design support so staff can confidently produce evidence-based stories that inform and connect.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff training in data interpretation• Access to survey results and dashboards• Design support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of insight-driven stories created• Leadership usage of insights• Public understanding as measured by survey

6. Allocate staff time for engagement (to be done via Economic Development, Recreation, or Clerk's offices)

Departments such as Economic Development, Recreation, and the Clerk's office should have clearly defined responsibilities in supporting resident engagement and local events.

Adjusting workloads or formally allocating time will ensure staff can assist Communications with planning, participating in, and following up on activities that strengthen community connections

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjusted workloads or formal role allocation• Event planning protocols• Cross-team briefings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of community interactions recorded• Engagement event participation• Staff satisfaction with clarity of role

Tactics, Tools, and Training

Strategy, reporting, and refinement

1. Include Communications Lead in senior leadership discussions for implications of major municipal initiatives

Clarence-Rockland should include the communications lead from the outset when the City’s senior leadership team begins discussions about major municipal initiatives (e.g. updating the official plan) or decisions that will have high public visibility (e.g. snow removal schedules).

That’s because the communications lead can use their expertise and experience engaging with residents to help the City avoid decisions that would damage its reputation, as well as help the City take advantage of opportunities to build trust with residents by demonstrating the public value of decisions. The best practice we recommend is to have the communications lead be part of all senior leadership discussions by default.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Regular Senior Leadership Team meeting access● Briefing protocols● Communications lens in project planning templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Number of initiatives with comms integrated from outset● Per cent of strategic initiatives with communications leads assigned● Leadership satisfaction with comms support● Fewer incidences of reputational damage to the City finds as a result of municipal action or decision

2. Make “closing the feedback loop” a strategic priority for major projects

From the beginning of this project, the City has wisely prioritized building trust with residents and strengthening the connection between the City and the people it serves—priorities that are reflected in resident responses to the public survey in this report’s Appendix.

One of the best ways to do this is to provide resident with meaningful opportunities to engage with municipal decision-making, but to also demonstrate to residents how their input has shaped municipal actions. Other municipalities have done this by integrating public engagement into major project planning from the outset, and following up with residents showing them how their feedback shaped the project in question.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Standard templates for follow-up● Staff training on engagement cycle● Integration into project timelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Per cent of engagement initiatives with follow-up reports● Resident recall of follow-up (survey)● Examples of decisions shaped by feedback

3. Establish communications “report card” through Cocoriko survey to be shared regularly with council

Another tactic to build trust with residents is to create a quarterly survey that asks residents to rate the City’s performance on a series of communications benchmarks and report those results to Council, driving accountability and testing the effectiveness of the City’s approach.

The survey should also track resident satisfaction with City programs and services, as well as trust in the City overall. The data from this survey can then be used to inform changes to the City’s communications tactics and strategy, as well as programs and services more broadly.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cocoriko integration and analysis • Time for quarterly reporting • Design template for report card output 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate and representativeness • Change in satisfaction scores • Council engagement with report findings

4. Familiarize senior leadership team and all public-facing staff with the new narrative through training workshops

The Municipality should deliver training workshops to ensure all senior leaders and public-facing staff understand and can apply the new narrative consistently.

Workshops should include practical examples, a narrative reference guide, and department-specific exercises to strengthen confidence in using the agreed tone, language, and key messages across all City touchpoints.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop materials and facilitator • Department-specific training time • Narrative reference guide and toolkit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per cent of staff trained • Staff confidence/self-assessment post-training • Audit of narrative usage in materials and presentations

5. Track message clarity and visibility as KPIs, building on survey results

Communications should monitor how clearly key messages are understood by residents, using tools such as surveys, social media analysis, and quarterly content audits.

Results should be tracked in a centralized dashboard to measure improvements over time and guide adjustments to ensure messages remain relevant and easy to understand.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark survey questions • Quarterly content audits • Centralized tracking dashboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Per cent of content meeting clarity threshold • Increase in residents’ understanding (survey) • Improvement in key message recall

Communications Content

6. Establish centralized content calendar

The Municipality should coordinate messaging across platforms and departments through a shared content calendar.

This tool will help align timing, reduce duplication, and ensure messages reflect the same priorities and narrative, with scheduling software and posting guides supporting consistent use.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scheduling software (e.g., Notion, Trello, Sprout Social, Hootsuite)• Platform-specific posting guides• Staff training and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Per cent of campaigns coordinated through calendar• Reduction in redundant or conflicting messages• Consistency in timing and narrative alignment

7. Develop templates for news releases, Council briefs, web banners, and social media posts

Standardized templates for news releases, Council briefs, web banners, and social media posts should be created to streamline production and maintain consistent tone and formatting.

A centralized template library and clear style guidelines will help all departments produce on-brand, easy-to-read content more efficiently.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and writing support• Internal style and branding guide• Template library access for all departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time saved on content production• Template usage rate• Reduction in off-brand or inconsistent content

8. Develop storytelling features

Clarence-Rockland’s consultations and survey results show that residents want to feel more connected to their municipality, understand the people behind its services, and see themselves reflected in its communications. A structured storytelling feature series—such as “Voices of Clarence-Rockland”—can highlight residents, community groups, and municipal staff whose experiences illustrate the City’s values and impact.

By focusing on personal narratives tied to municipal services, amenities, and events, these stories humanize the City’s work, build civic pride, and strengthen the shared identity across rural and urban areas. This approach also provides a steady stream of locally relevant, bilingual content for multiple platforms, addressing the need for communications that are engaging, relatable, and easy to share.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Story intake process and consent forms• Photography/videography resources• Editorial guidelines for tone and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of stories published per year• Reach and engagement rates• Qualitative feedback from participants

9. Create quarterly update

Regular, predictable updates can help address perceptions of uneven service delivery and limited amenities, while reinforcing that the Municipality is making tangible investments in quality of life. A quarterly highlight of new or continuing services, amenities, and improvements will make it easier for residents to see progress and value in their community.

By integrating with the Economic Development Department’s The Slice initiative, these updates can also highlight local entrepreneurs and small businesses—helping to keep more economic activity in Clarence-Rockland. This approach responds directly to survey findings that many residents miss City messages entirely and want communications that are clear, relevant, and easy to access.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Newsletter or update template• Departmental submission process• Distribution via bciti+, email, and social	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open and click-through rates• Reader satisfaction (survey)• Increased awareness of featured services

10. Create “Why It Matters” sections in all major messaging to connect with personal impact

The Municipality should add short, clear explanations to major communications that show how municipal actions affect residents’ daily lives.

Embedding this “Why It Matters” framing will make information more relevant, improve understanding, and encourage stronger engagement with City updates.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative writing training• Staff prompts embedded in communications planning templates• Centralized examples library (e.g., previous “Why It Matters” sections)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of messages featuring personal impact framing• Improvement in public comprehension/recall (via surveys or feedback)• Reader engagement rates (e.g., clicks, comments, shares)

11. Conduct educational and informational campaigns for major initiatives

Major initiatives and service changes—such as updates to the Official Plan or significant infrastructure projects—require more than a single announcement to build public understanding and trust. The consultations and survey identified that many residents are unclear on how decisions are made at City Hall, and that complex topics often receive lower performance ratings.

Phased, plain-language campaigns using visual formats can demystify these projects, help manage expectations, and ensure residents understand both the “what” and the “why” behind long-term initiatives.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual explainer formats (e.g., timelines, flowcharts)• Plain language writers• Campaign planning time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduction in service-related confusion or complaints• Reach of campaign materials• Public understanding (survey or feedback forms)

12. Experiment with communications pilot projects

Clarence-Rockland’s audience is diverse in age, language, and preferred communication channel, and survey data shows that some residents—particularly younger and newer ones—are not being reached consistently through existing platforms.

Piloting new formats, such as live Q&A sessions, resident ambassador programs, or pop-up engagement booths, can help the Municipality identify effective ways to engage underrepresented groups. These pilots will allow the communications team to test, measure, and refine approaches before committing resources at scale, ensuring the City meets residents where they are.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexible pilot budget• Staff time for iteration• Evaluation plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of pilots tested annually• Insights generated and applied• Engagement with new audiences

13. Consider long format content

Some municipal topics—particularly those tied to growth, identity, or major planning decisions—require deeper storytelling to build understanding and trust. Long-format content such as podcasts, mini-documentaries, or narrative reports can give residents a fuller picture of the Municipality’s vision, decision-making, and impact.

This approach directly addresses survey findings that residents want to understand how and why decisions are made, and leverages the Municipality’s bilingual identity to produce content that feels authentic and inclusive across audiences.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audio/video production capability• Content planning calendar• Clear alignment with strategic topics (e.g., Official Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen/download/view metrics• Average duration or completion rate• Public sentiment or media pick-up

14. Apply accessibility and plain language standards across all messaging

The Municipality should apply accessibility, inclusive, and plain language standards to all communications so information is clear and understandable for every resident and employee.

Accessibility in this context means prioritizing comprehension—making content readable, concise, and jargon-free across all channels.

Embedding these standards into both external and internal communications will help people better understand bylaws, programs, and services, support education, improve transparency, and ensure messages reach audiences in a way they can act on.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Style guide and readability tools● Internal training● AODA compliance reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Readability scores of published content● Accessibility audit compliance rate● User feedback on clarity

Community Engagement and Events

15. Build a community-sourced library of stock photography

The Municipality can create a shared image bank that reflects Clarence-Rockland’s people, seasons, and spaces. This will be a library of visual assets that the community contributes to on an on-going basis.

This can provide the Municipality with a large asset library to pull from for use in a variety of owned media with varying perspectives from around Clarence-Rockland. It creates interest, encourages resident engagement, and helps alleviate content creation pressure on staff.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission and consent process • Image tagging and storage system • Submission Process • Photo selection guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size and diversity of library • Number of departments using library images • Representation of rural/urban, age, and cultural diversity

16. Build a toolkit for partners and local businesses

Create a branded toolkit in collaboration with the Economic Development team. The toolkit should have ready-to-use materials and key messaging that partners and local businesses can use to amplify and align with City initiatives and campaigns.

This resource can help to increase reach and visibility of campaigns, and foster a sense of shared ownership and collaboration between the Municipality and its business and community network.

Examples of materials to include:

- Key messages (campaign messaging, talking points, and calls to action)
- Branded templates (print and digital)
- Social media copy, hashtags, and handles
- Campaign calendar (e.g., upcoming city events and promotional opportunities)
- Brand assets (e.g., logo files and usage guidelines for co-branded promotion)
- FAQ sheet

This toolkit should be refreshed every 6 months to align with communications and EcDev priorities.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit template and design • Messaging refresh every 6 months • Distribution via EcDev, website, and bciti+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit download/use rate • Increase in co-branded or partner-aligned messaging • Partner satisfaction (via feedback)

17. Create a community-driven “Citizen’s Guide”

A bilingual, plain-language welcome guide—delivered directly to new households—will help address the confidence gap identified in the survey, where 77% of residents reported they do not understand how decisions are made at City Hall.

The guide can serve as a central, easy-to-use reference for services, contacts, and civic participation opportunities, supporting both newcomers and long-time residents. Updated every two years, it can also reinforce a shared sense of place by including information that reflects the Municipality’s rural-urban mix, bilingual culture, and community events.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and translation support• Printing and distribution schedule• Update cycle (every 2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number distributed and accessed online• Use of featured services• Resident feedback or recognition

18. Offer workshops on social media, marketing, and promotion

The Municipality should partner with departments and local business organizations to host workshops that help community groups and businesses strengthen their communication and marketing skills.

These sessions can cover practical topics such as social media management, promotion strategies, and content creation, building local capacity and supporting community growth.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitator or department lead• Curriculum and promo plan• Partnership with BIA or Chamber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance and satisfaction• Follow-up support requests• Application of skills (e.g., improved business pages)

19. Host annual non-holiday event in late winter

Community connection is one of the three pillars of Clarence-Rockland’s Strategic Plan, and consultations revealed a desire for more inclusive, diverse programming outside of family-oriented summer events.

A signature late-winter gathering—whether a recognition awards ceremony, “best of the City” celebration, or enhanced winter festival—would help bridge the rural-urban divide, showcase local talent and achievement, and offer a meaningful way for residents to connect during a quieter time of year.

While led by the Community Development team, the event’s success will benefit from coordinated communications to maximize reach and participation.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Event planning team• Venue and promotion• Tie-in content for bciti+, social, and Citizen’s Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attendance and diversity of attendees• Participant satisfaction• Engagement on associated content

20. Use bciti+ for “micro-engagements”

The Municipality should use bciti+ as an everyday engagement tool by adding short polls, service explainers, and feedback prompts into regular communications.

Expanding its use beyond event updates will help keep residents involved year-round, increase platform usage, and encourage more two-way interaction between the City and the community.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement calendar with micro-content schedule• Staff training on bciti+ features and analytics• Content templates for polls, forms, and plain-language explainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of micro-engagements launched per quarter• Response rate and demographic reach• Increase in platform usage and two-way engagement metrics

Digital Media

21. Maintain and optimize Facebook as a core communication channel

The Municipality's official Facebook page is a key and trusted source for information. It should continue sharing updates, events, and other information here. The content needs to be optimized by following current best practices such as making sure posts are the right size for the platform.

Continually test effectiveness of content formats like static images v. short form video v. long form video to find out what works best for Clarence-Rockland's Facebook audience.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal marketing staff to create, publish, and test content• Monthly report to track and analyze results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement and reach• Traffic to promoted pages

22. Collaborate with community organizations, businesses, and influencers

Collaborate with the Economic Development team to identify community members to co-create content. This content can be to promote community events, updates or information, and day-to-day life in Clarence-Rockland. It can look like collaborative social media video or image posts or in-person activations.

This strategy will help the Municipality increase their reach, engagement, and awareness. It can also help relieve some content creation pressure off of internal staff.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identified community members/ organizations/businesses• Internal Marketing/ Communications team and Economic Development team to facilitate• Photography/Videography resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement and reach• Success of promotion or event (if relevant)• Number of content pieces created and published

23. Grow Instagram as a visual storytelling platform

Clarence-Rockland can lean into Instagram by using visual storytelling to connect and engage residents across the community.

Create photo and video content for Clarence-Rockland’s Instagram feed and Stories to highlight community life, municipal projects, local events, and behind-the-scenes content. This content can include collaborations and partnerships with other community members and organizations. Focus on consistent, engaging, and accessible content that builds connection, trust, and pride.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal marketing staff to create/publish content• High-quality photography and videography capability camera or phone• Editing tools - Free or paid (e.g., Instagram in-app editing features or Instagram Edits, Canva, Adobe Express, Adobe Premiere Pro, CapCut)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement and reach• Number of followers (see an increase)• Traffic to promoted pages

24. Enable residents to post community events to public calendar

The City can enable residents to submit their community events to the City calendar on the website. This calendar will be synced with the bciti+ portal.

A micro-engagement that prompts residents to submit their event should be added to bciti+. This prompt will include a link back to the City website page where resident-proposed community events can be submitted to appear on the calendar.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal staff to review and approve submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of events submitted and approved• User feedback• Success of events (e.g., number of attendees)

25. Launch resident-facing bciti+ campaigns

Clarence-Rockland should develop specific campaigns throughout the year to promote the bciti+ portal as the resident go-to place for updates, information, community events, etc.

The City can highlight how the portal can be tailored to individual preferences and notify of new or important information through the users channel of choice (e.g., text message, email, push notification).

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Internal marketing staff to create and facilitate campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of new subscribers to bciti+ during campaign periodCampaign engagement, reach, and impressions

26. Improve bciti+ onboarding and visibility—low use, high trust indicates room to grow

The bciti+ portal was recently launched by Clarence-Rockland to its residents. The results of the Municipality's public engagement survey conducted in June 2025 showed low use and high trust in bciti+, indicating room to grow the platform, its features, and its adoption with residents.

The Municipality should find and create opportunities to promote bciti+ to increase awareness and usage among residents. For example, use events and in-person set-ups in community spaces to encourage and help residents on-board.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Marketing materials (print, digital, in-person prompts)Visibility in service touchpoints (e.g., permits, rec programs)In-app onboarding and FAQ content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase in platform registrations and loginsImproved onboarding completion rateUser-reported ease of use and satisfaction

27. Invest in the website with regular updates to keep it modern, to improve residents’ experience, and to align with current best practices

The Municipality’s website needs to have a great user-experience that is optimized across devices (e.g., desktop computer v. mobile phone v. tablet).

The website should be assessed regularly to keep it modern and on trend with the latest best practices for the time. This will engage residents, improve functionality, and help Clarence-Rockland reach its goals and objectives.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal marketing staff and/or web developer• Biannual audit of the website	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• User feedback• Google Analytics (mobile user engagement)• Google Search Console (core web vitals)

Tools

28. Expand internal photo and video capture and editing capabilities

Clarence-Rockland can expand its internal photography and videography capture and editing capabilities by investing in equipment and training to produce high-quality, in-house visual content that supports and strengthens storytelling, service promotion, and community engagement.

Reduce reliance on external vendors, allow for timely content creation, and ensure a consistent visual identity across all platforms by building internal capacity.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capital investment in camera, lighting, and audio gear• Staff training in photography/videography• Centralized digital asset storage and backup system• Video editing tool (e.g., Canva, Adobe Express, Adobe Premiere Pro, CapCut)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of original photo/video assets produced• Use of internal assets in City content• Cost savings vs. external production

29. Invest in social media management and monitoring tool

The Municipality should invest in an integrated social media management tool to plan, schedule, and publish content, monitor public sentiment, and track performance across channels.

This investment will allow the Communications and Marketing team to manage content efficiently, gain a consolidated view of results, and use real-time data to refine messaging, allocate resources effectively, and strengthen engagement in the community.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subscription to platform (e.g., Sprout Social, Hootsuite)• Onboarding and training for comms staff• Integration into existing workflows and reporting (connect natively if available or use a third-party app like Zapier)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time saved in publishing and reporting• Engagement and reach improvements• Frequency and quality of reporting to Council/Senior Leadership Team

30. Develop social media community standards

Create a “Community Standards” policy document for city-official social media accounts and any other platform that allows public input.

The policy should include examples of behaviour or comments that are inappropriate or not tolerated on city-official accounts and the appropriate response or action. The policy needs to outline what kind of behaviour can result in someone being removed or blocked from city-official accounts.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review to ensure standards comply with applicable laws and privacy legislation, as well as the platform’s own community standards• Monitoring and recording of comments or behaviour in violation of standards• Training of relevant staff to apply the standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of people removed or blocked in accordance with standards• Decrease in inappropriate behaviour or comments

31. Complete project intake form

The Municipality should implement a standardized intake process for internal communications requests to streamline priorities, timelines, and outputs.

This will guide specifics for staff submitting the request and give the Communications team clarity on what and why the request is being made. The intake form will also provide a means for data collection and analysis of requests and subsequent resource use.

Resources needed	Key performance indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Intake form design and testing● Staff rollout and onboarding● Alignment with planning calendar and team capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Per cent of projects initiated through intake form● Reduction in ad-hoc or last-minute requests● Internal satisfaction with request process

Recommended Implementation Timeline

2025

- Refresh **City website** with improved mobile UX and accessibility
- Develop and approve **narrative-aligned messaging framework** for departments
- Launch resident-facing **bciti+ promotional campaign** with improved onboarding
- Relaunch **Instagram** with visual storytelling strategy
- Establish centralized **content calendar** and create core content templates
- Begin **“Why It Matters”** framing in all major public messages
- Initiate development of **“resident-facing” explainers** (e.g., How Council Works)
- Launch **project intake form** to streamline internal comms requests
- Begin quarterly **communications “report card”** via Cocoriko
- **Include Communications Lead in all senior leadership discussions, going forward**

2026

- **Hire** Social Media Coordinator and Digital Content Producer
- Deliver staff workshops on **narrative onboarding** and plain language writing
- Deliver **training workshops** on visual storytelling, media relations, and personal impact framing
- Build internal capacity for **data storytelling** and content performance tracking
- Begin collection for **community-sourced photo/video library**
- Launch **content partnerships** with community orgs, influencers, and residents
- Distribute **updated Citizen’s Guide** (print + bciti+); pair with winter event
- Offer **community workshops** on social media, promotion, and digital content
- Begin **“Voices of Clarence-Rockland”** storytelling series
- Pilot **“Civic 101” educational campaign** using videos, maps, podcasts
- Launch and measure **communications pilot projects** (e.g., longform content, micro-engagements)
- Deploy **toolkit for partners and local businesses** to amplify city messaging
- Track and evaluate **message clarity and visibility** KPIs

2027

- **Hire** Communications Specialist
- Review **City website** for improved mobile UX and accessibility
- Apply **plain language and accessibility standards** to all messaging
- Launch storytelling campaigns around **complex or technical topics** (e.g. taxes, infrastructure)
- Expand **resident contributions through bciti+** beyond events
- Host **annual non-holiday community event** (Feb–March)
- Complete investment in **photo/video capture tools** and/or studio space
- Evaluate strategy impact using analytics, KPIs, and community feedback
- Scale up use of **Sprout Social (or similar) tool** for publishing and analytics

2028

- Refresh “Citizen’s Guide” and toolkit materials
- Expand “**Civic 101**” **series** into deeper narrative themes and policy explanations
- Grow resident-led and co-created content across all channels
- Use bciti+ for **regular micro-engagements** on City priorities
- Maintain quarterly reporting cadence and annual strategy review

2029–2030

- Continue quarterly evaluations and annual refinements
- Scale storytelling across platforms; ensure **narrative and visual consistency**
- Integrate lessons from pilot projects into long-term communications tools and policy
- Maintain and deepen public trust through **transparent, responsive messaging**
- Reassess team structure and capacity needs in advance of next strategy cycle

Appendix

Public survey: Summary of topline findings

Where do you get information

- The City has control over the two most prominent sources: official social media (36%) and website (32%). While 12% say that they visit community-led social media pages/groups, few (7% or less) use any other source tested.
 - Looking specifically at info for major projects/road closures, emergencies, festivals/events, and waste collection, the City's social media and website has the highest incidence of usage (8 in 10 or more), among all ten sources of information tested.
- Mirroring usage, trust is highest for City controlled website (69% completely) and social media (49%). While penetration of usage for Bciti+ and local media is low (7% and 4%, respectively), trust is strong (40% and 28%, respectively trust completely).

Experience communicating with City

- One-quarter and one-third of respondents say that they have not communicated with the City's staff and elected officials.
- Among those who have communicated with the City, experience across each measure is similar among staff and elected officials, and assessments are divided. With the exception of staff being accessible (according to 60% of respondents who have had an interaction, compared to 49% for elected officials), approximately half (43% to 50%) agree that staff and elected officials have dealt with issues quickly and left residents feeling listened to.

Communication ratings (% good job)

- 80% community festivals/events
- 76% garbage, waste, sanitation services
- 74% elections/voting
- 63% emergency information
- 58% weather/environmental damages
- 56% water, sewer, utility maintenance
- 54% tax information
- 54% recreation facility availability/closures
- 51% major projects/road closures

Majority (77%) respondents say they are not very (39%) or somewhat (38%) confident they understand how decisions are made at City Hall.

Preferred methods of communication

- For proposed neighbourhood change: receive written communication/notification/advisor 63%; receive bciti+ communication 46%; City social media 45%...community social media 38%; attend public consultation 32%. All else, fewer than 15% put others in top 3.

Knowing input makes a difference (63% select it from list offered) is the most likely motivator to encourage participation in issues that impact the City. Nearly half (43%) say that making it more convenient would encourage their participation.

Half of respondents say that missing the messages provided by the City prevents them from reading/seeking information – all other factors are selected by fewer than one-quarter of respondents.

Making City communication more attention grabbing (% completely)

- Personal impact 75%
- Short and clear 71%
- Includes visuals/maps 64%
- Clear call to action 62%
- Shared by trusted source 54%
- In preferred language 68%

Narrative testing

“We believe in building a city where growth doesn’t leave anyone behind – but where everyone is included. A city where municipal decisions aren’t hidden behind process – they’re explained with purpose. Where rural voices aren’t competing with urban ones – they’re building communities together. Where residents don’t just hear what’s happening – they understand why it matters and how they can shape it.”

- Majority (69%) of respondents say that vision would make them somewhat (34%) or much more (35%) likely to get involved in city issues. 15% say it would have no impact, and 14% are not sure.

“Clarence-Rockland has never been just one thing. We’re bilingual and increasingly multilingual. We’re rural and urban. We’re proud of our small-town feel but ambitious about our future.”

- Majority (73%) of respondents say they somewhat (44%) or strongly (29%) agree that the statement describes Clarence-Rockland—12% are neutral and 16% disagree.

“Because in Clarence-Rockland, we’re not just filling potholes and ploughing snow. We’re building trust. We’re building a city where everyone belongs. And we’re not just dealing with growth – we’re shaping it, together.”

- A slight majority (59%) of respondents say that the approach would make them feel somewhat (40%) or much better (19%) about the City’s decisions. 28% say it would have no impact, and 8% would feel worse.

Survey respondent demographics

- 66% woman
- 49% 56 years or older; 39% 36-55 years
- 63% lived in Clarence-Rockland for 10+ years
- 87% own their home
- 70% from Rockland; 10% from Clarence Creek
- 95% use a car most frequently
- 34% are a parent of a child
- 93% were born in Canada
- 57% working full-time; 32% retired
- 86% have higher than high school education
- 43% have \$120K household income or higher