



CORPORATE SERVICES

Staff Report

REPORT NO: COR-2026-07
TO: Council on April 27, 2026
SUBMITTED BY: Harold O’Krafka, Deputy CAO / Director of Corporate Services
PREPARED BY: Brett O’Reilly, Communications Specialist
REVIEWED BY: Jeff Willmer, Chief Administrative Officer
DATE: April 15, 2026
SUBJECT: Corporate Communications Strategy Refresh

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report COR-2026-07 Corporate Communications Strategy Refresh be received for information; and,

THAT Council approve the refreshed Corporate Communications Strategy and direct staff to prepare an implementation plan.

SUMMARY:

In 2025, the Township of Wilmot retained Redbrick Communications to review and refresh its draft Corporate Communications Strategy. This approach was taken to ensure the strategy is grounded in current industry standards and accurately reflects the needs of the community, Council and staff. This report contains the outcome of the refresh and presents a path forward for improving Wilmot’s communications.

BACKGROUND:

The Township of Wilmot has long recognized the need to enhance its communications approach. Residents’ desire for better and more frequent communications has been identified through many public engagement campaigns and has been a goal of several strategic plans.

Adopting a comprehensive communications strategy is a critical step in this process. Effective communications strategies establish a framework for how information is shared, ensuring residents receive timely, transparent, and accessible updates while strengthening trust, engagement, and accountability.

The Township began developing its first corporate communications strategy in 2022, retaining Redbrick Communications, a recognized leader in municipal communications. A draft was developed that year based on input from internal and external stakeholders and a review of municipal communication best practices.

The project was temporarily halted in 2022 to allow the incoming Council an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategy. A first draft was presented to Council in September 2023, and while it was received by Council for information, it was not formally approved for implementation.

In 2025, the Communications Specialist reviewed the draft plan and determined a refresh was necessary to ensure it reflected Wilmot’s current reality. As the authors of the original plan and leaders in municipal communications, Redbrick was retained again to conduct the refresh. The scope of work included:

- Meetings with the Communications Specialist, Corporate Leadership Team, Director of Corporate Services and Mayor to understand the current landscape, challenges, opportunities and expectations
- Review of strategic documents, sample communications materials, digital channels and recent media coverage
- Analysis of recent survey data collected for related projects, including the Strategic Plan and the Service Delivery Review
- An environmental scan of recent communications strategies from other comparable municipalities

Redbrick used this data, feedback collected during the development of the 2023 draft strategy, best practice research and their municipal communications expertise to develop the refreshed communications strategy presented with this report.

REPORT:

The 2026 – 2030 Communications Strategy Refresh charts a renewed course for improving Wilmot’s communications. It streamlines the original plan, narrowing the focus to three priority areas instead of six. The refreshed strategy better reflects the Township’s current reality and offers resourcing recommendations to build a long-term strategic function.

Priority	Objectives
1. Stabilize the communications function.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish organizational alignment around the priorities, expectations and role of corporate communications ▪ Invest in additional communications resources and strengthen internal skillsets to support stronger organizational communications ▪ Develop foundational elements for an efficient and effective organizational communications planning and approach ▪ Demonstrate communications impact and opportunities to improve by increasing measurement and evaluation of communications efforts and outcomes
2. Protect and enhance what’s working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and continue communications practices that have led to recent improvements ▪ Enhance current communications practices to take them to the next level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue emergency planning and elevate preparedness to communicate about common issues
3. Strengthen quality storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the visibility of daily Township work and staff ▪ Increase positive storytelling and strengthen social media presence ▪ Enhance audience reach and begin to improve public engagement efforts

Implementation and Resourcing

Each of the objectives identified in the strategy is associated with specific actions that can be implemented over the next four years to enhance Wilmot’s communications approach. Some are simple, straightforward tasks; others are complex tactics that will require significant planning and execution.

The Township currently has one dedicated Communications Specialist who is already operating beyond daily capacity. This role assists all departments with day-to-day communications, supports major projects, liaises with media, sits on inter-governmental working groups, and manages emerging issues, leaving little room to implement the actions of the strategy.

There are also limited opportunities to draw on existing Township staff for communications support. Like many roles in a municipality, communications requires specialized training, knowledge and experience. The Township’s recent Service Delivery and Organizational review also found that every other role at the municipality is at capacity. As such, adding communications functions to other staff to help meet needs is not a sustainable option.

Based on these capacity issues, additional resources will be required to successfully implement the actions outlined in the communications strategy. Redbrick recommends hiring a Manager of Communications, which aligns with the direction of the Service Delivery Review.

Redbrick has prepared a business case for the role, which outlines the benefits of an additional resource and the risks of maintaining the status quo.

Risks	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed opportunities to tell “good news” stories about the Township • Minimal message control, which can result in the spread of misinformation • Issues may not be strategically managed with communications oversight • Slower flow of information during emergencies due to limited pre-planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better strategic oversight in managing/telling Township stories, improving accountability and transparency • Greater alignment between communications efforts and strategic goals • Improved management of misinformation and media relations • More efficiency through process/policy development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited brand oversight and little ability to produce engaging visual content • No back up/coverage for the Communications Specialist, risking burnout • Lack of analytics/evaluation to measure the effectiveness of communications efforts • Increased reliance on third-party support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger corporate collaboration through consistent “one Township” approach • Improved strategic communications support for Mayor and Council • Signal of commitment to improved communications and alignment with industry resourcing standards
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It is worth noting the precedent for this position; the Township had a Manager of Communications and Strategic Initiatives on staff as recently as 2024. Between past precedent, the recommendations of the Service Delivery Review and Redbrick’s Business Case, there is a demonstrated need for the role.

If Council approves the refreshed Communications Strategy, staff will bring forward an additional report detailing options for implementation, including the hiring of a Manager of Communications. A proposed job description and full financial details will be provided in that report.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE TOWNSHIP OF WILMOT STRATEGIC PLAN:

Trustworthy Leadership

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Implementation costs will be provided in a future report if Council approves the refreshed Communications Strategy.

ATTACHMENTS:

Township of Wilmot – 2026 – 2030 Corporate Communications Strategy Refresh

Township of Wilmot Social Media Overview

Business Case – Full-time Communications Manager for the Township of Wilmot