



Full-time Communications Manager for the Township of Wilmot

Business Case
April 14, 2026



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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a rationale for investing in a Manager of Communications position for the Township to improve the quality and strategic value of the Township's communications, create stability in the communications function, manage risk and build greater trust with the community.

This business case supports the priorities and actions in the Township's *2026-2030 Corporate Communications Strategy*.

Current Communications Context

In 2026, the Township of Wilmot engaged Redbrick Communications to refresh the municipality's corporate communications strategy.

Redbrick had originally developed a strategy in 2023. However, it was never formally approved, and since that time, the local context has evolved: the senior leadership team has changed; the Township is implementing recommendations from a Service Delivery and Organizational Review; the mayor has been delegated strong mayor powers by the Province; and the Township's designated communications role has shifted several times.

The Township's communications function has been in flux since 2019, when the Township first established a dedicated communications position. In that time, the job title, level and scope of work have changed four times. As well, four different professionals have occupied those roles. The current communications specialist has been with the Township since November 2024.

It is also important to note that despite having these permanent roles in place, demand has consistently outweighed capacity for many years, and the Township has long supplemented the communications FTE with contracted services to ensure organizational needs have been met.

The previous support contract was terminated in 2025; however, the funds remain in the current budget. Their allocation will be informed by the communications strategy refresh and the recent Service Delivery and Organizational Review conducted by Strategy Corp.

The current approach to communications is focused on meeting daily, operational tactical needs. When high-profile matters or issues arise, responses are typically led by the leadership team with the specialist posting messaging as directed. When these moments arise, the specialist's capacity limit is reached, and any other organizational communications needs cannot be managed.

Demands on the role are high and unsustainable at their current level. Daily, the specialist faces competing priorities and makes decisions as to what work can realistically be accomplished, often needing guidance from directors.

Further, the senior management team unanimously agrees that more communications capacity is needed across the organization to meet each department's everyday needs and improve the Township's ability to share department-specific updates and achievements and demonstrate the value for taxpayer dollars staff deliver day in and day out.

The 2026-2030 Communications Strategy provides recommendations to create stability in communications and find efficiencies. However, without a manager in place, the Township will not be able to implement the strategy and benefit from its recommendations.

Redbrick Municipal Communications Maturity Index

Redbrick has developed a maturity index customized to use as an assessment tool for municipal communications. The Index assesses the organization as a whole and their approach to communications, since all staff and departments play a role in its success.

Maturity models offer a non-biased approach to measuring an organization's current state against a best practice state. As such, they are used for continuous improvement and can provide a roadmap to growth and greater effectiveness.

It is a valuable assessment tool that has informed both this Business Case and the Township's refreshed Communications Strategy. It is intended to support strategic conversations with decision makers related to their vision for and future investments in communications.

Township's Assessed Level: "Doer"

Given the Township's current highly tactical and operational approach to communications, the municipality's model falls within the "Doer" level of maturity. There are many opportunities to improve and enhance approaches to become more strategic, efficient and add greater value to the organization and the community. For municipalities of Wilmot's size and projected growth, we recommend investing to elevate efforts to the "Ally" level at a minimum.

Township of Wilmot: Municipal Communications Maturity Index

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	1. Side Hustler	2. Doer	3. Ally	4. Strategist	5. Partner
Organizational structure and competency	Fractured and off the side of the desk; no dedicated communications staff or under resourced; limited skills and/or training; no access to the senior leadership team	Limited dedicated resource(s); emerging training/development; report to manager or director with limited to no access to the senior leadership team	Resourcing for service level expectations; some training/development; either has a duo reporting role with a senior leader and CAO or reports to leader with access to the CAO	Strong alignment to service objectives; sufficient resources and varied skillsets to meet needs; development plans in place; report to CAO with seat at senior table	Sufficient complement for entire organization's communications needs; multidisciplinary; function is equal partner and integrated at senior table; embedded continuous improvement
Strategic Business Purpose	No Corporate Communications (CC) strategy (internal or external); tactical, ad hoc, reactive focus	Minimal involvement in digital** and business strategies, customer service and decision making; communications are operationally based	Emerging alignment with digital and business strategies and customer service; consulted for some key decisions; emerging strategic approach to communications	Function aligned with overall digital and business strategies, customer service; CC strategy followed, including for public engagement; stronger corporate storytelling	Value Creator: involved in and advise on all digital and business strategies, integrated with customer service and information technology; strategic, cohesive storytelling approach
Organizational Accountability and Processes	No communication-focused policies; no processes; no KPIs or use of analytics/data; no standards nor clear roles or confidence in communications	Some standardized processes and service level standards; minimal KPIs, use of analytics and reporting; emerging confidence in communications; some collaboration with departments	Standardized processes, basic service standards in place; some analytics/data and reporting; regular collaboration; monitors trends / best practices; some department feedback on service delivery; some confidence in communications	KPIs tracked; often data driven with regular reporting; continuous improvement embedded across the organization; recommends service improvements based on best practices; expected collaboration and high confidence in communications	Advanced analytics, reporting and KPIs; active continuous improvement; authority to implement service improvements; demonstrated impact to business goals; standardized/streamlined processes; clear roles; embedded collaboration
Operational Investment and Backing	No budget, tools nor automation; no flexibility to take innovative approaches	Minimal budget, basic tools; limited to no flexibility to take innovative approaches	Some budget and automation; emerging use of communications / marketing tools, some flexibility to take innovative approaches	Centralized budget, more advanced business tools in place for monitoring, automation and efficiency; often innovative	Centrally owned and managed budget for all municipal communications; proactive adoption of new tools; always seek innovative approaches
Community Building, Accessibility and Inclusivity	Reactive issues management with no communications involvement; no focus on strategic relationship building or on accessible / inclusive communications*	Some involvement in issues management and strategic relationships; some accessible and inclusive communications	Often involved in issues management and strategic relationships; communications are often accessible and inclusive	Always consulted for issues management and guiding strategic relationships; communications are always accessible and inclusive	Communications has influence and guides ethical response and strategic relationships; participates in strategic relationship building; Accessible and inclusive approach across the organization

*accessible and inclusive communications mean the use of plain language, visual storytelling, following AODA guidelines and inclusivity best practices / language demonstrating a welcoming workplace / community

**digital strategies include Artificial Intelligence (AI) policies, protocols and approaches

Communications Scope of Work Assessment

The table below lists the best practice duties and services performed by municipal communications staff with an assessment of the level of function currently performed by the Township's Communications Specialist in order of most significant priority of work to least priority.

The table clearly indicates that with only one resource, tactical work is the focus with little to no capacity for pre-planning and strategic thinking. There is also no capacity to develop strong, engaging visual communications that resonate with and would be better shared with key audiences. This puts the Township's brand and reputation at risk, and means the Township misses significant opportunities to better tell its story in an evolving environment of growth and increasing demand.

Best practice function	Level performed at Wilmot	Commentary
Communications implementation	Significant	Highly focused on tactical implementation
Digital media (website & social media)	Significant	
Media relations	Moderate to Significant	Good improvement in this area
Promotional / social marketing (advertising)	Moderate	

Best practice function	Level performed at Wilmot	Commentary
<i>Mayor support related to decisions of Council</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	This area needs role clarity
<i>Strategic communications advice and counsel</i>	<i>Minimal to moderate</i>	To some limited degree
AODA oversight support	Minimal to moderate	Specifically for the website
Design best practices	Moderate	No graphic designer onsite. Specialist has improved overall basic design standards, but is not formally trained in this area
Risk & issues management communications (reputation management)	Minimal	Posting directed content only; not consistently brought in
Emergency communications planning	Minimal	Some improvements on common significant weather-related emergencies, but limited capacity to proactively plan ahead for other emergencies
Communications planning (proactive vs. reactive)	Minimal to none	Limited capacity for strategic planning
Brand identity and management	Minimal to none	Limited checks and balances for brand use
Print production coordination	Minimal to none	Often departments do their own thing
Community engagement planning and promotion	Minimal to none	Departments lead their own engagement, with limited support from the specialist
Communications training / coaching	Minimal to none	
Internal communications planning and implementation	Minimal to moderate	Some improvement here, but limited support provided
Visual communications	None	No capacity

Best practice function	Level performed at Wilmot	Commentary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography • Video 		
Analytics and reporting	None	Basic reporting of social media and website statistics
Emergency & crisis communications response	As needed	Posting directed content only

Aligning with Strategy Corp Recommendations

This business case aligns with the priority recommendations in the Township’s recent Service Delivery and Organizational Review conducted by Strategy Corp.

Hiring a Communications and Government Relations Manager is identified as a “Horizon 1” recommendation, which includes investments that should be “front-loaded to reflect their urgency in stabilizing the organization”.¹

Increasing communications capacity at the Township also responds to the agency’s overarching finding that “the Township has tended to over-leverage temporary backfilling for staff vacancies, relying on existing staff to absorb additional responsibilities.” They stated that while “these arrangements can support short-term continuity, they are not sustainable and prolonged use risks the embedding of these arrangements as status quo.”

The current communications specialist is already operating beyond daily capacity. Based on Strategy Corp’s findings and recommendations, every other role at the municipality is also at capacity. As such, adding communications functions to other staff to help meet needs is not a sustainable option, and in fact, would put the Township at greater reputational risk.

Risks to Maintaining the Status Quo

Community trust in their local governments continues to decline. Municipalities are experiencing the symptoms of this distrust every day through increased community anger, pushback and polarization. With the decline of traditional media and the increase of online critique, municipal communicators are facing greater challenges protecting and maintaining positive reputations for their governments.

¹ *Township of Wilmot – Service Delivery and Operational Review – Final Recommendations Report – 2026-01-23*. Strategy Corp, pages 6 and 8

As seen every day in the news, organizational reputations are fragile. They can fall quickly and easily, and it is much harder and takes much longer to recover and rebuild. Like every other function across the Township, communications requires trained and skilled professionals to be effective and address these challenges. One does not ask a snowplow driver to manage a municipal budget. Nor should other roles across the organization be asked to backfill communications functions for which they are not trained. Communications requires sufficient resources to protect and maintain positive reputations.

As the Township grows and transitions into a mid-sized municipality, demands will continue to increase on services and finances. Being able to tell a quality growth story is critical to help build trust and manage expectations along the way. As well, the Township will want to demonstrate its accountability and improved operational management to taxpayers as it implements the recommendations from the Service Delivery and Organizational Review.

Redbrick is also seeing an increase in instances of municipal communicators needing mental health supports or taking leave in other municipalities due to burnout or constant exposure to online negativity and inappropriate commentary.

Investing in organizational resiliency in communications is a critical, appropriate and responsible response to meet needs and manage risk.

Other risks to having limited communications capacity include:

- Not meeting the growing demands of an increased population.
- Not getting ahead of important topics and telling the Township's story means others in the community drive the narrative while the Township only has capacity to "put out fires" to maintain the municipality's current reputation.
- No backup for communications when the current specialist is unavailable. This results in the Township either not responding or limiting communications during those times and that others, not trained in communications, are pulled in to respond risking potential reputational errors.
- Limited oversight over the Township's brand and general graphic design standards, which can negatively impact a perception of professionalism.
- Continuing to respond reactively or not at all to misinformation risking greater community distrust and further misinformation spread.
- Missing opportunities to tell positive, visual stories about the Township's achievements and how they are delivering good value.
 - Not meeting current communications trends and expectations for visual communications, which means audiences are less likely to engage with or remember and share the Township's content.
 - This results in not having as broad a reach.
- Risking either burnout or departure of the current, skilled resource, resulting in recruitment time and effort in a hard-to-find market for skilled resources in small communities.

- Issues management files may not be strategically managed with communications oversight.
- Limited analytics and evaluation to measure the effectiveness of communications efforts to make data-informed decisions.
- Emergency response is slower because pre-planned communications processes are not in place, such as contact lists, photos, protocols etc.
- Lack of capacity increases the likelihood of needing third party resources for support.

Rationale to Support a Communications Manager Position

Effective communications will play an important role as the Township implements the Service Delivery and Organizational Review and positions itself as a well-managed, efficient, accountable organization prepared to respond to its evolving community.

A Communications Manager would provide needed capacity, and result in many strategic benefits for the Township, including:

- Offer greater strategic oversight in managing and telling the Township's stories.
- Provide a higher level of strategic communications and political acuity.
- Ensure greater alignment between strategic Township goals and communications efforts.
- Offer a unique "horizontal" lens to the organization to anticipate and identify potential reputational risks, present ideas and tie operational messaging in with broader strategic priorities.
- Help keep up with and respond to a changing landscape with fewer traditional media outlets and growing online and often negative discourse.
- Provide improved strategic support to Mayor and Council as appropriate.
- Improve efficiencies by implementing processes and ensuring they are followed across the organization.
- Respond to the priority recommendations in the Service Delivery and Operational Review "to drive sustained, corporate-wide improvements to the Township's internal and public-facing communications, both identified Council priorities...such as "[fostering] a culture of accountability and organizational excellence."
- Support CLT and help build stronger collaboration across departments for a more coherent and consistent "one Township" approach to communications and engagement.
- Signal to the rest of the organization the importance of improved communications as a Township priority.
- Align with best practice and capacity levels in other comparable municipalities such as Centre Wellington, Oro-Medonte, Strathroy-Caradoc. Their teams break down as follows:

- Centre Wellington: two FTEs + 1 contract: Communications and Engagement Manager and Coordinator and one contract assistant
- Oro-Medonte: two FTEs: Manager and Website Information Coordinator, supported by a Corporate Customer Service Supervisor
- Strathroy-Caradoc: two FTEs + 1 director: Communications Coordinator and an Assistant reporting to a Director of Economic Development and Community Engagement; Police and Fire manage their own communications for the most part

Conclusion

Municipal communications leaders continue to adjust to a dramatically changed communications landscape. More than ever, municipalities need sufficient, skilled, strategic professionals to help them navigate increasing misinformation and polarization, declining trust in government, louder and more empowered community voices, changing social media algorithms and technologies.

Municipalities need to be their own newsrooms to direct their own stories and demonstrate their values.

Township Council and leaders want residents to be better informed and engaged with their local government. They also want to build greater trust, accountability and transparency. They recently invested in a Service Delivery and Organizational Review to ensure they are better positioned for the future as they transition to a mid-sized municipality and experience greater expectations from their community.

The final Review report recommends recruiting a supervisory position for communications. Redbrick supports this recommendation. From our perspective, establishing and recruiting a full-time Communications Manager will bring the Township closer to its goals more effectively and sooner, and offer the greatest long-term value: a more proactive, professional, consistent and strategic approach; a more informed and engaged staff and community; a greater ability to tell Wilmot's story.

We have seen the benefits experienced by municipalities who invest in communications. They are visible, telling authentic stories about the skilled staff who work every day to improve the quality of life in their community. We are confident a new communications manager position will get you there.

