



## **Interlakes Fire Truck Assent Vote - Communications Plan -**

### **ISSUE/EVENT**

To satisfy Fire Insurance Underwriter requirements, the Interlakes Area Fire Protection Service must replace two engine/pumper trucks in 2019 and 2021. The Cariboo Regional District plans to replace the trucks through debt financing, versus leasing which has previously been how apparatus were replaced. The CRD needs public authorization in order to borrow the money to purchase the new trucks.

### **GOAL**

**Goal: Equip and encourage residents to make an informed vote at the referendum for the expansion of the South Cariboo Recreation Centre.**

Our goal is to effectively communicate with residents in the Interlakes Area Fire Protection Boundary and all key publics about the referendum to replace two fire trucks. Our main messages are “be informed” and “vote.” The communications plan is not designed to ensure that voter response is for or against the proposal; rather, it is designed to ensure that voters can make an informed decision on referendum day. Materials will present costs, benefits and other issues from a balanced perspective.

### **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this communications plan are to build awareness and action towards achieving the organizational goals and objectives of purchasing two fire trucks. Through our communications, we will also try to raise awareness about local governments and the need for residents to exercise their democratic rights.

- **Objective #1: Ensure residents understand there will not be an increase to current tax rates.**
- **Objective #2: Ensure residents understand the need to replace the two trucks.**
- **Objective #3: Increase voter participation compared to the last referendum within the Interlakes Area Fire Protection Service.** A referendum held in the service area 10+ years ago had 361 voters.

### **TARGET AUDIENCE**

Our target audiences in no particular order are:

- Taxpayers within the fire protection area
- Interlakes Volunteer Fire Department members
- CRD elected officials and staff

## SWOT ANALYSIS

An analysis of the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats surrounding the referendum will help inform our communication strategies and key messages.

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The need to replace fire apparatus is based on insurance requirements</li><li>There is no increase to taxation</li><li>Purchasing the trucks is a financially sound decision</li><li>Summer residents will be around during this period</li></ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The fact that there will be no increase in taxation may lead to voter apathy</li><li>Summer activities may lead to low voter turnout</li><li>Short timeline to raise awareness and share information</li></ul>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Interlakes community is very engaged</li><li>The referendum brings awareness to the Interlakes VFD, which is respected in the community</li><li>Following the 2017 wildfires, there is increased public support for fire departments</li></ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>People may not understand the financial details behind the referendum</li><li>People may not understand the importance of voting in the referendum</li></ul>

## KEY MESSAGES

See Referendum FAQ.

## SPOKESPERSONS

All interview requests will flow through Emily Epp, CRD Manager of Communications. The appropriate CRD staff will act as the spokespersons as required, such as the Chief Financial Officer, the Manager of Protective Services and the Manager of Communications. The Interlakes VFD Chief may also conduct some interviews on occasion. Additionally, the CRD Electoral Area L Director may conduct general interviews about the referendum, with cognizance of the CRD's Election Communications Policy, which applies after July 20, 2018.

## TACTICS/BUDGET

### *Open House*

CRD staff will host an open house at the Interlakes Fire Hall, including a tour of the fire trucks that need replacing. The goal will be to make the event fun and family-friendly to encourage community participation. Staff will give a short presentation about the project and referendum.

### *Fire Department Meeting*

CRD staff will attend a fire department meeting/training night to give a brief overview of the project and referendum to ensure all the members understand and have their questions answered.

### *Information Handouts*

A referendum specific handout (FAQ) will be developed with important information about the project costs, concept plan and referendum. These will be posted on the CRD website and social media accounts and will be made available in paper form at the offices.

***Posters***

Staff will create posters advertising about the upcoming referendum and post them throughout the Interlakes community.

***Mailers***

A full-colour mail-out focused on the referendum details and process will be mailed to every home and business within the Interlakes area. Efforts will be made to drop off paper copies at key community locations, like the fire hall, library, etc.

***Regular Publications***

Articles highlighting the project will be included in the CRD's Board Highlights, as appropriate.

***Website***

The CRD website will be used with information updated regularly.

***Information Displays***

A couple information panels will be produced and displayed in key community locations, such as the CRD's Interlakes Library. The panels will provide project and referendum details.

***Social Media***

The CRD's Facebook page and Twitter feed will be utilized. A video could potentially be developed and shared to explain key points about the project.

***Email Blasts***

Information updates will be emailed via the CRD's email distribution list as deemed necessary. People can subscribe or unsubscribe through the website or conventional email.

***Media Relations***

News releases will be sent to the media to announce important updates. A media tour may also be arranged in conjunction with the public open house.

***Advertising***

Print, radio and Facebook advertising will be used leading up to the referendum to encourage residents to get out and vote. Advertising will be coordinated with the legislated referendum advertising to keep information consistent.

Tactic	Estimated Cost	Final Cost
General Printing	Internal	--
Mailer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printing</li> <li>• Postage</li> </ul>	Printing: \$900 Postage: \$1,550  Total: \$2,450	\$3,401.89
Social Media (using existing CRD & SCRC sites)	\$0	--
Advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Print (awareness &amp; referendum)</li> <li>• Radio (primarily used for “Get Out and Vote”)</li> <li>• Facebook (“Get Out and Vote” message)</li> </ul>	\$2,700	Print: \$1,562.93 Print (What’sBrewing): \$20.00 Radio (Open House): \$210 Radio (Vote): \$672.00 Facebook: \$51.40 \$8.60 \$51.51
Display Boards (referendum specific)	\$200	\$134.40
Fire Hall Rental	\$0	--
Open House Event (food or games?)	\$200	
Staff Travel	\$500	
Referendum Costs	??	
Contingency	\$450	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,500 plus referendum costs</b>	<b>\$6,112.73 (plus staff travel and referendum costs)</b>

## TIMELINE

See the attached spreadsheet.

## EVALUATION

The impact of the tactics will be measured against the objectives to see how the program has influenced people's knowledge and awareness of the referendum. These results will be measured using observation and media monitoring.

Objective	Measure
Ensure residents understand there will not be an increase to current tax rates.	Did residents understand their tax rates would not increase?  <b>Anecdotally, through analyzing media coverage, social media comments, and in-person conversations, people understood that tax rates would not increase.</b>
Ensure residents understand the need to replace the two trucks.	Did residents understand the need to replace the two trucks?

	<p>Yes, anecdotally, through media coverage, social media comments, and in-person conversations, people understand the importance of replacing the trucks. The members of the fire department felt the concept was explained well.</p>
Increase voter participation compared to the last similar referendum (361 voters).	<p>Did voter participation increase compared to the last referendum?</p> <p>No, we saw 255 residents come out to vote; however, 98% voted in favour, so with little objection, people may not have felt they needed to vote.</p>