



## REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Erin Kaiser, Manager of Economic Development & Innovation  
Alexandra Fuller, Director of Corporate Communications

**DATE:** November 22, 2023

**REPORT NO.:** BEC-2023-015

**SUBJECT:** Postal Code Change Communications Plan

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. BEC-2023-015, dated November 22, 2023, regarding the Postal Code Change Communications Plan, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse a multi-phased postal code change communications plan and the associated workplan approach, as outlined in this report;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be directed to report back to Council with the outcome of Phase 1, the postal code change communications plan, with the intention to move forward with Phase 2, Implementation, provided that 60% or more of respondents are in favour of the change.

### KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- On June 19, 2023, Council requested a staff report to explore potential implications of aligning postal codes with municipal boundaries in defined areas of the Town.
- A communications plan has been developed to engage residents and businesses potentially impacted by the proposed postal code changes.
- Recognizing the complexity and sensitivity of the task, a phased approach has is recommended to ensure clear and transparent communication for decision-making.

- A comprehensive survey will be conducted targeting both residents and businesses in effected areas to gauge concerns, preferences, and potential impacts related to the proposed postal code changes.
- A modest budget is required for the survey, communication materials, and letters to businesses and residents. Anticipated costs (Phase 1 and 2) are expected to be accommodated through existing funds.
- The recommendation is to proceed to Phase 2 only if a significant majority, at least 60%, of respondents of the survey express support for the proposed postal code update.

Phase 2 will involve a comprehensive investigation into internal resources required, if any, that may be related to further communications and database updates.

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:**

At its June 19, 2023 meeting, Council approved a request for a staff report on the issue that some areas in Halton Hills – notably the Town’s Premier Gateway Employment Area and rural areas may be served by postal codes attributed to Milton, including the area generally bounded by 15 Sideroad south and east to 6 line. Given that community engagement is a vital component of the Town’s core values, Town staff was requested to report back on the costs and a plan to engage residents and business owners on potentially having the postal codes changed.

In response to Council’s direction and to explore potential implications of aligning postal codes with municipal boundaries, a communications plan has been developed to engage residents and businesses that may be impacted by this proposed change. Specifically, this report responds to Council’s request for:

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Town staff be requested to report to budget committee on the costs and a plan to engage residents and business owners on potentially having the postal codes changed.”

Work to date has involved connecting with Canada Post and collaboration with relevant Town departments, particularly Corporate Communications, Clerks and Finance. This collaboration was focused on gaining insights into the potential impacts of aligning postal codes with municipal boundaries, with a specific focus on the communication strategies required to gauge community feedback. This work has included:

- Initial identification of potentially impacted addresses to gain insights into the scope and cost considerations associated with a communication plan;
- Connecting with Canada Post’s Service Delivery Officer to initiate discussions on the procedural aspects of implementing a potential postal code change;
- Discussions with the Town of Milton to explore the possibility of Milton considering updates to their postal codes as well. Further discussions would likely be required if the decision is made to move forward with a formal request to change postal codes. This would be undertaken as part of Phase 2, as outlined below; and,

- Researching other municipalities that have successfully executed similar projects to gain insights and best practices from their experiences.

Recognizing the potential complexity and sensitivity of potentially changing long-standing postal codes, a phased approach has been developed to ensure effective communication and to evaluate next steps and support decision-making.

In light of the communications focus of this project, Corporate Communications, in collaboration with any impacted departments, will lead this project going forward.

The proposed communications plan includes:

### **Phase 1: Survey and Engagement:**

Phase 1 directly relates to the resolution passed by Council.

Phase 1 involves preparing and undertaking a community survey targeting both residents and businesses within the impacted areas. The survey will be designed to gauge concerns and preferences regarding a potential postal code change.

The survey will also shed light on the potential expenses businesses may incur in updating their documents, marketing materials, including letterheads, business cards, and other printed and/or digital collateral (e.g. websites). Additionally, it will highlight any potential supply chain impacts and the associated financial considerations. Residents, too, may face costs related to updating personal information.

A survey will be hosted on the Let's Talk engagement platform that will be accessible only via a special link provided to the targeted stakeholders. This approach helps ensure that only potentially impacted stakeholders weigh in on the issue. Information about the project and the special link will be included in a mailout to the stakeholders inviting them to complete the Let's Talk survey. Paper copies of the survey will also be available at select Town facilities to facilitate resident engagement in situations where internet access may be a challenge. Availability of paper copies will be noted in the mailout.

While a modest budget is required for the communication of the survey and supplementary marketing materials (e.g. roadside signage), it's anticipated that these costs will be covered within existing budgets.

Upon completion of Phase 1, staff will consolidate, analyze and report on the community feedback. A staff report will be presented to Council. It will outline recommendations for the next steps, including potentially moving into Phase 2 (below). At this time, it is recommended that the Town proceed to Phase 2 only if a significant majority (at least 60% of respondents) expresses support for the postal code update. If support for a change is less than 60%, it is recommended that Phase 2 not be advanced.

In light of existing workplans and available staff resources, it is anticipated that Phase 1 will be initiated prior to the end of Q1 2024. If there is any opportunity to advance this project earlier, Town staff will do so.

### **Phase 2 (if initiated): Internal Impact Investigation and Implementation Planning:**

If 60% or more of respondents have expressed interest in the postal code change, staff would recommend moving into Phase 2. At that time, an assessment of any internal work required, if any, for the implementation of the proposed postal code changes will be undertaken. This may include an assessment of further communication and financial impacts, responding to any concerns raised through the survey, and identifying potential departmental implications such as internal contact lists and/or database updates.

Upon completion of Phase 2, staff will report to Council outlining any additional implications through an Implementation and Education Plan.

### **Phase 3 (if initiated): Implementation and Education Plan Execution**

Phase 3 will involve implementation of an Implementation and Education Plan, pending Council direction from staff reports related to Phases 1 and 2.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not have an impact on the Town's Strategic Plan.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Public Engagement was not needed as this report is administrative in nature. However, it will be required as detailed in the report.

### **INTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

Corporate Communications, Economic Development, and Clerks staff were involved in the contents of this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not have any financial implications.

Staff do not anticipate a budget impact to complete Phase 1 and 2. Some modest funds may be needed to pay for the mailing of communication material. This cost is anticipated to be included within existing budgets.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Business, Environment & Culture

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer