

Greater Sussex Hampton Region

Investment Ready Community

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Presented by

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Context and Project Background

In January 2016 the Greater Sussex Hampton Region was notified by the Potash Corp of Saskatchewan of the suspension of operations at the Picadilly mine and the permanent closure of their mine at Penobsquis resulting in the direct loss of 400 mine jobs and the potential loss of between 400 and 600 indirect jobs in the support and maintenance sector associated with mine operations. This notification had a significant impact on the surrounding community.

This loss of opportunity has been compounded by the provincial government's moratorium on natural gas development. Many of the same support companies were also involved in serving the natural gas wells that currently operate and had looked forward to the development of more wells in the region. Furthermore, it is believed that the opening of the completed Fundy Trail Parkway will impact the Sussex region as it has long positioned itself as the "Gateway to the Fundy Trail". The opening of the parkway will allow traffic to enter from other locations and could move tourist traffic off of Route 1 away from Sussex. Traditionally traffic could travel through Sussex and Sussex Corner to St. Martins.

The closing of the Piccadilly mine was covered broadly by the media, including coverage in the Globe and Mail and Toronto Star. The business media focused on the plummeting potash prices, job losses and major setback for a province trying to turn its economy around. The local media focused on the shock to the community after losing its largest employer. Federal ministers and provincial politicians confirmed this to be devastating news placing the province in a difficult position. Mayor Marc Thorne said it was completely unexpected and heartbreaking news, leaving the community in shock.

The Town of Sussex, in collaboration with partners Potash Corp, ACOA, Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL) and the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce took a leadership role in early 2016 to address the adverse effects of the suspension of operations at the PotashCorp mine. The Sussex Chamber undertook an extensive community engagement process over the past year to determine what steps the business community and others felt the region should be taking to strengthen their economy. A difficult task considering the state of the global economy and the struggle of other New Brunswick communities to do the same.

The key steps undertaken by the Town of Sussex include; engaging an economic development coordinator to manage the overall process; identify affected business needs; develop a strategic action plan; identify an implementation strategy; develop a communication plan and participate in ongoing reporting of the progress.

With the current state of the New Brunswick economy and desire for other communities to attract business the Sussex/Hampton region will need to present a desirable proposition for businesses. The most recent steps undertaken to develop a strategic plan and identify priority opportunities is a critical step in moving the region forward.

The seven strategic priorities identified fit within the two key pillars recognized by the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce; building our industrial base; and, destination of choice. The strategic priorities are as follows:

1. Unified Tourism and Arts and Culture
2. Geothermal Energy
3. Food processing
4. Low-cost energy (from existing natural gas sources)
5. Warehousing/distribution
6. Targeted and aligned retail development
7. Targeted and aligned training/education

It is noted that the Economic Development Coordinator will champion these strategic priorities once the strategic goals and action plans are developed.

Strategic considerations

This communications plan will assist to increase awareness for the Greater Sussex Hampton Region in collaboration with the strategic plan. This is a region coming together with a story to tell, to the community, to your stakeholders and then to the world. The following are a few strategic considerations which inform our approach to communications:

- The local, regional and federal governments have taken note of the difficult position the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is in and have identified resources (ACOA, Post-Secondary Training and Labour, Opportunities NB) to work with the region in moving it forward. Marc Thorne, Mayor of the Town of Sussex confirms that the community is “changing gears” as it is not just a one town industry.
- The Greater Sussex Hampton Region is strategically located in the province with a population of over 500,000 within a 95 km radius. Sussex is known as being in the middle of the golden triangle of Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John and is considered as the gateway to southern NB
- The Greater Sussex Hampton Region will need a new identity or new brand to reflect everything the community stands for taking into consideration the seven strategic priorities identified.
- Even though the Greater Sussex Hampton Region has invested in an economic development plan, there is still more work to do. With limited budgets and resources, consideration must be given to less costly communication methods avoiding traditional advertising in papers, on radio stations and in magazines.
- Developing a website and building an inventory of regional assets is critically important for local, regional and international audiences. This will become the primary delivery tool to increase awareness and promote economic development for the Greater Sussex Hampton Region.

Communication Objectives

The primary objectives for the Greater Sussex Hampton Region are to:

- 1) Express the outcomes of the community strategic plan to all internal audiences
- 2) Create awareness that development of an inventory of regional assets is necessary and requires participation
- 3) To identify and engage community supporters to assist in promoting the Greater Sussex Hampton Region as an ***investment ready and open for business*** community
- 4) Provide information to the local economy of the goods and services available in the area and the benefits of buying locally

The secondary objectives:

- 5) Identify and engage third party supports to verify the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is strategically located for investment opportunities
- 6) To ensure that the Greater Sussex Hampton Region has a regular, consistent and disciplined approach in sharing its story with key external stakeholders and potential investors that it is ***investment ready and open for business***
- 7) To achieve a balanced and fair response from media and all stakeholders throughout the process

The Strategy

Keeping in step with the two key pillars identified by the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce; building our industrial base; and, destination of choice, the desire to overcome the loss of one of the region's largest employer is a key priority for the Greater Sussex Hampton Region. Capitalizing on their existing strengths will help to reposition the region and focus on sustainable economic growth.

In order to move forward in support of the strategic priorities, we therefore recommend a two pronged communications approach; an internal communications campaign and a public awareness campaign. Both of these campaigns can be carried out over a six – nine month period from the date of commencement.

a) Internal communications campaign:

The internal communications campaign will focus on participating in meetings with key stakeholders directly impacted by the loss of the mine such as the local business community and partners, to present the outcome of the strategic plan and to stress the importance of having an ***investment ready community***.

The campaign will consist of various collateral materials, such as a PowerPoint presentation, briefing notes for government officials, information fact sheets for partners/employers, social media network content, media articles and an informative website.

Rollout of the campaign will be designed to ensure a focused approach on creating awareness that development of regional assets is necessary and requires participation. This includes meetings and engagement with key stakeholders. In addition, while gathering an inventory of the regional assets, it will be necessary to identify key stakeholders in support of the project who can assist in delivering messages of on behalf of the Greater Sussex Hampton Region.

b) External communications campaign:

The external communications campaign will focus on delivering the key messages directly and indirectly to various stakeholders, including the general public, elected officials and the media. The messaging may need to be modified to reflect the objectives as noted in the strategic priorities once they are adopted and ready for publication. The external communications campaign will include engaging a few community members as advocates to deliver the messages via social media networks and also in person. It is not intended to be time consuming, yet it will require some participation at stakeholder meetings and key public events.

Like the internal communications campaign, this campaign will rely on an informative website, collateral materials and social media networks as noted above.

Intended Audiences / Stakeholders

Stakeholder relations is defined as the art of fostering customer and brand loyalty, creating a reputation buffer in times of crisis, building equity with partners, enhancing corporate reputation, and heightening transparency and accountability.

The stakeholder group in this plan is organized in two categories, those internal to the Greater Sussex Hampton Region and those external. The internal group should be considered as your primary allies and should be kept informed of all your activities. They must be engaged to become champions of your message and help persuade external audiences of your community's values and needs. They should be your first point of contact when communicating important messages or just providing updates. The external stakeholders are also very important, some are your allies, some will become your allies and others just need to be informed and convinced of the value and merits of your community, its products, services and its ongoing opportunities.

For the purpose of this plan, the following have been taken into consideration as the overall key stakeholders with whom such a plan should endeavour to connect.

- A) Internal Stakeholders:
 - a. Town of Sussex
 - i. Mayor
 - ii. Councillors
 - iii. CAO
 - b. Town of Hampton
 - i. Mayor
 - ii. Councillors
 - iii. CAO
 - c. Village of Sussex Corner
 - i. Mayor
 - ii. Councillors
 - iii. CAO
 - d. Village of Norton
 - i. Mayor
 - ii. Councillors
 - iii. CAO
 - e. Regional Service Commission 8
 - i. Chair
 - ii. Board of Directors
 - iii. Executive Director

- f. The Sussex & District Chamber of Commerce
 - i. Chair
 - ii. Board of Directors
 - iii. Members
 - g. The Hampton Chamber of Commerce
 - i. Chair
 - ii. Board of Directors
 - iii. Members
 - h. ACOA
 - i. Regional representatives
 - i. Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour
 - i. Minister
 - ii. Deputy minister
 - iii. Assistant deputy ministers
 - j. Potash Corp.
 - i. Regional representatives
 - k. Local businesses and contributors to the strategic plan
- B) External Stakeholders:
- a. Provincial Government
 - i. Premier
 - ii. Local MLAs
 - iii. Minister for local government
 - iv. Minister of tourism
 - b. Opportunities NB
 - i. Chair
 - ii. Board of directors
 - iii. President
 - iv. Local representative(s)
 - c. Federal Government
 - i. Regional MPs
 - ii. ACOA minister
 - d. Tourism Operators
 - i. Local
 - ii. Regional
 - iii. Provincial
 - 1. NB Trails
 - e. Regional/National/International manufacturers
 - i. Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters Association

- f. Media (local, regional and national business reporters)
 - i. Telegraph Journal
 - ii. Hampton Herald
 - iii. CBC news
 - iv. CTV news
 - v. The Globe and Mail
 - vi. The Star
- g. General Public (local, regional and national)
 - i. Opinion leaders (including university professors)
 - ii. Industry analysts
 - iii. Professional business groups

A detailed Stakeholder list is attached as [Appendix A](#) which identifies each stakeholder group and the challenges, goals and tactics for each.

MESSAGING

Key messages for internal stakeholders

- The Town of Sussex, in collaboration with partners Potash Corp, ACOA, Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL) and the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce took a leadership role in early 2016 to address the adverse effects of the suspension of operations at the PotashCorp mine. The Sussex Chamber undertook an extensive community engagement process over the past year to determine what steps the business community and others felt the region should be taking to strengthen their economy.
- The key steps undertaken include; engaging an economic development coordinator to manage the overall process; identify affected business needs; develop a strategic action plan; identify an implementation strategy; develop a communication plan and participate in ongoing reporting of the progress.
- The development of a strategic action plan identified seven strategic priorities which fit within the two key pillars identified by the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce; building our industrial base; and, destination of choice. The strategic priorities are as follows:
 1. Tourism and Arts and Culture
 2. Geothermal energy development
 3. Food production and processing
 4. Low-cost energy (from existing natural gas sources)
 5. Warehousing/distribution
 6. Targeted and aligned retail development
 7. Targeted and aligned training/education
- In order to move forward and promote the region ***as investment ready and open for business*** we need to create an inventory of our assets. Your support is essential.

Key messages for external stakeholders

- The Greater Sussex Hampton Region has undertaken a comprehensive research and analysis to identify key priorities and areas for investment opportunities. Our top priority areas of investment include: tourism, arts and culture; geothermal energy development; and, food production and processing.
- The Greater Sussex Hampton Region is ***investment ready and open for business***. Check out our website to explore the opportunities.

TACTICS

All communication activities will be designed to ensure awareness with all stakeholder audiences. We will take a three step approach to incorporating internal and external communication activities aimed at increasing awareness that the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is ***investment ready and open for business***.

Step 1 – Planning

The first step is to ensure the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is prepared and that it has all the collateral materials, research and support required to carry out the task. This includes briefing notes, fact sheets, PowerPoint presentation, questions and answers, at a minimum. The informative website will follow once input is received from your internal audiences. Once the collateral materials are ready then it is time to schedule meetings with your internal and external audiences. Once the meetings are planned, then you move into Step 2 – implementing the plan.

Step 2 – Implementing

The second step in the Greater Sussex Hampton Region Communications Plan includes informing key stakeholders, such as committee members, allies and supporters about the campaign; reminding all of them the importance of their support to develop the asset inventory for the website. Committee members and allies may be in a position to support the Greater Sussex Hampton Region publicly or respond to enquiries that may arise. In addition, the Greater Sussex Hampton Region should line up a few key stakeholders that could speak in support of its activities. Then the Greater Sussex Hampton Region will meet with key government officials to brief them on the status of their plan. Simultaneously they will embark upon greater awareness by publishing an article/opinion editorial in the provincial newspapers, engaging in social media via Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks and will participate as a guest speaker with the Sussex and District Chamber of Commerce and the Hampton Chamber of Commerce.

Once the Greater Sussex Hampton Region website is prepared it will be officially launched and communicated to all external stakeholders. A refined communications plan to complement the individual strategic priorities may be required to target specific audiences relevant to the identified priorities.

Step 3 – Evaluation

The third step will include evaluating the effectiveness of the campaign. We believe the best way to evaluate this campaign will be the progress made by the Greater Sussex Hampton Region in communicating its message that it is ***investment ready and open for business***.

ROLL OUT PLAN AND TIMELINE

Timing

Given the magnitude of the work to undertake, it may be necessary to adjust the timeline. At present we are suggesting that the introductory work should be carried out over a 6 to 9 month timeframe. Once the Greater Sussex Hampton website is launched, it will become a consistent tool in communicating the strengths of the region to regional, national and international investors.

Activities

The following is a list of recommended activities to support the objectives identified:

| 1.0 Planning | | | |
|--------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------|
| No. | Activity / Tactic | Target audience | Time Frame |
| 1.1 | Confirm the Greater Sussex Hampton Region approves of the Economic Development Strategy and priorities identified therein <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjust if necessary | Economic Development Committee | Weeks 1-2 |
| 1.2 | Review of existing collateral materials that can potentially be modified and used by the Greater Sussex Hampton Region such as the resources available on existing community websites | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 2-4 |
| 1.3 | Develop briefing notes, fact sheets that can be used in internal communication activities (for sending to MLAs or MPs, or for possible circulation with community businesses) | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 3-5 |
| 1.4 | Develop a PowerPoint presentation that could be made to internal stakeholders | Internal Stakeholders | weeks 4-5 |

| No. | Activity / Tactic | Target audience | Time Frame |
|------|---|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1.5 | Preparation of questions and answers to support briefing sessions / stakeholder meetings | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 5-6 |
| 1.6 | Commence development of an informative website to promote the strengths of the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm scope of work • Include social marketing capabilities • Include opportunities locator search or map showing where opportunities and services are located in the region • Include video content | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 5-17 |
| 1.7 | Research and establish a process to gather information on regional assets for development of the asset inventory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include PETL and ONB services | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 6-8 |
| 1.8 | Identify potential advocates to collaborate with delivering messages | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 3-5 |
| 1.9 | Identify local/regional communication opportunities for members to speak (local Rotary, Regional Chambers, RSC8 meeting, etc.) | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 4-6 |
| 1.10 | Media relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prepare articles to communicate elements of the Strategic Plan and progress • prepare articles / news release to launch website | External Media General public | Weeks 5-17 |
| 1.11 | Media/presentation training for up to three Greater Sussex Hampton Region representatives | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 5-6 |
| 1.12 | Develop a social media strategy | External Stakeholders | Weeks 6-8 |

| No. | Activity / Tactic | Target audience | Time Frame |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1.13 | Seek to obtain exposure through links from other industry related sites such as the Sussex & District Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, etc. | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 8-12 |
| 1.14 | Seek third party supporters to verify the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is investment ready and strategically located | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 13-17 |
| 2.0 Implementation | | | |
| No. | Activity / Tactic | Target audience | Time Frame |
| 2.1 | Schedule media/presentation training for the Greater Sussex Hampton Region representatives | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 5-6 |
| 2.2 | Schedule meetings with key stakeholders to brief them on the outcomes of the Strategic Plan and the action plan for moving forward. This would include a series of meetings with those internal stakeholders (partners and government officials) as identified. | Internal Stakeholders | Weeks 4-8 |
| 2.3 | Schedule presentations/briefing sessions with key stakeholders to secure potential support and identify speaking/event opportunities via their networks (i.e. Opportunities NB events/missions; trade shows; industry conferences). | Internal External Stakeholders | Weeks 9-20 |
| 2.4 | Set up social media sites | External Stakeholders | Weeks 7-10 |
| 2.5 | Commence media plan by publishing opinion editorials, engaging social media networks and partnering with third party supporters once plan is underway | External Stakeholders | Weeks 10-22 |

| No. | Activity / Tactic | Target audience | Time Frame |
|------|---|------------------------------------|-------------|
| 2.6 | Commence gathering information on regional assets for development of the asset inventory | Internal and External Stakeholders | Weeks 5-17 |
| 2.7 | Launch website and promote the Greater Sussex Hampton Region to national and international audiences | External Stakeholders | Week 18 |
| 2.8 | Publish news articles on the website from third party supporters verifying the Greater Sussex Hampton Region is strategically located for investment opportunities | External Stakeholders | Week 19 |
| 2.9 | Host networking opportunity with regional chambers with a key note speaker on 'The importance the Greater Sussex Hampton Region in economic growth for the province" (consider doing this in Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John) | External Stakeholders | Weeks 32-34 |
| 2.10 | Issue news release and solicit interviews during Small Business Week October 2017 | External Stakeholders | Week 35 |

See attached Appendix B - Timeline chart showing the schedule for various phases.

See attached Appendix C – Collateral Materials Budget.

Evaluation

As mentioned, evaluation is one of the key tactics and it is important to put in place proper evaluation tools to measure the success of the Plan as it relates to the Greater Sussex Hampton Region overall goals.

Potential questions to ask when determining the success of the plan:

1. Was the timelines of the plan met?
2. Was the budget met?
3. What unplanned activities were we able to support in addition to the planned activities?
4. Were specific targets achieved?
5. Was the reputation of the Greater Sussex Hampton Region positively affected?

Results can often influence your approach to communications and offer guidance along the way.

All media will be monitored closely by the Greater Sussex Hampton Region to ensure accurate content is reported and that key messages are communicated during the launch of the Communications Plan.

See attached Appendix D – Evaluation Form that for use as a starting point.

Summary

This Communications Plan is provided as the recommended strategy for use by the Greater Sussex Hampton Region to increase awareness about the Greater Sussex Hampton Region that the community *is investment ready and open for business*.

It will take a dedication of time and support by the Greater Sussex Hampton Region to ensure its success. We recommend immediate implementation to communicate the results of the Economic Development Strategy and engage the community.

Information is subject to change to ensure the best approach in a timely manner.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela McKay