

Priorities Committee Meeting_Jun21_2022

REPORT FOR INFORMATION**Stormwater Facilities Safety Communication Campaign****Report Purpose**

To provide Council with an update on results of additional communication campaign activities including signage to educate the community on the dangers of using stormwater management facilities for winter recreation and to provide information on safe winter activities that are available.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goal

Goal 4 - Ensure effective stewardship of water, land, air and energy resources

Goal 7 - Provide opportunities for public engagement and communication

Goal 8 - Foster an environment for safe communities

Report

The County has obligations for public safety in relation to Stormwater Management Facilities (SWMFs). The County, consistent with the regional approach, educates on the dangers associated with SWMFs and has signage at all SWMFs. Regional communication efforts create awareness that SWMFs are not safe for recreation activities and that ice conditions on SWMFs are unpredictable and dangerous.

During winter 2020/2021, more residents looked for outdoor activities than in previous years as the pandemic curtailed indoor activities. Strathcona County enhanced communication for winter 2021/2022 to educate on the dangers of SWMFs and direct residents to the numerous alternative safe skating opportunities.

2021/2022 communication activities similar to 2020/2021: news release, animated video on stormwater facilities, social media, webpages, 154 permanent safety signs and 18 temporary signs, coordinating with regional safe outdoor recreation opportunities, customer service staff and enforcement services staff prepared to answer questions.

Additional communication activities in 2021/2022: bill stuffer to all homes receiving a utility bill; video filmed on location with enforcement officer and young resident, shared on social media; Council messages prepared for resharing on social media; Strathcona County Online Opinion Panel (SCOOP) poll; spring news release and social media on thin ice. Signage options were explored and it was determined that the most effective approach would be additional permanent signage installed at the 28 highest risk locations, on the same posts as safety signage. Signage will be installed in spring/summer 2022 and will have a QR code linking to locations for safe places to skate.

SCOOP panelists had the following polls available on their profiles between January 27, 2022 and March 24, 2022:

- Are you aware that all the ponds throughout Sherwood Park are actually stormwater management facilities? Of 880 responses, 83% Yes; 17% No
- Are you aware that stormwater facilities are unsafe for recreational use? Of 879 responses, 93% Yes; 7% No

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Utilities customer service had only one inquiry due to resident activities on stormwater facilities between November 2021 and March 2022. Enforcement Services conducted 92 proactive patrols. They had three complaints and gave three verbal warnings. No tickets were issued. Comparing year to year is not an accurate indicator of compliance as weather patterns result in a different number of days where people would be inclined to consider activities on SWMFs.

Reputation is built and maintained over time. The campaign contributes to Strathcona County's goal: residents perceive Strathcona County as building a top community with safe, vibrant neighbourhoods. The majority of residents are aware activities are not allowed on SWMFs and are aware of safe outdoor options. Though awareness is high and signage prominent, education remains the preferred approach for those engaging in activities on SWMFs, though on-site warnings and/or enforcement are used when appropriate. The communication campaign remains consistent with the region about safety and public utilities (SWMF). Conversation style social media (enforcement officer talking with young resident) and recreation activity awareness (RPC outdoor campaign) have greater reach and engagement than safety education social media. While safety education messages have less interaction, they remain an important component of the overall campaign. This multi-pronged approach is effective, with relatable social media about SWMF safety; enjoying winter safely at Strathcona County's many vibrant outdoor options; and regional coordination.

Council and Committee History

November 30, 2021	Council directed administration to undertake an additional communication campaign including additional signage to educate the community on the dangers of using stormwater management facilities for winter recreation and to provide information on safe winter activities that are available. The campaign is to be funded within existing budgets. Administration is to provide a report with the results of the education campaign by end of Q2 in 2022.
November 9, 2021	Priorities Committee referred the Stormwater Management Facilities Winter Recreation Activities Report to the November 30, 2021 Council Meeting.

Other Impacts

Policy: N/A

Financial/Budget: N/A

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Interdepartmental: Communications, Utilities, Recreation, Parks and Culture, Enforcement Services, Planning and Development Services, Legislative and Legal Services, Emergency Services

Master Plan/Framework: N/A

Communication Plan

The County will continue to advise residents that there is no skating or other activities on stormwater facilities including the dangers of these facilities.