



Press Release

ONLINE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS EARN AWARD FOR CITY OF PORT COQUITLAM

Port Coquitlam, BC – September 30, 2010... Citizens who have clicked the City of Port Coquitlam website, “liked” the City’s Facebook page or followed its tweets have been making use of an online outreach program that earned the City a prestigious award today.

The City of Port Coquitlam received a Best Practices – Civic Engagement Award at the Union of BC Municipalities’ annual Community Excellence Awards ceremony, held in Whistler at 7 am Thursday. The awards showcase BC municipalities and regional districts that lead the pack, take risks to innovate, establish new partnerships, question established ways of doing business and pioneer new customer service practices.

“I’m thrilled that our process for reaching out and engaging our community has been recognized by our peers as being innovative and a model for others to follow,” Mayor Greg Moore said after the awards ceremony. “We’ve been working hard to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate in everything we do at the City, and this acknowledgement is encouraging. We’re going to continue to be a leader in finding new ways to engage our community.”

The City developed its online outreach program to find new ways to reach the community, to create a two-way dialogue with its citizens, and to reach residents who didn’t previously engage with their local government.

The program leverages technology to reach citizens in their own time and space, in a way that reflects the best practices of that particular media. The result has been a documented rise in citizen participation and interest in civic affairs.

For example, the use of Facebook has soared since the City became the first local government in the Lower Mainland to launch a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/portcoquitlam) in early 2008. More than 2,380 people now follow the page, and most posts receive some kind of response. Close to 500 people follow the City’s tweets on Twitter (www.twitter.com/cityofpoco), and the Mayor’s blog (www.portcoquitlam.ca/mayor) has a growing number of readers.

The City’s website (www.portcoquitlam.ca), revamped in September 2009, has also seen a steady rise in visitors, thanks to a user-friendly design and rich content and resources. From January to June 2010, the site had 218,000 visitors and 688,000 page views – a 22% increase from the previous six months.

More than 1,100 residents subscribe to the E-Update email newsletters (www.portcoquitlam.ca/e-update), and the City makes regular use of online surveys, forums and comment forms to offer residents feedback opportunities on a wide variety of topics, as an alternative to attending a meeting or open house.

Videos are also increasingly used to deliver information and news via the website, Facebook page and City YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/cityofpoco).

Prior to winning the award, the City's success in online outreach had already been unofficially recognized by its peers, in that staff are regularly approached for advice by other local governments – particularly in the use of social media (e.g. Facebook). The City's management had approved the exploration of social media at a time when it was still emerging as a local government communications tool. City Council has also supported online outreach as part of its goal to expand community engagement.

The winning award submission will become part of the Excellence Awards Library on the UBCM website (www.civicnet.bc.ca/ubcmsearch). It has also been posted on the City website at www.portcoquitlam.ca/whatsnew .

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