

2021

Chief Administrative Officer
Annual Report



2021 Annual Report Chief Administrative Officer

General

If one sentence could be used to describe 2021 the sentence that keeps coming to mind is “Exhaustion with riding this Pandemic Roller Coaster”. Trying to provide the basic government services under constantly changing conditions with alternating working from home and back in person has been challenging. Having many staff members either quarantined due to being a close contact and or being tested positive for COVID has put a major pressure providing services especially in the Public Works department. Citizens frustrated with restrictions and employees re-evaluating their life satisfaction has led to a larger than normal personnel turnover within the Town organization.



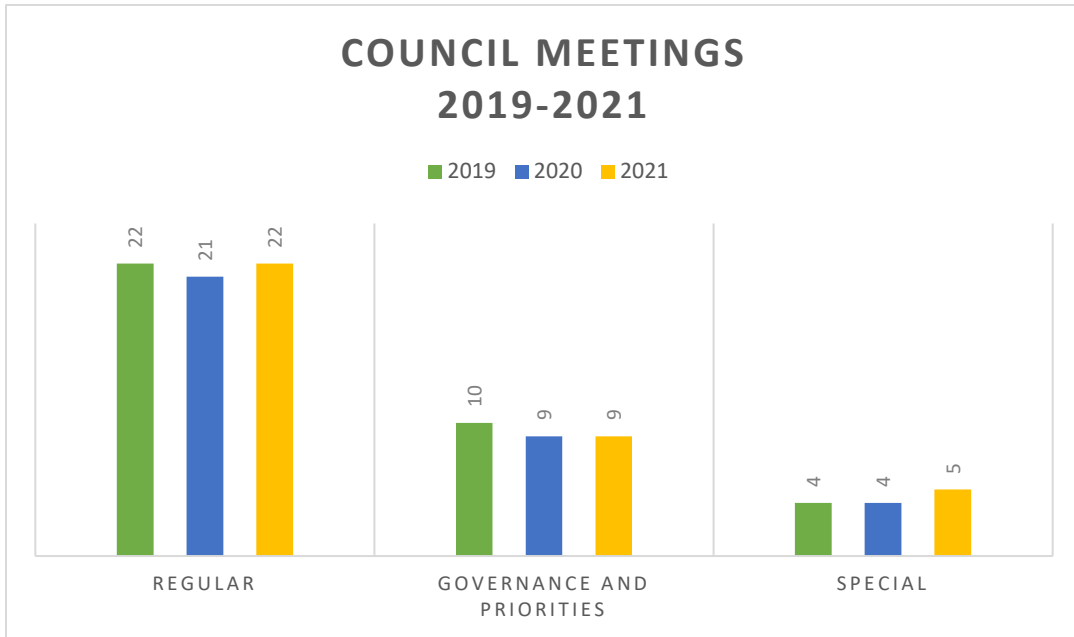
Pandemic Response

Response to the COVID-19 pandemic shaped a great deal of Administration’s actions and decisions in year two of this pandemic. With the new variants, administration has had to adapt to the mandates put forth by the provincial government while still attempting to provide basic municipal services. A new emphasis on mental health of the employees and COVID fatigue has shown as a predominate issues in our organization and the community.

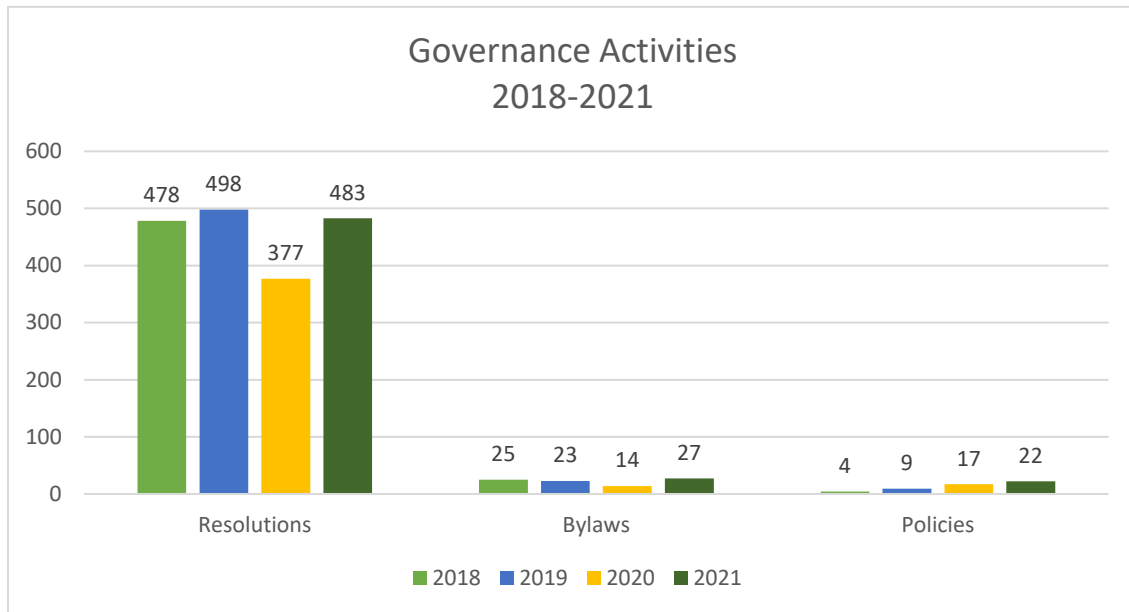
Although the rate of change has slowed, many accommodations remain in place. Administration continues to engage with the Province and public health officials and adjust processes and operations as required. While this does take less time than in early months, it continues to affect staff time and capacity.

Governance

Council meetings fluctuated in 2021 with meetings moving in-person to electronic format over the course of the entire year. Some perspectives on Council business in 2021 as compared to 2019:

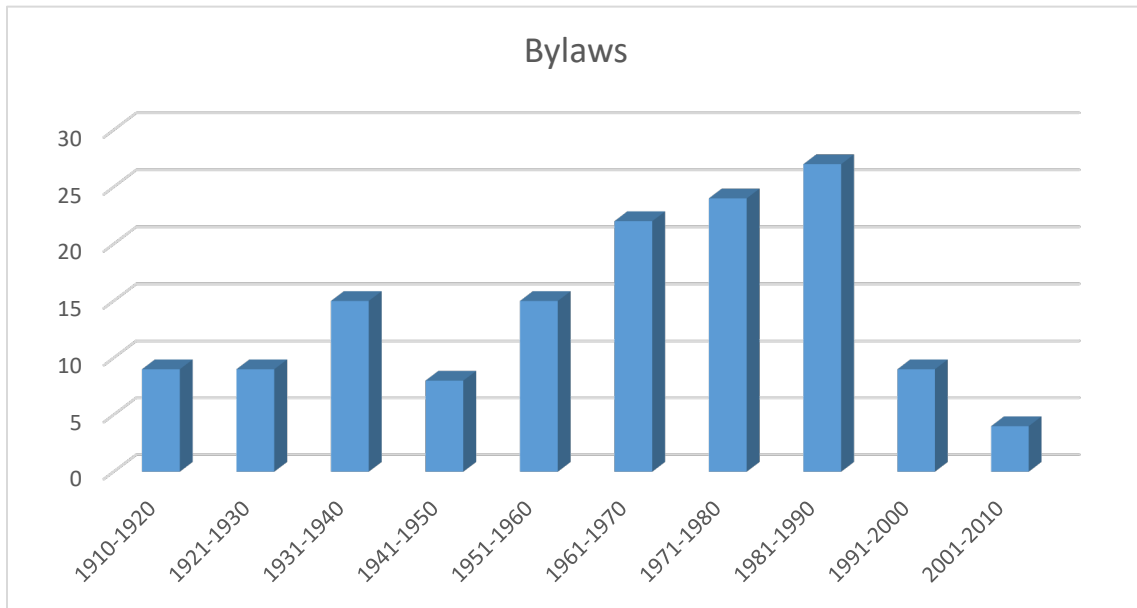


The number of meetings is based on the calendar and varies little year over year. A slightly more accurate representation of the business of governance is in decisions made by Council:



This chart clearly conveys the focus required by the pandemic response. Under normal operations, staff has the capacity to bring a broad range of strategic and operational matters before Council. Note, however, the increase in Policies in 2021 as opposed to previous years.

A complete review of outdated bylaws resulted in 2021 a repeal of over 142 in the month of July alone. The chart below shows the decade the original bylaws were adopted.



Intermunicipal Affairs

Following the completion of negotiations, Intermunicipal Collaboration Framework (ICF) Agreements were signed between the Town and both Northern Sunrise County and the County of Northern Lights 2020, with the new committees meeting regularly in in 2021. These meetings have been regular and strictly follow the terms of reference adopted by all councils.

Also of significance the ICF for the MD of Peace 35 went to arbitration in 2021 and was concluded with the ruling in late November. A new agreement was drafted and was referred to the 2022 council year for ratification. This agreement was backdated to start on April 1st 2021. The cost of an Arbitrator was borne by the MD and the Town equally.

Committees have been set up with each partner to regularly review issues and discuss opportunities for collaboration. All three of these agreements have increase the funding received by our municipal partners from previous agreements to support the programs that we offer to their residents. This funding ensures that a process has been developed to provide a sustainable and predictable operating revenue source that the town can use in the day-to-day operations of our mutually beneficial programs with the Counties. Though the capital funding from some our municipal partners is still an issue, hopefully, this coming year the town will be able to obtain a formula that also will help in providing a predictable funding source so the town can develop plan long term plans.

Emergency Planning and Response

Updating the Town's Municipal Emergency Plan (MEP) has been an ongoing project for several years. However, the process was given new direction by the release of a new Regulation late in 2018.

Work on has continued through 2021 with completion the MEP occurring in July of 2021. Staff and council have been trained in the program. Municipal Emergency Plan: Content for several key portions

of the Plan were finalized in May, notably the Emergency Social Services (ESS) plan. This is a required component under the legislation and is one of the more complex portions of the plan. A second required component, a plan for communicating with the public during emergencies, was completed in June.

In addition to the written portion of the plan, staff have updated all the materials needed by the Incident Command Post (ICP) during an emergency. This includes making sure all office supplies, forms and other support materials are up to date. Building on the demonstrated success of the system used by the ESS team during the 2019 wildfires, the plan now provides for portable containers for all key ICP positions. Each contains the supplies needed for a minimum 48 hour on-site deployment



Key Issues

Update on GST

In March of 2019, a routine audit by the Canada Revenue Agency resulted in a GST re-assessment of over \$600,000. As the majority of this assessment was applied to intermunicipal agreements, the Town submitted an appeal, maintaining that the auditor reinterpreted the relevant legislation. It was the Town's concern that this reinterpretation could potentially affect all municipalities by making it unclear which transactions should be assessed GST. The appeal was not successful. The town has issued out invoices to the various municipalities to recover the GST fees paid by the town on due to this new ruling.

Election

The election has been a significant focus for the department this year. The election officially started on January 1st of 2021 in which candidates could have filed their nomination papers to run with the change

in the rules with a new Local Authorities Election Act. Many members of administration had to register and complete in a 10-session training program over the spring to review the new areas of the legislation and how to run an election using the updated rules.

With staff turnover, a couple of different staff members were appointed as the Returning and Substitute Returning Officers over the course of the year. The Returning Officer conducted a training session which covered basic election day procedures, changes in legislated processes and post vote activities. This training was attended by town employees and contracted staff. The training and training resources were also made available to both school divisions.

The numerous changes to the legislation had required an audit and updating of all forms, training materials, local reference manuals, signage and more.

The town conducted two institutional votes, two advance polls and the election day poll. Residents had an opportunity to over a period of 37 hours this year as compared to 18 in previous years. Staff ensured that an accommodated voting area was created to ensure a safe environment for all individuals wanting to participate due to the pandemic.

There were 1883 voters this year as opposed to 2017 where we saw 1728 participants or 155 more than in the 2017 election. Stats Canada figures show 5404 eligible voters in the Town of Peace River, so this represents a turnout of 34.8%. We had 20 candidates for council and 3 for Mayor.



The Town's Returning Officer and election staff also administered the referendum poll and senate nomination vote on behalf of the province. Municipal Affairs provided additional guidance regarding election activities and required COVID precautions. This, along with enhanced safety protocols due to COVID, substantially increased the complexity of the election process.

The final election process will be completed in 2022 once all the documentation required by the candidates have been received by the March 1st deadline. Any documentation not received in time will lead to candidates being fined and could result in automatic disqualification for participating in future municipal elections.

Business Support Grants

The Local Business Support Program was launched with the partnership between the Town of Peace River, Community Futures Peace Country and the Peace River Chamber of Commerce.

The program focused on providing businesses with ten hours of free one on one coaching with an expert in either bookkeeping, human resources, business planning and social media marketing. Applications were accepted from May 10, 2021 to August 31, 2021, and successful applicants were eligible to continue their coaching sessions through November 30th.

For the duration of the program, we had a total of 36 applications. Out of those 36 applications we had 11 businesses that were successfully eligible in applying. Of those 11 applicants we had eight who followed through and participated in one-on-one coaching. All experts were used for these successful applicants and many received more than one session.

The businesses who did participate found that they learned valuable information and were able to apply it directly to their business. They felt that these coaching sessions gave them realistic help and allowed them to focus on bettering their businesses during a time that's proven to be difficult. The feedback we received was that each business was grateful and appreciative of the coach that they had worked with and they would likely reach out and use their services again.

From the coaching side of the operations, the coaches we had were happy to provide support and assistance to the businesses who applied. They found that many took their advice and applied it right away. The panel of experts did well with communicating the needs and expectations with each applicant and helped them set attainable goals during their sessions.

Dani Wearden was the Program Coordinator and stated that the businesses who did successfully apply were wonderful to work with. Our group of experts were professional and highly skilled in their areas, making them a great asset to this program. The general feeling was that the program was a success, as it was something new, and it provided more comprehensive and targeted assistance to local businesses in the area. Though the timing was off when it came to launching. The program was meant to help pull local businesses out of the COVID restrictions, but at the time of launching we were struck with more restrictions being implemented, making it extremely hard for businesses to focus on anything else. Administration believes that if they had waited and launched in the Fall of 2021, we would have had an even higher success rate.

Overall, this Program was able to make a difference and help local businesses. It showcased the dedication that the Town of Peace River, Community Futures Peace Country, and the Peace River Chamber have for their community members and business owners and was a great benefit to businesses who were struggling.

Airport

On April 6th the airport was officially transferred to the PRRA. The town was waiting for final approval from the Federal government, which we received early April. All requests concerning the airport are now being referred to the new organization. In order to provide a smooth transition, the agreement with the new agency provided personnel support of one airport operator and one water wastewater for a period of one year ending at the end of March 2022, and funding of \$700,000 for the next two years ending in March of 2023.

Communications

Website

The website is our central communications tool and many communications strategies rely on attracting users to the website to help them find the information they need. Website analytics provide a snapshot of what types of information people are accessing from our website, which helps us to further optimize content on it.

Definitions of analytic terms used:

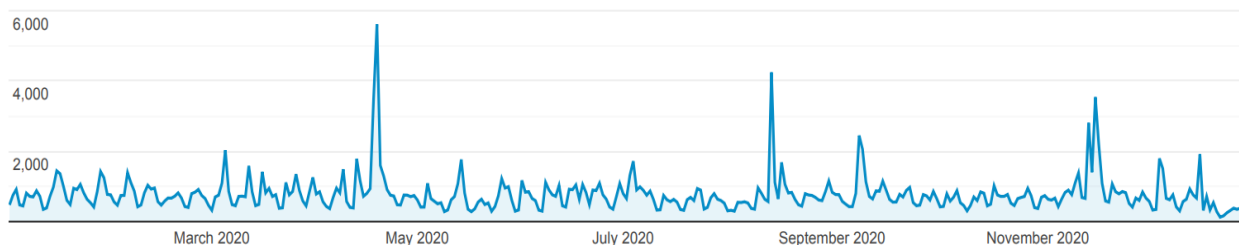
1. **Session** – A period of time when a user is accessing the site. Record from the time the user opens the site to the time it is closed. Multiple sessions under the same user can occur in one day.
2. **Page views** – A record of an instance where a web page on the site is opened by a user and viewed

Top Pages by number of Page Views

1. Pool – **17,548**
2. Election – **6,371**
3. Arena – **5,969**
4. Careers – **4,645**
5. Council – **3,898**
6. Moving to Peace River– **3,362**
7. COVID-19 – **3,191**
8. Contact – **2,514**
9. Candidates – **2,505**
10. News – **2,407**

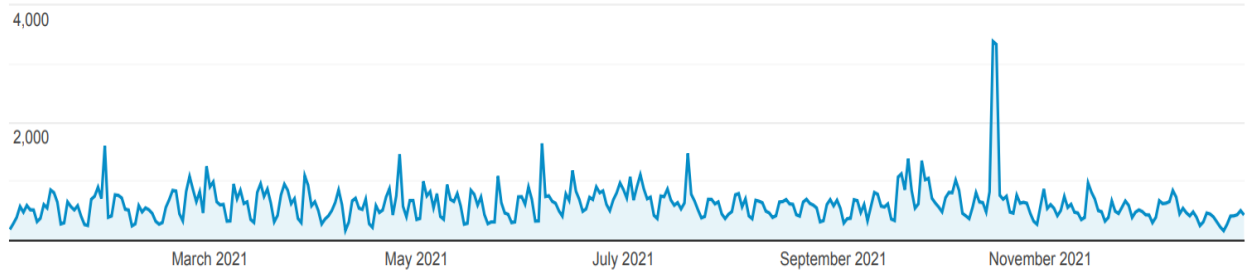
Total landing on homepage – **46,057**

Web Traffic for 2020



Key events in 2020 which likely triggered the increase traffic were the Pat's Creek Flood (April), Mask Bylaw (September) and Mask implementation (November-December)

Web Traffic for 2021



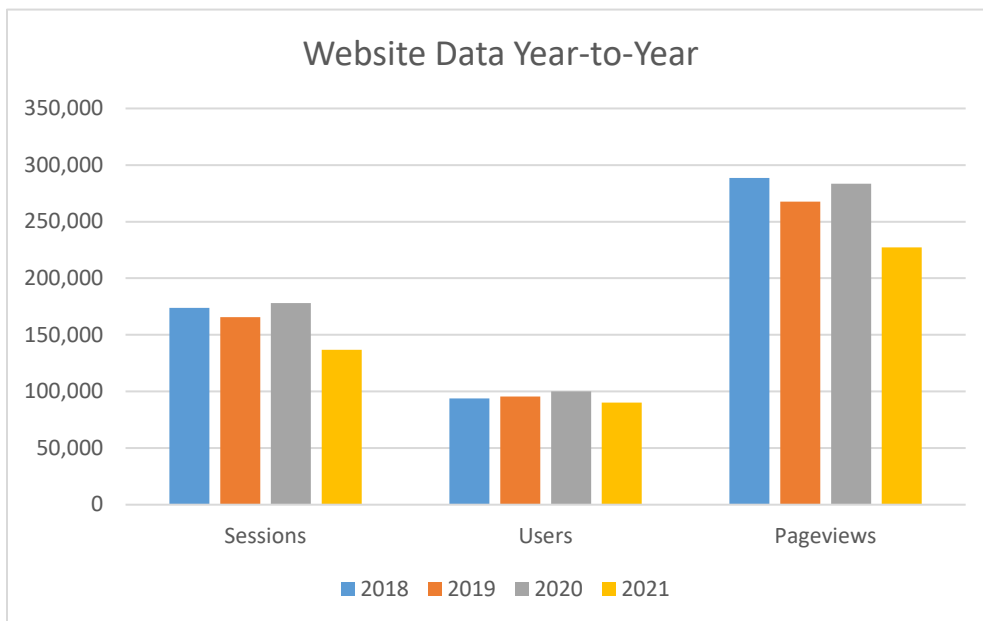
Key event triggering the spike in 2021 would have been the election (October).

User Data

Sessions – in 2021 there were 136,760 sessions which was a **23.22% decrease** from 2020.

Users – in 2021 there were 90,188 users which was a **9.87% decrease** from 2020.

Pageviews – in 2021 there were 227,409 pageviews which was a **19.83% decrease** from 2020.

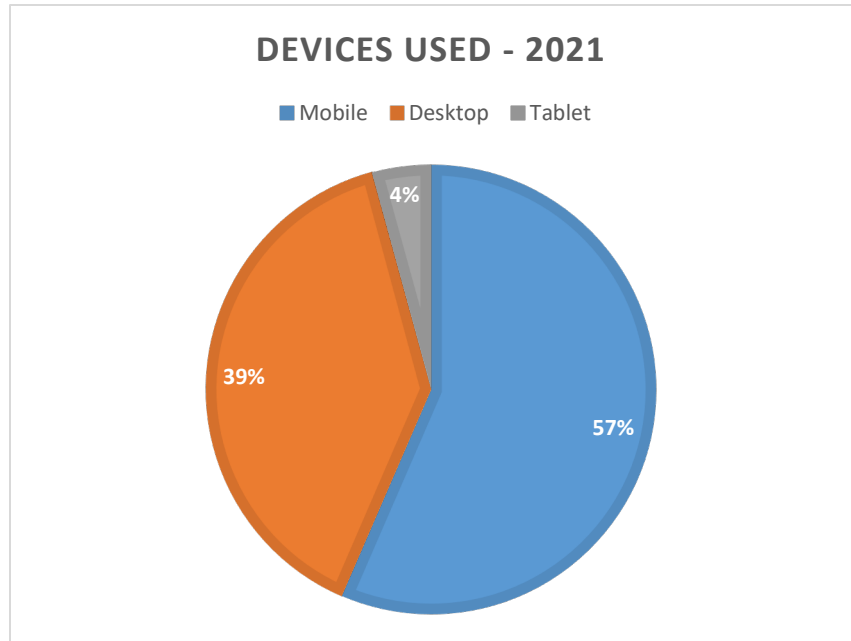


Devices Used

Mobile – 50,301

Desktop – 34,727

Tablet – 3,673



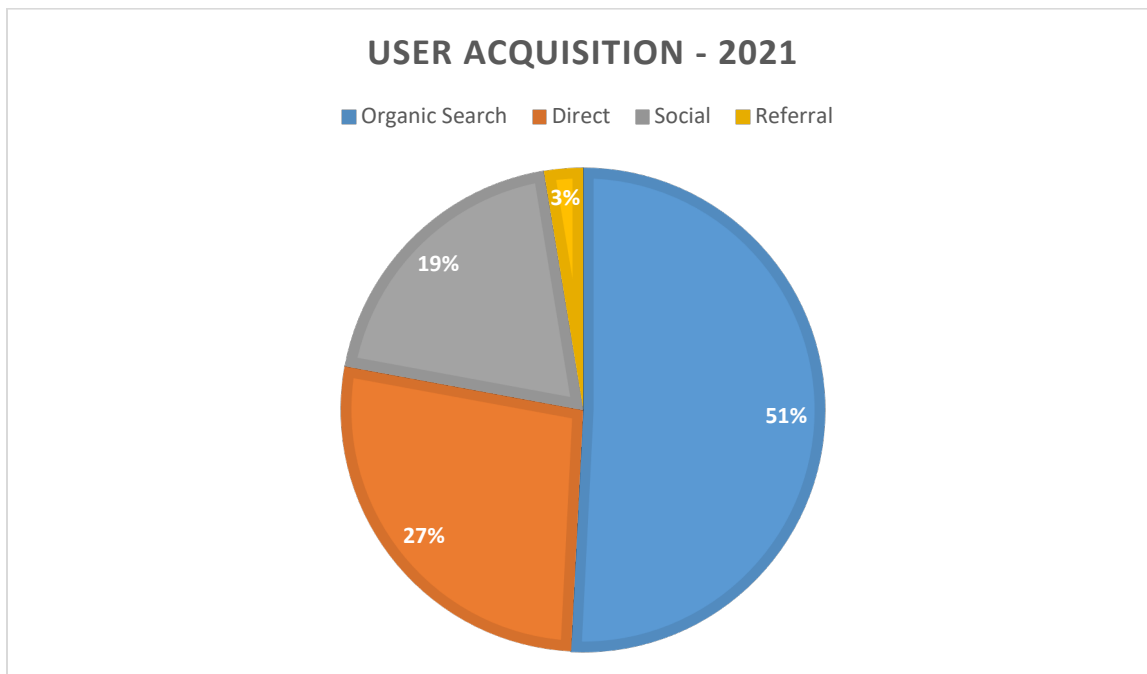
User Acquisition

Organic Search (Redirected from Google, Yahoo, Bing Etc.) – 46,776

Direct (Directly inputting the URL or the use of bookmarks.) – 24,985

Social Media (Includes Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) – 17,983

Referral (Referred from another site, or another place on the internet) – 2,372



A note that 2021 saw more User Acquisition from Direct than Social Media, which is different from last year. This means that more people are manually typing our URL into the address bar. Or, that more people might have our site bookmarked. Interestingly, much fewer people accessed our website through our social media in 2021. We also had lower referral numbers, meaning we had fewer people being directed to us through partners like rivercountry.fm, kix.fm, indeed.com, Wikipedia, elections.ab.ca, govjobs.ca, surveymonkey.com, mightypeace.com, etc.

Social Media

The Town of Peace River uses three main social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Facebook has our largest audience followed by Twitter. Instagram continues to show the most year over year audience growth. In addition to those three main platforms the Town also uses RSS feeds for website content delivery, YouTube for video hosting, and Soundcloud to host Council meeting audio.

Definitions of Analytic Terms Used

1. **Impressions** – Refers to the number of times a post is loaded into a user's newsfeed, sometimes the same post can be loaded into the same user's news feed more than once. Twitter and Instagram report using impressions, Facebook uses reach.
2. **Reach** – The number of people a post reached. Unlike impressions reach only counts news feed delivery once.
3. **Follower** – Someone who has opted to follow updates from a social media page. Note that Facebook uses likes and followers. In their context you can like a page, without following it for updates, or you can follow a page without "liking it". As a result, followers are used for Facebook as they provide a more accurate number.

Twitter

There was a 2.2% increase in followers, going from 1,634 to 1,670. Top three tweets by impressions are below.

2,501 Impressions

 **Town of Peace River**
@PeaceRiverAB

This week is Rural Healthcare Week in Alberta and we want to take moment to thank healthcare providers in our community. Your work is deeply valued and your contributions to our community's well-being cannot be overstated. 1/4 [#PeaceRiver](#)



4:30 PM · May 27, 2021 · Twitter Web App

||| [View Tweet activity](#)

4 Retweets 12 Likes

2,014 Impressions

 **Town of Peace River**
@PeaceRiverAB

Town Council's Meeting on March 8 will be held electronically. The live stream will be available on our website, linked in this post. For agendas, minutes, and details about how to make a submission tap or click on the link. [#PeaceRiver](#)



peacriver.ca
Mayor & Council
Town council is composed of seven individuals (Mayor, Deputy Mayor and five Councillors) who serve for a four-year term. [Read More →](#)

4:18 PM · Mar 5, 2021 · TweetDeck

||| [View Tweet activity](#)

2 Retweets 4 Likes

494 Impressions

Facebook

There was a **5.67% increase** in followers, going from 6,617 to 6,992. Top three posts by reach are below.

30,084 People reached



Town of Peace River

June 29, 2021 · 🌐



The new pedestrian pathway under the Highway Two bridge has been opened! It connects at either end to the pre-existing river path network. Please note that the pedestrian pathway over the arch bridge is now closed, all pedestrians must use the new walkway.

#PeaceRiver



👍👀 413

62 Comments 318 Shares



18,062 People reached



Town of Peace River

September 3, 2021 · 🌐



We are excited to present the latest addition to the Town's public art collection!

A new mural was completed this week by Dave Thomas of Flying Colours, on the north wall of Peace Country Hearing Care, along River Road. Distinctly different in style from the last few murals, the 2021 art piece is titled "New Beginnings". It celebrates moving from childhood to adolescence, emphasizing spring and new growth.

Thank you to Vicky Fedosky of Peace Country Hearing Care for partner... [See more](#)



👍❤️ 871

139 Comments 93 Shares

12,782 People reached



Town of Peace River

July 21, 2021 · 🌐



Due to the rain, there has been a mudslide that is impacting the northbound lanes of 98 St. near the roundabout between the two highway bridges. Alberta Transportation has been notified and clean-up will take place, the road is currently open to traffic, however, taking an alternate is recommended. If you do go through the area please drive slowly and cautiously.



🤔👍😱 39

21 Comments 64 Shares

Instagram

There was a **7.32% increase** in followers, going from 1,257 to 1,349. Top three posts by reach are below.

9,230 People reached



peacerverab

Baytex Energy Centre
christmas_count_down2021 • Original Audio



peacerverab The Baytex Energy Centre is feeling festive this year!

#fireinthehole #christmastree #peacerverab #christmasspirit
#happyholidays

5w



Liked by and.everything_ and 152 others

DECEMBER 7, 2021

5,631 People reached



peaceriverab
Geek Music • Married Life (From "Up")



peaceriverab We are over the moon with the response to our Fresh Air Cinema last night at the Ag Grounds!

Thank you to everyone who came out and enjoyed Up or Back to the Future!

Thank you to our vendors @billiescones @boardnbarrel @archercookieco @northern.dough & Sly Dogs Hot Dogs for filling us all with wonderful snacks!

AND thank you to the organizing committee 🍷 can't wait to do it again next year!

#peaceriverab #outdoormovienight #freshaircinema #northernalberta #communityplanning #Up #BacktoTheFuture #movenight #outdoorfilm #summernights #familyfunnight #smalltownliving #AgGrounds

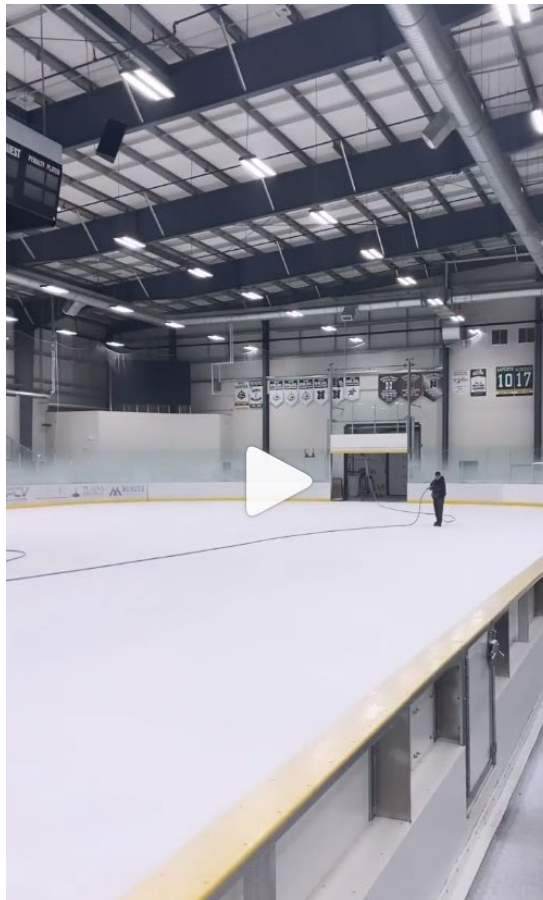
20w



Liked by and.everything_ and 76 others

AUGUST 20, 2021

5,164 People reached



peacriverab
Kid Francescoli • Moon (And It Went Like) ...

peacriverab Ice is in at the Baytex Energy Centre! We are so excited to welcome back our ice-loving patrons.

Checkout our website or Fbook page for the fall/winter schedule!

#peacriverab #iceicebaby #icemaintenance #iceisback #albertaarena #northernalberta #hockey #speedskating #figureskating #ringette #oldtimers #zamboni #northpeacenavigators #miniorhockey

20w

♡ 💬 📌

👤 Liked by and.everything_ and 78 others

AUGUST 24, 2021

Organizational Support

Communications provides support to every corner of the organization. In order to manage requests, our ticketing system is utilized to track and record organization support.

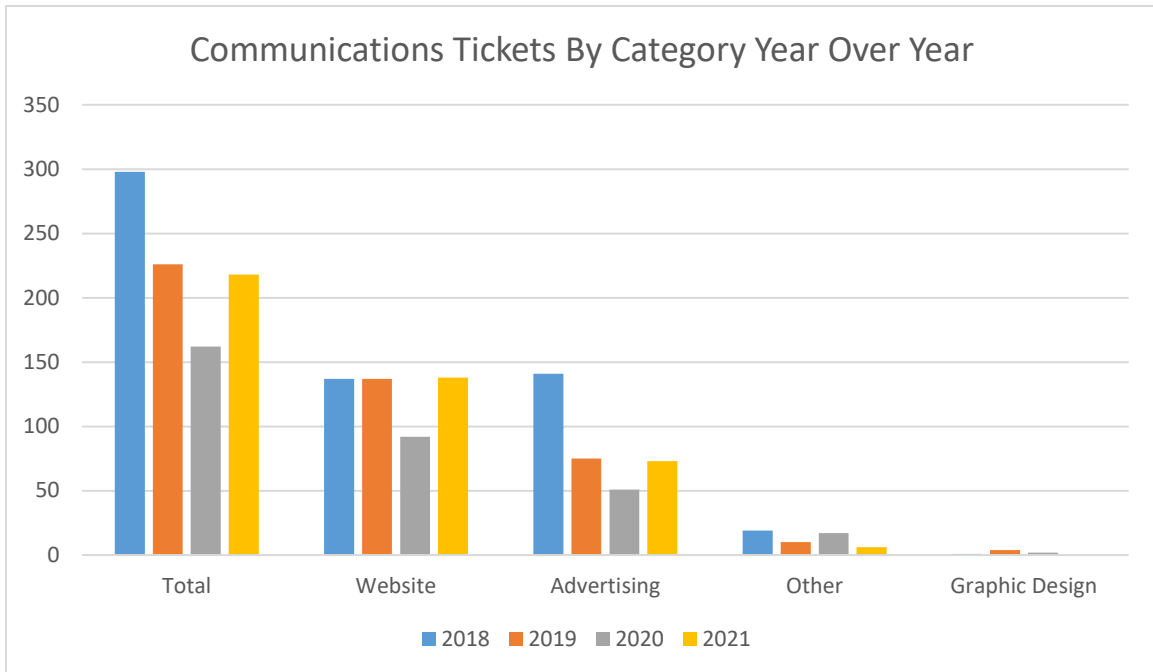
The Website category includes updates to pages, specific news posts, or user experience improvements. The Advertising category includes job ads, statutory advertising, as well as requests for program and event advertising. Graphic Design includes things such as posters and graphics. The Other category encompasses items like form creation, large format printing, press releases, and social media only notices.

Communications Tickets By Category

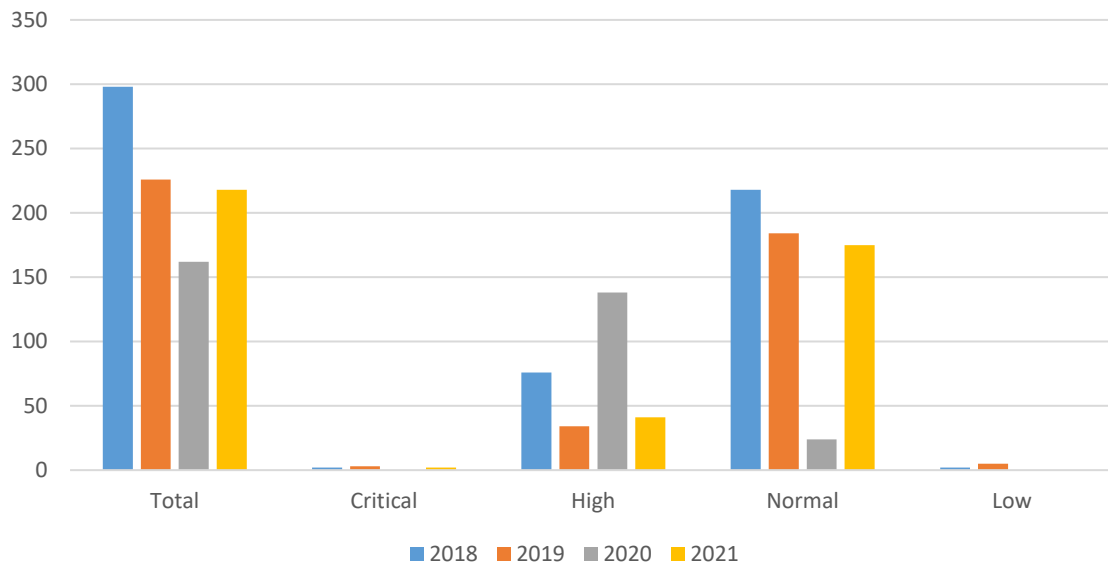
Tickets	Total	Website	Advertising	Other	Graphic Design
2018	298	137	141	19	1
2019	226	137	75	10	4
2020	162	92	51	17	2
2021	218	138	73	6	1

Communications Tickets By Priority

Tickets	Total	Critical	High	Normal	Low
2018	298	2	76	218	2
2019	226	3	34	184	5
2020	162	0	138	24	0
2021	218	2	41	175	0



Communications Tickets By Priority Year Over Year



Human Resources

The HR Department provides employee and management supports starting in the hiring process, continuing through employment, and finalizing during the offboarding process. Alongside training, personnel records management and labour relations, one of the main focuses of the department is to provide guidance to all staff on legislation, employment issues, pension and benefits and policy administration.

Human Resources also provides referrals for programs such as the Employee Assistance Program, manages Long Term Disability and Worker's Compensation claims, as well as the modified work program.

Functional areas of the Human Resources department include benefits and pension administration, labour relations, policy development, training, recruitment, onboarding and offboarding, performance management, and record keeping. HR works closely with all levels of staff to support and responds to their needs.



Facts and Figures

Staffing Complement (at December 31, 2021):

- 60 Permanent Full Time
- 6 Permanent Part Time (3.8 FTE)
- 69 Casual & Temporary

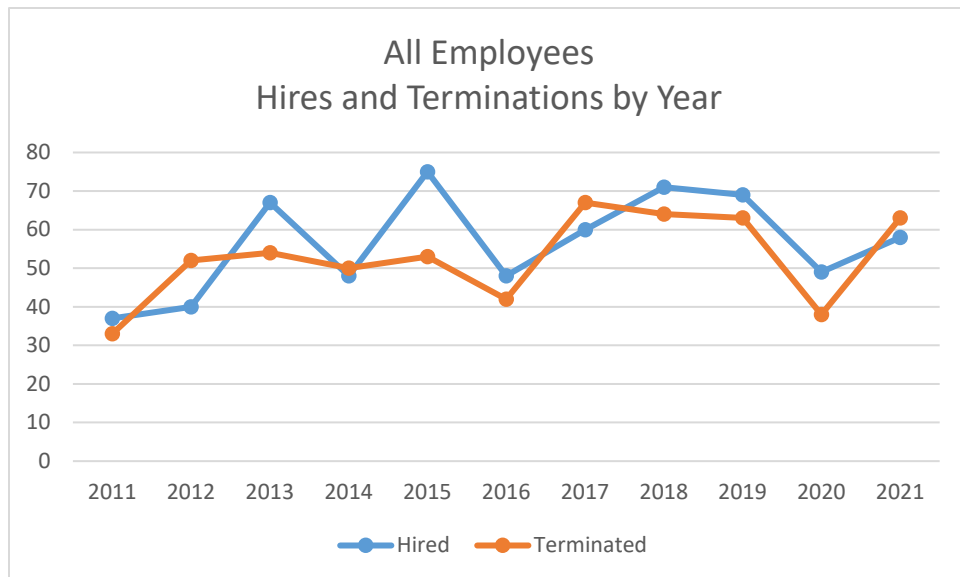
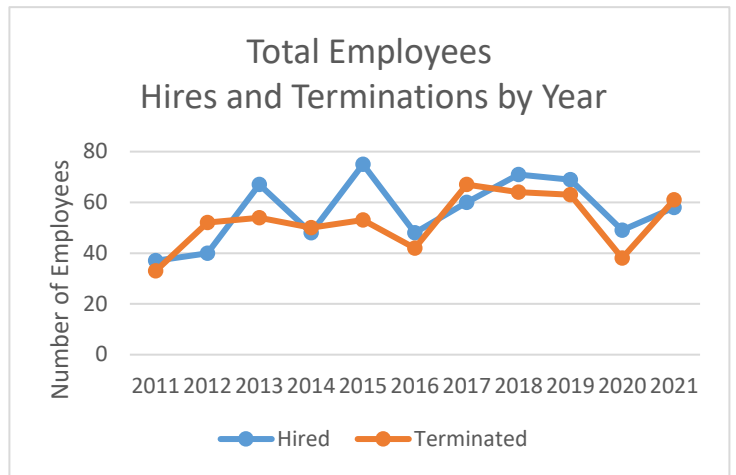
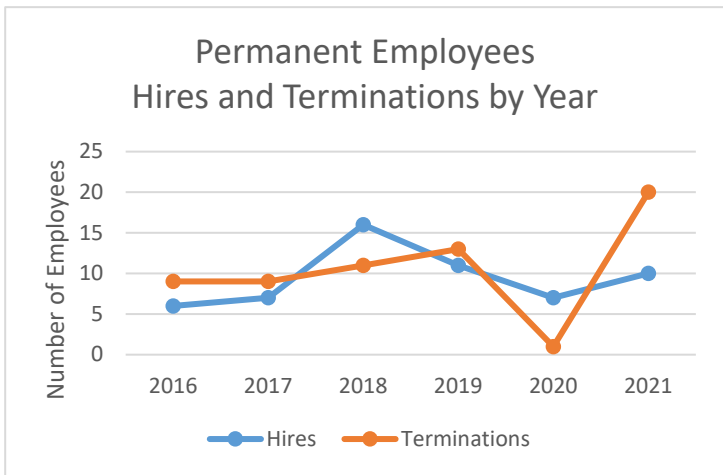
The staffing complement includes both in scope and out of scope employees in full time, part time, temporary, seasonal, and casual capacities.

2021 Hires and Terminations

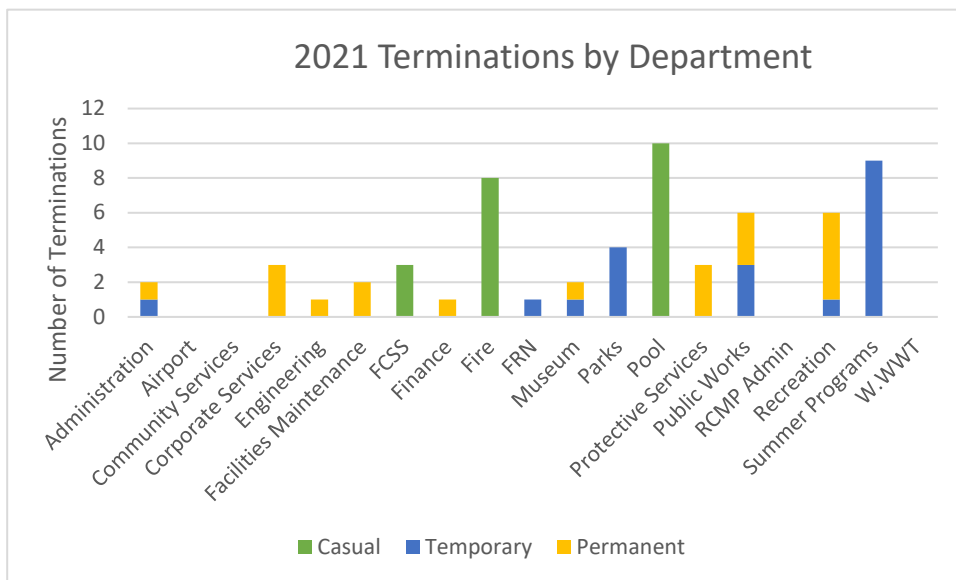
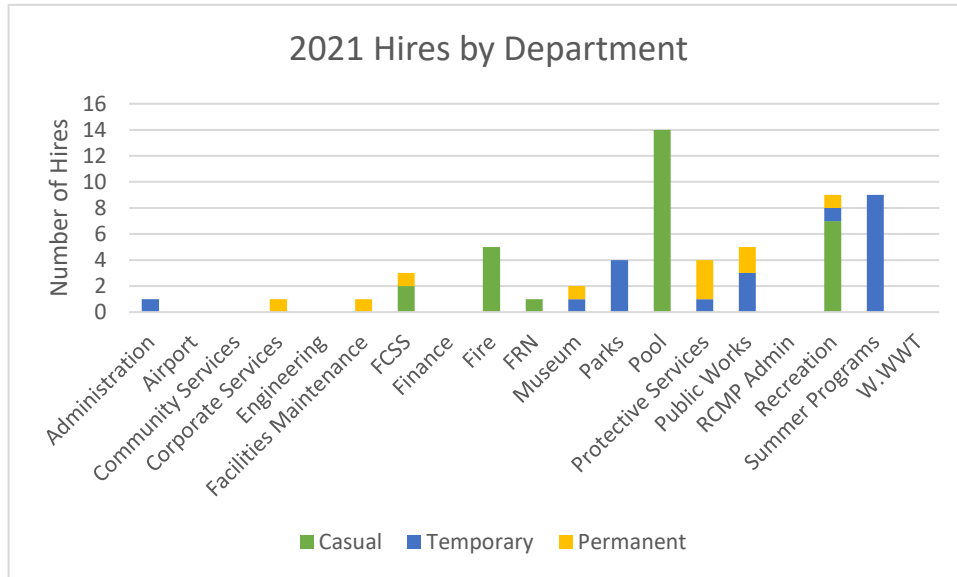
Staff turnover in 2021 was significantly different than in 2020. The Town of Peace River was not immune to the effects of what is being called “The Great Resignation”, with a number of staff resigning for more personal reasons than in previous years. Some reasons include moving closer to family or taking on a completely different career path. Layoff and recall data relating to COVID-19 are not included in this report.

Note: The word “termination” refers to all reasons for ending employment, whether voluntary or involuntary and includes the end of temporary employment.

This year 58 new hires and 63 terminations per processed. Of that, 9 permanent staff were hired and 15 permanent staff left the Town (3 of the remaining vacancies were filled early in 2022). The majority of staff turnover comes from temporary positions, and seasonal turnover within our casual pool of staff.



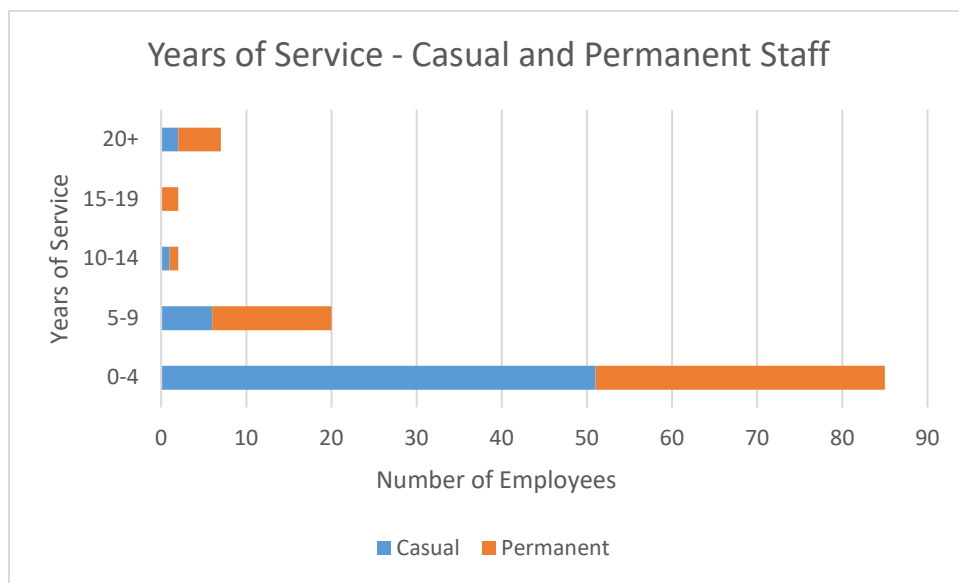
Human Resources assists with all stages of the employee’s life cycle including recruitment, interviewing, onboarding and offboarding processes. In 2021 there were 42 job advertisements posted. Of those hired 52% were casual employees, 33% were temporary staff and 15% were permanent staff.



Benefits

Every year the Town of Peace River hosts an Employee Recognition event, where staff are recognized for 5 year milestones. This year looked a little bit different, as we gathered in smaller groups due to the Covid restrictions at the time. The Town celebrated a total of 65 years of service from our staff!

Years of Service	Number of Staff
5	4
10	1
15	1
20	1



Training

The Human Resources Department oversees the training program for all employees. Each year HR focuses on one specific training that will be offered to all staff. Individual departments manage their compliance and license required trainings within their own departments, with documentation managed by HR. In 2021, the focus was on providing Health and Safety Training to the Joint Health and Safety Committee and all Supervisory positions. Staff attended the following courses throughout the year:

- Leadership for Safety Excellence;
- Health and Safety Management Systems; and,
- Joint Health and Safety Committee Training.

The HR Coordinator was able to take advantage of other training opportunities including:

- Canadian Mental Health Association – Working Stronger Conference
- Workforce Forward Conference

- CPHR Alberta: Momentum 21 Conference
- Webinar: Leader Skills for Long-Term Coping
- Webinar: WCB Legislative Changes
- Webinar: Leading When You Have All The Responsibility and No Authority
- Webinar: Anti-Racism and White Privilege
- Webinar: Benefits Plan Administrator Sessions (x4)
- Webinar: Lumino Health
- Webinar: APEX Plan Administrator Session

Other Significant Items

- COVID-19 Pandemic:
 - From January to July, we continued to monitor staff who were required to isolate due to Covid-19 symptoms, close contact, or positive cases. From August to December, we switched our monitoring to positive Covid-19 cases only. Throughout the year, we recorded 33 absences related to Covid.
 - The COVID-19 Employee Guide that was created in 2020 was dismantled in the Spring of 2021 as restrictions were relaxed.
 - Worked closely with Supervisors to navigate the specific situation of each positive case, and how the provincial restrictions affected the employee.
- Created and updated a number of Policies and Directives:
 - COVID-19 Masking Directive
 - COVID-19 Pandemic Directive
 - General Holiday Directive
 - Social Media Personal Use Directive (assisted with this update)
 - Vacation Policy
 - Council Floater Day Policy
 - Code of Ethics and Conduct for Municipal Employees Policy (assisted with this update)

Other Interesting Data

