

CPRS Hamilton

2007 Pinnacle Awards

Entry Data

Entrant name: Maria McDonald, Communications Specialist, Halton Region
Participants: Colin Jameson, Graphic Design Specialist, Halton Region
Organization: Regional Municipality of Halton
Category: Public Relations Tactics – Annual Reports
Title of entry: **Halton Region 2005 Annual Report**
Time period: 2006

Summary of Entry

Halton Region's 2005 Annual Report is a flagship document that continues to build the Region's reputation for excellence in delivering programs and services to the Halton community, and provides the ideal public relations vehicle for informing stakeholders about the Region's progress in 2005 towards reaching its strategic goals.

Entry Work Plan

The Regional Municipality of Halton serves more than 400,000 residents in the City of Burlington and the Towns of Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville. Halton Region is committed to meeting the needs of its residents, today and tomorrow, through its focus on four thematic areas and corresponding goals. Its workforce delivers quality, cost-effective programs and services, from water and wastewater and regional roads and planning to heritage programs, emergency management and business development. The Region is recognized by Canadian and international organizations for its strategic management practices.

Need

Obligation: Halton Region, like all Canadian municipalities, is obligated to produce a report outlining the municipality's financial position, and to make that information available to the public and the organization's stakeholders.

Opportunity: An organization's annual report is a valuable communications tool. In 2005, the requirement for a solid financial performance report also presented Halton Region with the opportunity to report back to the community and other stakeholders about the Region's progress to date towards fulfilling the goals of the 2004-2006 Halton Regional Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan sets out the themes and goals that define the vision and strategic priorities of Halton Regional Council over their three-year term. Over the years, the Region's annual report has evolved into a strategic public relations device with appealing design elements and accessible, resident-friendly content featuring explicit ties back to the Strategic Plan.

Goals and Objectives

Overall goal: To continue to build the Region's reputation for leadership and accountability with an annual report that will provide clear indicators for the Region's performance in the previous year, and valuable information about the Region's programs and services.

Objectives	
A.	To present a flagship document that builds Halton's image as progressive, consultative, visionary and accountable, and to support Halton Region's reputation as a leader in the municipal field in the areas of public health, social services, public works, planning and heritage.
B.	To present an accurate financial report that builds on the Region's fiscal planning practices that support its AAA credit rating.
C.	To produce a professional annual report in house as cost-effectively as possible.
D.	To use a resident-friendly approach to illustrate the full range of Halton Region's services.
E.	To report on successes in 2005 that align with the themes outlined in Halton Region's Strategic Plan.
F.	To provide a communications vehicle that helps enhance the scope of dialogue between the Region and its citizens and stakeholders.
G.	To create a document with a practical shelf life beyond an initial reading.

Audiences

Community partners & stakeholders

The Annual Report is a key vehicle to reinforce Halton's reputation for excellence at the local, provincial and national levels by providing a showcase for innovative and leading-edge initiatives.

Financial stakeholders

The Annual Report meets essential financial reporting requirements, including the Statement of Recommended Practice for performance reporting as set out by the Public Sector Accounting Board.

Businesses

Businesses are increasingly targeted with business development information and incentives from other communities. The Annual Report promotes Halton to new businesses and reinforces existing businesses' understanding and appreciation of Halton's merits.

Residents

The Annual Report provides interested residents with clear illustrations of how their community is progressing, and provides a basis for increased participation in the local government process. Halton Region's Strategic Plan places a strong focus on community engagement. This document represents an important contribution to this objective.

Budget

The original budget for this project was not to exceed \$40,000. By performing the design, writing and editing work using in-house resources, I kept outside expenses limited to printing and finishing. I was able to produce enough copies of the Annual Report (500) to reach all of our intended audiences for under \$10,000, less than a quarter of the original budget limit.

Execution

Planning: A Corporate Perspective

The production process for the 2005 Annual Report began in February 2006. As project manager, I set up an Editorial Committee, including representatives from Community Relations, Financial Services & Purchasing, Strategic Planning & Policy and the CAO's Office, to help streamline the review process and to ensure the publication had a truly corporate perspective. During initial meetings, I presented a recommendation for the theme of the report to be "Halton Region—Taking the Lead." The Committee approved the report's overall theme and provided input on the report's direction, which I then wove into the content of the report. Final approval of the content and design of the report rested with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Community Relations.

Content: Sourcing, Writing and Editing

For content, I sourced articles to profile the Region's accomplishments in 2005 and progress in the Region's four Strategic Themes:

- Theme A: *Managed Growth*
- Theme B: *Economic Prosperity*
- Theme C: *Services to People*
- Theme D: *Effective Halton Region*

As part of the editing process, I ensured that the articles clearly indicated the Strategic Theme with which they aligned. I also drafted messages from the Regional Chairman and Chief Administrative Officer to give context to the individual articles, and incorporated messaging that supported the theme of “Taking the Lead.” Legislated financial statements, along with a message from the Regional Treasurer, were incorporated into the overall visual design of the report. As part of my project management role, I oversaw quality control of the document and coordinated the review and proofing processes.

Art Direction

As part of the project management process, I worked closely with our in-house graphic design specialist to ensure that the design of the report followed Halton Region’s Visual Identity Guidelines, and aligned with the theme of “Taking the Lead.” The graphic design specialist provided expertise and guidance in terms of a pleasing design, attractive design elements, and the clean layout of figures and tables. The graphic design specialist worked with me to source the acquisition of photographs to complement articles in the report.

Printing and Finishing

Five hundred (500) copies of the Annual Report were printed, based on my review of the previous year’s distribution and existing stock levels. The graphic design specialist recommended the use of an innovative wrap-around coil bind to make it easy for the report to lie flat for easy reading.

Distribution

The 2005 Annual Report was distributed to stakeholders in summer 2006, along with a personally signed letter from the Regional Chairman. The report continues to be requested as a giveaway at community fairs and Regional events, and is also valued by Halton employees as a staff resource. The report is provided to members of the public upon request and is available on the Region’s website, www.halton.ca.

Results

The table below demonstrates the results of the 2005 Annual Report as they pertain to the objectives listed above.

Results	
A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2005 Annual Report is a flagship document that helps to build the Region’s reputation amongst its stakeholders and in the community. • The report succeeds in depicting the Region as progressive, consultative, visionary and accountable by providing snapshots of the Region’s accomplishments in 2005. • The theme of the report, “Taking the Lead,” supports the Region’s reputation as a leader in the municipal field.

B.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report is an accurate financial report prepared according to current standards in performance reporting. • The report highlights the Region's responsible fiscal planning practices and demonstrates how those practices are recognized (as with the AAA credit rating).
C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report met the goal for cost-effective production, with the initiative coming in significantly under budget.
D.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report uses a resident-friendly narrative approach to illustrate the services Halton provides to residents and businesses. Wherever possible, the report provides the reader with easy-to-understand outcomes from Regional initiatives. • The report's design is also resident-friendly, achieved by featuring appealing photographs and attractive design.
E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report aligns with the themes of the Region's Strategic Plan using design elements that mimic the format and colours used in the Strategic Plan. • Each article of the report has clear links back to the Strategic Plan and to appropriate goals and actions.
F.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Report enhances the scope of dialogue between the Region and its citizens and stakeholders by being distributed to pertinent stakeholders (including other levels of government), financial stakeholders, libraries, municipal counterparts, and by being made available to residents upon request. The report was also made available electronically on the Region's website, www.halton.ca, and featured in a local newspaper column under the Chairman's byline. • The report also enhances the scope of dialogue between the Region and its stakeholders by informing those stakeholders about the strategic planning cycle as a whole and the Region's commitment to public consultation.
G.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report has a shelf life beyond an initial reading by including information about the Region's Councillors and Management Committee, as well as an overview of each internal department and its responsibilities. A Regional Services listing helps readers understand what services the Region is responsible for. • The shelf-life of the report is expanded by including messages from both the Regional Chairman and the Chief Administrative Officer to frame the intent of the report, and to continue to build a rapport with members of the target audience.

Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback I've received on the 2005 Annual Report has been generally positive, including praise from colleagues in other municipalities. Anecdotal comments have indicated that the design, photographs and content are all professional and inviting.

Feedback from professional organizations, such the Government Finance Officers Association, will be used to improve the report in coming years.

Support Material

One (1) copy of Halton Region's 2005 Annual Report is attached.