Winnipeg

CITY OF WINNIPEG POLICY NO. XXX-XXX

POLICY TITLE	ADOPTED BY	EFFECTIVE DATE
Plain Language Policy	*City Council*	*XXXXXXXX*
ORIGIN / AUTHORITY	**CITY POLICY NO**	**MOST RECENT CONSOLIDATION**
Executive Policy Committee		*XXX-XXX*

1. Purpose:

The City of Winnipeg is a large organization that offers a wide variety of programs and services.

Communicating with members of the public is an activity that all civic departments perform.

The purpose of the *Plain Language Policy* (Policy) is to guide members of the Public Service on the use of suitable language in the City of Winnipeg's public-facing written materials to help ensure the intended audience can understand what is written, be better informed, and act on important information and participate.

Reading levels vary from person to person. Knowing who the intended audience is and its potential reading level will help determine the level of writing, taking into consideration legal, contractual, and technical language constraints.

Generally, public-facing written materials should be at a grade 8 reading level or lower so that most individuals can understand.

Writers should also avoid using complex sentences and difficult or uncommon words / terminology in public-facing written materials. If an uncommon word / terminology must be used, the writer should make every effort to explain what it means in plain language.

Public-facing written materials must also follow the guidelines set out in the City of Winnipeg Writing Style Guide.

2. Definitions:

2.1 **"Intended audience"** refers to the individual or group of individuals you are communicating with or attempting to inform.

2.2 **"Plain language"** means using words and terminology in public-facing materials that your intended audience can understand, and clearly explaining concepts that may be technical or unfamiliar to those who may be encountering it for the first time.

2.3 **"Public-facing written materials"** refers to materials written for, and intended to be consumed by members of the public.

2.4 **"Reading level"** refers to an individual's ability to read and understand content, which can vary from person to person.

3. Plain Language Policy

3.1 Application

This policy applies to public-facing written materials produced by the City of Winnipeg, in both official languages (English and French), including but not limited to:

a. Administrative reports (*Executive Summary* section only)
b. Advertisements
c. Correspondence
d. Presentations
e. Publications
f. Signage
g. Social media
h. Website content

This policy does not apply to written materials displayed on a property owned by the City but operated by a third party pursuant to a lease or other agreement.

This policy also takes into consideration legal, contractual, and technical language constraints, and does not apply to items, including but not limited to legal documents, agreements, disclaimers, engineering reports, financial documents, etc.

Public-facing materials intended for members of the public should be written at a grade 8 reading level or lower.

Members of the Public Service must verify and assess the grade level readability of their written content using Microsoft Word's readability statistics (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level), or using a similar application.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Director of Customer Service & Communications

The Director of Customer Service & Communications is responsible for administering this policy, including ongoing reviews every five years.

4.2 Manager of Corporate Communications

The Manager of Corporate Communications will review the City of Winnipeg Writing Style Guide and update it as required to ensure the instructions contained within it follow this Policy.

This position is also responsible for providing clarity on the requirements of this Policy.

4.3 Manager of Marketing & Advertising

The Manager of Marketing & Advertising will review the *City of Winnipeg Brand Manual* and update it as required to ensure the instructions contained within it follow this Policy.

4.4 Manager of Web & Social Media

The Manager of Web & Social Media will review the *City of Winnipeg Design System* and update it as required to ensure the instructions contained within it follow this Policy.

4.5 Administrative Report authors

Responsible for ensuring that the Executive Summary section of the Administrative Report adheres to this Policy and the appendices to this Policy.

4.6 Departments

Responsible for ensuring that public-facing written materials adhere to this Policy and the Appendices to this Policy.

Responsible for ensuring that materials written on behalf of the City by third parties adhere to this Policy and the Appendices to this Policy.

5. Review

The Policy will be reviewed, at minimum, every five (5) years.

6. Appendices

6.1 City of Winnipeg Writing Style Guide