

# Information, Consultation and Public Participation

# Policy



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## Presentation

Dear Fellow Citizens,

Developing and maintaining sustained trust between the municipal government and its citizens is the fundamental basis of our management approach. This was our frame of mind when we formulated the **Information, Consultation and Public Participation Policy**, adapted to the social, demographic and economic reality of Deux-Montagnes citizens.

With this policy, Deux-Montagnes acknowledges that everyone has the power to influence the decisions that concern them and take part in our collective development. This policy upholds our commitment to act with transparency, foster exchange and mutual understanding and promote citizen involvement. Its adoption by the various municipal bodies aims at improving and advising the decision-making process in view of being more open to projects acceptance by our citizens.

In this perspective, the present policy clearly identifies the means whereby citizens can be informed, heard, consulted or involved, by implementing specific means for each of its basic principles: **information, consultation and participation**. Besides those issues dictated by law or by-law, municipal bodies are responsible for assessing consultation or participation opportunities. The use of one of these governing principles will be determined based on the impact the decision-making will have on citizens' direct quality of life.

All municipal bodies, namely municipal government and elected officials, permanent boards or commissions, committees reporting to City Council or municipal services, and neighbourhood committees, are targeted by this policy's principles, which address the entire population, including corporate and community citizens.

That said, I am especially pleased to present this project, which we take to heart and towards which we stand committed.

I look forward to meeting you, maybe at one of our information, consultation or public participation sessions.

**Marc Lauzon,**  
Mayor of Deux-Montagnes



# 1. INFORMATION

**Information** represents the phase wherein the municipal government communicates with the citizens. It informs them of the elements and facts related to decisions being made or to be made. In this phase, the City has the responsibility of forwarding the information and addressing it to a citizen in particular, a group of citizens or the population in general.

**Citizen's Role :**

The citizen receives the information forwarded by the City. He is the recipient, the addressee. His role consists of acknowledging the information forwarded to him through various distribution media or requesting whatever information he requires.

**Main Objectives :**

- Keeping citizens informed about the various municipal bodies and their activities;
- Soliciting the population's interest in municipal affairs;
- Reaching as many citizens as possible;
- Ensuring continuity and transparency of information transmission;
- Communicating and explaining, when feasible, the decisions taken with regard to projects, programs or policies set up by the City;
- Producing and forwarding clear and accessible information, related to a project or program, in view of public consultation.

**Means** that can be undertaken and **actions** that can be taken to reach these objectives :

- Publicizing the information via local media and the municipal bulletin;
- Broadcasting the information on the city's website and on bulletin boards in public buildings;
- Producing communications tools adapted to the message being delivered (letter, pamphlet, poster, etc.);
- Organizing events or information sessions;
- Informing citizens regarding the various means at their disposal to access broadcasted information.



Possible information example:

*The City must proceed with the upgrade and standardization of the water filtration plant. An information session is being organized to inform the population of the facilities' current status and explain the need for and scope of the work to be performed.*

**In short:**

Information is a critical phase for both municipal government and citizens.

Information ensures that :

1. The population is well informed of public affairs within the City;
2. The citizen can ask questions and get pertinent answers;
3. Municipal bodies can make decisions known and assert the motives and objectives that led to these decisions;
4. Elected officials and government practices are transparent.



## 2. CONSULTATION

**Consultation** represents a phase where both the citizens' and City's roles are active. It invites the population to share the information they may have regarding a specific predetermined subject. Consultation sessions take place within a formal setting organized for that purpose. Regarding consultations, the municipal government can summon the entire population or invite certain groups of citizens, organizations, community groups, businesses or any individual concerned by the subject requiring consultation. Consultations are held either because they are prescribed by a law or by-law, or as open proposals by municipal bodies.

### Citizen's Role :

When consultations take place, citizens, groups, organizations or representatives are invited to express their concerns, expectations, comments or opinions in relation with the theme of the consultation.

### Main Objectives :

- Getting a grasp of public opinion and hearing what the citizens have to say;
- Enabling citizens to express their points of view;
- Seizing the diversity of different viewpoints;
- Helping municipal management make advised decisions that respect democratic values, public order and the general welfare of its citizens.

### **Means** that can be undertaken and **actions** that can be taken

to reach these objectives :

- Organizing consultation meetings;
- Registering consultation subject/theme in the city's website's Survey section and inviting the population to answer it;
- Distributing surveys, question-answer-comment forms or making them available in frequently visited stores and businesses;
- Holding individual meetings with those concerned.



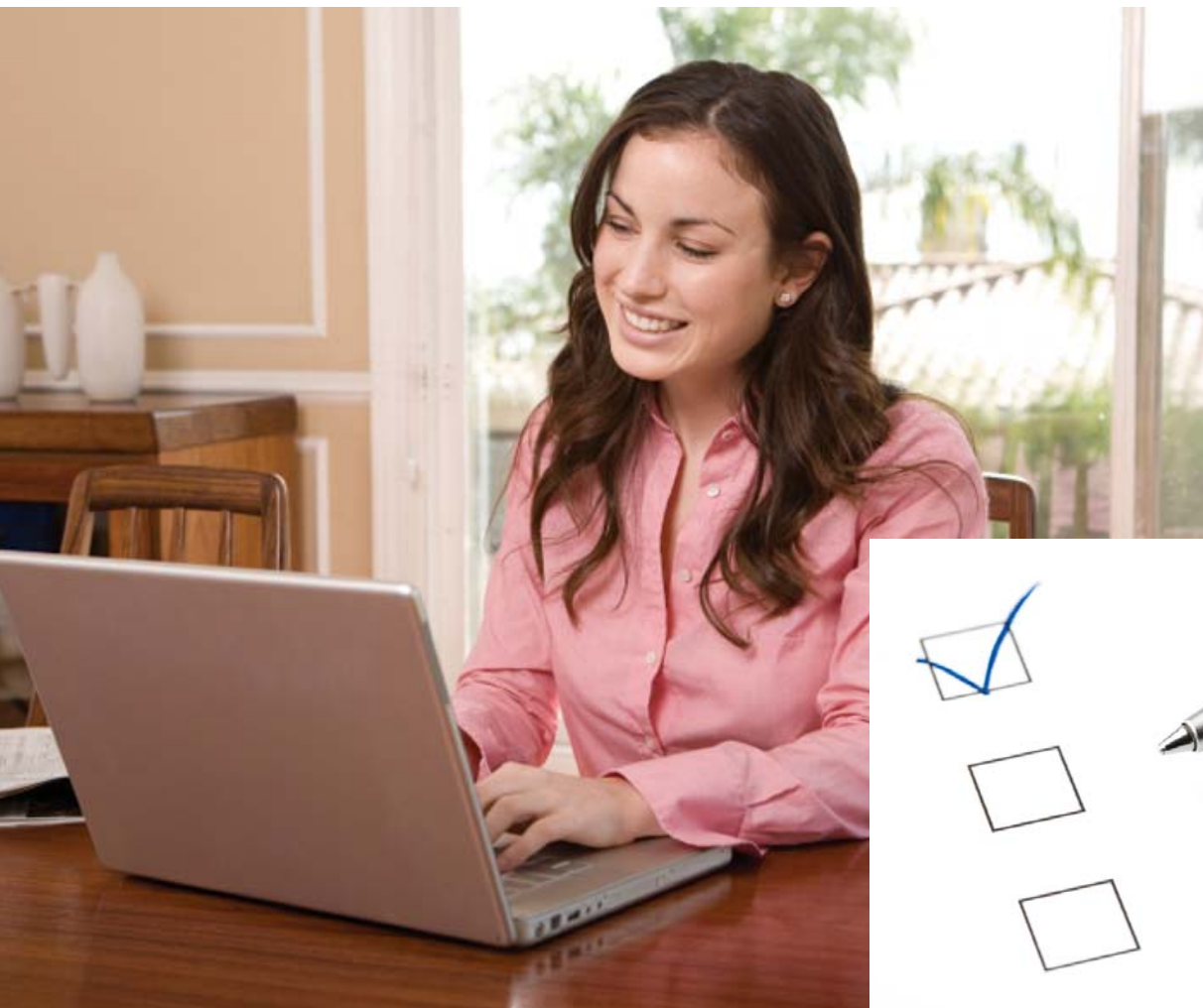
Possible consultation example :

*Repeated speeding violations have been reported in a specific area. The City is considering several solutions to eliminate the problem. Before proceeding, the City invites the citizens concerned by this problem to attend a consultation session, in order to better define the problem and identify the best-suited scenario.*

**In Short:**

Consultation is a **time to exchange**. It ensures that:

1. Citizens have a platform to express their needs and concerns, their opinions and comments, to be heard and understood;
2. Citizens and administrators discuss issues of concern;
3. Municipal administrators take into consideration the opinions and comments expressed by citizens;
4. Municipal administrators document their decisions with reports.





### 3. PARTICIPATION

**Participation** is an active, interactive and participative phase. In this basic policy principle, the population is called upon to get directly involved in an event, an activity or a process initiated by the City. A sort of partnership is established between elected officials, municipal administrators, the population or their designated representatives.

**Citizen's Role :**

Direct and active: he is involved in planning programs, policies, projects and activities, which can either be administrative, sports-related, artistic, community-related or other. The citizen is a stakeholder and actively participates in the process.

**Main Objectives :**

- Diversifying expertise;
- Increasing human resources handling a task;
- Increasing the presence and involvement of citizens in municipal affairs;
- Developing and maintaining strong and lasting relationships between citizens and the local government;
- Strengthening community ties.

**Means** that can be undertaken and **actions** that can be taken to reach these objectives:

- Involving citizens (or designated representatives) in the research that precedes project planning;
- Integrating citizens (or designated representatives) into the project planning process;
- Inviting members of the population- groups, organizations, associations, institutions, businesses, citizens (or designated representatives) - to participate in the project undertaking;
- Soliciting citizen participation in project implementation;
- Inviting citizens to follow up on the project and report their observations as to the outcome of this implementation or operation.



Possible participation example:

*Municipal authorities wish to develop a dog park project on the territory. In order for this park to meet the expectations of the interested and concerned population, in every respect, a committee consisting of elected officials, municipal employees and dog owners, has been set up to take part in this project's implementation and, subsequently, see to it that bylaws are adhered to by other park users.*

### In Short :

Participation is the principle whereby the citizen is **directly involved** in municipal affairs. It ensures that :

1. Citizens and municipal bodies build relationships;
2. The population gets involved in the City's affairs;
3. The City is abreast of its citizens' needs;
4. Expertise is broad and diversified;
5. Decisions are based on mutual agreement between municipal authorities and participating citizens.



## Policy Use

As the various **examples** throughout the document have shown, the three basic principles of this policy can be applied on an individual basis and used separately, and one can be chosen over another, depending on the intended objectives and the situation's requirements.

Furthermore, depending on the extent of the population's concern and the impact a future decision could have on the citizens' quality of life, all three principles could be successively implemented or used on an alternate basis. Each need not necessarily be preceded or followed by the two others.



## Scenario involving successive use of all three principles

### 1. INFORMATION :

The City receives a government subsidy to reconfigure one of its parks. Citizens are informed of this good news by way of our municipal bulletin, a press release distributed to local newspapers and the Internet site.

### 2. CONSULTATION :

Before planning the reconfiguration, the City wants to make sure it understands the needs of the residents living in the area. Representatives go door-to-door to meet the residents concerned, in order to gather all the ingredients, which will allow the project to materialize to the satisfaction of a majority of residents.

### 3. PARTICIPATION :

The City involves those actors which best represent potential park users to participate in the selection of accommodations and facilities; residents, members of sports associations or sports clubs, nearby daycare managers, etc. This approach provides municipal authorities with the assurance that selected accommodations will fulfill the needs of the majority of park users.

### 4. INFORMATION :

The park has been completed and citizens can start enjoying it. During the official inauguration, the City informs the people of the reasons that motivated, for example, their choice of playground structures or their decision to incorporate a soccer field - the results of consultation sessions and participation.



# Conclusion

Through election, elected officials are nominated representatives of the population; and via this privilege, they are granted decision-making powers in the development of the City's affairs. Under various provisions dictated by law or by-law, they have the obligation to inform, consult or involve citizens in situations concerning rezoning changes, loan by-laws or minor variations<sup>1</sup>.

Beyond these legal provisions, citizens also have the right to be informed, consulted and involved in various issues related to their municipality. In establishing this **Information, Consultation & Participation Policy**, the City of Deux-Montagnes wishes to implement principles that promote sharing and collaboration, important ingredients for a winning participative democracy.

<sup>1</sup> For additional information about these provisions, consult the City of Deux-Montagnes website.

Coordination and writing : Communications Department  
Translation : Johanne Benoît  
Graphic design : RDG inc.

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803, chemin d'Oka  
Deux-Montagnes (Québec) J7R 1L8  
450.473.1145

[www.ville.deux-montagnes.qc.ca](http://www.ville.deux-montagnes.qc.ca)



**VILLE DE DEUX-MONTAGNES**

Politique d'information, de consultation et de participation