



*September 12, 2014*

*2014 Utility Excellence Awards*

*The City of Calgary submission – Community Outreach Award*

## **The City of Calgary's community outreach Post 2013 Flood and 2014 spring run-off season - Building Flood Resiliency.**

Over 80,000 residents evacuated, recovery work started and only 10 months until the next flood season. That was the call The City of Calgary had to answer.

The flood of June 2013 was one of the most devastating and costly natural disasters in Canada's history. With the immediate emergency past, The City of Calgary worked to provide information to its citizens on ways to clean up and recover. The Citizen Satisfaction Survey in September 2013 showed that 95 per cent of respondents were confident The City was doing the right thing to help Calgary recover. But recovery wasn't the only information citizens were looking for.

In August and September 2013, The City began receiving numerous requests from river communities to attend meetings to discuss what was being done in their neighbourhood to mitigate future flooding, specifically the plans before the 2014 flood season (May 15 to July 15). The City engaged these communities over the next eight months to answer questions and review plans. The City was able to build relationships with these communities to ensure citizens received the information they needed.

As flood season approached (March 2014), a robust communication strategy was implemented in response to citizen need for information and in preparedness for the 2014 spring run-off season. This included the implementation of face to face open house meetings with subject matter experts attending, an enhanced web presence, information videos and updates, and a coordinated 311 Service Request response approach. Our flood website ([calgary.ca/floodinfo](http://calgary.ca/floodinfo)) included information about flood recovery, preparation and commemoration of the 2013 Flood, as well as it offered a variety of tools:

- 21 videos on City-produced flood related informational videos on You Tube.
- Frequently asked questions.
- Update emails for residents.
- Checklists and brochures.
- Links to the Government of Alberta's river flow and levels forecasts.
- Floodway and flood fringe maps.
- Blogs and stories.
- Newsletters.

- Land-use bylaw information.
- Recovery updates.
- Infographics.

The resulting efforts were:

- 60,000 visits to calgary.ca/floodinfo.
- 14,400 views of the videos on YouTube.
- 1,160 subscribers to update emails.
- Over 9,000 flood related requests were received through The City's 311 Service Request system.
- In the month of 2014 June, 306 traditional and digital media articles, with a total reach of 32 million readers, with an 82 per cent positive tonality (18 per cent neutral, 0 per cent negative).
- City staff answered these specific property information calls and emails directly and met with citizens face to face.

Citizen engagement and safety has been a priority and a broad scope of engagement has occurred from direct individual service and door knocking (1,300 doors) to public open houses and presentations (6,000 attendees). Key identified stakeholder engagement deliverables have been successful in various formats such as: briefing notes, Councillor updates for their constituents, regular meetings with the Government of Alberta and media scrums and tours, and a coordinated approach to the one year anniversary media coverage of the flood recovery. Engagement at the community level focused on encouraging planning for business continuity and emergency preparedness. A Community Resiliency Table has been convened with The City, the United Way of Calgary & Area and several community-based agencies to build a strategic framework for effective planning and response to diverse emergencies, disasters and/or major interruptions. The focus of this resiliency table is to build preparedness and support enhanced coordination and communication among neighbourhoods, non-profit and government systems. This strategic framework will also continue to support organizations that work with vulnerable populations so that adequate support to those populations is in place during and after an emergency.

The City also organized the [Expert Management Panel on River Flood Mitigation](#), to offer recommendations on mitigation efforts. The Panel received over 200 submissions of ideas and engaged 37 technical experts, and was able to provide a report City Council with 27 recommendations for consideration.

The City approached the 2014 spring run-off season with intent of ensuring that the public felt informed, engaged and able to make decisions regarding preparedness. Our partners which included the Government of Alberta, Civic Partners, Canadian Red Cross, United Way and Calgary community and business associations helped tremendously with our efforts.

The results of The City of Calgary communications efforts has made our citizens more resilient and prepared for any future flooding that may come.