Shifting hearts and minds: Communicating across the political spectrum

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THE NATIONAL **RIGHT TO HOUSING** NETWORK

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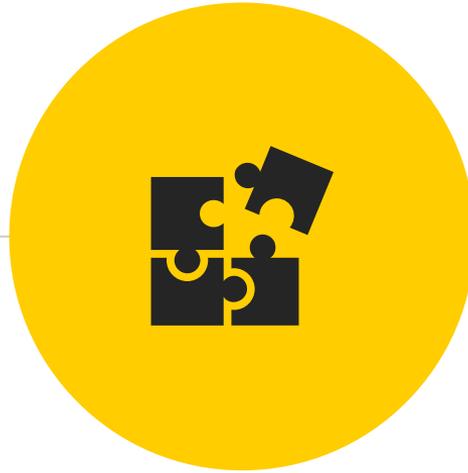
Break down silos

Between political ideologies, audiences, sectors, and government departments.

Find the **cross-cutting issues, goals, and solutions**. Amplify shared asks.
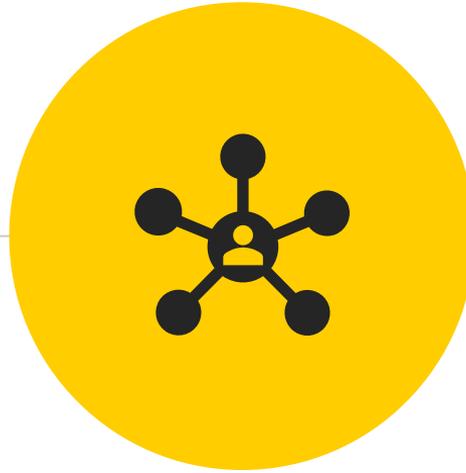
Build trust

Government actors, people with lived experience, media, and civil society advocates all have a role to play in ending homelessness. Enlist **strategic allies to advance your cause** by building reciprocal relationships of trust and collaboration.

Be proactive and transparent

Communicate efforts, progress, and wins **consistently** rather than as a response to major, divisive issues or concerns. **Transparency builds trust.**

Use values-based messaging

Facts and figures **reinforce an idea.** They don't persuade.

Leading with values can establishing human connection, cut through stereotypes and partisan suspicion, activate emotions, and **open an audience's hearts, ears, and minds.**

Value, Problem, Solution, Action:
A recipe to motivate action

Lead with **VALUES**	to create **broad points of agreement and shared goals** that will resonate with the audience(s).
Be explicit about the **PROBLEM**	and **how it threatens shared values** to create a sense of urgency. Acknowledge audience concerns and connect individual stories (e.g., examples, lived experience) to broader systemic issues and dynamics.
Offer a practical **SOLUTION**	to give audiences **hope and motivation**. Show how your solution, program, or policy will address the problem in a direct and sustainable way. Make clear where the responsibility for change lies.
Assign an **ACTION**	and **concrete, doable next step** to give the audience a feeling of agency.

Let form follow function

First decide **who** you are trying to reach (audience) and **why** (goal). Then select your communication platforms. **Platforms are not audiences.**

Audience Segmentation

1. Select an **overarching goal** or takeaway. Do you want to encourage thinking, feeling, or action?

2. **Segment and define your audience(s)** according to their values, needs, behaviours, and desires. Consider their relation to—and understanding of—the issue. Be as general or detailed as necessary (e.g., city councillors, policymakers, NIMBY homeowners, sympathetic community members, precariously housed tenants, international students, etc.).

3. Select the appropriate **campaign style, tone, and mode(s) of communication** to reach and influence your audience(s).

4. Craft and schedule **targeted messaging**.

Great Examples

- Guelph's action-oriented **YIMBY campaign**

- Huron County's cringe test and Be Part of the Solution **education campaign**

- Peterborough's transparency-oriented monthly Built for Zero **report card**
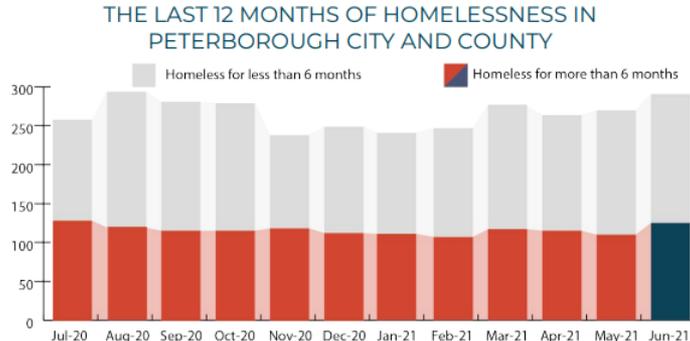
Is it discrimination?
Take the cringe test.

The Cringe Test is a tool you can use to tell the difference between discrimination and a legitimate objection to supportive housing. If it sounds wrong when you say the same thing about a racial, ethnic or religious minority, then you know you've heard a discriminatory statement and this statement may go against the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Would you say?

This neighbourhood already has its fair share of people on welfare.

The homeless should be placed only on arterial roads.

...If it makes you cringe to say?

This neighbourhood already has its fair share of Italians.

Australians should be placed only on arterial roads.

THE LAST 12 MONTHS OF HOMELESSNESS IN PETERBOROUGH CITY AND COUNTY

Homeless for less than 6 months   Homeless for more than 6 months

300
250
200
150
100
50
0
Jul-20 Aug-20 Sep-20 Oct-20 Nov-20 Dec-20 Jan-21 Feb-21 Mar-21 Apr-21 May-21 Jun-21

yes! in my backyard
YIMBY
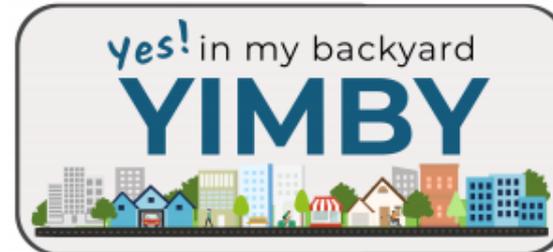
Best Practices

- ✓ **Break down silos** and build trust with allies
- ✓ **Communicate proactively** and set the narrative rather than responding to events
- ✓ Have **one overarching goal** and maintain consistent messaging
- ✓ Identify and enlist **strategic partners** to co-create and amplify your message
- ✓ **Target** communications towards specific audiences
- ✓ Use **values-based messaging** to explain the problem and why it is important

- ✓ Use **data** and facts to support the narrative
- ✓ Be simple and succinct, using **plain language** where possible
- ✓ Focus on causes and offer mutually beneficial, practical **solutions**
- ✓ **Don't tackle each argument** from critics—acknowledge their concerns and explain how your solution resolves them
- ✓ Offer a **call to action**—give the audience something to do with this information (and make it easy for people who want to help but don't know how to)