



**HARLEY HOUSE**  
CONSULTANTS INC.



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## Communication After COVID

### Coming to Terms with the New Reality

By Phil Hurcomb

Mining hard data from the Canada.ca web site does not tell the real tale of Covid-19 and the federal government communications community response.

From the start of the pandemic in March 2020 to the end of March 2021 the total number of news releases and media advisories registered on the government web site actually decreased significantly from previous years.

Less work being done in communications?

Not by a long shot. You all know it.

Nimble use of social media, massive levels of coordination, constant emergencies and re-invented processes, high levels of anxiety among the political class, and constant public scrutiny all made for unprecedented effort and endless success stories.

There has been an horrendous workload carried by communications shops in lead health, science and financial departments and agencies - barely tolerable even with borrowed staff and managers from across government. But almost equally impressive has been the effort of “secondary” departments in supporting collateral policy and programming work being done in response to the pandemic across government.

What’s more, internal communications in every government entity have been turned on its head, with employees working from home and dealing with a whole new range of personal and work challenges. “Go to” communications approaches like audience supported announcements, eye-catching on-location events, and face-to-face dialogue have had to be put on the shelf, replaced by pixel-to-pixel comms, video, graphics, and more video again featuring too many earnest talking heads with flag backdrops.

### What’s Next for Government Communications?

If we are truly on the cusp of an end to this pandemic communications push, a bunch of questions are worth contemplating concerning the work of government communications:

- “What actually happened out there?”

- “Where are we now after a year and a half of Covid-dominated communications?”
- And maybe most importantly, “What lasting change will come out of all this?”

Over the summer months Harley House will continue discussing these issues with government communications personnel. We continue our own research and analysis of the incredible change that continues to affect everyone supporting large organizations through communications.

And yes, we will be sharing our thoughts and findings through our ongoing newsletter series.

Threats? You bet. Opportunities? Communicators across the federal government communications community are seeing them.

Let’s keep the dialogue going on post-Covid comms in the federal government context.

*(Phil Hurcomb is a Senior Associate with Harley House Consultants Inc., and a former federal government ADM-level leader)*

At Harley House we assist our clients improve their effectiveness. Our solution is to transfer knowledge and skills so that organizations like yours can more effectively manage their own communications, engagement, and change efforts. We help organizations build understanding and capacity. We don’t swoop in, drop a thick presentation deck on your desk and leave. We arm you with customized tools, training, coaching, processes, and procedures.

For more information about how to improve the effectiveness of your change, engagement and communications management efforts visit: [www.harleyhouse.com](http://www.harleyhouse.com), or contact:

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