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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Town of Smiths Falls launches new online community engagement service**

The Town of Smiths Falls is pleased to announce it has enlisted the services of Bang the Table, an online community engagement tool to facilitate community input, public engagement and feedback. This resource can be accessed through the Town's new online platform, Speak Up Smiths Falls ([www.speakupsmithsfalls.com](http://www.speakupsmithsfalls.com)).

"We are excited to bring this innovative and citizen focused resource to Smiths Falls," Chief Administrative Officer, Malcolm Morris, said. "Bang the Table will take our community engagement efforts to the next level, and help us collect feedback through a range of online tools."

In Ontario every municipality must meet provincial requirements when it comes to community engagement for specific projects and activities. Community engagement tools like public meetings and information sessions are commonly used to facilitate community engagement. Other tools include the municipal website, email, and social media.

"There are many reasons to engage with the community and it can be challenging to communicate effectively and often on a short timeline," Morris said. "We have found a resource that will serve our outreach needs, and give members of the community a convenient platform for civic participation."

After some research, the Town decided to enlist the community engagement services of Bang the Table, an international company founded in Australia that provides support for all levels of government through its community engagement software to drive public engagement. Bang the Table has more than 750 clients world-wide, including the Cities of Kingston and Gatineau, and has offices located in Ontario and British Columbia.

Bang the Table will facilitate the collection of feedback by using online tools such as surveys, questions, polls, forms, and a guestbook.

The Town's new online platform, Speak Up Smiths Falls, will allow Smiths Falls residents and property owners to offer feedback, share opinions, and exchange ideas about Town priorities, programs, and services. Users simply sign up through the [Speakupsmithsfalls](http://Speakupsmithsfalls.com) website and can immediately begin providing feedback. All feedback is compiled and sent to the relevant project manager to inform the recommendation and/or decision-making.

Speak Up Smiths Falls will serve to augment existing consultations like open houses, public meetings and workshops. All feedback and comments made through the online forum will become part of the public record.

"The town is poised for tremendous growth and we genuinely want to engage with the public to help shape the evolution of Smiths Falls," Morris said, "We have several important initiatives underway, including a refresh of our strategic plan, and are excited to launch this new service to receive constructive community feedback."

A Strategic Planning open house has been set for Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Centre (second floor) at 71 Cornelia Street in Smiths Falls.

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