

Policy: Media Relations Policy

Purpose

To establish guidelines for the interactions between media and designated City staff on behalf of the City and its departments to ensure residents are informed of City initiatives, programs and policies.

Policy Statement

It is in the best interest of the City to work with media to further enhance communications with various stakeholder individuals and groups in support of City goals and objectives. In that the City wishes to inform residents, businesses and visitors by engaging in pro-active communications, City staff should make every effort to respond in an efficient manner to media inquiries. To that end, the City will provide information to media and interact with media in conformity with the following guidelines:

1. General

- a) The first point of contact for media interested in acquiring information or speaking with staff will be the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services, as designated by the Director of Corporate Services ultimately reporting to the City Manager.
- b) Unless otherwise authorized, the City's spokespersons are:
- I. Mayor and City Council members
 - II. Committee Chairs (City Council Members and/or External Chairs)
 - III. City Manager, or in his absence Deputy City Managers
 - IV. Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services – for the purpose of providing information and facilitating interviews, not speaking on behalf of the City
 - V. All staff must receive authorization through the Communications Division before speaking to media
 - VI. The Director of Public Works and Parks is authorized to speak on summer/winter street maintenance issues
 - VII. The Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chiefs and their designates are authorized to speak on fire, safety and emergency issues as related to the St. John's Regional Fire Department
- c) All media inquiries received by City staff other than those listed above should be referred immediately to the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services. Staff shall also inform the Director of their Department. Staff should ask any media for their name, contact information, reason for calling and their deadline to help facilitate a timely response.

d) Wherever possible and appropriate, content provided to media (i.e. media releases) will also be posted to the City's website and the City's social media sites for the information of residents, businesses and visitors.

e) Where the nature of the issue warrants, the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services will liaison with the City Manager and/or appropriate Departmental Director to develop key messages to ensure a timely and accurate response on behalf of the City.

f) All media interaction will conform with provincial legislation and, in particular, The Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

2. Emergency Information

a) In the event of an emergency necessitating the activation of the City's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) the City's Communications Officer will be responsible for providing timely updates to media as per the City's Emergency Plan.

3. Public Meetings

a) Staff who are attending public meetings for the purpose of providing information to residents, businesses and visitors may speak to media subsequently at the conclusion of the public meeting to clarify any questions media may have at the time, but should ask not to be quoted as a City spokesperson.

4) Volunteers

a) Volunteers who work with the City of St. John's are asked to please adhere to the same media procedure as staff and if approached by media are requested to submit the request to their supervisor who will handle the request with the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services. Volunteers approached by media to give a personal opinion outside of their volunteer duties are requested to remove any identification they may have identifying them as working with the City of St. John's before speaking to media.

5. City Initiated Contact

a) Proactive media contact will be initiated through the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services. This includes issuing media advisories and releases on behalf of the City. Departments interested in seeking publicity for events or activities should coordinate with the Communications Division of the Department of Corporate Services as soon as possible to ensure the best coverage of their event/activity.

6. Personal Media Contact

a) Employees who choose to speak to media and/or write letters to the editor must be clear that they are not speaking on behalf of the City and are providing their own personal point of view if identifying themselves as a City employee in any correspondence or interview. Employees who have received approval to speak with media should identify themselves to media as an official City spokesperson.

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7. Other
a) T.B.D.

Approvals:

Finance and Administration Standing Committee report – December 8, 2011. Regular Meeting of Council – January 3, 2012.

Responsibility

Department of Corporate Services, designated employees.

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