

City of Sarnia

Department: City Clerk	Effective Date:
Section: Clerk's	Revision Date:
Subject: Media Relations Policy	

I. Definitions

1. The Media

For the purposes of this policy, "the Media" and "members of the Media" are used interchangeably to mean journalists, columnists, editors, and other contributors to one or more of the following mediums: newspaper, radio, and television.

2. Private News Outlets

For private news outlets, such as blogs and inter-organizational newsletters, the Communications Coordinator is primarily responsible for fielding inquiries and directing inquiries to the most appropriate staff member.

3. Non-News Media

For non-news Media inquiries; such as film, video games, and books; the CAO is primarily responsible for fielding inquiries and for establishing and implementing policies and procedures to handle requests.

II. Roles and Responsibilities

4. Designated Media Relations Staff Members

The following staff persons shall be called "Designated Staff Members" and are authorized to speak to members of the Media on topics that fall primarily under their supervision:

- a) Members of the Senior Management Team
- b) Managers, supervisors
- c) Superintendents
- d) Staff liaisons for committees

5. Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator is the primary contact with the Media for all new or general inquiries. The Communications Coordinator shall introduce his or herself to local members of the Media by way of email, letter, or phone call. The Communications Coordinator shall stay abreast of which members of the Media are responsible for covering the City. Members of the Media shall be made aware that the Communications Coordinator can direct their

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inquiries to a Designated Staff Member who can provide an official response.

The Communications Coordinator may provide general information or information in news releases to the Media and will refer members of the Media to the most appropriate Designated Staff Member.

6. Additional Media designates

Senior Management Team, managers, and superintendents may designate additional staff members to respond to the Media in their absence, for specified projects, or from time-to-time.

III. Responding to the Media

7. Response time

Staff shall respond to Media inquiries within a minimum of 24 hours, and before the end of the day if possible. Staff who are not authorized to speak to the Media shall refer members of the Media to either their Department Head or to the Communications Coordinator who shall coordinate a response.

8. Minimum reply

At minimum the Communications Coordinator or Designated Staff Member shall reply within 24 hours with the following information:

- a) A brief explanation for the delay
- b) An estimate of when a reply can be provided

9. Directing inquiries

Inquires received by the Communications Coordinator shall be directed to the most appropriate Designated Staff Member. The Communications Coordinator may help arrange interviews or otherwise facilitate the request.

10. Fair treatment

Staff will refrain from giving preference to any specific Media organization when responding to inquiries.

11. Media response log

Designated Staff Members shall keep records of all their communications with the Media. The Communications Coordinator shall keep a log of Media responses that shall include the responding staff person, the topic, and the

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date.

IV. Stakeholder Distribution Lists

12. Contact list

The Communications Coordinator shall develop a contact list of stakeholders to facilitate the distribution of information relating to significant, ongoing projects.

13. Emails to stakeholders

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for selecting and issuing media releases by email to stakeholders related to projects.

14. Permission

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that stakeholders provide permission to be added to the stakeholder distribution email list.

V. Sarnia-Lambton Media

15. Press release distribution

The Communications Coordinator shall maintain a list of Sarnia-Lambton members of the media. This list shall be used by all staff members when disseminating media releases

16. Media list maintenance

The Communications Coordinator updates the Media list as required and informs other staff members who disseminate media releases. Media contacts can be added to the list by the Communications Coordinator.

17. No requirement to add contacts

City of Sarnia reserves the right to refuse to add contacts to its Media list for any reason.

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VI. Media Advisories

18. Purpose

Media advisories are intended to provide the public with notifications of an upcoming event, service disruption, public meeting, or other brief time-sensitive notification.

19. Template

The Communications Coordinator will maintain and provide a template for staff to develop media advisories.

20. Publish

Media advisories will generally be published no more than 3 days before an event. The Communications Coordinator shall approve all media advisories.

VII. Media Releases

21. Purpose

Media releases are intended to provide members of the Media with sufficient detail to produce an article or news brief of a project, story, or event.

22. Template

The Communications Coordinator will maintain and provide a template for staff to develop media releases. Staff shall refer to the Canadian Press Stylebook for writing guidelines.

23. Photographs

Media releases should include photographs when appropriate.

24. Website

All media releases shall be published on the News Centre of the City of Sarnia website.

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VIII. Media Release Procedure

25. Drafting the release

The staff member responsible for a project shall draft a media release using the media release template. The Communications Coordinator may assist with general guidelines if available.

26. Senior management approval

The draft media release shall be forwarded to the corresponding Department Head or designate for approval.

27. Revisions

Department staff shall revise and resubmit the draft media release to the CAO or designate for approval if required.

28. Internal Distribution

Once the CAO or designate has approved a final version, the department staff shall email a Word and PDF version of the document to all members of City Council with carbon copies sent to: CAO, CAO's Assistant, City Clerk, City Clerk's Assistant, Mayor's assistant, Communications Coordinator, staff member who drafted the media release, and Department Head who approved the media release.

29. External Distribution

The Communications Coordinator shall distribute the press release in the following sequence:

- a) Upload to "News Centre" on the City website
- b) Send to City staff
- c) Send to Sarnia-Lambton Media
- d) Sent to corresponding stakeholder distribution list if applicable.

IX. Committees of Council

30. Committee media release

Committees of Council may utilize the City of Sarnia media release template to draft a media release. The staff person responsible for attending

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committee meetings shall coordinate the media release procedures on behalf of the committee.

31. Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator shall assist by providing editing and review, and providing to the CAO or designate for approval, then publishing.

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