



Corporate Policy

Media Relations Policy

Policy Number: COMM.5-01

Topic: Communications

Applies to: All Members of the Council of the Town of Newmarket and all members of Staff of the Town of Newmarket.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 In keeping with its core value of accessibility and governance objectives to encourage two-way interactivity and strengthen community relations through formal communications, the Town of Newmarket seeks to proactively inform its residents, businesses and visitors via established communications programs and policies. One of the most effective and efficient means to accomplish this is by working in partnership with the news media. The purpose of a Media Relations Policy is to support staff and Members of Council throughout their dealings with the media to ensure corporately effective and consistent messaging.
- 1.2 This policy reflects current media relations practices, replacing the related text in the Administrative By-law.
- 1.3 By identifying key spokespersons to address the media it ensures consistent, accurate reporting on Town issues. It also reinforces with the public that the Town is a professional and unified government organization. Consistent messaging instills the public's trust in government. This is particularly important during an emergency or when dealing with contentious issues. Conflicting details on a particular issue can be detrimental to public health and safety and can lead to mass confusion and distrust.
- 1.4 In all instances, elected officials have every opportunity to address the media to express individual points of view on Town issues. This policy in no way impedes or infringes on a Council or staff member's right to freedom of expression.
- 1.5 The Mayor is the primary spokesperson for Council on all issues related to the Town, unless otherwise designated. The CAO is the primary spokesperson on all administrative issues, unless otherwise designated.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the Media Relations Policy is to ensure consistent, accurate, and timely communication with the public through coordinated engagement with the media. By establishing clear protocols and identifying designated spokespersons, the policy promotes transparency, reinforces public trust, and safeguards the integrity of information, especially during emergencies or sensitive situations pertaining to the Town.

3. General Principles

- 3.1 The Corporate Communications Department of the CAO's Office is administratively responsible for the Town's media relations. Although the majority of media requests are received via the Corporate Communications Department, all Town employees shall notify the Corporate Communications Department whenever media inquiries are received, to enable a coordinated response, as well as accurate tracking and reporting of the Town's communications effectiveness.
- 3.2 Because the media often works on tight deadlines, it is important that all Town departments respond as soon as possible when the Corporate Communications Department requests information or a spokesperson for the media. Specific guidelines for responding to media requests as set out below.
- 3.3 Every effort should be made to meet media deadlines and to ensure that all information released is accurate. Any decisions regarding the nature or timing of a response should be made in consultation with the Corporate Communications Department to ensure alignment with corporate messaging and media best practices.
- 3.4 The Corporate Communications Department will attempt to arrange for reasonable deadlines with the media to allow for detailed, accurate and complete information dissemination and reporting.
- 3.5 Council members shall coordinate any photos or videos through Corporate Communications.
- 3.6 All Town media events, photo opportunities, corporate social media posts and media responses shall be coordinated through the CAO and the Corporate Communications Department with the consent of the staff involved.
- 3.7 Council may identify a need to inform or educate the public and/or the media on matters related to corporate initiatives, strategic priorities, or community impact. In such cases, Council may request the development of a media campaign or public information initiative. To ensure consistency, accurate information, alignment, and effective use of resources, all such requests must be submitted through Council and/or the CAO. This process ensures:

- (a) Strategic Integration: Messaging aligns with existing or planned corporate communications;
- (b) Resource Coordination: Appropriate staffing, budget, and tools are allocated;
- (c) Unified Voice: Public-facing communications reflect the Town's values, priorities, and branding; and,
- (d) All media campaigns initiated under this policy will be developed in collaboration with the Corporate Communications Department and other relevant departments, ensuring professional execution and measurable outcomes.

4. Corporate Spokespersons

4.1 The Town's primary spokespersons are:

- (a) Mayor; and,
- (b) Chief Administrative Officer.

4.2 Alternate or secondary spokespersons for the Town, may include:

- (a) Council Members, as designated by the Mayor;
- (b) Commissioners & Directors, as designated by the Chief Administrative Officer;
- (c) Director, Corporate Communications; and,
- (d) Fire Chief for matters related to Fire and Emergency Safety.

5. Media Inquiries:

5.1 The following procedure shall be followed by all staff upon receiving a media inquiry:

- (a) The staff member shall immediately refer the media to the Corporate Communications Department.
- (b) The Corporate Communications Department shall:
 - i. coordinate a response in consultation with the appropriate staff, such as the CAO's Office, applicable Commissioner(s) and Director(s), such response coordination may also include the Mayor's Office;

- ii. draft the key message to the media and rely on the applicable Departments for fact-checking;
 - iii. track media requests;
 - iv. ensure that the final response to the media is consistent with corporate viewpoints; and,
 - v. designate a spokesperson after consultation with the Mayor's Office, CAO's Office, applicable Commissioner(s) and Director(s), in accordance with Section 4.0 of this Policy.
- (c) Staff must exercise a heightened professional discretion when dealing with any media inquiries in order to maintain a positive relationship with the media in the pursuit of their legitimate function as public inquiry.

6. Personal Points of View

- 6.1 It is recognized that all staff have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, personal points of view may conflict with the corporate viewpoints.
- 6.2 Staff members shall not express their personal views or opinions when representing the Town on any media platform and must always act in accordance with this policy and Employee Code of Conduct.

7. Staff Points of View

- 7.1 If a staff member chooses to identify themselves as a Town employee to any media, they must clearly express that their views do not represent the views of the Town, but are member's personally held opinions. Similar disclaimers must be given if a staff member employee speaks at a public meeting or other public forum or is interviewed for a media story or program unless the staff member is officially representing the Town.
- 7.2 Any staff member who is representing the Town must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the Town.

8. Administration and Contact

- 8.1 This Policy shall be administered by the CAO in consultation with the Director of Corporate Communications.
- 8.2 Members and Staff shall contact the CAO or the Director of Corporate Communications with regards to questions about this Policy.

Cross-References

Legislation

[Municipal Act, 2001](#)

[Municipal Conflict of Interest Act](#)

[Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#)

[Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)

Codes of Conduct

[Council Code of Conduct](#)

[Employee Code of Conduct](#)

Corporate Policies

[Accountability and Transparency Policy](#)

[Council Request for Information Policy](#)

[Customer Complaint Policy](#)

[Media Relations Policy](#)

[Use of Corporate Logo, Crest and Images Policy](#)

[Use of Corporate Resources and Election Campaign Activities Policy](#)

Employment-Related Policies

[Harassment and Discrimination Free Workplace Policy](#)

[Violence Free Workplace Policy](#)

Details

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