

## CORPORATE POLICY

**POLICY TITLE: MEDIA RELATIONS FOR CITY STAFF**

**POLICY NO.: 17.C.02**

<b>Section:</b>	Public Information		
<b>Effective Date:</b>	March 29, 2004	<b>Date of Last Review:</b>	October 22, 2020
<b>Approval Authority:</b> Council	<b>Policy Owner:</b> City Manager		

### POLICY STATEMENT

Media interaction is an important means of communicating messages in a consistent manner on matters of significant to residents and businesses. Responding appropriately to all inquiries in an open and professional manner assists in building an understanding of the work carried out by the City. Successful media relations will help ensure that all City decisions and day-to-day operations are seen as transparent and carried out in accordance to City policy.

### PURPOSE

To maintain and enhance the reputation of the City with the public and stakeholders through the media, by communicating consistent corporate messaging in a timely and accurate fashion. The development and maintenance of effective communications with representatives of the print and broadcast media in order to facilitate the flow of information between the corporation and the public by explaining programs and activities; answering media inquiries; and supplying feature, background and current information.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all City of Vaughan staff and Members of Council.

### LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

None.

### DEFINITIONS

- 1. Issues Management:** The process of identifying and resolving issues.

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- 2. Media Product:** A type of document used to communicate with members of the media and the public. These include but are not limited to news releases, public service announcements (PSA) and media advisories.
- 3. Media Relations (general):** Either reactively or proactively engaging with representatives from print, online, social or broadcast media outlets.
- 4. Proactive Media Relations:** Initiating media contact through media products, news conferences and media advisories.
- 5. Reactive Media Relations:** Responding to a request from the media for information or interviews.

## **POLICY**

### **1. Responsibilities**

#### 1.1. Corporate and Strategic Communications

Corporate and Strategic Communications has primary responsibility for media relations involving City staff. The department also provides media relations support to Council as required. This could include:

- 1.1.1. Coordinating day-to-day interaction of City staff with the media;
- 1.1.2. Preparing City staff by providing advice and support to facilitate positive media interaction, and;
- 1.1.3. Providing timely notification to the City Manager of issues in which there is media interest.

### **2. Reactive Media Relations/Responding to Media Calls**

#### 2.1. Council Spokesperson

The Mayor is the primary spokesperson on matters of the Municipality.

#### 2.2. Staff Spokesperson

- 2.2.1. The senior staff spokesperson is the City Manager who may delegate responsibility to specific matters to the Director, Corporate and Strategic Communications and/or an identified spokesperson at the Deputy City Manager and, where appropriate, Director levels.

2.2.2. Staff identified as spokesperson will be provided with media training through Corporate and Strategic Communications.

### 2.3. Responding to Media Inquiries

2.3.1. City staff contacted directly by the media shall refer all inquiries to Corporate and Strategic Communications.

2.3.2. For City initiatives and issues where media contact is anticipated, a media spokesperson (as described above), is usually designated in advance and briefed on key messages. Corporate and Strategic Communications will provide support for these designated spokespersons in the way of briefing notes, communications messages, question and answer packages and other information materials.

### 2.4. On-Site Media Visits

All media crews, reporters, etc., requesting access to non-public areas shall sign-in at the front desk so that a member of the Corporate and Strategic Communications department can facilitate their visit.

## **3. Proactive Media Relations**

### 3.1. Media Products, News Conferences and Media Advisories

3.1.1. All media products, news conferences and media advisories are arranged by Corporate and Strategic Communications in conjunction with the appropriate department.

3.1.2. All media-related vehicles identify Corporate and Strategic Communications as the contact for further information and, where appropriate, a program contact is identified as well.

### 3.2. Media Products

3.2.1. Media products provide information to targeted media concerning City initiatives and actions. They also provide an opportunity to deliver key messages that explain the City's services and activities to city residents and businesses.

3.2.2. Media products are prepared and/or coordinated by Corporate and Strategic Communications. If a media product is initiated by a department, a draft is to be sent to Corporate and Strategic Communications for review and distribution to the media.

3.2.3. Where appropriate, media products will include a quotation from the Mayor. A Member of Council, staff member or a third-party stakeholder may also be asked to provide a quotation (should the product pertain specifically to the organization's mandate). This will be determined by the Mayor and/or City Manager in consultation with Corporate and Strategic Communications.

3.2.4. The order of approval for media is:

- 3.2.4.1. Department Director;
- 3.2.4.2. Deputy City Manager, City Manager or designate;
- 3.2.4.3. Mayor's Office, when the Mayor is quoted in the product; then,
- 3.2.4.4. Approval of person quoted, if other than above

### 3.3. News Conferences

3.3.1. A news conference is a planned event for the announcement of high-profile City news, initiatives or activities to which the media are invited, usually through a media advisory. As with media products, a news conference offers an important opportunity for the City to explain its policies and operations to residents and businesses using key messages developed in cooperation with Corporate and Strategic Communications.

3.3.2. Corporate and Strategic Communications arranges news conferences on announcements of City-wide significance. A media product and a related backgrounder explaining an initiative are prepared and distributed to the media by Corporate and Strategic Communications. Proposals or plans to arrange a news conference shall be discussed with staff in Corporate and Strategic Communications for advice and assistance.

### 3.4. Media Advisories

3.4.1. Media advisories provide advance notice to targeted media concerning an upcoming event or news conference which media are invited to cover.

3.4.2. Media advisories prepared by program staff are submitted to Corporate and Strategic Communications for review and distribution. Corporate and Strategic Communications will be identified as the contact for further information, along with a program contact where appropriate.

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#### **4. Issues Management**

##### **4.1. Reactive**

If criticism or misunderstanding of City decisions or actions arise in the media, Corporate and Strategic Communications will assist in developing a response by preparing key messages to clarify and communication the City's position.

##### **4.2. Proactive**

Proactive issues management may be appropriate where media interest is anticipated. In these cases, Corporate and Strategic Communications will assist by preparing key messages on the matter to ensure the City's decisions or actions are communicated accurately, clearly and consistently.

#### **5. Other Issues**

##### **5.1. Fire and Rescue**

Due to the role of the Fire and Rescue Services, the department designates its own spokesperson to respond to media requests, as they relate to ongoing fire and rescue incidents, as well as maintains responsibility for its own media relations.

##### **5.2. Media Relations Training**

Media relations training is offered through Corporate and Strategic Communications to the Mayor, members of Regional and Local Council, Deputy City Managers, Directors and other individuals who are designated as media spokespersons. The purpose of the training is to assist them in communicating the City's activities and operations to the public in an effective and consistent manner.

##### **5.3. Daily News Clipping Distribution Service**

Each workday, Corporate and Strategic Communications compiles a package of new items on City matters. This daily news service is provided to Mayor, Councillors, Deputy City Managers and Directors.

#### **ADMINISTRATION**

*Administered by the Office of the City Clerk.*

<b>Review Schedule:</b>	5 Years If other, specify here	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	October 22, 2025
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<b>Related Policy(ies):</b>	
<b>Related By-Law(s):</b>	
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