



POLICY No. 2003-12

Media Relations Policy

Originating Department CAO

SMT Approval: 2003-10-16

Council in Committee: N/A

Recommendation #: N/A

Council Approval: N/A

Resolution #: N/A

Revision History:

[Click here for revision history](#)

1. PURPOSE

Establish a protocol for communicating with the media, which includes media releases and media inquiries.

2. POLICY

A media or news release is a factual written summary of information issued to the media for the purpose of making a statement or publicizing newsworthy updates/announcements. The terms 'media' and 'news' may be used interchangeably when referring to these written summaries.

Media releases can be defined under four categories: routine, non-routine, emergency or contentious.

- A routine media release would apply to an event/situation that takes place on a consistent basis, has had a release issued on a previous occurrence, and requires minimal Communications revisions, e.g. annual programming, seasonal reminders (winter control bylaws, outdoor water use restrictions), etc. Communications requires minimum one weeks' notice to issue a routine media release. Where possible, provide notice and/or draft release as early as possible.
- A non-routine media release would apply to an event/situation that is new to Haldimand County and/or requires significant Communications review, e.g. annual budget approvals, receiving new grant funding, installation of a new pedestrian crossover, announcement of a new facility, senior management staff change, etc. Whenever possible, Communications requires two weeks' notice to issue a non-routine media release in order to conduct research, draft, review, and schedule a media release. Additional activities (comprehensive social media campaign, branded materials, media events, etc.) may be required to ensure appropriate communications with the public, in addition to the media.

- An emergency release would apply to an unexpected event/situation requiring immediate action, e.g. flash flooding, winter closures, danger to the public, etc. The Emergency Information Officer or backup, as designated by the Manager, Emergency Services as part of the Emergency Control Group, is responsible for preparing, distributing and archiving emergency releases as per the process defined in Haldimand's Emergency Response Plan. In the event of an emergency or crisis, the Emergency Information Officer or designate acts as the lead media liaison and coordinates all media-related initiatives for that event. Communications should be notified immediately and copied in all media correspondence and responses.
- A contentious media release would apply to a situation where the interpretation of the contents of the release has a greater potential to cause damage to the reputation of Haldimand County, Council, and/or Staff. Communications requires two weeks' notice (when possible) to issue a contentious media release in order to conduct research, draft a release, consult with Legal (if necessary), and attain Mayor and/or CAO approval. Once approved by the CAO and/or Mayor, contentious releases should always be circulated to the Senior Management Team and Council by e-mail as an advance notification, prior to distributing them to general staff, the community and media.

The author will be notified by Communications staff when the media release is approved for circulation, and the date on which it will be circulated.

Media Release Preparation and Approval

1. Media releases must be prepared using the most up-to-date, AODA-compliant Media Release Template available on the employee intranet. Pre-designed media release templates should not be modified in any way, except for the circulation date, body content and contact information. Media releases should not be more than 1.5 pages in length and must always include a member of the Communications team as media contact.
2. Media release drafts must be provided to Communications for vetting and distribution. Any significant edits will be sent back to the author for review prior to distribution.

Once the release has been approved, Communications staff will:

- Publish to Haldimand County website;
- Distribute to All Staff and Council via e-mail for awareness;
- Distribute to relevant media contacts; and
- Post to social media channels, as soon as possible after media distribution.

Media Inquiries

Reporters may reach out to Haldimand County to seek information on a topic that affects Haldimand County or in response to a media release. Any communications with the media must

go through the Communications staff. It is their responsibility to provide a response that maintains a positive corporate image and conveys only factual and objective information related to policies, reports, by-laws or information adopted by Committee or Council. Comments must support the decisions of Committee and Council, regardless of any staff personal opinion.

Media Inquiry Preparation and Approval

1. When a media inquiry is received, Communications will forward the request for information to the subject matter expert(s) with appropriate deadlines for response.
2. The subject matter expert is to respond as soon as possible to Communications only, not the media.
3. Communications will then review the response and edit it, as necessary, prior to providing the response on behalf of Haldimand County.
 - If the media is requesting content, the content will be provided per Communications' edit.
 - If the media is requesting a quote, any edited quotes will be provided to the quoted employee for approval prior to being shared with the media.
 - If the request involves content from multiple divisions, Communications will compile all answers into one combined response to be approved by all subject matter experts.
4. If the content of the request is sensitive or contentious, SMT approval will be required.
5. After all necessary approvals have been obtained, Communications will respond to the media request on behalf of Haldimand County.

If a media request is sent to an individual staff member, please forward the request to Communications immediately.

REVISION HISTORY	
REVISION DATE	DETAILS
SMT Approval – June 2004	Media contact list
SMT Approval – October 2004	Term “Press” Release changed to “News” Release
SMT Approval – March 2007	Media Contact List Renamed to “Contact List” and contents updated
SMT Approval – September 2007	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – October 2007	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – March 2008	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – May 2009	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – October 2009	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – October 2010	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – May 2011	Policy revised to reflect technological efficiencies and contact list updated
SMT Approval – September 2011	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – December 2011	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – February 2013	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – August 2013	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – January 2014	Contact list updated
SMT Approval – February 16, 2017	Contact list updated & policy revised to reflect centralization of media relations activities (Coordinator, Strategic Initiatives)
SMT Approval – Nov. 3, 2023	Policy revised and renamed to Media Relations Policy to better reflect updated divisional movement of media relations activities to Customer Experience & Communications, minor update of processes, removal of official media list, and expanded media inquiries section description.