



Title:	Media Relations Policy		
Policy Group:	Your Government and People	Policy Administrator:	Community Services, Programs & Initiatives
Resolution No.	CW-242-2022	Policy Number:	CSPI-06
Approval Date:	2022-09-15	Revision Date:	2026-09-15

1. Policy Statement

- a) The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward (hereafter "The County") seeks to inform residents, businesses and visitors by engaging in a pro-active communications program. Proactive media relations will convey and clarify municipal information accurately, quickly and effectively.

2. Purpose

- a) The purpose of the Policy is to:
 - i. Uphold the County's reputation and promote its mission, goals and various strategic plans
 - ii. Maintain a positive and professional relationship with the media
 - iii. Outline protocols for after hours and unexpected communications needs
 - iv. Proactively convey accurate information about municipal issues
 - v. Correct any substantive misinformation about municipal issues
 - vi. Increase the visibility of County achievements, performance, events, and initiatives
 - vii. Provide timely, accurate, and efficient responses to media inquiries
 - viii. Ensure consistent efforts are made to meet media deadlines
 - ix. Clarify roles and responsibilities with regards to media relations
 - x. Ensure the most appropriate employees are designated as spokespersons for their department/division
 - xi. Raise awareness of the importance of incorporating media relations into municipal business, projects, events, and service changes.

3. Scope

- a) This policy applies to any professional interaction with the media by the Mayor, Members of Council, Administration, and all County employees.

4. Legislative Authority

- a) N/A

5. Definitions

- a) N/A

6. General

- a) Responding to Media Interest and Media Inquiries
 - i. If necessary, the Communications and Consultation Supervisor will coordinate an appropriate time for the media to interview a spokesperson, and help support any necessary preparations for the spokesperson/people including the development of key messages, Q&A, news conference, etc.
 - ii. When contentious media inquiries are received, efforts should be made to notify the Communications and Consultation Supervisor in order to facilitate the delivery of a consistent corporate response.
- b) Media Attendance at Meetings of Council
 - i. Media attendance and participation at meetings of Council must comply with the stipulations of the County's Procedural By-Law.
 - ii. For matters related to closed session meetings, both Members of Council, staff and Committee Members shall maintain the confidentiality of the matter discussed within the closed session meeting.
- c) Participation in Community Media Events
 - i. From time to time, the County may either seek out or be asked to participate in and/or provide monetary or in-kind support to community media events and/or products.

- ii. Employee participation in community media initiatives, as well as The County's role, will be approved by the appropriate director/manager/supervisor on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the CAO and the Communications and Consultation Supervisor.
- d) Crisis Communications (contentious issues management specific to Municipality)
 - i. This policy applies to crisis communications specific to the County of Prince Edward – but will be adapted as per the appropriate Crisis Communication Plan. A Crisis Communications Plan will be developed in collaboration with the Communications and Consultation Supervisor and identify all necessary adjustments and delegations to work proactively and effectively with the media throughout the duration of a municipal crisis.
- e) Emergency Communications (large scale declared emergencies)
 - i. This policy does not apply to emergency communications. In a declared or undeclared emergency, the media protocols contained in the Municipality's Emergency Response Plan will supersede the protocols outlined in this Policy.
- f) After-Hours Communications
 - i. The Communications and Consultation Supervisor is available by mobile phone after hours to provide communications support for unplanned issues that pose an immediate threat to the health, safety, and wellbeing of residents, businesses, visitors, and employees of The County.
 - ii. After-hours communications needs related to Public Notices of Service Disruption will be managed on a case-by-case basis as per Appendix A to this policy.
 - iii. Other unplanned and after-hours communications needs will be managed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Communications and Consultation Supervisor.
 - iv. All managers and supervisors who oversee a work area that could require unplanned after-hours communications needs will work with the Communications and Consultation Supervisor to create a Standard Operating Procedure/Communications Plan to guide their response in these situations.

- g) Use of Social Media by both employees and elected officials of The County will be guided by The County's Social Media Policy and Guidelines.
- h) The attached Appendix A demonstrates tools, techniques, and associated procedures that are currently in place to ensure consistent and effective media relations practices across The County.

7. Responsibility and Implementation

- a) Council is responsible for approving and making changes to this Policy.
- b) The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for
 - i. directing compliance and resolving any conflicts with this Policy;
 - ii. assigning appropriate service departments for the application of this Policy;
 - iii. establishing procedural guidelines; and
 - iv. making routine changes to the Policy, as required.
- c) Only authorized personnel are the County's media spokespersons.
- d) The Mayor:
 - i. The Mayor is the County's chief spokesperson on behalf of Council, explaining policies, priorities, initiatives and decisions to the public.
 - ii. The Mayor is normally the chief spokesperson for decisions approved by County Council and for the County as a Corporation, unless another Member of Council is designated or an issue is operational.
- e) Members of Council:
 - i. Ward Councillors are typically the appropriate spokespeople for ward specific matters/issues, but do not represent Council or the Corporation as a whole. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for decisions approved by County Council.
 - ii. Ward Councillors may speak with regards to decisions made by Council based on their perspective as a representative of their respective wards. In doing so, they will maintain respect for the decision-making processes of Council, even if in disagreement with the decision.
 - iii. While Councillors may speak on behalf of their constituents, they should allow the Mayor to speak on behalf of Council as a whole and put these comments in context, ensuring that respect of the decision-making process of Council is maintained.

- iv. On occasion, the Mayor, on behalf of Council, may designate an individual member of Council as the lead spokesperson on a particular issue.

f) Chief Administrative Officer:

- i. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or appointed Acting CAO is the primary spokesperson for municipal administration and related issues.

g) Directors:

- i. are the official spokespersons for the programs, services and initiatives they administer.
- ii. will inform their employees about this policy and its relevance to their role and work area.
- iii. will seek media training as necessary.
- iv. will strive to provide expedient approvals to media products to support their timely distribution.

h) Other Designated Spokespersons:

- i. The CAO or Directors may designate their reporting managers/supervisors or other staff as media spokespersons to speak on behalf of specific initiatives, policies, programs, or services with which they are familiar and for which they have responsibility.
- ii. Designations may be appointed on a one-time or ongoing basis, as follows:
 - When the CAO/Director themselves are not available for timely media response
 - If the CAO/Director determines that it is more appropriate for a manager/supervisor to speak to a particular service area or issue (eg: Fire, Economic Development, Museums, Community Centres).
 - When designated spokespersons have been provided with appropriate media training.
 - A media contact person should be appointed for major corporate undertakings (eg: construction/planning/strategic projects). Should this person be different from the CAO/Director

or other designated spokesperson, they should be provided with media training.

- Efforts should be made to inform the Communications and Consultation Supervisor of any ongoing or one-time designation of spokesperson authorities in order to improve consistency of corporate messaging.
- Alternatively, technical experts may be called upon by a designated spokesperson to brief them on a particular topic, provide background information, help construct Q&A documents, etc.

i) Non-Spokespersons:

i. County employees who are not designated spokespersons shall, upon being contacted by a member of the media:

- Treat the media representative courteously as per the County's Customer Service Procedures
- Clarify that as a non-spokesperson they are unable to provide an interview, quote, or background information
- Explain that they will forward the media inquiry on to the Communications and Consultation Supervisor
- Notify the Communications and Consultation Supervisor about the media inquiry.
- Support the Communications and Consultation Supervisor by helping gather any necessary facts and information to prepare the appropriate spokesperson.

j) Communications and Consultation Supervisor:

i. The Communications and Consultation Supervisor will not act as an official spokesperson for the Municipality unless otherwise designated. The Communications and Consultation Supervisor may do some or all of the following:

- Provide advice and support to both spokespersons and non-spokespersons when responding to media inquiries

- Provide advice and support when developing and presenting internal and external key messaging
- Provide advice and support when developing media advisories, releases, public service announcements, and any other form of interaction with the media
- Act as a central coordinator to ensure consistent corporate wide messages and responses are delivered to the media
- Monitor local media coverage and maintain archives of relevant news stories/coverage
- Maintain current media distribution lists on behalf of the corporation
- Maintain a list of designated spokespersons for the corporation
- Arrange media training for designated staff through The County's training coordinator.
- Obtain the following information from media inquiries:
 - Name, title, and contact information
 - Deadline
 - Intent of the story/topic of the interview
 - Any specific information required
 - Who else they are interviewing/have interviewed for the story

8. Documentation and Forms

- a) Appendix A - Tools and Techniques Available To Seek Media Interest