



CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Section:		Policy No:	
Subject:	MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY	Resolution:	
Issue to:	All Manual Holders	Effective:	
Issued by:	Jason Trottier, CAO	Page:	1

1.0 PURPOSE

The Municipality of East Ferris is committed to developing and maintaining professional working relationships with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of initiatives, programs and services, issues facing the municipality, corporate policies and Council decisions.

The purpose of the Media Relations Policy is to ensure professionalism and consistency in how the municipality communicates and collaborates with the media to manage proactive and reactive media relations activities. This policy outlines who can interact with the media in an official capacity on behalf of the Municipality. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Mayor lead official media relations activities on behalf of the municipality, but all Council members and departments have a role to play in building cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships between the Municipality and the media.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all forms of communications between Staff and members of Council with the media.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Media

Media includes traditional news media (print, radio and television) and online channels such as websites and blogs that publish news, investigative reports, analysis, events and/or general information.

Media Advisory

A media advisory is used to invite reporters to cover an upcoming event such as a press conference, meeting, or open house. The goal of the media advisory is to make the event sound interesting and newsworthy so that the event receives media coverage.

Press Release

A press release is used to communicate official municipal activities, decisions, projects, or services, or for use as official statements during Emergency Operations.

Spokesperson

A spokesperson is a Municipality of East Ferris employee or Council member who is authorized to make



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Section:		Policy No:	
Subject:	MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY	Resolution:	
Issue to:	All Manual Holders	Effective:	
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official statements to the media on behalf of the corporation in accordance with Sections 4.3 and 4.4 of this Policy. Unless otherwise authorized, the Municipality's spokespeople are:

- Mayor
- Chief Administrative Officer
- Department Managers
- Fire Chief

A spokesperson may be represented by a delegate as indicated in the Policy.

4.0 CONTENT

4.1 Introduction

The Municipality of East Ferris is a vibrant and healthy rural community with steady growth. It is a community where residents and the municipality work together to promote health and well-being for all. Promoting effective communications and relations with the media aligns with our guiding principle of being transparent, where transparency is defined as having open government decision making and operations, and is essential in order to promote public awareness and understanding of initiatives, programs and services, issues facing the municipality, corporate policies and Council decisions .

4.2 Background

The Municipality has never had a Media Relations Policy. This policy was developed by conducting a scan of various media relations policies being utilized in other municipalities. These plans were identified by availability on municipal websites.

4.3 Municipal Initiated Communications with Media

Media Advisories and Press Releases

It shall be the policy of the Municipality that all official press releases and media advisories be released by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) except for Emergency Operations related releases which will be released in accordance with the Municipality of East Ferris Community Emergency Plan.

All press releases and media advisories shall be posted on the municipal website and Facebook page after releasing the information to the media.

4.4 Media Initiated Communications with Municipality



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Section:		Policy No:	
Subject:	MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY	Resolution:	
Issue to:	All Manual Holders	Effective:	
Issued by:	Jason Trottier, CAO	Page:	3

Requests for Information – Authorized Spokespersons

Mayor - The Mayor is the official authorized spokesperson to speak with the media on behalf of Council and the Municipality. In the Mayor's absence, the CAO will assume the role of spokesperson.

CAO - The CAO is the official authorized spokesperson for the municipality to speak with the media on administrative, litigation, and human resource matters (non-Council-related). In the CAO's absence, the Municipal Clerk is his/her delegate.

Department Managers - Department Managers may address media inquiries on matters related directly to the day-to-day activities of their department but shall only provide the information after approval of the release of information by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Fire Chief - The Fire Chief is authorized to provide information to the media about public safety and/or specific fire-related incidents. Inquiries that are administrative in nature pertaining to the Fire Department shall be referred to the CAO. During a crisis or major emergency (i.e. flooding, tornado, mass casualty incident, etc.), the procedure for communicating with the media is highlighted in the *Municipality of East Ferris Community Emergency Plan*.

All other media enquiries must be referred to the CAO.

Non-Spokespeople

Employees - Employees who are not authorized spokespeople must refer media inquiries to the Department Manager. Municipal staff who are not designated spokespeople are not authorized to make statements to the media and/or in public discussion on behalf of the municipality.

Council Members - Council members have been elected to represent the residents of our community and are free to speak to the media on any subject matter but not in the capacity as authorized spokesperson (except for the Mayor). Council members have the right to express personal opinions on any issue but must make it clear that they are speaking for themselves and it is not an official Council position unless they are speaking of a decision made by Council.

Known or Potentially Contentious Issues

All requests for information regarding known or potentially contentious issues must be immediately referred to the CAO.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency situation, the Public Information Officer will act as the primary media contact in accordance with the *Municipality of East Ferris Community Emergency Plan*.



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Section:		Policy No:	
Subject:	MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY	Resolution:	
Issue to:	All Manual Holders	Effective:	
Issued by:	Jason Trottier, CAO	Page:	4

Personal Point of View

All employees have the right to express personal points of view and, at times, their opinions may conflict with the Municipality's official position. Employees' opinions must not be expressed using Municipal letterhead, email accounts, social media accounts or online accounts.

If an employee expresses his or her personal opinion during a public discussion, he or she must identify himself or herself as a municipal employee, and state that his or her views do not represent the views of the Municipality, but rather, are the employee's personally held opinions.

During public discussions and media interviews, employees acting as authorized spokespeople are expected to convey the official position of the Municipality of East Ferris rather than personal points of view.

4.5 Inaccurate Media Coverage

Inaccurate media coverage should be brought to the CAO's attention.

5.0 COMMUNICATION OF POLICY

This policy will be communicated to Council and staff of the Municipality of East Ferris and will be made available to the public on the municipal website.

6.0 CONNECTIONS TO OTHER POLICIES AND BY-LAWS

Municipality of East Ferris Community Emergency Plan

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

7.0 REVIEW

This Media Relations Policy will be reviewed once per term of Council or as requested by the CAO or Council.