

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) - JANUARY 27, 2004

CORPORATE PROTOCOL POLICY FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Economic/Technology Development and Communications, in consultation with the Senior Management Team and the Director of Corporate Communications, recommends:

That the attached Corporate Policies and Protocols For Media Relations be approved.

Purpose

To obtain Council approval for the Corporate Protocol Policy For Media Relations.

Background - Analysis and Options

A main goal of the Corporate Communications Strategic Plan, *Mastering Communications Excellence*, approved by Council on June 24, 2002, is the organization-wide adoption of Corporate Communication Policies, Standards and Procedures for all corporate communications activities and functions.

The restructured Corporate Communications Department not only coordinates existing functions, but it is mandated to provide new direction, initiatives and a stronger emphasis on the communications process, as identified in *Vaughan Vision 2007*, approved by Council on June 10, 2002. In keeping with Vaughan's strategic vision, this Media Relations protocol policy ensures the effective and efficient delivery of services. Specifically, this policy is intended 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.

As detailed in the attached policy statement, the Corporate Communications Department will have primary responsibility for media relations involving the Corporation and Vaughan Council. This policy formalizes an established practice and details the protocols to be followed by City staff and Council for interacting with the media.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

The establishment of a Corporate Protocol Policy for Media Relations is in keeping with the emphasis on the communications process as identified in the City's strategic plan, *Vaughan Vision 2007*. In support of the goal (6.2) to "Develop Innovative External Communications Initiatives" is the objective (6.2.3) to "Develop a system that will manage information around key issues to assist in prioritization and resolution of important issues." In addition, this policy initiative is consistent with the goal (6.4) to "Strengthen Corporate Image and Identify" and its objective (6.4.2) to "Create increased awareness of the City's leadership on key issues and celebrate our successes and achievements."

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Conclusion

Council approval of the Media Relations policy will ensure that the City develops and maintains effective communications with representatives of the print and broadcast media and the flow of information will be facilitated between the Corporation and the public.

Attachments

Corporate Policies and Protocols for Media Relations

Report prepared by:

Madeline Zito,
Director of Corporate Communications

Ted Hallas,
Manager of Corporate Communications

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Miele

Commissioner of Economic/Technology Development and Communications



CORPORATE POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS FOR MEDIA RELATIONS

prepared by
Corporate Communications

Frank Miele, Commissioner
Economic/Technology Development and Communications

January 22, 2004

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS

SUBJECT: MEDIA RELATIONS

DEFINITION:

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.

DESCRIPTION:

Media relations includes:

- **reactive media relations**, i.e. responding to a request from the media for information or interviews,
- **proactive media relations**: i.e. initiating media contact through media releases, news conferences and media advisories
- **issue management**
- responding to **requests under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOI)**
- **media relations training**, and
- **daily news clipping distribution service** of stories related to City activities.

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.

Media interaction is an important means of communicating messages in a consistent manner on matters of significance to residents and businesses. Responding appropriately to all enquiries 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.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Corporate Communications has primary responsibility for media relations involving staff and Council. This includes:

- managing and co-ordinating day-to-day interaction with the media,
- preparing Councillors and staff by providing advice and support to facilitate positive media interaction, and
- providing timely notification to the Mayor's and City Manager's offices of matters and issues in which there is media interest.

REACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS/RESPONDING TO MEDIA CALLS:

Corporate Communications is usually the first point of contact by the media. Depending on the nature of the information requested, Corporate Communications will respond directly, often with input from appropriate staff, or arrange for the media to meet with the appropriate department.

Council Spokespersons:

As a general rule, the Mayor is the primary spokesperson on matters of City-wide significance. In the Mayor's absence, the Acting Mayor is the spokesperson, then Regional Councillors, followed by Ward Councillors. If the initiative relates to a Council Committee, the Councillor chairing the Committee will be the spokesperson. On Ward matters, individual Councillors take the lead as spokespersons.

Staff Spokespersons:

The senior staff spokesperson is the City Manager who may delegate responsibility on specific matters to the Director of Corporate Communications and/or an identified spokesperson at the Commissioner and, where appropriate, Director levels. Staff identified as spokespersons will be provided with media training through Corporate Communications.

Responding to Media Calls:

City staff contacted directly by the media must refer all calls to Corporate Communications immediately. All members of Council shall notify Corporate Communications of any media contacts to allow proper tracking of media coverage by the department.

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 Communications will provide support for these designated spokespersons in the way of briefing notes, communications messages, question and answer packages and other information materials on the subject to guide them in their responses.

PROACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS:

Media releases, news conferences and media advisories are arranged by Corporate Communications in conjunction with the appropriate department or the Mayor's Office. All of these media-related vehicles identify Corporate Communications as the contact for further information and, where appropriate, a program contact is identified as well.

Media Releases

Media releases and related backgrounders, Fact Sheets and Question and Answer sheets 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.

Media releases are prepared and/or co-ordinated by Corporate Communications. If a media release is initiated by a department, a draft is to be sent to Corporate Communications for review, approval and distribution to the media.

A media release will identify a contact in Corporate Communications and, where appropriate, a program contact for more information. If the program contact receives a media request for more information, he or she will log the call and inform Corporate Communications immediately.

Media releases related to City-wide initiatives will include a quotation from the Mayor. If the initiative relates to a Council Committee, the Councillor chairing the Committee will be quoted. All quotes by members of Regional and Local Council are approved by the Councillor's office prior to distribution. In the event a member of Council does not approve a quote in a timely manner, the Commissioner of Economic/Technology Development and Communications can approve distribution of the media release.

Media releases related to a departmental initiative or action will contain a quote from the City Manager and/or the Department Commissioner.

The order of approval for media releases is:

- originating Commissioner or Director
- Commissioner of Economic and Technology Development and Communications
- City Manager
- Mayor's Office
- Approval of person quoted, if other than the above

News Conferences

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 releases, 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 co-operation with Corporate Communications.

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

Media Advisories

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

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

If the program contact receives a media request for further information, the request will be logged and Corporate Communications informed about the details of the request.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT

Issues management activities may be reactive or proactive.

Reactive:

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

Proactive:

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

OTHER ISSUES

Requests under Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Legislation (FOI)

All media requests to the City for information under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act will be communicated to Corporate Communications to ensure that the City is able to respond to questions or concerns raised by the release of the information. This is especially important where the information to be released has the potential to generate media/public interest.

Media Relations Training

Media relations training is offered through Corporate Communications to the Mayor, members of Regional and Local Council, Commissioners, 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.

Daily News Clipping Distribution Service

Each day, Corporate Communications compiles a package of news items on City matters. This daily news service is provided to the Mayor, Councillors, Commissioners and Directors. If a news story is anticipated, or is seen or heard during the course of a day, Corporate Communications is notified as soon as possible.

City of Vaughan Media Contact Summary

Date:	
Time:	
Name of Reporter:	
Media Outlet: (newspaper, TV/radio station)	
Phone number:	
Subject:	
Questions/Type of Information Requested:	
Needs Response by:	
Call Taken by:	(Name and contact info of City employee)
Call Referred to:	(Name and contact info)
Corporate Communications Contact:	(Name and contact info – if different than person call is being referred to)