

CORPORATE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY MANUAL



SECTION	NAME OF POLICY
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

DEVELOPED BY: Communications Manager

APPROVED BY: Board of Directors

DATE: February 15, 2017

EFFECTIVE DATE: February 15, 2017

LATEST REVISION: October 31, 2019

INTRODUCTION

As a leader in open governance, transparency, and accountability, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) acknowledges the value that mainstream and social media play to communicate information to the public.

Effective media and public relations are important to the NPCA. We are committed to fostering and maintaining positive working relationships with media bodies within the NPCA area of jurisdiction to promote public awareness and understanding of policies, programs, and initiatives.

PURPOSE

The goal of this policy is to ensure professionalism and consistency in how the NPCA communicates to media and the public. This policy also includes specific procedures for the effective delivery of media relations services.

To provide general principles and protocol when dealing with accredited media on behalf of NPCA and communicating through social media to the public.

To ensure media inquiries are responded to on time, accurately and by the most appropriate spokesperson.

To ensure public and media relations are conducted in a proactive manner, providing residents and visitors to the watershed with timely, accurate and newsworthy information about programs, services, and issues of public safety.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all staff of the NPCA, and members of the Board of Directors when communicating with media or in social media on matters related to the NPCA.

POLICY STATEMENT

Building and sustaining strong relationships with the media and public is a priority for the NPCA. Media is an effective vehicle for communicating information about the organization and its goals, to the public and to foster positive public perception.

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The NPCA acknowledges the importance of engaging the community through various means. Participation in social media provides many benefits such as maintaining open dialogue, sharing of information and an accessible forum for two-way communication. The intention of this Policy is to establish a culture of openness, trust, and integrity in social media. Employees and Board Members shall participate in a responsible and professional manner. Unless specific written approval from the Communications Manager has been granted, staff may not participate in social media on behalf of the NPCA or utilize their personal accounts to discuss or respond to NPCA matters.

INTEGRATION

All staff should be aware that some of our functions may have an impact on residents and the community and as such may be newsworthy. Newsworthy items include:

- good news and exciting initiatives
- a public event, product or program announcement, and public events conducted by a third-party at an NPCA property or facility;
- business successes;
- crisis or emergency issues;
- community or public meetings or any community consultation;
- staff presentations and responses to the Board of Directors; and
- visits or meetings with other levels of government.

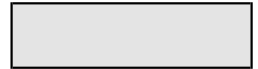
Definition of Media:

The NPCA defines media as any print, radio, television or online media outlet. This includes national, regional, local, neighbourhood, community and ethnic media outlets. Online media refers to websites that publish news, investigative reports, analysis, commentary, events and/or general information.

SPOKESPERSON PROCEDURE

- 1) The Chair shall be the NPCA spokesperson, particularly on issues of a political nature, on major initiatives, or issues that have an NPCA-wide impact. In his/her place, the spokesperson is the Vice-Chair.
- 2) The Chief Administrative Officer shall be the spokesperson on major staff or administrative/operational issues or initiatives.
- 3) Directors/Supervisors shall be spokespeople on issues or programs for which they are considered to be the experts, subject to the approval of the Communications Manager and CAO.
- 4) The direct media contact is the NPCA Communications Specialist and/or Manager who is fully briefed and authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the NPCA.
- 5) All other staff shall be the spokesperson(s) on issues that they are acknowledged content experts subject to the approval of the Communications Manager, or CAO, or in accordance with their respective approved job descriptions. The scope of media involvement is limited to specific areas of expertise only.

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- 6) Other Board Members shall be spokespersons for the NPCA as assigned by the Chair, or in his/her absence, the Vice-Chair.

The assignment of official spokesperson(s) to comment on behalf of the NPCA shall be made in consultation with the NPCA Communications Manager and CAO in all cases. Furthermore, comments provided by all staff and Board Members must be reasonable, and at all times, refrain from disparaging statements towards Board Members, staff, and the organization.

All official requests for comments or opinions by media and/or the public regarding the legislative mandate of the NPCA shall, , be referred to the Office of the CAO who will determine the appropriate spokesperson, except where staff are required to provide professional opinions as part of their daily job duties.

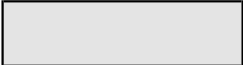
- 7) Without exception, media requests for political comments shall be referred to the NPCA Communications Manager and CAO and assigned appropriately.
- 8) Staff shall communicate any situation, occurrence, or knowledge that has come to their attention which could reasonably affect the reputation of the NPCA to the appropriate Supervisor or Director. The Supervisor or Director will notify the Communications Manager and CAO.
- 9) All NPCA employees and Board Members shall refrain from commenting on any NPCA matter that is in-camera, is the subject of litigation, or that is personal or confidential as defined in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).
- 10) Communications staff shall be notified immediately of any and all media inquiries.
- 11) NPCA staff are to notify Communications staff for any plans to develop and distribute documents which are intended for the broader public.

Any media product that is written in collaboration with a community partner or government body and that refers to the NPCA, must have NPCA information on it, including logo and contact information.

On occasion, community partners do not have the resources or capacity to issue a media product. The distribution and assistance in development of the media product are at the discretion of the Communications Manager.

- 12) After-hours media calls are to be directed to the appropriate NPCA Communications staff. For after-hours contact information, visit: <https://npc.ca/after-hours-contacts>

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- 13) All media releases will be drafted and distributed by the NPCA Communications Department. Communications staff shall forward media releases, public meeting notices, all releases and advisories to the following:
 - News releases posted to the NPCA website by a communications staff member
 - All members of the NPCA Board of Directors
 - All NPCA staff members

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The NPCA recognizes that employees and Board Members participate in social media in their personal lives. If either were to discuss matters related to the NPCA, employees and Board Members will clearly note they are representing their personal views and not the views of the NPCA. To be clear, disparaging statements towards Board Members, staff, and the organization are considered a breach of policy.

BREACH OF POLICY

A breach of this policy by an employee is a serious matter and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The determination of a breach of this policy by a Board Member will be made by the Chair (or Vice-Chair in absence) of the Board of Directors. In this case, the Chair will choose a course of action consistent with, but not limited to, a vote of the Board of Directors to censure, suspend, or direct the Communications Specialist to issue an apology/retraction on the member’s behalf.