



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Media Relations Policy

Date: March 24, 2025
To: Toronto Public Library Board
From: City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present a Media Relations Policy (Policy) for approval by the Toronto Public Library Board. A draft of the Policy is included with this report as Attachment 1.

As an open and accountable public service organization, Toronto Public Library (TPL) values the role of the media in communicating news and information to the public. The media play an important role in helping inform the public about TPL services and news.

TPL currently operates without a formal media relations policy. A media relations policy is important for ensuring consistent, accurate and appropriate information and processes with the press and public. This proposed Policy outlines and sets appropriate expectations about how TPL interacts with, and provides information to, the media and equips staff to confidently represent TPL in media interactions. It covers all TPL employees, volunteers, contractors and Board members, and addresses both traditional and digital media interactions, including proactive and reactive communications, crisis communications and media events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approves the Media Relations Policy as included in Attachment 1

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report has no financial impact beyond what has been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & CFO has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

The Media Relations Policy is aligned with the Strategic Plan priority of awareness and availability. The media play an important role in helping to inform the public about TPL services and news. The Policy helps ensure consistent, accurate and appropriate information is shared with the press and public, and equips staff to confidently represent TPL in media interactions.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Media Relations Policy supports TPL staff in ensuring that consistent information is equitably provided to diverse media outlets so that residents across the city have equitable access to information about TPL and its services.

COMMENTS

As an open and accountable public service organization, TPL values the role of the media in communicating news and information to the public. The media play an important role in helping inform the public about TPL services and news.

TPL currently operates without a formal media relations policy. A media relations policy is important for ensuring consistent, accurate and appropriate information and processes are shared with the press and public.

The proposed Policy is modelled on the City of Toronto's Media Relations Policy. It outlines and sets appropriate expectations about how TPL interacts with and provides information to the media, and equips staff to confidently represent TPL in media interactions. The Policy covers all TPL employees, contractors, volunteers and Board members, and addresses interactions including proactive and reactive communications, crisis communications and media events.

The Policy includes the following principles that will guide TPL interactions with the media:

- **Transparency:** commitment to open and honest communication with the media and public
- **Accuracy:** ensuring all information provided to the media is factual and verified
- **Timeliness:** responding to media inquiries promptly and meeting deadlines
- **Consistency:** providing consistent information to diverse media outlets
- **Professionalism:** upholding high standards in all media relations and communications
- **Strategy:** Developing a comprehensive media approach that goes beyond reactive responses to proactively inform, engage, and raise awareness of TPL services, while addressing issues and providing customer service information
- **Accountability:** clear assignment of responsibilities for media relations activities
- **Equity:** fair and equal access to information for media outlets

The Policy also articulates TPL's commitment to developing and maintaining professional working relationships with members of the media to generate timely and accurate reporting on TPL policies, services, programs, emerging initiatives and issues, and to ensure consistent, accurate and professional representation of TPL in the media.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Vickery Bowles
City Librarian

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Media Relations Policy (draft)

Media Relations Policy
Board Policy

Media Relations Policy

Policy Classification: Board Policy

Approval Date: March 24, 2025

Last Revision Date: n/a

Effective Date

March 24, 2025

Last Reviewed

This is a new policy.

Purpose

The Media Relations Policy outlines and communicates to staff and the public how TPL interacts with the media to ensure accuracy, professionalism, consistency and equity. It outlines who is authorized to speak on behalf of Toronto Public Library (TPL), and the conditions and approvals required for a spokesperson to engage with the media.

Scope

This policy applies to all TPL staff, volunteers, contractors and Board members who are approached by the media about TPL or asked to represent TPL in a media interview.

This policy is meant to provide clarity and guidance to the unique considerations associated with media relations, and works in collaboration with relevant TPL policies and procedures, such as the Rules of Conduct and the Employee Code of Ethics.

Underlying Principles

The Media Relations policy is founded on the following core principles:

- **Transparency:** commitment to open and honest communication with media and the public
- **Accuracy:** ensuring all information provided to the media is factual and verified
- **Timeliness:** responding to media inquiries in a timely manner
- **Consistency:** providing consistent information to diverse media outlets
- **Professionalism:** upholding high standards in all media relations and communications
- **Strategy:** Developing a comprehensive media approach that goes beyond reactive responses; to proactively inform, engage, and raise awareness of TPL services, while addressing issues and providing customer service information
- **Accountability:** clear assignment of responsibilities for media relations activities
- **Equity:** fair and equal access to information for media outlets

Policy Statement

As an open and accountable public service organization, Toronto Public Library (TPL) values the role of the media in communicating news and information to the public, and the important role they play in helping inform the public about TPL services and news. TPL is committed to developing and maintaining professional working relationships with members of the media to generate timely and accurate reporting on TPL policies, services, programs, emerging initiatives and issues, and to ensure consistent, accurate and professional representation of TPL in the media.

1. Media relations activities and directives

- 1.1. TPL's media relations activities are part of communications planning aligned with overall TPL priorities.

- 1.2 TPL produces and distributes timely, clear and accurate information to media, and ensures that proactive media relations are newsworthy and consistent with generally accepted media relations practices including equitable access to information. News releases are available to all members of the media, and public, on tpl.ca.
- 1.3 TPL may host media events to provide insights into TPL priorities, inviting media via advisories and prioritize attendance for outlets with significant reach when necessary. TPL may also partner with the City of Toronto, Mayor's Office, Toronto Public Library Foundation or other partners on media events.
- 1.4 TPL responds to media requests promptly and transparently. TPL reserves the right to prioritize responses to media queries based on organizational capacity and strategic importance, with a commitment to transparent communication about engagement decisions. TPL prioritizes established media but will evaluate and respond to diverse media requests including student newspapers or bloggers.
- 1.5 TPL coordinates and manages all media relations centrally, through its communications division, and maintains a transparent process for media access to TPL leadership, spokespeople and subject matter experts. TPL staff, Board members, volunteers or contractors who are contacted by media must direct their inquiry to the designated staff in the communications division.

Authorized designated spokespeople recognize that they speak on behalf of TPL; will strive to be accurate and refrain from offering personal opinion, supporting or refuting a particular political view, or commenting on TPL work outside their area of expertise; and will adhere to the Employee Code of Ethics when acting as a TPL spokesperson.
- 1.6 At times, TPL staff may undertake media relations activities for personal or volunteer pursuits unrelated to their work for TPL. Employees engaging in personal media relations activities must

adhere to all relevant TPL policies and procedures and ensure their participation neither implies TPL's endorsement nor reflects negatively on the organization.

Accountability

The Director, Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement has overall responsibility for this policy.

CPCE develops and maintains professional media relationships, oversees compliance with this policy, and coordinates all media relations activities. CPCE must ensure a rigorous fact-checking process before releasing information to the media.

Directors and Managers authorize and recommend spokespeople from their divisions, allow time for spokesperson training, and support media relations activities aligned with communications objectives.

TPL staff, volunteers, contractors and Board members ensure compliance with this policy and direct any media inquiries to CPCE.

Related Library Policies

[Online and Social Media Policy](#)

Employee Code of Ethics

[Rules of Conduct](#)

[Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy](#)

Definition of Terms

Inquiry

A question, questions or interview request posed by a member of the media to TPL.

Media relations activities

Actions intended to prompt media interest (i.e., news release, media advisory, social media targeting members of the media) or in response to interest from members of the media (i.e., email to media@tpl.ca, interviews, media event).

Member of the media

A person who participates in the act of journalism in a professional capacity, including writing for newspapers, magazines or news websites and/or preparing news to be broadcast. TPL adheres to the definition of journalism used by the [Canadian Association of Journalists](#) (2021), defining journalism as an activity that includes the pursuit of truth for its audiences, an act of creation and dissemination and a particular set of methods.

In addition, TPL acknowledges the evolving media landscape, including bloggers, social media influencers and other non-traditional journalists with significant following and public influence. Inquiries by these individuals will be evaluated by CPCE on a case-by-case basis.

Spokesperson

A spokesperson is an employee of TPL or TPL Board member authorized by the Director, Communications, Programming & Customer Engagement (or delegate) and appropriate division head (or delegate) to speak to media on behalf of TPL, meeting all criteria listed in this policy.

Contact

Director, Communications, Programming and Customer Engagement