



**THE CORPORATION OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF
ADJALA – TOSORONTIO**

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

ENACTED BY COUNCIL:

MOTION NUMBER:

REVISED BY COUNCIL:

MOTION NUMBER:

1. PURPOSE STATEMENT

The Township of Adjala-Tosorontio is committed to consistent, effective, timely, and transparent communications. Effective communications are critical to the Township's work and contribute directly to residents' trust in their local government.

The purpose of the Corporate Communications Policy is to establish a framework for Township's corporate communications to improve information sharing and engagement with residents and to guide open, honest and effective communication.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

This Policy provides the framework for the Township's Corporate Communications to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Enhance public engagement by fostering transparent, timely, and effective communication with stakeholders.
- b) Improve accessibility and inclusivity ensuring communications are accessible, inclusive, and compliant with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* ("AODA").
- c) Administer this Policy and its related procedures in accordance with the *Municipal Act, 2001*, the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and any other relevant legislation.
- d) Manage crisis communication by providing a structured approach for timely and accurate information during emergencies.
- e) Promote awareness of the Township's services and initiatives informing residents and stakeholders about programs, services, policies, and community developments.

- f) Encourage communication and facilitate dialogue and feedback between the Township and the community to foster trust and engagement.

2.2. Values and Guiding Principles

All communications shall embody and reflect the following:

- a) Accessibility by using plain language and a variety of communication methods to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the target audience.
- b) Diversity by using gender neutral, and non-discriminatory language. Communications shall exclude words and images that connote stereotypes, any negative or passive language relating to physical appearances, and exclude clichés, slang, and jargon.
- c) Accountability by being responsible for the actions, goals, and objectives of the Township and when an error is made, it must be corrected, with notice and taking responsibility for it.
- d) Cordiality by delivering communications with friendliness, kindness and compassion.
- e) Timeliness by aiming to communicate with residents as quickly as possible without compromising key values. If an interaction requires seeking additional or detailed information and input, the request should be acknowledged, and the expectations defined around the communications.
- f) Transparency by communicating honestly and openly with stakeholders including providing proactive disclosure of information where appropriate.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This Policy applies to all internal and external communications of the Township and applies to all Members of Council, employees, contractors, and volunteers.

4. DEFINITIONS

CAO means the Chief Administrative Officer for the Corporation of Adjala-Tosorostio.

Communications Division means a division responsible for managing internal and external communications including public relations, media relations, social media management, crisis communication, branding, marketing, and stakeholder engagement. This division includes Communications Officer.

Corporate Communication(s) means the variety of ways the Township, as a government body, communicates with external and internal audiences.

Emergency means a situation that requires prompt action to limit damage to persons, property, or the environment.

Inappropriate Communication means communication in-person, electronic, telephonic, written, or other forms of communication that:

- a) a person knew or reasonably ought to have known would cause the subject of the communication, the person receiving the communication, or both to feel humiliated or intimidated;
- b) is discriminatory, threatening, violent, or defamatory; or
- c) is part of a pattern of communications that are frivolous, vexatious, or made with malicious intent.

Media Product means the type of document used to communicate with members of the media and the public. These include but are not limited to news releases, press conference, media release, public service announcements (PSA) and media advisories.

Media Relations means either reactively or proactively engaging with representatives from print, online, social or broadcast media outlets.

Social media means websites and digital applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content online, or to participate in social networking, which may change from time to time.

Stakeholder means a resident, business, municipal neighbour, elected official, staff, upper tier level of government, board, committee, authority, agency, association, and anyone with an interest in municipal affairs.

Township means the Corporation of Adjala-Tosorontio.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. The Communications Division also provides media relations support to Township as required. This may include:

5.1.1. Coordinating day-to-day interaction of Township staff with the media.

5.1.2. Preparing Township staff by providing advice and support to facilitate positive media interaction.

5.1.3. Providing timely notification to the CAO and Communications Division of issues in which there is media interest.

6. BRAND USAGE

6.1 All corporate communications shall make use of the Township brand and brand standards as appropriate and in accordance with the Brand Identity Guidelines. Usage of the Township's brand outside of corporate communications shall be at the discretion of the CAO. It is all staff responsibility to ensure the logo and brand is used in accordance with the guidelines.

7. CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

7.1. The Township shall maintain a website to provide the public with information regarding municipal services, Council decisions, Council and Committee meeting schedules, minutes and agendas, by-laws, policies, activities, events, and ongoing government business.

7.2. The CAO shall be the official spokesperson for matters related to the administration of the Township. All media inquiries shall be referred to the Communications Officer to further be discussed with the CAO.

7.3. If authorized by the CAO, an employee may serve as the designated spokesperson for matters relating to their position, skills, and expertise.

7.4 The Township will recognize all Federal important commemorative days as stated on Canada.ca, as well as any additional special days identified by the Mayor through the Township social media accounts.

7.5. Social Media use by the Township and Employees

7.5.1 All use of social media shall be done in adherence with the Township Social Media Policy.

7.6. Emergency Communications

- 7.6.1. In times of emergency or crisis, the Township shall communicate all information that will protect the health, safety, security of residents and their property.
- 7.6.2. Communications decisions shall be made by the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio's Emergency Information Officer (EIO) in consultation with Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) and CAO.
- 7.6.3. Communications will take any form necessary to ensure residents receive accurate, timely, and relevant information to prevent, mitigate, respond to, or recover from an emergency.
- 7.6.4. Due to the role of the Fire and Rescue Services, the Fire Department has its own spokesperson being the Fire Chief or designate, to respond to media requests, as they relate to ongoing fire and rescue incidents.

7.7. Mayor and Council Media Relations

- 7.7.1. The Mayor is the primary spokesperson on matters of the Township.
- 7.7.2. The Mayor, in their capacity as the spokesperson for Council, may receive communications support from the Communications Division. Such assistance may include but is not limited to speaking notes for public appearances or events, scripts or research notes for media interviews, and key messages for media requests or emergency situations.
- 7.7.3. In all communications from Members of Council, including the use of social media, the following shall be considered:
 - a) Obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct.
 - b) Obligations under Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation.
 - c) The accuracy of the information provided.
 - d) If the communication could bring about disrepute to or expose the Township to legal action.
 - e) Whether the subject or position on a matter is enabled or prohibited by a law, or By-law or Policy of the Township.
 - f) Whether the communication reflects the values of the Township;
and,

g) Whether Council has taken a particular position, by way of a motion, on the topic.

7.7.4. When sharing Township information on social media, Members of Council are encouraged to share directly from the Township official social media channels to ensure information is accurate and up to date.

7.7.5. Individual members of Council are encouraged to reflect the position of Council in their communications, or state they are providing a personal opinion. Where an individual Member of Council expresses a personal opinion, whether written or verbal, it must be explicitly clear to the audience that the Member is not speaking on behalf of the Township or Council.

Accordingly, when a Member of Council is communicating as an individual, they may include the following statement in written correspondence:

“The information contained in this correspondence reflects the views of an individual Member of Council, and not those of Council as a whole or the Township of Adjala-Tosorontio.”

7.7.6. With respect to communicating the business of the Committees of Council, the Members of Council serving as Chair shall refer to and be bound by the policies of their respective Committee.

7.8. Media inquiries received by Members of Council

7.8.1. Councillors shall refer all media inquiries to the Mayor and CAO for direction and assistance.

7.8.2. The Mayor shall be the default spokesperson for all media inquiries regarding Council matters, unless another Member of Council is designated by the Mayor to respond to a particular matter.

7.8.3 Nothing in this policy is intended to limit a Council Member’s ability to respond to communication received from the public.

7.9. Staff Media Relations

7.9.1. Township staff contacted directly by the media shall refer all inquiries to the Communications Officer.

7.9.2. The Communications Officer will provide support for these designated Township spokespersons in the way of briefing notes,

communications messages, question and answer packages and other information materials.

- 7.9.4. All media crews, reporters, etc., requesting access to non-public areas shall sign-in at the front desk and the Communications Officer will be notified to facilitate the visit.
- 7.9.5. All media products, news conferences and media advisories are arranged by Communications Officer in conjunction with the appropriate department.
- 7.9.6. All media products shall identify the Communications Officer as the contact for further information and, where appropriate, a program contact is identified as well.
- 7.9.7. All Media products are to be prepared and coordinated by the Communications Officer. If a media product is initiated by a department, a draft is to be sent to the Communications Officer for review and distribution to the media.
- 7.9.8. Where appropriate, media products will include a quotation from the Mayor. A Member of Council, staff member or a third-party stakeholder may also be asked to provide a quotation This will be determined by the Mayor and/or CAO in consultation with the Communications Officer.
- 7.9.9. Prior to publication of a media product containing quotes, approval of the final product must be obtained by each individual quoted.

8. MEDIA RELATIONS TRAINING

Media relations training is offered through the Communications Division to the Mayor, Members of Council, Department Heads and other individuals who are designated as media spokespersons. The purpose of the training is to assist them in communicating the Township's activities and operations to the public in an effective and consistent manner.

9. COPYRIGHT

The use of images in print and digital communications products, and their distribution to targeted audiences, will comply with the Copyright Act. The Township will ensure that the ownership rights associated with works subject to copyright are fully respected in the Township's communications channels and products.

10. REPORTING VIOLATIONS

Members of Council and employees shall immediately report known or suspected violations of this Policy to the CAO. All good faith allegations of violations of this policy will be confidentially investigated.

11. INAPPROPRIATE COMMUNICATIONS TOWARD EMPLOYEES

- 11.1. If employees believe they have received inappropriate communication, they will report the incident in writing to their supervisor. Where the incident is limited to written or electronic communication, a copy of that written or electronic communication should be included.
- 11.2. If, upon receipt and review of an Incident Report, the Manager or Director believes the incident may have violated this Policy and/or the Township Frivolous, Vexatious or Unreasonably Persistent Requests or Complaints Policy, they will notify the CAO and provide the CAO with the written complaint.
- 11.3. When the CAO receives an Incident Report, they will take such action as they consider appropriate in the circumstances, considering the following guidelines:
 - a) whether the Inappropriate Communication concerned a matter for which the author of the communication had a statutory right to be heard;
 - b) the role of the individual to whom the Inappropriate Communication was directed;
 - c) whether the inappropriate communication relates to comments and feedback regarding a program, service, or initiative of the Township;
 - d) whether the inappropriate communication is violent, threatening, defamatory of an individual, or discriminatory;
 - e) whether the inappropriate communication was a single or repeated act;
 - f) whether the person has acknowledged wrongdoing or apologized for the inappropriate communication; and

- g) whether the person had received previous warnings or actions from the Township regarding inappropriate communication.

11.4. The CAO may determine that the incident did not constitute a violation of this Policy and take no further action.

11.5. The CAO may determine that the incident constituted a violation of this Policy and take one or more of the following steps:

- a) issue a written warning letter to the person who engaged in inappropriate communication.
- b) impose limits on the way a person may communicate with employees including:
 - i) limiting the person to communicating in a particular manner (e.g., email only)
 - ii) at a particular time (e.g., telephone calls only one day per week, emails only reviewed once per week)
 - iii) or a particular duration of time (e.g., a maximum time for telephone calls) require that all communications from the person be directed to the Manager and advising other employees not to respond.
- c) any other action the CAO considers appropriate in the circumstances.

12. AMENDMENTS

13. POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed a minimum of every five years, pending departmental changes.