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**REPORT TITLE:     Establishing a Region of Peel Media Release Policy**

**FROM:                     Kathryn Lockyer, Interim Commissioner of Corporate Services**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Media Release Policy attached as Appendix II to the report of the Interim Commissioner of Corporate Services, titled “Establishing a Region of Peel Media Release Policy”, be approved;**

**And further, that the Media Release Policy replace Corporate Policy I30-02 – Communication with Media.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Region of Peel has committed to a vision of Community for Life where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging and access to the services and opportunities they need to thrive at each stage of their lives.
  - The opportunities and needs to communicate with various media outlets are critical for sharing key messages and information for residents and businesses on Regional programs and services.
  - Recognizing that timely information distribution to media is essential, the Region has developed a procedure to be followed by Regional staff.
  - This procedure and approach support key outcomes in the Marketing and Communications Strategy, a key organizational strategy which support the outcomes of the Region's 20-year Strategic Plan, helping to build a Community for Life.
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## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Background**

The Region of Peel provides information on a regular basis on programs, services, and advancements of the business of the corporation, to support residents and businesses. Information distribution is accomplished in a variety of ways, including but not limited to: in person engagements, social media, instructional videos or video storytelling, peelregion.ca website, e-newsletter (Connect2Peel), and media release distribution.

At the Regional Council Policies and Procedures Committee meeting held on August 20, 2020, staff in Marketing and Communications was asked to report back to the Committee with recommendations for establishing a Region of Peel media release policy and procedure.

The following report outlines the background on media release distribution, the common practices of the Region and the local municipalities, and the proposed Policy and Procedure.

## **Establishing a Region of Peel Media Release Policy**

An existing Corporate Policy I30-02 – *Communication with the Media* will be replaced with the new policy.

### **2. Background on the Use of Media Releases at the Region of Peel**

A media release is one communications tactic that may be used in order to gain media interest or coverage on programs, services, and advancements of the business of the Region, to support residents and businesses.

In 2020 (at the time of writing of this report), 87 media releases from the Region have been prepared and distributed to media, posted to the Region's website, and shared through various channels. The media releases in 2020 have covered: 27 COVID-related items, 5 Holiday Closures, 13 PAMA events/updates, and 42 Programs and Services news items.

By comparison, in 2019 during non-COVID response, 97 were distributed over the year. The media releases in 2019 covered: 8 Holiday Closures, 23 PAMA events/updates, and 66 Programs and Services news items.

In most cases, the Region will use a media release as one part of an overall communications strategy, with a potential to reach intended media audiences. This decision to use a media release as a tactic is made on a case-by-case basis, considering the final intended audience and intended action/behaviour change to be taken, and interest the media may have in covering the subject. On an ongoing basis, Council and Committee report reviews include consideration to communications needs.

If a media release is a chosen method of communication, the Communications lead will draft the media release with the departmental subject matter experts (SMEs), who consult to ensure that all content is correct. The Communications lead will also ensure that other aspects of the communications are prepared to align – including, but not limited to, resident-facing communications, social media, signage, e-newsletters and community engagement.

When the media release would be enhanced by a quote from the Head of Council, the communications lead works with the Chair's office to determine the quote/statement, seeks review and sign-off. Chairs/Vice Chairs of programs, SME's and/or departmental leads may also be quoted, as well as other levels of government, etc.

Once all contributors have reviewed the communications tactics aligned to the strategy, including the media release, Communications will distribute the media release to a media contact list via email, post to website, and share through other channels.

### **3. Common Practices on Media Release Distribution**

The approach to media release distribution is aligned with that of the local municipalities within the Region; information was received from the Cities of Brampton and Mississauga and Town of Caledon communications departments. All departments were found to use a common set of best practices and informal procedures to support the preparation of media releases (see Appendix I)

### **4. Procedure for Media Releases for the Region of Peel**

Incorporating these common best practices and informal procedures, a Corporate Policy and related Procedure have been developed for the preparation of media releases and are attached as Appendix II and III respectively

## Establishing a Region of Peel Media Release Policy

The Policy provides the Purpose, Scope and Responsibilities for the preparation of Media Releases.

The Procedure provides guidelines on planning, use of, spokespersons/quotes, timing and distribution of media releases. The procedure provides an expected structure for media release activities while allowing for the flexibility that may be necessary to ensure factual and newsworthy content.

### NEXT STEPS

Upon approval, staff will launch the Policy and Procedure with the Communications division within Corporate Services. Subject matter experts will be made aware of the Procedure when working with Communications to support fact-checking and the timely distribution of information to the media.

### CONCLUSION

The Media Release Policy and Procedure will ensure the timely distribution of Regional information to media outlets in support of building knowledge and awareness of the work undertaken by the Region as we work towards building a *Community for Life*.

### APPENDICES

Appendix I – Common Practices on Media Release Distribution

Appendix II – Media Release Policy

Appendix III – Media Release Procedure

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*For further information regarding this report, please contact Lisa Duarte, Director, Marketing and Communications, [Lisa.Duarte@peelregion.ca](mailto:Lisa.Duarte@peelregion.ca), 905-791-7800 x4862*

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#### ***Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:***

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



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N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer