

# ***Media Relations Protocol***

***Executive Management Committee  
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## *Introduction*

- Environment Canada's proposed Media Relations Protocol will guide the department in responding to calls from the media
- The protocol is based on consultation with other science-based departments, notably Agriculture and AgriFood Canada
- The protocol will represent the first formal policy on media relations



## *Purpose*

- To provide a clear policy on how media calls to Environment Canada are to be handled
- To ensure that media inquiries are responded to quickly, accurately and in a consistent manner across Canada
- To improve service to media by coordinating responses and ensuring that appropriate spokespeople are speaking to issues
- To coordinate responses and ensure that the responses to similar issues are consistent



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## *Rationale*

- Environment Canada is one of only a few departments that does not have a media relations protocol
- Just as we have “one department, one website” we should have “one department, one voice”



## *Current Context*

- No policy exists
- Media calls are answered individually by programmes and regions
- No overall sense of media activity coming in or going out of department
- No overall sense of who is speaking to the media
- Limited coordination of messages across the country
- Interviews sometimes result in surprises to Minister and Senior Management



## *How will it work*

- Media relations at NHQ will coordinate all media calls coming into the department
- Upon receiving a media call, the recipient will inform their direct supervisor and contact media relations
- Media relations will work with individual staff to decide how to best handle the call; this could include:
  - Asking the programme expert to respond with approved lines
  - Having Media Relations respond
  - Referring the call to the Minister's Office
  - Referring the call to another department
- Once the call is returned, Media Relations will log the call and close the file





# Guiding Principles

- Environment Canada employees and subject matter experts are sometimes called upon to speak directly with the media following consultation with Media Relations in Headquarters.
- When speaking for the department, Environment Canada employees and subject matter experts:
  - shall discuss only their own job within their personal areas of experience or expertise;
  - shall respect the judicial process with respect to matters before the courts, and federal laws and policies such as the *Privacy Act* governing disclosure of information to the public.



## *Guiding Principles Continued*

- In addition, Environment Canada employees speaking in their official capacity, including designated subject matter experts and Media Relations Officers shall not:
  - respond to media queries that fall outside of their personal area of experience or expertise, unless authorized to do so;
  - provide comments that could undermine the integrity of an investigation currently in progress;
  - speculate about events, incidents, issues, or future policy decisions;
  - offer personal opinion on government or Environment Canada policy; or
  - discuss advice given to the Minister, Cabinet or their superiors.





# *Role of Media Relations*

- Media Relations officers:
  - Speak on behalf of the department
  - Liaise with other parts of the department to help ensure the department speaks with one voice
  - Facilitate media training/coaching
  - Log and track media calls
  - Work within communications to develop media lines on issues of interest to the media
  - Assist with organizing technical briefings and news conferences
- Media Relations has a dedicated email, [media@ec.gc.ca](mailto:media@ec.gc.ca), which is connected to a blackberry and monitored on an ongoing basis
- Media relations is also available after hours



## *What it means for the department*

- Media Relations will serve as central coordinating function for media calls
- Experts will still be called upon to speak to their areas of expertise, where required, and input into media lines
- Calls should be returned only after running them through media relations
- OPG Board leads will need to provide updated lists of trained media spokespeople on a regular basis
- Due to volume and technical nature of inquiries, weather-related calls will continue to be handled through the Weather Media Access Line



## *Considerations*

- Environment Canada is a science department, so we recognize that many calls will require an expert's assistance
- Scientists will still be encouraged to speak directly to the results of their work
- Media relations is a client service organization, serving the department to ensure that messages are communicated clearly, quickly, accurately and in a consistent manner across Canada





# Key Contacts

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