



## External Communications

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## Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this Policy:

**“Appointed Board”** means the appointed members of the Forest Practices Board and includes the Chair, the Vice-Chair and Board Members.

**“Appointed Board members”** means individual members of the Appointed Board.

**“Board staff”** means staff employed by the Forest Practices Board.

**“Board”** means the Forest Practices Board organization as a whole, and includes Appointed Board members and Board staff.

**“Board or Board’s mandate”** means the purpose and duties of the Forest Practices Board as specified in the following legislation:

- *Forest and Range Practices Act*
- *Wildfire Act*
- Forest Practices Board Regulation

**“Chair”** means Chair of the Forest Practices Board.

**“Framework Policy”** means the Policy and Procedures Management Framework Policy of the Board.

**“Media”** means traditional media and includes print (newspapers and magazines), broadcast (television, radio) and online platforms associated with such organizations.

**“Panel”** means a subset of the Appointed Board assigned by the Chair under section 137 of the *Forest and Range Practices Act*.

## 1. Purpose

This policy provides guidance on when and how the Board's information will be provided to media, and the type of information that can be provided to the media and the public, while meeting requirements for protection of privacy and confidentiality.

## 2. Objectives

- a) Ensure that external communication of information is consistent with legislation, regulations and the Board's Strategic Plan, mission and values.
- b) Implement communication of information in an effective, efficient and consistent manner.
- c) Increase transparency in the conduct of Board activities.

## 3. Legislation and Regulations

- *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*

## 4. Application

This policy and procedure applies to Board staff and Appointed Board members.

## 5. Policy

### 5.1 Media Relations

- a) The Chair is the official spokesperson for the Board.
- b) The Vice-chair or Panel chair will be the spokesperson in the event the Chair has a conflict with the file in question.
- c) Any media requests should be forwarded to the Director of Communications, who will consult with the Chair and determine who will respond. Board members do not speak to media without approval from the Chair (or Vice-Chair in the event the Chair has a conflict on the matter).
- d) The Chair or designate will always provide the Board's opinion, while staff may be asked to respond to technical questions.

### 5.2 News Releases

- a) All audit reports will be accompanied by a news release.
- b) The Board will issue news releases for other reports or issues on a case-by-case basis; this will generally occur:
  - i) when a Board report raises a significant issue of public interest,
  - ii) where there has been previous media coverage of the issues covered in the report, or
  - iii) the Board Chair, or Panel Chair, after consulting with the Communications Director, decides a report warrants a news release to media.
- c) The Chair, or Panel Chair, will provide advice on the key message for a news release when they are approving significant or controversial reports.

- d) News releases will use a neutral and balanced tone, without sensationalizing and will focus on:
- i) the results on the ground,
  - ii) why results matter to people, and
  - iii) recommendations for improvement made by the Board.

### **5.3 News Conferences**

- a) On recommendation of the Communications Director to the Executive Director and Chair, a news conference will only be held to release a report, or follow up on recommendation(s), if at least two of the following criteria are met:
- i) The report is about a matter of major public and media interest.
  - ii) The report or recommendation relates to:
    - a significant threat to a forest resource and/or public safety, which makes it necessary to call public attention to the issue, or,
    - a significant achievement in stewardship of forest or range resources.
  - iii) The report is likely to attract significant public comment and/or controversy.
  - iv) The report findings are sufficiently complex to warrant a detailed explanation to media and stakeholders, in order to minimize inaccurate reporting or misunderstanding of the findings.
- b) Consideration should also be given to whether the report has a sufficient visual component to be of interest to broadcast media.

### **5.4 Public Requests for Information**

Appointed Board members or Board staff may be contacted by members of the public with requests for information about Board work.

- a) The Board will provide information to the public whenever possible, subject to
- i) requirements for protection of privacy;
  - ii) requirements to ensure due process for participants in ongoing Board audits and investigations; and
  - iii) requirements to protect personal and other specified information under the FOIPPA.
- b) The Board will not require a person to file a formal request for information under FOIPPA before it handles the request.
- c) The Board will respond to requests and provide information consistent with
- i) FOIPPA requirements; and
  - ii) Board procedures for staff response to FOI requests.
  - iii) The Board guidance document on *Responding to Requests for Information* (Guidance Document) which outlines specific types of information and the specific circumstances under which it may be shared.

## **5.5 Presentations**

Appointed Board members or Board staff may be asked to speak at public events about Board work.

- a) The Board will accept invitations to present Board work whenever possible.
- b) Staff must obtain the approval of their supervisor and work with the Communications staff to develop an appropriate presentation. Board templates and standards for presentations must be followed.
- c) Board members must obtain the Chair's approval to present on behalf of the Board and follow Board templates and standards for presentations.
- d) If a Board member is speaking or presenting at an event in a capacity outside of their Board role, and the audience is likely to be aware of their role with the Board, they should be clear they are not speaking on behalf of the Board.

## **5.6 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Chair**

- Acts as official spokesperson for the Board with media.
- Decides when to issue a news release or hold a news conference, consistent with section 5.2 and 5.2 of this policy.
- Carries out duties specified in the FOIPPA legislation and procedures document.
- When sharing information about ongoing Board work, follows the Guidance Document.

### **Appointed Board Members:**

- Act as official spokesperson for the Board when requested by the Chair.
- When sharing information about ongoing Board work, follow the Guidance Document.

### **Executive Director:**

- Works with the Chair and the Director of Communications to determine the need for news conferences.
- Provides oversight of external communications, ensuring adherence to this policy and relevant procedures and guidance.
- Approve procedures necessary to meet the requirements of this policy.
- When sharing information about ongoing Board work, follows the Guidance Document.

### **Communications Director:**

- Recommends when news releases and news conferences should be used to convey information to media and the public, oversee implementation and ensures news releases follow this policy and related procedures.
- Develops procedures and standards in accordance with this policy.
- Oversee responses to requests for information and ensure adherence to relevant policies and procedures.
- Provides leadership, direction, guidance, advice and support to Board staff in accordance with this policy.
- Monitors effectiveness of procedures and guidance and makes adjustments where necessary.

- Identifies the need for development of new, or updates to existing, policies relevant to external communications.
- When sharing information about ongoing Board work, follows the Guidance Document.

#### Board Staff

- Respond to media requests for information when asked to do so.
- Follow relevant procedures and the Guidance Document when sharing information about ongoing Board work, and when responding to requests for information.

## 6. Procedures

Procedures for communicating information externally:

- FOI Guiding Document (2019)
- Procedures for News Releases

## 7. References

- Responding to Requests for Information (Guidance Document)
- Media Relations Guidance Document
- Policy and Procedures Policy
- Panels Policy

## 8. Document Control Information

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Approved by:



Kevin Kriese, Chair  
Forest Practices Board