



External Communications

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 information communicated externally complies with legislation, regulations and the Board's Strategic Plan, mission, and values.
- b) To communicate information in an effective, efficient, and consistent manner.
- c) Increase transparency in the conduct of Board activities.

3. Legislation

[Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FOIPPA)

4. Application

This policy applies to Board staff and the Appointed Board.

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 of interest.
- c) Any media requests should be forwarded to the Communications Manager, 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 Board 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) if the Chair, after consulting with the Communications Manager, decides a report warrants a news release to media.
- c) The Chair, or Panel Chair, will advise the Communications Manager 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 Manager to the Executive Director and Chair, a news conference may 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 significant public and media interest.
 - ii) The report or recommendation(s) 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 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 requirements:
 - i) for the protection of privacy;
 - ii) to ensure due process for participants in ongoing Board audits and investigations; and
 - iii) to protect personal and other specified information under *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (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;

- ii) Board procedures for staff responding to freedom of information requests; and
- iii) The Board guidance document on Responding to Requests for Information made under the FOIPPA, which outlines specific types of information and the specific circumstances under which it may be shared, and the Communicating Information to the Public and the Media document.

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 Manager 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 5.3 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 the 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 Communications Manager 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 Manager

- Recommends when news releases and/or news conferences should be used to convey information to the media and public.
- Oversees timely coordination, distribution, and publication of news releases.
- Ensures news releases follow this policy and related procedures.
- Develops procedures and standards in accordance with this policy.

- Oversees responses to requests for information and ensures adherence to relevant policies and procedures.
- Monitors the effectiveness of procedures and guidance, making adjustments where necessary.
- Identifies the need to develop new – or update 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

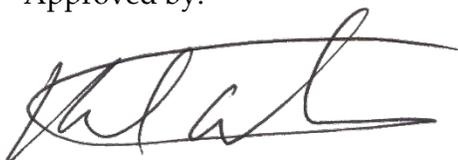
Procedures for communicating information externally:

- [Responding to Requests for Information](#)
- [Communicating Information to the Public and the Media](#)

7. References

- [Guidelines for Media Relations](#)
- [Panels of the Board Policy](#)

Approved by:



Keith Atkinson, Chair
Forest Practices Board