



<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>Policy on Communications and Media Relations</b>
<b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>	2005-01
<b>CONTACT:</b>	Vice President (Society Activities)
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b>	August 1, 2005
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## **POLICY ON COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA RELATIONS**

### **1. PURPOSE AND PREAMBLE**

The purpose of this policy is to assure that information about the MCRC and its policies, practices, and programs is communicated consistently and reported accurately in the media. We recognize that a deliberate and proactive communications strategy is critical to managing the public image of the MCRC and ensuring that relevant information is communicated to MCRC staff.

A favourable public image enhances MCRC's ability to advocate credibly on behalf of our members and generally to achieve our mission; however, these guidelines are not intended to infringe the individual's freedom of speech or freedom of the press.

### **2. INTENDED AUDIENCE**

The intended audience for this document is staff, volunteers, and management of the MCRC. Wherever the term "staff" is used in this document, it shall be interpreted to mean all three of these groups.

### **3. GOALS**

- 3.01** To achieve a positive image of the MCRC within the MCRS and the wider University community.
- 3.02** To ensure timely dissemination of noteworthy events in order to inform our membership of our activities, and draw attention to the positive work residents do in their community.
- 3.03** To provide the media with timely access to information.

### **4. VALUES**

The MCRC is committed to:

- 4.01** Honesty. The MCRC will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.
- 4.02** Transparency. The MCRC promotes openness and accessibility in its dealings with the media, while complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.
- 4.03** Balance. Information provided to the media will be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.
- 4.04** Clarity. All communications with the media will be written in plain English.

## **5. POLICY**

**5.01** The Vice President (Society Activities) shall coordinate and be responsible for all communications and media relations activities and shall act as the principle contact for the media.

**5.02** Only the Vice President (Society Activities) and individuals specifically authorized to do so by the President of the MCRC shall publicly speak on behalf of the MCRC.

**5.03** Only accurate, timely, and newsworthy information should be communicated to the media.

**5.04** Staff are prohibited from initiating contact with, or responding to, the media on matters concerning residences or the MCRC without prior authorization of the President, MCRC.

**5.05** Media inquiries received by staff must be immediately referred to the Vice President (Society Activities). An appropriate response to the media would be "I'm sorry I don't have full information. I will give your request to the Vice President for Society Activities who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available." Obtain the reporter's name, phone number, topic of story, and deadline.

**5.06** The media have a vital role to play on behalf of students in holding the MCRC to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to authorized officers and to background information to assist them in this role. To balance this, the MCRC will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that students are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

**5.07** Nothing in this policy shall restrict staff members' rights to give personal opinions to the media on matters not related to residences or the MCRC. Staff are required, however, to indicate clearly that their opinions are personal and do not represent the views of the MCRC. In addition, MCRC letterhead or other official MCRC materials shall not be used in such media communications, nor shall staff identify themselves by their MCRC titles.

**5.08** It shall be the policy of the MCRC not to release information regarding resignations or terminations of non-elected staff.

**5.09** Publicity about individual staff members may include work related contact details, the positions they hold in the council (e.g. member of the Executive Board or Chair of Finance and Audit Committee), and their responsibilities. Publicity may also include information about individual staff member's proposals, decisions and recommendations only where this is relevant to their position and responsibilities within the MCRC. All such publicity shall be objective and explanatory, and personalization of issues or personal image making shall be avoided.

**5.10** House Presidents should advise the Vice President (Society Activities) of newsworthy events taking place within their houses, preferably well before the event takes place. Examples of newsworthy events would be: house-wide social activities, passing or revoking of house rules, awards given to house staff, exceptional accomplishments of students or staff residing in the house, guest speakers, and any other event out of the ordinary.

**5.11** For the safety and privacy of residents, photography or video recording by the press is expressly prohibited in residence, including cafeterias, without the prior approval of the Vice President (Society

Activities). With reasonable notice, the MCRC is willing to assist reporters, photographers and videographers in accessing these areas.

**5.12** When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then a reasonable effort should be made to obtain advice from legal council before any response is made.

**5.13** Assembly and committee agendas, reports and minutes shall be sent to the media on request, as early as possible prior to the meeting. The media are encouraged to attend meetings, and seating shall be made available. Copies of any late tabled items and the text of any formal speeches shall also be made available. The relevant members and officers will be available following committee meetings for comment or interview.

## **6. INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS**

Any items that need to be communicated internally shall be directed to the President through the Vice President (Residence Affairs). The Vice President (Residence Affairs) will distribute information internally in consultation with the President. Outside organizations or groups wishing to distribute information or contact MCRC staff will also be directed to the Vice President (Residence Affairs).

## **7. E-MAIL**

Only the President of the MCRC shall have the authority to authorize mass e-mails to the entire membership on behalf of the MCRC. Such e-mails should be important, concise, and infrequent.

Other than the MCRC, and those organizations specifically authorized to do so by the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and/or its departments, no group or organization shall be permitted to distribute mass e-mails to the entire membership.

## **8. APPEALS**

**8.01** A staff member denied permission under section 5.04 to communicate directly with the press may appeal the decision to the Executive Board within two days of the President's decision. Appeals shall be directed through the Secretary of the Board.

**8.02** Decisions of the Executive Board may be further appealed to the General Assembly.

**8.03** No appeal shall be considered unless the Secretary of the Board determines that the appeal is substantive.

## **9. ENFORCEMENT**

**9.01** The Vice President (Society Activities) shall have authority to enforce this policy and responsibility to ensure that it is well understood and adhered-to by all staff.

**9.02** Failure to comply with this policy will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the MCRC Policy on Human Resources (2005-02).

**9.03** Staff on leave while running for an MCRC office shall not be subject to this policy.