



Ontario Professional Planners Institute  
**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY AND PROTOCOL**  
Approved by Council February 2001 - Revised June 2001

**POLICY:** The Institute speaks with one voice at the provincial and local levels. In order to ensure consistent messaging, communications regarding Institute activities are coordinated by the OPPI office.

**PROTOCOL:**

- In advance of extending a written or verbal invitation to the media or upon receipt of a request for an interview regarding Institute matters, contact the OPPI office and speak with the Manager of Policy and Communications, Loretta Ryan, 416-483-1873 or 1-800-668-1448, ex. 26.
- Organizers of events should work with OPPI staff early on in the process. This assists with the coordination and organization of communications.
- Prior to distribution, written material circulated to the media (including policy or position statements, media advisories, and news releases) are to be submitted, in a timely fashion, to the OPPI office. This material is then forwarded to the Chair of Policy Development and the Chair of Recognition for review and approval, as appropriate.
- OPPI media requests are tracked and directed to the appropriate individuals. This allows the Institute to monitor issues and provide coordinated messaging. Council is informed, on a timely basis, of all media relations.
- Members may be requested to answer questions from the media. Prior to the interview, the Manager of Policy and Communications provides a briefing on other media activities and/or information that are pertinent to the interview. This helps to ensure that individuals have the best possible interview.
- Prior to the interview, the Manager of Policy and Communications obtains the necessary background information from the reporter and provides this to the interviewees. This, in addition to the attached guidelines, assists individuals in preparing themselves. Questions asked in advance of an interview include (but are not limited to):

- What is your name?
  - What is your beat? (editor? columnist? reporter?)
  - What paper/radio station/television station do you work for?
  - What is your deadline?
  - What is the angle for your story?
  - Have other articles appeared on this topic? (part of a series etc.)
  - What section is the article to appear in? (special edition etc.)
  - What is the length of the article? (words, inches of text)
  - What is your phone number?
  - When can I call you back?
  - Who else are you interviewing?
  - When will the article be printed?
- Notify the Manager of Policy and Communications by e-mail if you see a newspaper article that mentions the Institute. (policy@ontarioplanners.on.ca)

#### GUIDELINES:

The key to a successful interview is being prepared. The following are some guidelines to assist you:

- Follow the established media relations protocol and direct calls to the OPPI office.
- Stall! You don't have to answer questions right away. Ask for at least a few minutes (and more, if necessary). Use this time to formulate an answer.
- Deadlines for a newspaper are normally one day. Print reporters are usually seeking information related to statistics, facts and other background material. Be prepared for these requests. Use them to back up your statements.
- Don't assume that your quote will only appear in a local paper. Reporters often share stories and pull others 'off of the wire'.
- Your quote should stand the test of time. Remember that what you say can appear months after you give your interview.
- Call the reporter back on time. Respect their deadlines.
- Arrange to speak to the reporter in an area without distractions.
- Remember and rehearse your key messages (main points).
- Don't be passive – be active. Focus the interview on areas that you want to discuss rather than being led by the reporter. If drawn off topic, refocus the interview back to your key messages (bridging).



- Always tell the truth. If you don't know an answer, don't give false information.
- Don't repeat negative questions. Respond positively.
- Don't get drawn into speculating on hypothetical situations.
- Don't speak on another's behalf. Let them speak for themselves.
- Don't be defensive. Stay calm and cool.
- Try to be yourself but remember that an interview is not a casual conversation.
- If interviewed in-person, use positive body language and make eye contact.
- Don't use complex planning terms that are not understood by the general public.
- Don't over-answer a question – talking too much can dilute your main points and cause you to wander off topic.
- Don't say 'no comment' – this appears evasive and untruthful.
- Don't go off the record – everything is on record.

