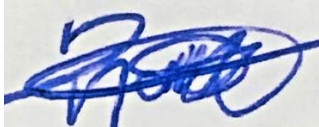




**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE**  
**Communications & Strategic Initiatives Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	April 5, 2023
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Media Accreditation Review: Terms of Reference (CM23008(a)) (City Wide) <b>(Outstanding Business List Item)</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Matthew Grant (905) 546-2424 Ext. 1012
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Matthew Grant Director, Communications & Strategic Initiatives, City Manager's Office
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## RECOMMENDATION

That a third-party review process for the proposed media accreditation policy, attached as Appendix "A" to Report CM23008(a), be approved, with funding up to \$15,000, to be funded from Dept ID 310031

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At their February 15, 2023 meeting, the General Issues Committee (GIC) members discussed details of a proposed media accreditation policy.

At that meeting, members of GIC directed staff to commission a third-party review of the proposed policy to measure the policy against best practices, determine if it could meet the policy's stated objectives and that it did not unduly discriminate against or exclude members of the press from reporting on City business.

The policy recommended membership in two self-regulatory journalism bodies – the National NewsMedia Council and the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council – as objective criteria for media accreditation at the City of Hamilton, meaning that membership in either would immediately qualify a media outlet for accreditation.

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

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The policy was drafted following consultation with the media on the City's media, which included discussions on criteria to guide eligibility for media privileges at the City of Hamilton. These privileges go beyond what is made available to members of the public and include access to City Hall outside of business hours, use of media centre office space in City Hall, and access to dedicated media briefings for the media.

During consultations, media indicated they favoured having a standard that governed access to the media centre and associated media privileges but that they did not want the City to establish that standard nor did they want local media to establish that standard.

In line with Council direction, staff has set up an independent review to be informed and overseen by researchers at some of Canada's top research and journalism education institutions.

Review participants would provide their analysis and recommendations to the review chair, Dr. Terry Flynn, who is the lead professor and founding director of the Master of Communication Program at McMaster University. The review chair would then consolidate the analysis and recommendations of review partners and present a final report to members of Hamilton City Council for their consideration.

**Alternatives for Consideration –Not Applicable**

**FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:** It is anticipated that the review will incur \$15,000 in costs to be allocated as honorariums to members of the academic community participating in the review. The expenses can be accommodated within the existing Communications Operating Budget, Dept ID 310031.

**Staffing:** A dedicated media relations team comprising of three FTEs is being created from existing resources to better assist media in their work.

**Legal:** There are no legal implications anticipated as a result of the review.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In late 2021, the Communications Division began reviewing its media relations program as part of an overall review of its operations as directed by the City Manager. The review occurred in two phases, which included an assessment of core service levels and a review of amenities designed to assist the media in their work.

Phase two consultations focused on media-related amenities at City Hall and included a broad range of Hamilton media outlets. Consultation included tours of the new Media Centre space before conducting a competitive bid process for the space's technology, a formal survey, and one-on-one interviews with the Director of Communications and Strategic Initiatives.

Common areas of agreement among media outlets consulted highlighted engagement with the need to have eligibility standards, often referred to as accreditation, governing access to the space as well as general agreement that those standards should not be developed or overseen by the City or members of Hamilton media. The majority of media also agreed on the need for appropriate security and after-hours access to the space.

Staff recommended using third-party, self-regulatory standards bodies as a form of objective criteria, which the majority of those media consulted deemed appropriate. Staff confirmed the majority of Hamilton media are already members of one of the self-regulatory bodies and confirmed the eligibility of non-members who regularly cover City business, including post-secondary institutions with dedicated media. Accredited media would be offered access passes to the City's Media Centre and press conference area after signing a User Agreement. Accredited media that do not want to sign a user agreement will receive a digital access pass for virtual attendance at press conferences and announcements.

When presented with the proposed media accreditation policy at the February 15, 2023 meeting of the General Issues Committee members, committee members voted in favour of having the media accreditation policy go through a third-party review and analysis that includes consultation with independent Hamilton news stakeholders as well as any recommendations that may improve the policy in terms of best practice.

In line with Council direction, staff has set up an independent review to be informed and overseen by researchers at some of Canada's top research and journalism education institutions.

The review would include:

- An analysis of the City's proposed media accreditation policy and a review of how the policy approach compares with other public sector accreditation policies and any existing best practices
- Further consultation with Hamilton media, in particular, independent media in Hamilton
- Consideration of concerns and a review of submissions from the Canadian Association of Journalists

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- Consideration of whether the policy can meet its stated objectives while not erecting any unnecessary barriers to members of the news media, including independent media and media serving equity-deserving groups
- Consideration of how freelance journalists and foreign journalists would be considered in the policy

Review participants would provide their analysis and recommendations to the review chair, Dr. Terry Flynn, the lead professor and founding director of the Master of Communication Program at McMaster University. The review chair would then consolidate the analysis and recommendations of review partners and present a final report to members of Hamilton City Council for their consideration.

A final report for the third-party review is anticipated to be presented to Hamilton City Council in late June or early July 2023.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

The Media Accreditation Policy and Procedures would clarify the definition of accredited media for the City of Hamilton. It would also provide accredited media access to the City Hall Media Centre from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm.

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

As part of the effort to prepare for the review, staff consulted with various professors/researchers at McMaster University, Carleton University, the University of British Columbia, Laval University, Toronto Metropolitan University, Simon Fraser University, Western University, and York University.

The above consultations were in addition to those undertaken in the policy development phase, including journalism standards councils, the City of Toronto, City staff, and Hamilton-area media.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

Journalism is a rapidly changing environment that sees journalism and non-journalism practitioners often using the same technology to distribute information. The convergence of media has made it challenging for many to differentiate between those engaged in news gathering and dissemination and those communicating for a different purpose.

As the nature of journalism is currently the focus of considerable academic study, it is recommended that individuals involved in the rigorous study of journalism, the changes

journalism faces, and the impact of technology on the practice of journalism is strongly encouraged.

Further, universities have a long-standing academic review process that is highly relevant to a policy review, have established processes in place to ensure the independence and integrity of the review and either are or have long-standing relationships with journalism practitioners who can provide up-to-the-minute experiences that researchers can draw upon to assist them in their work.

Staff believes that university communications and journalism research practitioners are best placed to thoroughly review a policy in their field of study and review the area from a position of academic independence.

## **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

N/A

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

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## **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” – Scope of Third-Party Review of the City of Hamilton’s Proposed Media Accreditation Policy

Appendix “B” – City of Hamilton – Media Accreditation Policy, as presented at February 15<sup>th</sup> General Issues Committee