

City Hall Media Centre Accreditation Policy and Procedure

Policy and Procedure Created in January 2023

Policy Statement

- The City of Hamilton is an open and accountable organization. As such, it values the role that the media plays in communicating, informing and engaging the public on civic issues and initiatives.
- The City of Hamilton is committed to developing and maintaining professional working relationships with members of the City Hall Media Centre to promote public awareness and understanding of Council decisions, City policies, issues facing the City, services and programs, and new and emerging initiatives.
- The City of Hamilton is solely responsible for security and access to City Hall and is committed to providing a safe environment for Mayor and Council, staff and others who work at or visit City Hall.
- City facilities made available to members of the media are to support them in their work on covering City business and issues. These facilities are not available to members of the public.
- This policy does not apply to Council Chambers, where broader public access is provided to all members of the public.
- All visitors, including members of the media, are expected to adhere to all City of Hamilton policies, procedures, and by-laws, and acknowledges that the City has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, bullying, harassment or racism of any kind in any of its City facilities. Applicable policies and procedures to members of the Media Centre include, but are not limited to, the Media Centre Use Agreement.
- Members of the Media Centre are expected to conduct themselves appropriately at all times, which includes being considerate, respecting people and their rights, and showing proper care and regard for City property and the property of others. Any individual who fails to do so may have their City media accreditation and/or extraordinary access privileges (beyond what is available to any member of the general public) revoked.
- Members of the Media Centre maintain the same access privileges to Council chambers as members of the public but will be afforded priority seating in the “media row” of Council chambers. Note that if the media row is not full, it may also be occupied by members of the public.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy (“City Hall Media Centre Accreditation Policy”) is to:

- Outline the City’s accreditation process for members of the City Hall Media Centre
- Specify the City of Hamilton requirements for accreditation for members of the City Hall Media Centre.

- Outline the conditions under which accreditation for members of the City Hall Media Centre may be issued and/or revoked.
- Ensure the City reserves the right to revise and update this City Hall Media Centre Accreditation Policy and Procedure as may be required.

Application

- This Policy applies to all members of the media who wish to participate in the use of the Hamilton City Hall Media Centre which, by definition, is through the accreditation process.
- From the date of implementation of this Policy and Procedure, the privilege of accessing the secure basement-level Media Centre area will only be available to those City Hall Media Centre Members who meet the requirements of this Policy and Procedure and is not intended to provide access to members of the general public.

Definition - City Hall Media Centre Member

The City of Hamilton defines a Member of the City Hall Media Centre as:

A journalist whose primary occupation is news gathering and news reporting and is an employee, employer or owner/operator of a media outlet, including digital-only independent outlets/sole proprietorships, who have entered into a valid licensing agreement (Media Centre Use Agreement) for the use of the City Hall Media Centre; and whose organization/outlet is a member in good standing of either the National News Media Council (print and digital publications) or an affiliate of the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council (radio and television outlets).

Additionally, it is recognized that members of Canada’s national broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and TVO which are subject to their own regulations and similar standards as the above organizations, are eligible for membership.

The City of Hamilton defines a Digital Pass Member of the City Hall Media Centre as:

A journalist whose primary occupation is news gathering and news reporting and is an employee, employer or owner/operator of a media outlet, including digital-only independent outlets/sole proprietorships, who is granted sole access to participate in virtual media briefings; and whose organization/outlet is a member in good standing of either the National News Media Council (print and digital publications) or an affiliate of the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council (radio and television outlets).

Accreditation Application Process

All media seeking membership in the City Hall Media Centre, including those with existing City identification badges, are required to complete the following accreditation process. All eligible media, as defined above, may be eligible to apply for accreditation, in accordance with the following procedure

1. Applicants are required to complete and sign the attached application form.
2. The application form must be signed by the applicant and by a responsible individual authorized to sign on behalf of the applicant's employer stating that the information on the application is accurate.
3. Applicants must provide proof of membership in either the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council or the National News Media Council, unless members of CBC or TVO.
4. Applicants can select whether they request access as a Member of the City Hall Media Centre or as a Digital Pass Member of the City Hall Media Centre.
5. The application for accreditation will be reviewed and a determination on approval will be made by the Manager of Communications and the City's Security Specialist in accordance with this Policy and in consultation with representatives of accredited media organizations, including but not limited to Hamilton area publishers, editors and/or producers or their designates, known as the Media Centre Oversight Committee. Details and membership of the Oversight Committee will be listed on the City's website.
6. Approved applicants will enter into the Media Centre Use Agreement where applicable, (digital access only credentials do not require a signed User or Per Use agreement).
7. Subject to approval, the applicant will be issued an identification badge, a "City Media Badge". City Media Badges are issued to the approved individual Members of the Media Centre.
8. Applicants who are not approved, or who have had their approval subsequently revoked, may appeal the decision in accordance with the appeals process set out at the end of this policy.

City Media Badge –Issuance

- Media Centre badges will only be issued in one of three categories:
 - Full time member, including designated City Hall reporters;
 - Visiting members who enter into a Temporary Media Centre Use Agreement;
 - Organizations who are provided access to the Media Centre for academic and community education purposes by agreement.

Note: A security pass is not needed for accredited media who select digital access only as they will not be attending the Media Centre in person.

Terms of Use for the Media Centre and City Hall Access Privileges

- Use of the Media Centre will be for the purposes of news gathering and news dissemination only.
- City Media Badges must be visibly worn by the Media Centre Member while on City Hall premises and must be presented to staff from the Communications and Strategic Initiatives Division and/or Corporate Security, at any time upon request while in the Media Centre and other areas of City Hall that are not accessible to the general public.
- City Media Badges remain the property of the City of Hamilton.
- Badges cannot be loaned, shared or used to provide access for any other individual, whether or not a Media Centre member.

- The City Media Badge is distinct from identification badges worn by City staff and clearly identifies the Media Centre Member and their associated media outlet.
- City Media Badges provide card access privileges for all accredited members of the City Hall Media Centre to the ground floor of the City Hall building from 8:00 am to 10:00 pm, Monday to Friday.
- Security access cards for Media Centre members provides access during the hours of 8:00 am to 10:00 pm to the first-floor entrances at City Hall, City elevators as well as all areas leading to the City Hall Media Centre.
- Access to the City Hall Media Centre and to City Hall after regular business hours is at the discretion of the City of Hamilton. Changes to access privileges may be implemented by Corporate Security as necessary.
- Media Centre Members may not loiter in the hallway(s) of secure areas or enter City staff work areas or rooms, including but not limited to print and mail room areas, City lunch room areas or other areas marked as staff only.
- Access to the City of Hamilton’s press conference room is by agreement only and digital technology housed in the press conference room is for the exclusive use of City of Hamilton staff and the staff of the Mayor’s Office.
- The City reserves the right to make such changes as it determines necessary to this Policy.

Conditions to Revoke Accreditation

- The list of accredited Media Centre Members will be reviewed quarterly, or such sooner period if so determined, by the Manager of Communications and Corporate Security staff, with input from a representative of the Oversight Committee. Wherever possible, City officials should seek consensus from the Oversight Committee.
- During review, City Media Badges will be cancelled for journalists who no longer meet accreditation requirements.
- City Media Badges will be revoked for those Media Centre Members and/or Digital Pass Media Centre Members who breach the provisions of the Policy or the terms and conditions of the application, including, but not limited to the following:
 - Neglecting to follow City policies or by-laws, including the terms of service for the Media Centre.
 - Facilitating access to City Hall for another individual.
 - Changes to a journalist's employment status such that they are no longer journalists.
 - Cancellation or expiration of license agreements between the applicable member and the City of Hamilton.

Appeals Process

- Members of the City Hall Media Centre and/or Digital Pass City Hall Media Centre who are denied accreditation, or who have had their accreditation revoked, may appeal that decision in writing to the MCOC within 30 days of the decision to the Oversight Committee.

- If the Oversight Committee agrees with the appeal, their decision will be forwarded to the Director of Communications for review, along with their recommendation for reinstatement.
- The decision of the Director of Communications with respect to the appeal shall be in writing, shall determine any future eligibility or any further terms or conditions applicable to the applicant, and shall be final.
- Wherever possible, the Director of Communications should seek to uphold the recommendation of the Oversight Committee, except in cases where security and safety issues are deemed to be a concern.