



Memorandum

Date: 2010 July 27
Approved by: PGAIR Directors
Subject: **Public and Media Communication Protocol**

Whereas the PGAIR Society strives to have a positive and an open relationship with the public and the media and wishes to assist in conveying accurate messages to the public through the media;

And whereas the PGAIR Society is made up of a diverse range of stakeholders and interests which means that in-depth and sometimes lengthy discussions between Board members is a normal expectation in order to reach agreement on final decisions of the Society;

And whereas Board members expect and trust in the ability to have the opportunity to hold such discussions in confidence in order to fully express their interests and viewpoints;

And whereas premature disclosure or release outside of the Board of confidential discussions and other information can undermine the trust and functionality of the Board and may lead to inconsistent, confusing or contradictory information being released into the public realm;

Then the PGAIR Society has developed the following communications principles and protocols that are essential to the success of PGAIR:

1. Why we want to communicate with the media

- a) We want to be recognized as a credible proponent of air quality management issues in the Prince George airshed.
- b) The media provide a valuable conduit for communication to all interested citizens of Prince George.
- c) We want to convey accurate messages to the media, and thus help the media to educate the public about a wide range of air quality issues, thereby building community awareness, understanding and support for the work of PGAIR.

2. What we will communicate to the media

- a) Meeting information:
 - i. Decisions that have been agreed upon and finalized at the meetings.
 - ii. Overviews of activities in progress at meetings, excluding details of any in-camera discussions.
 - iii. Presentation materials after they have been approved by PGAIR.
 - iv. Meeting minutes after they have been approved by PGAIR.

- b) Reports that have been accepted and approved by PGAIR. These reports could be in various formats, including paper, electronic and verbal.
- c) Where there are protracted review periods or delays, interim reports may be prepared and released after they are approved by PGAIR.
- d) The President or persons designated by the President may release interim statements when timeliness is of the essence for important community issues.
- e) Letters of support for various issues, after they are approved by PGAIR.
- f) Other appropriate information pre-approved by the President.

3. *Who is authorized to communicate with the media*

- a) The PGAIR President, or an alternate he/she designates, will be the spokesperson for media inquiries. Under most circumstances the AQ Coordinator will be designated as the authorized alternate spokesperson. From time to time other persons within PGAIR will be delegated by the President.
- b) All communications with the media will be pre-approved by the President. In the absence of the President they will be pre-approved by another member of the executive.
- c) No one else is authorized to communicate with any media on behalf of PGAIR, including directors, proxies, committee chairs and committee participants.

4. *How the communications will take place with the media*

- a) The normal format for media communications will be in written text distributed via email. Each media release will include the following:
 - i. A standard template with the following information at the top of the page: Media News Release, PGAIR logo, date, issued by, approved by, and subject.
 - ii. The body of the information.
 - iii. A statement at the end of the main body of information to help educate the public about the role of PGAIR by its repetition as part of each release.
 - iv. A statement at the very bottom saying further information may be obtained from the AQ Coordinator, with an email address and phone number. When pre-approved by the President, an additional statement may be placed at the bottom identifying additional qualified spokespersons for PGAIR for the particular issue.
 - v. All media releases will be password protected so they cannot be altered.
- b) When anyone other than the President or AQ Coordinator (or qualified person additionally identified at the bottom of media releases) is verbally approached by the media, they must advise that they are not authorized to speak on behalf of PGAIR and recommend the media person contact one of the authorized persons for a statement. No one is authorized to make “off the record” responses to any media person.
- c) When authorized persons are approached by the media to make statements, it is recommended that under normal circumstances they ask the media person when they need the information by, and commit to get back to the media person with a response within a mutually agreed upon timeframe. This allows a reasonable period of time to consolidate factual information and present it in proper context without being unduly rushed. Once a time commitment is agreed upon, it is important to PGAIR’s credibility that such commitments are fulfilled as agreed.
- d) From time to time PGAIR may develop additional plans and tools for communications to community interests and the general public.

5. *When the communications will take place*

- a) PGAIR recognizes the value and importance of promptly and punctually issuing accurate information.
- b) Meetings:
 - i. After each meeting, a draft meeting summary will be prepared by the AQ Coordinator and distributed via email to the executive the following morning. It will identify key decisions, milestones and accomplishments that need to be communicated to any audiences with an interest in the work of PGAIR. The draft will be approved by the President or designate, and then emailed to the media the same afternoon.
 - ii. Meeting minutes will be posted on the PGAIR website by the AQ Coordinator after they are approved. Typically approval takes place at subsequent meetings.
- c) Reports that have been accepted and approved by PGAIR:
 - i. Within three business days of approval by PGAIR.
 - ii. As appropriate, PGAIR directors will be provided with the reports as a courtesy prior to distribution to the media.
- d) Letters of support and other appropriate information:
 - i. As soon as reasonably possible after approval by the President.
 - ii. As appropriate, PGAIR directors and other appropriate persons will be provided with copies as a courtesy prior to distribution to the media.
- e) All releases will be distributed via email at the same time to all Prince George media outlets, thereby giving all of them the same information at the same time.
- f) All media releases will be uploaded onto the PGAIR website by the AQ Coordinator immediately after being distributed to the media. The PGAIR website will be a reliable source of timely information for the public and out-of-town media outlets. An archive of media releases will be maintained on the website and available to the public and media outlets for future reference.

6. *Member organizations*

- a) Directors of PGAIR have a responsibility to report back to the constituent groups that each of them represents. They are encouraged to do so in a proactive and timely manner, using tools such as the meeting summaries, current media releases and other vehicles developed for PGAIR communications; at all times respecting PGAIR's Code of Conduct.