

Position Description

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| Position Title: | Communications Officer |
| Team: | Communications |
| Reports To: | Director of Communications |
| Classification: | Bargaining Unit Member |

A. Position Summary

Communications and media relations are essential components of the Ombudsman's work and vital elements in maintaining credibility with the public and a high degree of effectiveness in responding to complaints about provincial government services. The Communications Officer provides a wide range of high-quality professional communications services as part of the Communications team in a busy office that maintains a high public profile, issues frequent public reports and deals with frequent requests from the media, as well as requests for speeches and presentations from the Ombudsman and his staff.

Communications services provided by the Communications Officer include (but are not limited to): Extensive media monitoring, research and analysis; media liaison; production (writing, editing, formatting, designing and publishing) of communications materials including press releases, speeches, presentations, videos, brochures, e-newsletters and reports; website design and maintenance (both Internet and office Intranet); social media monitoring and maintenance of the Office's social media presence; producing a regular e-newsletter; co-coordinating and/or participating in training and outreach activities and presentations; and supporting the Ombudsman's participation in a variety of professional organizations (such as the International Ombudsman Institute).

The incumbent reports directly to the Director of Communications.

B. Responsibilities

- **Media Monitoring, Research and Analysis:** Monitors a wide variety of media sources including print, radio, television, online news sources and social media (with the assistance of outside monitoring services) on a continual basis to ensure that the Office is constantly up to date on relevant news and developments. Monitoring begins early each day (8:30 a.m.) and may continue during evenings and weekends. Although the majority of the work is done at the Ombudsman's Office, some may be done offsite via wireless mobile device or laptop computer.

Engages in daily and at times more frequent review and analysis of press releases and media coverage of news items involving the Office or which may be relevant to the Office and its operations.

Monitors proceedings of the Legislature and provides summaries and reports on matters relevant to the Office, as warranted.

Prepares reports, using outside services and resources, on media coverage and public awareness of Office activities, including press releases and report releases, including advertising value reports and website activity reports.

Regularly conducts research of media items on issues of relevance to the Office and its operations on own initiative, as well as on request and assists in researching trends relative to provincial government organizations.

Media Liaison: Provides communications support for response to media inquiries as needed, including researching information to respond to media queries and fielding contacts, where requested by managers. Also provides co-ordination and support for Ombudsman media interviews and appearances, including conducting research, preparing briefing notes and frequently asked questions and attending and taking notes during interviews, as requested.

Provides communications support and assistance in issuing press releases and organizing press conferences including co-coordinating and attending press conferences, preparing relevant materials and providing information to members of the media and other stakeholders as requested, and attending press conferences.

- **Communications Materials:** Researches material for and writes and edits a variety of communications materials including reports, press releases, backgrounders, videos, speeches, opening remarks, outreach materials and e-newsletters. Also provides support and assistance as needed in the design, production and publication of such materials.

Liaises as required with graphic designers, printers, photographers, translators, and others to support the production of publications.

Co-ordinates distribution of reports, releases and other communications materials to external parties, in a variety of formats including electronic and hard copy.

- **Internet, Intranet and social media:** Contributes to the planning, design, regular administration, maintenance, monitoring and updating of information on the Ombudsman website, Intranet and social media sites. Monitors activity on social media sites and responds to public inquiries as needed, in consultation with managers as appropriate. Posts all news releases, press conference videos, report releases and other newsworthy items on website and social media as warranted, in consultation with managers.

- **Outreach Activities and Presentations:** Provides support and assistance in the organization of events, meetings and presentations and other activities hosted by the Ombudsman's Office.

Organizes and/or participates in outreach activities to promote awareness of the office and its operations.

Provides support and assistance to the Ombudsman and other members of the executive management team who are delivering speeches or other presentations.

Oversees Ombudsman's Office listserve and mailing lists, including subscriptions to the e-newsletter, which provide information to external stakeholders and interest groups.

- **Participation in Professional Organizations:** Provides support for the Office's participation and membership in professional organizations including the International Ombudsman Institute and several others.

Acts as a liaison and/or point of contact for the Office for various professional organizations in which the Ombudsman or members of the executive management team hold an executive or other position and provides a range of services in support of these functions including co-coordinating presentations, conferences and training sessions etc.

Monitors coverage of relevant issues on professional Ombudsman listserves (including the United States Ombudsman Association, International Ombudsman Institute) and ensures timely posting of articles related to the Ombudsman's Office.

- **Other communications-related functions, as assigned.**

C. Position Qualifications

- **Education:** Post-secondary degree from a recognized University and/or College program in communications/marketing/journalism or an equivalent acceptable combination of education and experience.

- **Experience:** Experience in providing communications support and services including in preparing communications materials and liaising with members of the media. Preference will be given to candidates with a minimum of 3 years experience.

- Experience working in the public sector, for an officer of the Legislature or other oversight body will be considered an asset.

- **Personal Suitability:** The Communications Officer position requires a candidate with a high level of professional interpersonal skills and excellent communications ability, who is comfortable responding to inquiries from members of the media and the public, including interest groups and stakeholders. All communications must be handled with a high level of respect, courtesy and professionalism at all times.

Excellent interpersonal and communications skills and a high degree of professionalism are required. The incumbent must also be capable of demonstrating excellent judgment, initiative and discretion and must be reliable.

Language: Proficiency in English both in oral and written communications is required. Proficiency in French both in oral and written communications is preferred.

- **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:** Excellent oral communication skills, including the ability to represent the Office in outreach activities and to handle requests from members of the media, the public, interest groups and stakeholders.

Excellent written communication skills, including the ability to prepare communications materials that reflect the organizational direction of the Ombudsman's Office.

Demonstrated ability to work successfully on multiple projects and priorities within established timelines.

Superior research skills, including the ability to perform research effectively using the Internet in addition to other resources.

Knowledge of the parliamentary and legislative process in Ontario and the role of the Ombudsman.

Knowledge of Ontario government programs and services will be considered an asset.

Experience in using computer software to support communications functions, such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator will be considered an asset, as will experience in using Apple programs and applications such as Keynote, and Microsoft Word.

Knowledge of graphic design software and principles involved in the production of publications and web pages will be considered an asset.

Experience in website content management and with social media will be considered assets.

D. Work Environment

The Communications Officer position requires a candidate with a high level of professional interpersonal skills and excellent communications ability, who is capable of working as part of a busy communications team and comfortable dealing with multiple projects and priorities, including fielding requests from the media, preparing speeches and presentations and organizing and co-coordinating media releases and press conferences.

The successful candidate must demonstrate a high degree of professionalism in his or her work and must be capable of demonstrating excellent judgment, initiative and discretion.

Frequent overtime may be required during evenings and weekend. Occasional travel may also be required.

Time Pressures: The incumbent occupies a busy and demanding position, which requires regular multitasking and the ability to deal professionally with a high volume of work. The person must be capable of dealing with competing demands and priorities and highly organized in his or her work. A maximum amount of flexibility is required in order to ensure that media monitoring and analysis responsibilities are carried out in a timely fashion so that the Office is kept and current and up to date on emerging items at all times.

The incumbent must work effectively and efficiently with minimal supervision, taking the initiative to find solutions to any problems that occur and to identify creative ways to improve the quality of service provided. While the incumbent is expected to work with a high degree of autonomy, he or she must also exercise good judgment by consulting where appropriate.

Effect of Errors: The incumbent is expected to apply office policy and procedures and to act with a high degree of professionalism at all times. Failure to present a professional, courteous and competent image or to provide accurate and timely information to members of the public or the media has the potential to have adverse impact on the Office, its credibility and reputation and ultimately its operations. Failure to provide timely, professional and high-quality communications support internally could also impact negatively on the Office's profile with the media and the public, its credibility and reputation and its operations.

Freedom to Make Decisions: The incumbent works independently in a structured environment and must take initiative in organizing the day-to-day functions of the position. The incumbent's work is generally guided by policy but must exercise discretion in an appropriate and professional manner. The person must also exercise good judgment and consult where appropriate.

Interpersonal Contacts: The incumbent is expected to deal with inquiries from members of the media and the public, including interest groups and stakeholders, and to liaise with service providers as well as those involved in professional organizations and events being organized by the Office. All communications must be handled with a high level of professionalism, courtesy and respect and demonstrate a high level of competency commensurate with the position.