



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Toronto City Hall – Accreditation process for members of the City Hall Press Gallery

Date:	February 6, 2012
To:	Government Management Committee
From:	City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report responds to direction to staff to review with the President of the City Hall Press Gallery the implementation of a formal Code of Conduct for members of the City Hall Press Gallery including appropriate security badges to be worn by members of the media on a regular basis, security badge access to the secure Councillors' office area on the second floor of City Hall (accessed via reception areas A, B and C), and any anomalies in terms of the access badges, and report back on findings to the Government Management Committee.

This report provides an update on this matter and outlines a number of recommendations for Council’s consideration. The report is intended to clarify and formalize access and security procedures for members of the Press Gallery, through the issuance of City Media Badges subject to approval through an accreditation process.

The City of Toronto is an open and accountable organization. As such, the recommendations presented in this report aim to balance security needs and concerns with the important role the media plays in communicating, informing and engaging the public on civic issues and initiatives. It also recognizes the collegial and respectful relationships established between many members of the media, in particular the Press Gallery, City staff and Members of Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. **City Council approve the City Hall Press Gallery Accreditation Policy and Procedure set out in Appendix A to this report, subject to any minor modifications or stylistic changes;**
2. **City Council authorize the City Manager, or his designate(s), to take the necessary measures to implement the above recommendation;**
3. **City Council authorize the City Manager, or his designate(s), be authorized to make any necessary modifications to procedures from time to time, and be authorized to make any final determination on an individual's eligibility for a City Media Badge or the revocation of a City Media Badge, on such terms and conditions as he deems appropriate.**

Implementation Points

If adopted by Council the following implementation schedule is proposed:

First quarter 2012:

- Finalize accreditation process and application procedure for City Media Badges
- Design City Media Badges and arrange production

Second quarter 2012:

- Full implementation of City Media Badge accreditation process and application procedure.

Financial Impact

Funding for the production and related costs associated with the City Media Badges is available in the 2012 Approved Operating Budget for Facilities Management and Real Estate.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on April 12 and 13, 2011 Toronto City Council considered a report entitled Councillor Protection at City Properties – Update:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2011.GM2.12>

The report tabled in April 2011 was further to a security review and measures considered by Council in the fall of 2009: Councillor Protection at City Properties:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.GM24.32>

Media tenancy at Toronto City Hall is authorized by GM 20.8, adopted by Council on January 27 and 28, 2009:
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.GM20.8>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

There are currently 11 offices at Toronto City Hall that are leased by media organizations (please see Appendix B). Lease agreements between the City and these leaseholders require the Tenant to comply with all laws, including all City by-laws. However the leases deal only with the specified “leased premises” and do not address access by the media to any other areas of City Hall.

The "Press Gallery" (the media outlets that lease office space at City Hall) is not an official organization and generally is not governed by any Press Gallery-specific constitution, by-laws or Code of Conduct. Many of the current practices between the journalists whose media outlets lease office space at City Hall and the City have evolved informally since amalgamation.

The City generally considers the journalists who work out of the media-leased City office space who cover City news on behalf of their respective media outlets to be members of the "City Hall Press Gallery." Some of these journalists work from City Hall and cover City-related news and events on a regular or full-time basis. Others work from their media outlet's City Hall office and cover City-related news and events on an occasional or part-time basis.

As a legacy practice, many members of the media, including but not limited to those employed by media outlets with leased office space, were provided City identification badges. The City identification badges issued to members of the media are identical in appearance to those issued to City staff. Most of those badges provided 24-hour access to the ground floor of City Hall, required for entry to the Press Gallery office area, in addition to the secure second floor Councillors' office area. Issuance of the badges to members of the media was typically confirmed by Corporate Security staff by means of an email in response to a request from the president of the Press Gallery.

Councillors have frequently raised concerns about ensuring a safe environment within the secure Councillors' office area on the second floor. In addition, they have also indicated that it is their position that they should have the ability to access their offices without having to encounter or engage with a member of the media unless prearranged or authorized. In 2010, the City implemented new security measures requiring visitors to the secure second floor Councillors' office area to sign in at the reception desk, wear a visitor's badge, and be escorted by Councillors' staff to and from the reception area (the "Visitor Protocol"). At the same time, the number of City staff having access to the

second floor Councillors' secure office area was reviewed. Following this review, access to the secure second floor Councillors' office area became restricted to staff requiring access to conduct regular business meetings with Members of Council at least three times per week. Staff members without badge access are required to follow the Visitor Protocol.

In April 2010, badge access hours for media with City identification badges was adjusted to daytime (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday) access only. Members of the media without City identification badges were required to sign in and follow the Visitor Protocol. Members of the media issued City identification badges were required to sign a standard City form that outlines basic conditions of use for the badge, the same as City staff.

In October 2011, further to Council direction, staff from Strategic Communications met with representatives of the City Hall Press Gallery. Areas of discussion included identification badges, access to the secure second floor Councillors' office area, and a potential Code of Conduct for members of the Press Gallery.

As a result of this meeting, the Press Gallery president and City staff have agreed to work together to identify and disable City identification badges for individuals not currently considered to be members of the Press Gallery – i.e. those who were not employed by an outlet holding a lease for office space within City Hall or those not actually reporting on City matters or who had not attended City Hall in recent months. Press Gallery representatives identified their wish to retain or expand access to the secure second floor Councillors' office area for Press Gallery members. No objections were voiced with respect to implementing distinct City media badges.

With respect to a Code of Conduct, Press Gallery representatives indicated that their position is that journalists are already subject to employer Codes of Conduct. In their opinion a specific Code of Conduct for the Press Gallery is not required. This does not, however, preclude the City from imposing a Code of Conduct with respect to individuals while accessing the secure second floor Councillors' office area, if deemed necessary by Council.

There appears to be some level of confusion about the use of the term "Code of Conduct". The City is not seeking to impose a Code of Conduct dealing with journalistic or reporting ethics, nor one dealing with employer-employee relationships. The City is, however, refining the parameters governing access to non-public areas of City Hall and general guidelines respecting the conduct of those to whom this privilege is granted through the implementation of a formalized accreditation policy.

To understand how other jurisdictions manage onsite media, City staff contacted 20 other government organizations within the country. A total of 16 organizations responded, including: the federal government, nine provincial governments and six municipal governments. Each organization was asked if they had a press gallery or onsite media offices, and what procedures they had in place with respect to access and accreditation.

An overview of the research is presented in Appendix C. Highlights include the following:

- Twelve of the organizations surveyed have press galleries
- Of those 12, six of the galleries indicated they are governed by a formal constitution and by-laws
- Eleven of the 12 organizations with press galleries have accreditation processes in place
- Four out of the total of 16 respondents indicated media have direct access to elected officials' offices
- In all but three instances, members of the media are required to have an appointment to meet with elected officials.

COMMENTS

Access privileges

Monitoring and limiting access to all floors at City Hall, where staff and Members of Council are working is an important mechanism within the City's overall security strategy to reduce risks and help ensure a safe environment for those working at City Hall, conducting business, or visiting.

At present, upon request, journalists employed by media outlets with lease agreements are granted 24-hour access to the ground floor of City Hall in order to access their leased office space. Full-time Press Gallery members have extended access privileges to enter the secure second floor Councillors' area during regular business hours.

In light of the legacy practices, staff recommends that the City continue to provide the current level of access privileges to full-time and part-time members of the Press Gallery, through accreditation and issuance of City Media Badges. All legacy members will be required to go through the accreditation process. All other members of the media, with the exception outlined below with respect to camera operators or photographers, will continue to be required to sign in in accordance with the Visitor Protocol, and be greeted and accompanied in and out of the area by Councillors' office staff.

Photographers and camera operators

Press Gallery members who currently have a badge access to the secure second floor Councillors' area frequently use it to escort camera operators or photographers (who do not have City identification badges) into the area without signing in or following the Visitor Protocol. This access has not been authorized.

Staff propose that a modified access protocol be implemented for camera operators or photographers (who do not have City identification badges) if escorted by full-time and part-time members of the Press Gallery with accreditation. It is proposed that full-time and part-time members of the Press Gallery may escort one camera operator or photographer from the same media outlet into the secure second floor Councillors' office

area, provided that camera operator/photographer signs in at the reception area and wears a visitor's badge. This proposal will allow a camera operator/photographer to be escorted to and from the reception area by a full-time or part-time member of the Press Gallery rather than Councillors' staff, provided the sign-in and the visitor's badge requirements have been met.

Conduct and accreditation

The City, in its governing capacity and as the property owner of City Hall, has authority to impose acceptable use rules on members of the Press Gallery with respect to their newsgathering activities in public and restricted areas of City Hall (in addition to those already identified in the lease agreements). It is the position of staff that the City can accomplish this through the implementation of a formal media accreditation process for Press Gallery members. This process would provide the City with the ability to set out expectations and ensure accountability, while continuing to provide reasonable access to the secure second floor Councillors' office area by accredited Press Gallery members. The proposed accreditation process is set out in Appendix A to this report.

Communications staff proposes to work closely with the president of the Press Gallery with respect to implementation and ongoing coordination of the accreditation process. This would include a quarterly review of the list of accredited journalists. During this review, journalists who no longer meet the requirements would have their accreditation cancelled.

Conclusion

Access to the secure second floor Councillors' office area has been a legacy courtesy extended to members of the City Hall Press Gallery. Lease agreements deal only with the specified "leased premises" and do not address provisions for access by the media to any other areas of City Hall. Currently, there are no formal agreements in place with members of the City Hall Press Gallery, or any other representative of the media, with respect to City Hall security, access or conduct.

The City wishes to preserve the respectful and collegial working relationships it has with members of the City Hall Press Gallery. Access and security matters at Toronto City Hall, however, are soundly within the City's purview. The extent of access granted to members of the Press Gallery and the City's criteria and requirements with respect to that access and related decorum need to be clarified and formalized through an accreditation process.

It is the aim of this report to balance the City's access and security requirements with the important role the media plays in communicating, informing and engaging the public on civic issues and initiatives.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A – Press Gallery Accreditation Policy and Procedure
- Appendix B – Current Media Leases
- Appendix C – Research