



# Directors Guide – Communications Policy

## Introduction

To ensure consistent, productive, and professional communications with the members, the MAAC Board of Directors and Administration shall follow the principles of this Communications Policy.

## Confidentiality

Due to their position in the association directors have the privilege of seeing detailed information about the association and its business. Essentially every document or piece of information that comes to you in your role within MAAC is considered privileged information and cannot be shared unless it is explicitly permitted to be shared.

Confidentiality is also an important part of board debates and discussions. To facilitate open and candid discussion, from time to time there will be documents presented to the board that do not reflect the association's position, or even the Board's desired direction.

All Directors, officers, committee chairs, and staff are required to sign and agree to a confidentiality agreement annually.

To ensure the information given to the members is accurate, consistent, and productive, only approved final versions of documents can be shared outside of the board. Any document with a 'draft' watermark shall be considered a confidential document.

When seeking stakeholder feedback on issues facing the board, caution must be taken to ensure confidential information is not inadvertently shared. If consultation outside of the Board is expected, guidelines of what can and can't be shared will be developed on a case by case basis.

Documents discussed in an open meeting, including if they are displayed on a shared screen, are not considered to have been made publicly available as they have not been distributed to the observers at the meeting.

**SHARING OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION IS CONSIDERED A BREACH OF ETHICS AND A BREACH OF FIDUCIARY DUTY.**

## A Single Board Voice

The Board of Directors is a single entity which is the collective of the individual Directors. Once a decision has been made by the Board it is the responsibility of every Director to support that decision, even where individual directors vote against a motion or register dissent.

## Consultation

Any action item coming to the board will have the stakeholders identified. Wherever possible and practical, stakeholder consultation and feedback will be required as a part of any motion being presented for Board approval.

Committee chairs should be used as source of constructive feedback on new ideas and policy. Committee chairs will be required to sign and abide by confidentiality agreements.

Stakeholder consultation can be viewed as the first step in education of the membership. While the direction the Association must take may be obvious, helping others see that through their own engagement has significant value.

## Distribution of Information

A clear and consistent distribution process will ensure that members come to expect information to be delivered a certain way.

All official documents are released to the members through the Executive Director, or designate, in English and French at the same time, and only as PDF documents. Word or text documents should never be distributed or uploaded to the MAAC website.

Except in urgent situations, communications will be sent to club contacts and Presidents a day or two before being sent to the general membership. These advance releases will include further explanations as needed that will allow club leadership to be able to have informed discussions with their members. Additionally, feedback from this first outreach may prompt changes in the messaging and/or re-evaluation of the decision in extreme cases.

## External Contact policy

All MAAC email communications should be done using your @maac.ca email accounts, not from personal addresses. MAAC email addresses shall not be used for personal emails. (Full email accounts for each director is a project that is in process at the time of this draft)

All emails or phone calls received must be responded to as promptly as possible, even if that response is simply that you've received the email and will provide a full reply later. An auto-responder does not meet the intent of this requirement, unless the Director is unable to access their email for an extended period of time.

The language and tone of all communications must be professional, courteous, and respectful at all times, regardless of the tone of the incoming communications.

## Transparency

While confidentiality is important to having candid and complete discussions, transparency with the members and other stakeholders is also important. Transparency should not be confused with full disclosure.

Within the framework above, Directors are encouraged to be as transparent as possible about the issues in front of the board. While this may seem contradictory, there are some simple principles that can guide open discussions.

- With few exceptions we should be open about the broad issues we are discussing.
- When seeking feedback, care should be taken to ensure the problem being considered is clearly explained.
- Once a decision has been made, it is reasonable to explain the perspectives considered, but the final decision must be supported.
- The board should commit to reviewing decisions where transparency and communications brings new perspectives. This should be a rare situation if stakeholder consultation is done properly.

## Authors

Keith Morison, Interim Executive Director

## Revision history

V1 – Approved April 19, 2022