



Saskatchewan Municipal

Management Resource

Writing a News Release

News releases are one of the most common communications tools to get stories to the media. Organizations, including municipalities, can use news releases to communicate information to the media on a regular basis. So why is it that some news releases get more coverage than others? Since most media outlets are inundated with news releases on a regular basis, if your release is not properly and artfully written and sent to the right place, chances are your story won't get picked up.

Structure of a news release

Your news release will need to immediately capture the journalist's attention and be written to be run exactly as it is, not only simplifying the process for the journalists, but allowing your message to be clearly communicated.

Design

While the look of a news release may vary for each organization, the basic format is the same. All news releases should be printed on your organization's letterhead, which includes the name of the company or municipality and office contact numbers. The date of the release, followed by "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE," should be at the top of the page. The title should be in bold, followed by your story. At the end of the release, "-30-" (meaning end of the story) should be typed, followed by the name and telephone number of the person the media should contact for more information.

Content

The title of your release is your first chance, and sometimes your only chance, to capture the journalist's attention. It should be creative, short and descriptive of the story that follows. The Lead is the first sentence of the release and should be the main news or key message that you want to get out, captured in 20 to 25 words. The most important information needs to be at the beginning of the release. The journalist should be able to tell what it is about in the first paragraph. Include a quote in your release from your spokesperson, mayor, reeve, etc., followed by a supporting fact that backs up the quote or gives the facts of the story. Follow this by the next most important fact, and so on, avoiding boring, unnecessary details. Remember that your release must clearly and concisely answer the who, what, when, where, why and how questions.

After it's written

After your news release is written, proofread, proofread, proofread; and when you are done, proofread again! Double-check all of your spelling, dates, times, places, and facts prior to releasing it to the media. Try to keep your release jargon free, and use language and terms familiar to the general public. When it is ready, it needs to be sent out to the media via fax or e-mail to newspapers (daily and weekly), radio stations, television stations, newsletters, magazines, etc. Find out from your local media if they prefer e-mail or fax, and the name of editor or news director to send it to. A good place to find the contact numbers for the media is your local yellow pages, or online directory. If possible, follow up by telephone or e-mail with the news editor to ensure they have seen your news release and provide any additional information they may request (e.g. when the reeve, mayor, councillor, etc. would be available for comment).

News Release Tips

- ▶ The more white space you have on your news release, the easier it is to read.
- ▶ Ensure your company contact information is easily found.
- ▶ Start with a short, attention-grabbing title.
- ▶ The most important information goes at the beginning of the news release.
- ▶ Your release should include all relevant information, answering who, what, where, when, why and how.
- ▶ Be sure to include a media contact person and phone number for more information.
- ▶ Avoid jargon, technical terms, and clichés in your release.
- ▶ Keep your release short and concise, avoiding additional pages.
- ▶ For maximum coverage, be mindful of reporters' deadlines for the day.
- ▶ Be sure to allow sufficient time for media to attend events.
- ▶ **PROOFREAD** before you send it out!

For Further Information

Most organizations have “media” or “news releases” sections on their website that you can reference for examples. Try doing an online search for templates and examples of news releases.