

III. General

Section 16 – Communications and Stakeholders Relations

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16.1 Purpose

This document contains the policies the Municipal Employees’ Pension Commission (the Commission) adheres to in managing communications and stakeholder relations related to the Municipal Employees’ Pension Plan (MEPP).

The policies have been created to support communications and stakeholder relations requirements under *The Pension Benefits Act, 1992*, *The Pension Benefits Regulations*, *The Municipal Employees’ Pension Act* and the Municipal Employees’ Pension Commission’s Strategic Business Plan. These policies are to be followed to ensure communications of MEPP meet the requirements as set out in those documents.

16.2 Rationale

Communications Strategy

The Commission is aware of the importance of effective communications for Plan members and employers. The challenges are considerable given both the complexity of the information being communicated and the large number of relatively small organizations participating in the Plan.

The Commission believes that it is important to target communications to members at various stages in their Plan membership and, particularly, to focus on members who are nearing retirement. The Commission is also mindful of the need to facilitate two-way communications with stakeholders and to facilitate member feedback.

Plan Communication involves:

- Communicating with the Plan's various membership profiles to deliver information and education through the Public Employee Benefits Agency (PEBA) as the Plan administrator website, financial statements, newsletters, correspondence, public meetings and seminars.
- Managing the risks inherent in the communication of Plan information. We work to provide information in a clear and concise manner with sensitivity to members' level of understanding. We are responsive to members' interests and concerns.

The policies set forth here have been developed mindful of those goals and elements.

16.3 Policy

Communications Strategy

All communications with media or stakeholder groups should be planned to ensure a consistent, coordinated and professional approach.

Spokespersons

Senior PEBA officials would provide research, advice, information, consultation and support to the Chair of the Commission.

When a PEBA employee is contacted for comments on or about the Plan, they are to bring that to the attention of a member of PEBA senior executive acting on behalf of MEPP. Following internal consultation with the appropriate PEBA officer(s), the appropriate spokespersons would be recommended to the Chair.

Annual Reports

The Municipal Employees' Pension Act requires the Commission to produce an annual report within 120 days of the end of the calendar year. The report is to be tabled with the Clerk of the Saskatchewan Legislature as stipulated by *The Executive Government Administration Act*. This report is prepared by PEBA officials acting on behalf of MEPP and approved by the Commission prior to being tabled. (*The Municipal Employees' Pension Act*, section 62)

Financial Statements

Annual and quarterly financial statements contain the information required under the Act and such other information as management may determine as relevant and the Commission approves.

Commission Governance Documents

The Commission maintains a number of governance documents relating to issues of proper oversight, management, and administration of the Plan. Documents such as the Commission's Strategic Business Plan and its Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Procedures provide information that demonstrates the Commission's commitment to effective governance and are relevant to the Commission's stakeholders. As a means of providing accurate and transparent dissemination of its governance policies and practices, the Commission has placed the following documents on the Plan website:

- Annual Report
- CAPSA Pension Plan Governance Self-Assessment Questionnaire
- Statement of Investment Policy and Procedures
- Actuarial Valuation of the Municipal Employees Pension Plan
- Actuarial Valuation of the Municipal Employees Pension Plan Annuities
- A summary of the Commission's Strategic Business Plan
- Commission's Governance Manual which includes but is not limited to:
 - Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Funding Policy
- Stakeholder Quarterly Report

Other Commission governance documents to be made available upon stakeholder/Plan member request include:

- The MEPP Policy Manual (excluding Commission Minutes sections)
- Risk Management Plan (current year)
- Risk Management Plan Review (previous year)
- Periodic Checklist (final for the year)

The decision to release Minutes of Commission meetings is at the discretion of the Commission, and requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Minutes that are released will have information identified under *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or *The Health Information Protection Act* as either personal or proprietary information removed from the minutes, or "blacked out" to ensure that privacy is maintained.

Fees, where applicable, will be assessed to an applicant at the time access is given in accordance with the fees established under section 6 of *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulations*.

Release of Other Published Materials and Information

All published materials and information that do not require prior approval of the Commission (information sheets, newsletters, correspondence) must receive appropriate PEBA Executive approval. News releases are subject to approval by the Chair of the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission as well as the approval processes set out by Executive Council Communications Unit.

Any materials published by MEPP will be available to members at no charge.

Notice and Stakeholder Enquiries

Enquiries regarding publicly available information will be dealt with promptly by the PEBA Associate Deputy Minister (ADM), or the ADM's designate. Whenever possible, stakeholders will be referred to the MEPP web site.

Enquiries from the Minister of Finance or Ministers or Members of the Legislative Assembly will generally will be dealt with by the ADM or by the ADM's designate in accordance with their roles as support or alternate spokespersons.

Other enquiries from stakeholders generally will be directed to the Manager, MEPP or PEBA's Assistant Director, Communications to evaluate the request, respond directly, or respond through a designate when appropriate, or gather the necessary background information and direct the request to a more appropriate officer.

Member's Annual Statements

Members receive an annual statement (or as otherwise required by *The Pension Benefits Act, 1992* and the associated Regulations) that provides pension information and projections. The statements are mailed to the most recent addresses for members MEPP has on file. (*The Pension Benefits Act, 1992* section 13, *The Pension Benefits Regulations, 1993* sections 13 through 21)

Media Enquiries

The Associate Deputy Minister or the Executive Secretary will inform the Chair of the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission of any media enquiries with respect to the Commission or the Plan. The information provided will include background on the enquiry, the recommended course of action to be taken, and the spokesperson from PEBA who will respond to the enquiry on the Commission's behalf. The Chair will approve or amend PEBA's recommendation.

Background briefings and interviews are subject to prior approval by the Chair of the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission and will be developed in collaboration with the Associate Deputy Minister and the Assistant Director, Communications. Generally, interviews and background briefings will be on-the record.

Communications During Provincial Election Campaigns

The Commission recognizes the Government of Saskatchewan's requirement to restrict communications in order to preserve the integrity of provincial elections. There may be instances, however, when the Commission is of the view that it is compelled to communicate with Plan members and participating employers regarding significant Plan events that occur during provincial election campaigns. Significant events would include any occurrence that may give rise to members' concerns regarding their pension entitlements.

When there is a significant event that prompts the need for the Commission to communicate with Plan members and participating employers during the period coinciding with a provincial election campaign, and there is a deadline associated with delivering this communication, the Commission will write to the Minister of Finance to seek an exemption from the communication prohibition under *The Election Act, 1996*.

Presentations

MEPP conducts member presentations about the Plan. MEPP considers requests for presentations for all areas of the province. Overview presentations are provided when there are 20 or more people.

Website

The MEPP web information is part of the PEBA website (as the administrator the Plan). The MEPP website is a primary means of providing current and accurate member and public communications. Only published material and information previously approved by the Commission or an appropriate PEBA official is posted on the website.

Any possible changes or updates proposed for the website will be brought to the attention of PEBA's Assistant Director, Communications.

MEPP Member Booklet

Responsibility for updating the MEPP Member Booklet belongs to the Public Employees Benefits Agency. The MEPP Member Booklet provides an overview of the main provisions of MEPP. The MEPP Member booklet is made available on the website or may be sent to a member on request.

MEPPMatters

MEPPMatters is the Plan newsletter that is published and mailed to members and pensioners. It is produced at least twice per calendar year. The newsletter provides general information about the Plan and its operation.

Special editions may be produced to inform Plan members on important Plan developments.

MEPP In-Depth

MEPP *In-Depth* publications are specific topic pamphlets used to provide members with details on specific topics about the Plan. These are mentioned in MEPPMatters, posted on the website, and are available to be mailed to members upon request. For example, a MEPP *In-Depth* has been created for *Designation of Beneficiary Prior to Retirement, Disability Waiver, Pension Calculations, Pre-retirement Spousal Waiver, Portability Agreements, Retirement Options, and Termination Options*. New MEPP *In-Depth* publications will be created if a need is identified.

Review

The Commission will review communications initiatives periodically.

16.4 History

Approval date: January 20, 2006; January 21, 2011;
February 17, 2012, November 21, 2014
November 20, 2015, and March 16, 2018

Last review: March 16, 2018

Next scheduled review: November 2019