

April 14, 2026

Deputy Mayor Adam Veri and Members of Council
50 Colborne Street South
Simcoe, Ontario
N3Y 4H3

The local media play an important role in local government. Our print and digital stories help inform the public about municipal councils and school boards and help ensure local government is transparent and accountable.

Recently, something has made our jobs more difficult. Norfolk County began enforcing a ban on taking photos and making videos during council meetings.

Photos and videos help the media gather information and present our stories. We have taken photos and videos responsibly for years without any issues.

A December 2022 email (copy attached) from former County Clerk Teresa Olsen states the ban on photos and videos in the procedural bylaw was not intended to apply to the media. Ms. Olsen planned to bring forward a companion policy to exempt the media and provide further detail. Unfortunately, this didn't happen.

We ask council to direct staff to devise the intended companion policy for council's consideration.

The policy could say something like the media may take photos and videos during council meetings as long as taking them does not disrupt proceedings; for example, no flash photography.

We understand the procedural bylaw needs a tool to prevent photos or videos being misused for intimidation, harassment or invasion of privacy.

However, as responsible members of the media, we respectfully ask council to permit us to continue to take photos and videos in order to do our jobs effectively.

This request has the support of Paul Morris, editor and publisher of the Port Dover Maple Leaf, J.P. Antonacci, who covers Norfolk for the Hamilton Spectator, Michelle Ruby who covers for the Simcoe Reformer and Chris Abbott, editor of the Simcoe Advocate.

Sincerely,

David Judd

Port Dover Maple Leaf

Good evening Mr. Judd:

I will speak to this matter during my introduction of the report tomorrow. It is not intended to disengage the media from being able to report on matters at Council or have the opportunity for photos and videos. We have included the clause “unless authorized by Council” to allow us to set procedures around that clause; ultimately Council always has the authority to allow or disallow these practices (with or without this clause in the by-law). The intention will be to bring a companion policy that will outline how the process will work.

As Clerk, I am responsible for Privacy and Protection of Privacy policies at the County. This includes all aspects related to photos, videos and access to information across the County, including all facilities. Ultimately we need to ensure we are protecting the privacy of individuals who attend meetings, such as public and staff who are in attendance but not formally presenting. The opportunity to place tools in our procedure by-law to allow us to manage any situations that may arise within our Council Chambers as it relates to privacy should be addressed.

We recognize our media partners have been excellent advocates. I trust our media partners are diligent in respecting individuals privacy and as such we will develop procedures that will provide better clarity around this matter to ensure the media is able to continue with the work they need to do.

Thank you,
Teresa

Teresa Olsen
County Clerk
Clerks and By-Law
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