



Environnement
Canada

Environnement
Canada



MEDIA INTERVIEW TIPS

FOR ENVIRONMENT CANADA, ATLANTIC REGION MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS

Produced by the Communications Division of the
Community and Departmental Relations Branch

P
96
.154
E4313
2004

Rég. Québec Biblio. Env. Canada Library



38 502 058

193675

Canada

Media Interview Tips for Environment Canada, Atlantic Region
Media Spokespersons

Written by Wayne Eliuk, Regional Manager of Communications

February 2004

© Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2004

Catalogue No: En4-35/2004E

ISBN: 0-662-36082-6

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
What Reporters Do and How They Approach Interviews	3
The Crux of Successful Interviews: Preparing and Using Your Key Messages	4
Using Generic National and Regional Messages	5
Preparing Your Own Key Messages	5
Preparing Messages For Special and New Initiatives	6
Using Your Key Messages	6
Pre-Interview Discussions	7
The Difference Between Reactive and Proactive Media Interviews	8
General Do's and Don'ts For Effective Media Interviews	9
Conveying Your Key Messages by Using Techniques Called "Bridging", "Headlining/Flagging", "Hooking" and "Rephrasing"	14
Preparing a Media Interview Report	16
APPENDIX #1: Typical Problem Question Types and How To Handle Them	17
APPENDIX #2: Preparation Tips For Radio & Television Studio Interviews	23
APPENDIX #3: MY MESSAGES	26
APPENDIX #4: NOTES	28

P
96
.I54
E4313
2004

Introduction

The Government of Canada's 2002 Communications Policy, like its predecessors, states that communications with the public and the media are a part of the duties and responsibilities of public service managers and program experts. Therefore our department designates them as spokespersons to respond to media inquiries within their area of responsibility and expertise. In turn this gives them direct opportunities to publicly promote the important work that they and our department are doing for the environment and Canadians.

This media interview tips guide has been produced by the Communications Division of the Community and Departmental Relations Branch to assist Atlantic region media spokespersons. It has been designed both to supplement the two-day media interview training workshops that are periodically organized for regional media spokespersons, and also to assist people who have not attended that workshop. In addition the regional Communications personnel are always available to assist and advise spokespersons regarding media interviews.

Keep this guide handy and review it regularly, but especially before important interviews.

What Reporters Do and How They Approach Interviews

It is important to understand that while reporters are not your enemy, they are also not your friends. They need you at times in order to do their job, and you need them sometimes in order to do part of your job.

When reporters interview you they are just doing their job of finding out the details for a story that they have been assigned to cover. As professionals they strive to cover a story objectively without “an agenda” or preconceived ideas.

Reporters know what makes good news stories. They are typically stories that contain controversy, drama, good-guys versus bad-guys conflict, criticism, something unusual and/or something about people. Accordingly reporters are typically in search of statements from the people they interview and angles to a story that will make what they prepare as interesting as possible to their readers, listeners or viewers.

Reporters typically try to get two sides to a story, and more if they have the time. If there are opposing views about something, they typically highlight that dramatic angle ... again to make what they produce more interesting and also more complete. As a result however, if they have interviewed someone with opposing views before they interview you, they are very likely to ask you about those views. That is simply how it works.

Most reporters are, by the nature of their jobs, competitive. They typically try to be the first to cover a subject, and when that is not possible they try to be the first to cover new or different aspects of the subject. This dynamic can influence both their personal style and the type of questions that they ask.

You should not feel intimidated by reporters. Most reporters are not “out to get you”. They do not deliberately try to embarrass people, or make them look bad or get them in trouble as a result of an interview. On the other hand, regardless of their personal style many of them do

employ various common techniques and styles of questions in order to get beyond your prepared answers so that they succeed in getting all of the information they possibly can and in language that their audience will understand.

In turn, if you are aware of those techniques and styles of questions you can do more to ensure that you remain in control of telling your story about something in the way that you wish to do so. Many of the most common techniques and types of questions used by reporters are described below along with tips on how to deal with them.

The Crux of Successful Interviews: Preparing and Using Your Key Messages

The most important thing that you can do to ensure successful media interviews is to prepare “key messages” about your work in advance, and then use them when you respond to questions.

Once you have your messages ready, with some practice you will be able to implement the strategy that **no matter what question is asked, your answer is your opportunity to say what you want to say**...especially if you utilize some of the techniques outlined below, such as “bridging”.

This strategy is embodied in the following often-quoted statements made to reporters by two well-known political figures:

- “I am now ready to give the answers I have prepared for your questions.” Former French President Charles DeGaulle.
- “Do you have any questions for my answers?” Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Thus always remember that your answers are far more important than their questions.

Key messages are also often called “press lines” or “media lines”, and typically Communications personnel work with spokespersons to produce them. Sometimes they are prepared in our region for the use of our Minister.

Using Generic National and Regional Messages

National and regional Communications personnel regularly prepare generic messages for all of our department's priority issues and programs. Typically this is done in conjunction with program personnel. The messages are placed in communications plans and strategies, media lines and other related documents. The Atlantic region's Communications division periodically collects the national and regional generic messages together in one document, and makes them available to our regional media spokespersons.

The spokespersons should study the generic messages for their areas of responsibility and determine which ones to use as their own key messages. In addition they may need to prepare more specific ones.

Preparing Your Own Key Messages

To prepare your own key messages, first think about what you **most** want people to know about the particular subject, and what you would **most** like them to remember. Then prepare brief statements that tell people those things.

Sometimes one key message is enough; however typically you should prepare two or three, but rarely more than that number.

Keep the messages short...usually just one sentence long. And make sure that they contain a complete statement that will make sense on its own.

Use simple everyday language that everyone will be able to understand.

Try to prepare messages that are interesting, catchy and compelling. Your goal is to speak in "quotable quotes".

Try to prepare statements that you will easily remember, and that Atlantic Canadians will remember after they read or hear them. The regional Communications division personnel will be happy to assist you with this; so please do not hesitate to contact them.

After you have prepared your key messages, write them down in the "My Messages" section at the end of this booklet. Then practice using them so that you are totally comfortable with saying them in a natural way.

Preparing Messages For Special and New Initiatives

In addition to preparing and using key messages for your regular ongoing programs and initiatives, you may also have to prepare messages for special or new initiatives or for special events.

This is almost always done in the form of preparing media lines or questions & answers documents. One of the regional Communications personnel will always work together with you in the preparation of these documents.

Using Your Key Messages

If you are doing a media interview on the telephone you should have your key messages on your desk for reference, however you should not sound like you are reading them.

Always use your most important message first.

During interviews try to use one or two of your messages as soon as possible. Then repeat it or them regularly throughout the interview. Do not worry that you may sound repetitious because typically only snippets of what you say will actually be used by the reporter. By repeating your messages you will be increasing the likelihood that they will be used by reporters.

If appropriate, be sure to convey your messages with conviction, energy and perhaps passion.

If appropriate, reinforce your messages with one brief concrete example or one pertinent fact.

Stay consistent in how you say your messages, however also be flexible enough to reword them somewhat as you respond to various questions.

Finally, remember to review your key messages periodically to check if they need to be updated. The regional Communications division personnel will be happy to assist you with this.

Pre-Interview Discussions

For all interviews you have the right to request a pre-interview discussion, and you should **never** do an off-the-cuff interview. You should always have at least a brief discussion beforehand. This will enable you to be certain that you are the correct person to do the interview, and it will help you prepare for it.

In a pre-interview discussion you should ask:

- What does the reporter want to interview you about ?
- If it is not obvious, why is the reporter doing a story on the subject?
- What types of questions will the reporter ask during the interview?
- Will the reporter be interviewing other people as well, and if so whom will they be ?
- What is the deadline for the story ?

Pre-interview discussions can be an excellent opportunity for you to influence what the reporter will ask you during the actual interview. Reporters don't always know the subject they have to interview you about, and therefore during this discussion you can suggest appropriate questions that you would like them to ask.

It is important to remember that what is said during pre-interview discussions is never "off the record". The moment you begin speaking with a reporter you may be providing them with information even if you think you are just having a casual conversation and that the actual interview has not started yet.

In special cases when you are going to be discussing a particularly sensitive subject, after you have the pre-interview discussion you should notify appropriate managers about the interview before you do it. The managers may wish to assist you in your preparations for the interview, or alert others about it.

In addition, after a pre-interview discussion you can contact one of the Communications Division personnel to learn more about the reporter, the media outlet, etc. in order to assist you in your preparations before you do the interview.

The Difference Between Reactive and Proactive Media Interviews

Reactive interviews occur when reporters contact our department to speak to a spokesperson. In other words, the reporters initiate the interviews.

Proactive interviews occur when our spokespersons (or Communications personnel on their behalf) actively contact reporters in order to encourage them to report on subjects of importance to us. In other words, we initiate the interviews.

All of the tips and guidelines that follow apply to both types of interviews.

However it is important to bear in mind that it is often easier to be careless when you are giving proactive interviews. The dynamic tends to be more relaxed, friendly and non-threatening. Therefore spokespersons may end up speaking more casually and conversationally without regard to the tips and guidelines in this booklet. However, it is precisely the proactive interviews that are of such importance to us that we actively initiate them that require extra careful adherence to the contents of this guide.

General Do's and Don'ts For Effective Media Interviews

Review the following tips regularly, and always follow them in order to be effective in media interviews.

DO:

- Always have a pre-interview discussion first.
- Always remember that media interviews are not normal conversations.
- Always remember that during interviews you are speaking as a representative of our department; not as a private professional or individual.
- Always remember that your job is to give pertinent facts during interviews, and **never your own personal or professional opinions** about subjects.
- Always be prepared **in advance** to discuss factual information within your area of responsibility about your projects, programs and reports, etc. You should develop some key messages about your work and then think about how you can work them into interviews. As well, before an interview try to anticipate the questions that will be asked and prepare answers for them. For some key subjects regional Communications personnel work with spokespersons to prepare written Question and Answer documents in advance of announcements and interviews.
- Think positively and consider every interview that you do to be an opportunity to tell Atlantic Canadians about the important work you and our department are doing. If you think negatively and consider interviews as a nuisance that you would rather avoid then that attitude will likely negatively affect the tone and content of the interview.
- Respond to phone calls from the media as soon as possible. Reporters are usually working on tight schedules to meet deadlines. On the other hand, you should not feel you must call immediately. You should take

DO:

(cont'd)

some time to prepare yourself for an interview. Typically you will know in advance what subject the reporter wants to discuss, however you should confirm this during a pre-interview discussion when you do contact the reporter.

- Always be prepared in advance to answer the toughest question that you can imagine and that you hope the reporter won't ask (if there is one), rather than the easiest question that you hope the reporter will ask.
- During interviews take some time to collect your thoughts and plan your answer before beginning to reply to a question. You do not have to respond immediately. Furthermore your pauses to think are almost never reflected in newspaper stories or broadcast on radio or television. The reporters use what you actually say.
- Always stay within your own area of knowledge and expertise when responding to questions. If you are not the appropriate person to respond to a question then tell the reporter that, and if you know who the appropriate person or agency is then tell them that.
- Be prepared to lead reporters to ask appropriate questions. Reporters sometimes don't know enough about some subjects to be able to ask all of the questions that they should ask.
- Always stick to the facts that you know.
- Provide information in "plain English" without using bureaucratic and scientific jargon. Explain things in everyday language the way that you would to a family member or neighbour, rather than the way you would talk with co-workers and colleagues. However, when you do this avoid using slang or being folksy.
- Avoid using acronyms. Give the full names for things so that reporters and Atlantic Canadians will understand what you are saying.

- Keep your answers brief and to the point of the question. Then stop talking ...even if the reporter pauses (which is a common technique to draw more information out of you).
- Use short examples to clarify your points if possible.
- Be forthcoming and non-evasive when replying to questions. If information cannot be discussed or released for some reason, then say so and explain why it can't be.
- Stay calm if a reporter becomes aggressive. It is usually just a technique the reporter is using to try to throw you off using your planned answers.
- Feel free to revise and reword your response if it did not come out the way you intended it to, or it was too long. Simply say something like: "let me start that over again", " let me clarify what I mean", or "let me say that in another way to be clearer".
- If you become stuck or unsure of an answer, then simply say that you do not know the answer to that question. Similarly, if a subject comes up that you do not wish to discuss simply either use the bridging technique described below or say that you are not prepared to respond to that question. It is better to avoid a topic you are uncertain of than to try to fake an answer.
- Feel free to add more information, if appropriate, after a reporter has finished their questions. If their questions did not address the heart of the subject and you did not use the bridging technique to get to it, or if you feel that you did not convey your messages the way you had intended to, simply tell the reporter that you would like to add something to what you had said.
- Similarly, if a reporter asks you at the end of the interview if there is anything you would like to add or if there is something else they should know about, then do take advantage of this opportunity. Either use this as a last chance to repeat your most important key message, or as an opportunity to use a key message that you were not able to use during the interview.

DON'T:

- Never do an interview with a reporter if you are not the appropriate designated spokesperson. Arrange for the right person to return a call to a reporter who has left a message for you, or direct the reporter to that person and then immediately notify the person.
- **Never ever provide your own personal opinions about subjects** even when you are asked to do so. Remember that you are always speaking as a representative of our department, not as a private professional or individual. If you have personal or professional opinions and views that differ from those of our department **never** express them during an interview. If a reporter asks you for your personal or professional opinion simply start your answer by saying “the view of our department is...” and then state that view.
- Never agree to answer questions or engage in discussions “off the record”. There is no such thing. Always expect anything you say to be quoted, even if it is said when tape recorders or cameras are not turned on. Therefore also assume that anything you say in casual conversation either before the interview formally starts, or after it ends, may also be used by the reporter.
- Never say “no comment” in response to a question. The phrase is often viewed as an admission of guilt, and it can make you and our department look bad. If you cannot provide an answer to a question, explain why.
- Don't speculate about things even when you are asked to do so. Say something like: “ Rather than discussing speculations I would like to discuss the facts which are ...”
- Don't discuss advice or recommendations you provided to our senior managers or Minister in briefing materials.
- Don't criticize government decisions, policies or programs.

- Don't criticize or attack opponents of our plans and programs.
- Don't provide more information than you are asked for unless you have a very good reason for doing so. One good reason would be if it is necessary to do so in order to communicate one of your key messages.
- Don't try to manufacture an answer to a question when you don't know it. If you don't know the answer to a question, then simply say so and then offer to find out the answer.
- Don't give too many details, figures or examples when you are replying to a question. This can overwhelm an interview.
- Don't say "that's a good question". Very few people can pull that off.
- Don't get in an argument with a reporter. An interview is not a debate. If necessary say: "I'm not going to argue with you. The simple facts are..."
- Don't repeat a negative statement or accusation the reporter said in a question when you are replying to it. If you do it reinforces it and also it can be used as a quote of something you said.
- Don't utter "um's", "ah's" and other filler noises when you are thinking about what to say. This can give the impression that you don't know your subject well. Simply remain silent while you are thinking, and then give your reply.
- Don't try to be funny or humorous during an interview. It is rarely appropriate during interviews about our department, and it is difficult to do successfully.

Conveying Your Key Messages...

Using Techniques Called “Bridging”, “Headlining/Flagging”, “Hooking” and “Rephrasing”

After you have read about the techniques described below, watch for them when you are listening to radio interviews or watching interviews on television. You will see how commonly they are used by people in both the private and public sectors and also how very effective they can be.

“Bridging”:

This is the most commonly used and best technique, and it is the most important one to master. One way to describe bridging is to say that regardless of the question that is asked you give the answer that you want to give... which is one that includes your key messages. When using this technique you acknowledge the question, and then use a “bridge” phrase that gets you to being able to use your key messages. The following are examples of typical bridge phrases:

“The real issue is ...”

“The most important thing is...”

“But what’s really significant about this is...”

“But something we shouldn’t forget is...”

“That leads to the question of...”

“Just the opposite is true...”

“An equally important question is...”. Then state the question and answer it.

You can also create your own bridge phrases in advance that you will be comfortable using.

Your bridges _____

“Headlining or Flagging”:

Use this technique when you have something important you wish to emphasize. Simply tell the reporter that it is important. For example, you can use phrases such as:

“The most important thing is ...”

“The essential issue here is that...”

“If there’s one point I want to emphasize it’s ...”

“Our key concern is...”

“Let’s be perfectly clear that...”

“Hooking”:

Using this technique you phrase a response to a question in such a way that the reporter has little choice except to ask for an elaboration from you. For example, you can say:

“Our report contains several important recommendations”—but don’t say what they are.

“We are using a two-pronged approach to deal with that”—but don’t describe the approach.

Then the reporter will usually ask you to elaborate.

“Rephrasing”:

Using this technique you first rephrase a question to put a different “spin” on it, and then answer it the way you want to with your key messages. For example, you can say:

“The key question to be asked is...”

“Essentially what you are asking is....”

Preparing a Media Interview Report

After conducting an interview with a reporter you should complete a media interview report **as soon as possible**.

Media interview reports are important because they alert key managers about media interest in our programs. They can serve as an early warning of emerging issues and topics of public concern. When appropriate they also enable the managers listed below to alert people in our national offices in Ottawa/Hull, and to produce briefing and media materials before the contents of some interviews are published in newspapers or aired on radio or television.

The media interview report form is easily found on our regional Inside Lane web site. Simply provide the requested information, and then click on the "submit" button at the end of the form. This will automatically send the report to the Regional Director General, your Regional Director, the Regional Communications Manager and the Manager of the regional Briefing Unit. It will also send a copy to you for your records. If you wish to send copies to other people there is a place where you can add their e-mail addresses.

The screenshot shows the 'Atlantic Inside Lane' website. At the top, there are logos for Environment Canada and Canada, along with navigation tabs for 'Francis', 'PubService', 'Web Solutions', 'Search', and 'National Infoline'. Below these are sub-links: 'Garth's Corner', 'Knowledge Sharing', 'What's New', 'Green Lane', and 'Home'. The main header reads 'Atlantic Inside Lane Since 1996'. A left-hand navigation menu lists various sections, with 'Media Interview Report' highlighted by a red circle. The main content area includes a 'Welcome' message, a 'Print-friendly' link, and a 'QUICK LINKS' section with icons for 'Community & Departmental Relations', 'Environmental Conservation Branch', 'Environmental Protection Branch', 'Human Resources Branch', 'Informatics Systems Branch', 'Management Services Branch', and 'Meteorological Service of Canada'. At the bottom, there is a 'Weather Info' section for 'Halifax', 'Fredericton', and 'St John's'.

Typical Problem Question Types and How To Handle Them

Some reporters use some of the following types of questions, however they are all easy to deal with when you recognize them and have a strategy for handling them.

Remember—your answer is always more important than their question.

The Loaded or Set-up Question:

This typically consists of a long preamble and then a loaded question at the end such as...“Do you agree with that?”

How to respond: Challenge the premise or scenario outlined in the question, and then state your positive version of the facts. Also, if you are being interviewed on television, be careful not to nod your head during this type of question because it indicates your agreement with what is being said.

The Broad Brush/ Multi-Department Question:

This type of question goes beyond our department to include aspects of the work we are doing as partners in conjunction with other federal or provincial departments.

How to respond: It is very important that you never comment on, or criticize, the activities of other departments we are working with, even if (and especially when) you personally are unhappy with some aspect of the performance of the other department(s). You can only speak for our own department and your area of expertise. Simply always emphasize the positive aspects and results of the collaborations. As well, you can employ some of the techniques described below for related types of questions.

The “Second Hand” or “Empty Chair” Question:

This type of question contains a quote from someone who is not present during the interview. Typically this would be someone who is critical of something our department has said or done.

How to respond: Don't argue with someone, or their position, when they aren't there. Say you haven't personally heard or seen the remarks, and therefore you do not wish to respond to them. Then bridge to using your own key messages.

The Irrelevant Question:

This is a question that is unrelated to the interview subject. Some times it is asked accidentally, and other times it is intended to throw you off your prepared answers.

How to respond: Acknowledge the question, then simply bridge to using your key messages. For instance you could say “that is an interesting question, but the real question is ...” and then use your planned key messages.

The Hypothetical/Speculative or Devil's Advocate Question:

This type of question asks you “what if...?” or “what would you do if...?”

How to respond: Don't ever speculate or try to predict what might occur. Say that the question is a hypothetical one and then say, “But that raises the essential issue of...” and then state your key messages.

The Catching-You-In-An-Inconsistency Question:

This type of question points out when you or our department has taken more than one position or given more than one response to the same question.

How to respond: If it is true that you or our department has been inconsistent, then admit it but don't act defensive about it. You could point out that the situation has changed, or that new facts have entered the picture, etc. Or you could simply explain the correct current position or facts.

The Questionable or False Fact(s) Question:

This type of question is based on questionable or false facts or information, or it may even be completely fabricated.

How to respond: If you are confronted with a fact you are not familiar with, then either ask for the specific source of it, or disassociate yourself from the fact or simply deny its validity.

For example for the question: "A recent report by a major university says your department has the worst performance record in the field. What's your comment on that?"

An example response would be: "I have not seen that report, however I certainly question what you say it says because..... and then you use your key messages.

The Yes Or No or Either/Or Question:

This type of question is designed to trick you into choosing between two negative options.

How to respond: You should refuse to choose either one of them.

For example if the question is: "Was the recent incident caused by poor training or faulty equipment?"

A good response would be: "Neither one of those. Our employees receive comprehensive training and their equipment is inspected regularly. Actually we believe that the cause was ..."

The Fishing Trip Question:

This type of question is deliberately vague and broad in order to get you to start talking in the hope that the reporter will find something to explore in more detail.

How to respond: Identify that the question is too broad or general and ask for a more specific one.

For example in response to the question: “What’s your department’s policy on environmental assessments?”

You could respond: “That’s a very broad question. What specific aspect of our assessment process do you want to know about?”

The Are-You-Happy/Satisfied Question:

This type of question is designed to get you first to go on record as being happy or satisfied with something. Then the reporter will quote someone who is not happy or satisfied about it, and ask how you can be happy if they are not.

How to respond: Remember that it is inappropriate to talk about your personal opinions or emotions when speaking on behalf of our department.

For example if the question is: “Are you happy with your department’s handling of this incident?”

You could respond: “We have conducted an evaluation of this incident, and we have concluded that it was handled appropriately.”

The Pregnant Pause Non-Question:

This type of non-question is a long pause that is deliberately used to get you to say something, or something more, because you feel uncomfortable.

How to handle this: Don’t fall for this; simply remain silent. It is not up to you to fill “dead air”; that is the reporter’s job.

The Totally Unexpected Difficult Question:

Sometimes no matter how well you prepare for an interview, reporters ask questions that you are totally unprepared to respond to and that are difficult to reply to.

How to respond: Say “that’s a hard question to answer because”... and then using the bridging technique to shift the question to one that you want to answer that will enable you to use your messages.

The Deliberate Interruption Question:

This is more a technique than a specific type of question. By interrupting your response, this technique is meant to throw you off your prepared answers and get you to reply without thinking about the new question.

How to respond: First say: “let me finish responding to your previous question”, and then finish the answer. Then ask the reporter to repeat the interruptive question.

The Totally-Inappropriate-For-Our-Department Question:

This type of question asks you something that should be answered by someone who works in another federal department, or in a provincial government department. This is often an innocent mistake; the division of jurisdictions and responsibilities between departments is often confusing.

How to respond: Simply explain that the question addresses another department’s jurisdiction and refer them to the appropriate department. If you happen to know who the spokesperson on the topic is at that other department then you could also provide the name, however then as a courtesy you should call them an alert them about what you have done.

The Multiple-Questions Question:

This type of question deliberately or accidentally asks you two or more questions at once. Sometimes it is a deliberate tactic to confuse people and try to trick them into answering a question that they would not have answered if it was asked alone.

How to respond: Simply pick the question that you think is most pertinent and/or that is the one you would prefer to reply to, and then provide your answer.

The After-The-Interview-Is-Over Question:

This question is intended to catch you off guard after you have relaxed and let down your defences because you think the interview is over. The reporter might say: “there is one thing I forgot to ask”, or “another question just occurred to me.”

How to respond: Simply take a long pause before you reply to the question, get yourself back into “interview mode”, and think of your main message again. Then reply to the question. This also provides you with an opportunity to mention any key points that did not come up earlier.

Preparation Tips For Radio & Television Studio Interviews

- Advance preparation is particularly vital for studio interviews. Try to anticipate potential questions and practice answering them. Regional Communications division personnel will be happy to assist you with this preparation work.
- Prepare or review your key messages (as explained in the first section of this booklet) and think about how you can work them into the interview smoothly.
- Arrive at the radio or television station early in order to give yourself enough time to get comfortable with the surroundings.
- Remember that you are “on the record” the moment that you enter the studio. Thus be cautious what you say in casual conversation before the actual interview begins.

Radio Studio Interview Tips:

- How you dress is important even for radio studio interviews because dressing well can shape your attitude and give you more professional confidence.
- Use the minutes before the interview starts to stretch and warm up your voice. A brief conversation with someone and a few deep breaths will help prepare your voice for an on-air radio conversation.
- For radio news interviews, always answer briefly and succinctly. Learn to get your key points across in 15 seconds.
- If you are on a call-in show, don't become defensive or be pulled into an argument during calls from people who are hostile. Always try to answer in a positive and friendly manner. It may help you to respond to callers in the same way that you would to reporters by using the guidelines in this booklet.

Television Studio Interview Tips:

- Men should wear a conservative dark suit or sports jacket with a light blue plain shirt if possible. They should avoid wearing a white shirt, or a jacket or tie with a fine print or design (such as small stripes, checks, or herringbone pattern) which may be distracting to the television audience. They should pull their jacket down at the back and sit on it. This prevents the shoulders of the jacket from riding up.
- Women should wear professional clothing with basic colours (avoid red) and styles, and avoid a lot of jewellery that would show up on television, particularly dangly earrings.
- You should accept makeup services if the studio staff offers them to you.
- You should remove tinted glasses before the interview unless that will cause a problem for you. The interviewer and your television audience will want to see your eyes.
- Take a few deep breaths before the camera is turned on. Sit erect but not stiff. You should relax and try to avoid nervous gestures or mannerisms.
- Always maintain eye contact with the interviewer. And don't look at the camera (unless it is a remote interview in which you are in a studio alone with a camera and camera person while being interviewed by someone in another city). This will help you to concentrate on the questions, it will look more natural, and it will convey a better impression of you to the viewing audience. On the other hand, if you want to particularly emphasize a key message it is appropriate to look at the camera directly.
- Don't nod your head while the reporter/interviewer is asking a question unless you totally agree with what they are saying in the question.

- Keep your head up, and keep your hands away from your mouth and nose. Also don't clench your hands in front of you, and avoid excessive hand movements while you are talking.
- If you have notes or documents lay them flat on the table in front of you.
- Don't play with a pen or pencil during the interview.
- Remember that television interviews move at a quick pace. Keep your answers brief and to the point. Your key messages are more likely to be used if they can be extracted as "sound bites".
- Following the interview, a director may want to shoot extra footage without sound in order to have different camera angles for the final product. If this occurs remember that you are still on camera and act accordingly.

MY MESSAGES

#1. _____

#2. _____

#3 _____

#4. _____

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre:

Conseils pour les entrevues avec les médias à l'intention des
porte-parole d'Environnement Canada, Région de l'Atlantique

Printed on paper that is elemental chlorine-free, acid-free,
and contains a minimum of 20% post-consumer waste.

