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大成 DENTONS

# Crisis Communication

GSPIA

# What should you know about crisis communications from the outset:

1. They happen – frequently
2. So, there is no excuse to not be prepared
3. Staying calm is KEY
4. They're no fun – but you learn a lot
5. Do a post mortem

# Three crises

- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada – Allegations of Interference (IRB) (1994)
- Public Safety Canada (PS Canada) -Riots in a First Nation (2004)
- Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada- Privacy Breach (2014)

# 1 Approach

- Facts and Issues
- Challenges
- What we have done
- What we should have done
- Winning Strategies
- Winning tactics

# Allegations of interference at the IRB - Issues

- **The facts**

- High level players
- Political appointees from different parties
- Risk of sensationalism
- Damage the credibility of the tribunal
- Violation of confidentiality

- **The challenges**

- Avoid political pitfalls
- Bring out the truth through the conflicting interests
- Maintain the credibility of the tribunal
- Reconciling communication and confidentiality
- Manage personal attacks

# Allegations of interference at the IRB - Strategy

- What was done:
  - Independent consultant
  - Anonymized report based on the issues rather than allegations
  - Close collaboration at the political level
  - Transparency through the media on the non-confidential information
  - Internal management to avoid factions
  - Personal reflection to handle attacks
- What should also have been done:
  - Increased support to the crisis staff
  - Strengthening information security measures

# Riots in a First Nations Community – Issues

- **Facts**

- Federally and provincially funded First Nations police
- Special funds for special intervention
- Special intervention gone awry

- **The Challenges**

- Real risk of loss of life
- Fragmentation of positions in the community, in the federal government and between federal and provincial governments
- Reluctance of Québec police
- Federal government unilateral involvement
- High costs to taxpayers

# Riots in First Nation - Strategy

- What we did:
  - Constitution of a federal/provincial crisis response team
  - Daily update on facts from the police
  - Total but delegated openness with media
  - No editorial comment but facts
  - Regular meetings with the community
- What we should have also done:
  - Exclude political actors
  - Exclude political influence

# Invasion of privacy...at the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Privacy - Issues

- The facts:
  - Loss during a move of a removable disk containing personal information of OPC and OIC employees
- The challenges:
  - Crisis management for two organizations with two leaders
  - Credibility of the OPC
  - Risk of leaks
  - High media interest

# Invasion of privacy...at the Office of the Commissioner for the Protection of Privacy - Strategy

- What was done:
  - Creation of a crisis management team
  - Immediate and effective response
  - Strategic, constant and deliberate communications vis-à-vis staff and media
  - Personalized communication
  - Direct contact with the media (i.e. not delegated)
- What could have also been done:
  - Send factual information to journalists

# The Common Trappings Of Crisis Communications

1. No or Little Advance Warnings
2. Urgency to Act
3. Volatility of the Story
4. Instability of the Facts
5. Reduced Defense Mechanisms
6. High Visibility
7. Conjecture

## Successful strategies

1. Evaluation of major hazards and anticipative strategies
2. Mastery of the facts
3. Accessibility to the media
  1. Honesty
    1. Regarding the facts
    2. Regarding what is known and unknown
  2. Credible
  3. Compassionate
  4. Humble
  5. At an appropriate level
4. Training or recruitment of experts or employees or contract workers, including former journalists

# Winning Tactics

1. Anticipated crisis communication plan, including,
  1. Adaptable pre-established media lines;
  2. Identification of crisis response team; and
  3. Inclusion of communications experts
2. Identification of one spokesperson at appropriate level
3. Positive relationship with the media
4. Ethical reinforcement

## In summary,

- Take the challenge as an opportunity to show the organisation's mettle
  - E.g. Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada (OPC)
- Make sure there is staff support
  - E.g. OPC
  - Not IRB
- Focus on ethics not CYA
  - E.g. OPC, IRB
  - Not PS Canada

# Questions ?

# Thank you

大成 DENTONS

Dentons Canada LLP  
99 Bank Street  
Suite 1420  
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1H4  
Canada

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