CITY OF WEST KELOWNA

POLICY

Title: Media Relations
Department: Corporate Services
Policy Number: 0036
File Number: 0340-50-0036

Purpose

1.1. The media play an important role in providing information to the public. The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework to ensure the City consistently, accurately, and effectively communicates with media to support transparent and proactive sharing of information about City services, programs, policies and decisions with the public

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to the City of West Kelowna Council and employees.

3. Definitions

3.1. **City** means the City of West Kelowna.
3.2. **Emergency Operations Centre** means a location operated by Central Okanagan Emergency Management that is activated during a major emergency at the request of the incident commander and exists to support efforts at the site of the emergency.
3.3. **Media Advisory** means a notice to media to announce an upcoming media event such as a news conference, an opening event, or a photo opportunity.
3.4. **News Conference** means a meeting of news media representatives arranged for the purpose of making a statement, announcement, or replying to questions from the media.
3.5. **News Release** means an official written statement issued to the media and the public to announce new, noteworthy information.
3.6. **Public Service Announcement** means a message in the public interest shared through the media to raise awareness or change behaviour.
3.7. **Spokesperson** means the person who has been identified to speak on behalf of an organization on a specific topic.

4. Policy Statement

4.1. Media Inquiries

4.1.1. The media play an important role in providing information to the public. Media inquiries are welcomed and given a high priority by Council and staff and should be addressed promptly with consideration given to media deadlines.
4.1.2. Media inquiries of a general or operational nature shall be directed to the Communications department to coordinate a response.

4.1.2.1. Any staff member approached by the media must inform the Communications department and shall not share information without prior approval from the communications manager.

4.1.3. The City's authorized spokespeople are:

a) The Mayor (or their designate);
b) The Chief Administrative Officer (or a designate); and
c) Subject-area experts as assigned by the Chief Administrative Officer.

4.1.4. Media inquiries regarding a fire incident shall be referred to West Kelowna Fire Rescue. Media inquiries regarding a police incident shall be referred to the West Kelowna RCMP detachment.

4.1.5. Media inquiries regarding actions or intentions of Council shall be directed to the Mayor (or designate) as the appropriate spokesperson of Council.

4.1.6. The Mayor and Councillors may, out of courtesy, inform the Communications department of any contact with the media relating to Council business, but are not required to.

4.2. Council Spokesperson

4.2.1. The Mayor is the primary spokesperson to speak to Council business or matters before Council. If the Mayor is not available, the Acting Mayor is the designated spokesperson.

4.2.2. The spokesperson will present Council business or matters before Council to the media without personal opinion.

4.2.3. Once Council's directives/opinions have been provided, personal opinion may be expressed by the Mayor or individual Councillors.

4.2.4. Individual Councillors are not considered spokespersons of Council as a whole and may not represent themselves as spokespersons for the Mayor and/or Council as a whole.

4.2.5. Individual Councillors may comment publicly on any matter but are not to identify themselves as a representative of the Mayor or Council as a whole and should indicate their comments are personal opinions only.

4.2.6. Individual Councillors are not to initiate media contact on behalf of the City before notifying the Communications department. Individual Councillors wishing to pursue proactive media coverage on behalf of the City or Council should contact the Communications department for preparation of appropriate material and approval of the Chief Administrative Officer.

4.2.7. Staff members are not permitted to speak on behalf of the Mayor and/or Council, but may provide media with specific, public information regarding Council directives (such as motions in open Council).

4.3. News Releases

4.3.1. News releases of an operational nature are approved by the Chief Administrative Officer. News releases of a political nature are approved by the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer.

4.3.2. All news releases, media advisories and public service announcements will be distributed by the Communications department.

4.3.3. Proactive media contact is initiated through the Communications department including news releases, news conferences, media advisories, public service announcements, and media interviews. The communications manager and City staff will consult with Mayor when preparing campaigns or strategies that require participation by the Mayor or members of Council, or when preparing a response to a media inquiry that could have implications for the Mayor or Council.

4.4. Crisis or Emergency Issues

4.4.1. In the case of a crisis or emergency, the City will follow the City's Crisis Communications Plan, or for larger events, defer to the Emergency Operations Centre. Generally, in times of crisis or emergency, only the Mayor or Acting Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer or the Incident Commander are recognized as spokespersons for the City.

4.5. Media Training

4.5.1. The Communications department is available to support Mayor and Council and staff with media relations training and media interview preparation.

5. Authority

5.1. None.

6. Related Policies or Procedures

6.1. None.

7. Approval

Approved by	☐ CAO	☒ Mayor and Council
Approval date	September 8, 2026	
Council Resolution #	C239/26	
Signature	*[Original signed by Mayor]* MAYOR	

8. Additional Information

Category	☒ Council	☐ Administrative
Related procedure	☐ Yes	☒ No
Procedure number		
Date of last review		