



# DISTRICT OF WEST KELOWNA

## COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

Pages: 1 of 3

Approval Date: 2008-SEP-30

<b>SECTION:</b> CORPORATE SERVICES
<b>SUBJECT:</b> COUNCIL MEDIA RELATIONS

### GOAL:

A Strategic Priority of the District of West Kelowna Council is to provide a high level of public communication, feedback and customer service to its constituents. Council recognizes that one of the most efficient methods of communicating with its residents, businesses and visitors is through the news media (radio, television, print and internet).

### SCOPE:

This policy applies to the District of West Kelowna Council.

### POLICY:

#### 1. General

The District of West Kelowna Council considers all representatives of news media as an extension of the general public and, as such, treats news media with the same respect as residents, businesspersons or visitors.

Inquiries from the news media are welcomed and given a high priority by Council with consideration given to media deadlines. Council members will provide responses as quickly as possible to all media inquiries.

All information released to the media on behalf of the District of West Kelowna Council is to be accurate and free of personal opinion.

#### 2. Council Spokespersons

When representing all of Council, District of West Kelowna Council's spokespersons are:

- Mayor
- Acting Mayor

The Mayor will be considered the spokesperson on Council business or matters before Council. District staff will direct all media inquiries to the Mayor at first instance. If the Mayor is not available, media inquiries will be directed to the Acting Mayor. In the event that the Mayor and Acting Mayor are not available for comment, media inquiries will be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer who will consult with available councillors on who will field the inquiry.

The spokesperson will present Council business or matters before Council to the media without personal opinion. Personal opinion may be expressed once Council's directives/opinions have been rendered.

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.

No District staff members are entitled to speak on behalf of the Mayor and/or Councillors but may provide media with specific, public information regarding Council directives (motions in Open Council).

### **3. Media Inquiries**

District staff will direct media inquiries regarding actions or intentions of Council to the appropriate spokesperson of Council. When possible, staff will take a message and provide the Mayor or the Acting Mayor with the reporter's name, return phone number, topic of interest and deadline.

Media seeking comment from individual Councillors will be provided Councillors' individual contact information (district-provided cell phone numbers and emails).

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

### **4. Personal Points of View**

Individual Councillors are welcome to comment publicly on any matter, but are not to identify themselves as a representative of the Mayor or Council as a whole.

If a Councillor wishes to comment publicly on any matter unrelated to the District of West Kelowna or Council, they should indicate that their comments do not represent the District or Council and are personal opinions only.

### **5. Proactive District Media Contact**

Proactive media contact is initiated through the Communications Officer including News Releases, News Conferences, Media Advisories, Public Service Announcements, and personal contact with media. The Communications Officer and District staff will consult with Mayor and/or Council 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 members of Council.

Only the Mayor or Acting Mayor or designate, through the Chief Administrative Officer, are authorized to contact the media or release District News Releases on behalf of the City.

All News Releases, Media Advisories and Public Service Announcements will be distributed from the Communications Office.

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

**6. Public Safety Issues**

Any media inquiries regarding a fire or police incident should be referred to Westside Fire and Rescue or the Westside RCMP detachment.

Media inquiries seeking Mayor or Councillor comment on other public safety issues (ie: water quality concerns, unsafe public spaces) are to be referred to the appropriate Council spokesperson.

**8. Crisis or Emergency Issues**

In the case of a crisis or emergency, the District will follow instructions in the District's Emergency Plan. Generally speaking, in times of crisis or emergency only the Mayor or Acting Mayor and the Chief Administrative Officer are recognized as spokespersons for the District.

**9. Media Training**

The Communications Office will make available to District Mayor and Council a media relations training document entitled *Understanding Media* and will act as a resource at all times for media interview preparation and training for Council