



# REPORT TO COUNCIL

To: **Mayor and Councillors**

Subject: Media Relations Policy CO-63

File #: [Required]

Doc #:

From: Samantha Paulson  
Communications Officer

Date: March 6, 2023

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## RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the CO-63 Media Relations policy be approved; and
2. THAT GE-4 Media Contact Policy be repealed.

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## PURPOSE:

The purpose of the report is to provide City Council and employees with an understanding and direction as to who can speak in an Official Capacity to the Media on behalf of the City.

## POLICY:

The City of Langley is committed to communication with, and through, the Media in an open and transparent manner. The City will, whenever possible, respond to Media requests and may assign a Designated Spokesperson who will:

- respond to Media requests promptly and professionally;
- be open and transparent while respecting the access to information, confidentiality, and privacy rights of employees, organizations, and citizens;
- ensure messages and responses are clear and easy to understand;
- where possible, include references in response to relevant sections of legislation, bylaws, and policies, or other background resources; and,

- act in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act*, the *Community Charter*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and any relevant City bylaws, policies, or applicable legislation.

The City will respond to media enquiries from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. PST Monday to Friday unless the City feels a response is warranted and/or required outside of these hours.

The City recognizes a strategic approach to Media relations is crucial to building mutually beneficial and trusting relationships with news Media. Such relationships will help foster accurate, balanced, and fair reporting; help allow the City to convey information through Media to stakeholders; increase positive coverage, protect, and enhance the City's reputation.

The City of Langley is committed to communication with, and through, the Media in an open and transparent manner. However, these interests must also be balanced with the privacy rights and third parties and legislated duties of confidentiality.

#### Declining to Release Information:

The City's investigations are confidential. Generally, the City will not confirm or deny whether there may be an investigation underway into the actions of any individual or organization, or whether a complaint has been lodged, unless and until a court date has been set. In circumstances where the refusal to confirm or deny an investigation could undermine public confidence in the City, the City will make an exception to this policy. Such exceptions will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will be subject to the approval of the Chief Administrative Officer or his/her designate.

When a matter is due to come before the court, the City will not comment on the matter until a final decision has been issued.

The City does not comment on specific cases beyond what is stated in the published decisions. Other comments concerning hearings will be limited to general explanations, in order to promote a better understanding of the City's processes.

The City may issue a Media release when it determines that it would be in the public interest to do so.

The City also reserves the right to decline to respond to Media requests where a response would conflict with the confidentiality requirements, the *Local Government Act*, *Community Charter*, *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, or any other applicable law or policy.

Crisis or emergency issues:

During an emergency, Langley Emergency Communications Plan, Annex III of the Langley Emergency Response Plan (EOC Communications Plan) supersedes this policy.

Langley Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Langley RCMP) related issues:

The Langley Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) operates 24 hours a day, seven days per week, and their work generates a high volume of media inquiries. The RCMP has designated employees as Media spokespeople and follow other guidelines when releasing information. Employees who are not police personnel are required to refer Media inquiries regarding police to the Langley RCMP immediately.

**COMMENTS/ANALYSIS:**

The current GE-4 Media Contact Policy no longer reflects media relations in the City. The Media Contact Policy was adopted on October 3, 1977, and has not been amended since its adoption.

The updated Media Relations Policy is designed to provide City Council and employees with an understanding of who can interact with the media in an Official Capacity on behalf of the City. The updated policy reflects current practices and will protect and promote the image of the City while ensuring accurate, timely, consistent, and professional messaging.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

N/A

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Council may amend, or not proceed with, some or all of the proposed changes outlined in the draft updated Policy.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Samantha Paulson  
Title Communication Officer

Attachment(s):

1. Policy CO-63 Media Relations
2. Policy GE-4 Media Contact

**CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:**

I support the recommendation.



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Francis Cheung, P. Eng.  
Chief Administrative Officer