

	Title: Media Relations	Number: CO-63
	Authority (if applicable):	Section: Council
	Date Adopted:	Motion:
	Historical Changes (Amended, Repealed, or Replaced): Replaces Policy GE-4	

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to define who is authorized to speak in an Official Capacity to the Media on behalf of the City and ensure City Council and City employees will:

- provide accurate and timely information in response to Media requests;
- works collaboratively across the organization to ensure information is provided to Media;
- considers the range of communication tools available and uses those most appropriate;
- respects the access to information, confidentiality, and privacy rights of employees, organizations, and citizens;
- strives to achieve a culture of two-way communication with Media stakeholders; and,
- conducts Media relations in an open, professional, and transparent manner that is in accordance with the Local Government Act, Community Charter, the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, and any other applicable legislation, bylaws, and policies.

Scope:

This policy applies to City Council and City employees. This policy does not apply to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) as they have designated employees for Media relations and follow other guidelines when releasing information.

In the event of an emergency, the communications protocol, as outlined in the Langley Emergency Communications Plan, Annex III of the Langley Emergency Response Plan (EOC Communications Plan), will supersede this policy.

Definitions:

Chair: Langley City Council member who is designated as the Chair or Co-Chair and authorized to speak on the Committee, Panel, Board, and/or Task Group’s behalf.

City: means the City of Langley (Langley City).

City Council: means the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Langley.

Designated Spokesperson (Spokespeople): A person or group of people who have the authority to make statements on behalf of the City due to their knowledge, experience, and expertise.

Unless otherwise authorized, Designated Spokesperson (Spokespeople) for the City are:

- City of Langley Mayor (or Councillor designate);
- Chair or designated Co-Chair on behalf of a Council Committee, Panel, Board, or Task Group
- Chief Administrative Officer;
- Members of the Senior Management Team and their designate(s);
- Communications Officer;
- Other employees as authorized by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Media: A diverse collection of media technologies that reach a large audience which includes print media (mass media, traditional news media, books, magazines, newspapers, and pamphlets), broadcast media (films, radio, recorded video/music, or television), and digital news media (websites, blogs, internet-based radio, podcasts, and television).

Official Capacity: A Designated Spokesperson (Spokespeople) who provides the City's official statement or position on a subject/topic of interest to the Media on behalf of the City.

Policy Statement:

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 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 responses to relevant sections of the 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.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Communications Officer in the Administration Department is responsible for handling and coordinating Media interactions on behalf of the City. The Communications Officer may answer Media inquiries by phone, email, letter, or in person in order to:

- provide background information;
- provide print or electronic written statements attributed to the City of Langley;
- facilitate and arrange interviews with the Media;
- gather information for Designated Spokespersons ahead of Media interviews;
- provide publicly available material from the City's website to Media;
- provide links to Council material on the website; and,
- re-direct Media to other organizations.

Designated Spokespersons:

- must discuss only factual information;
- must not express personal opinions on City related matters or Council decisions;
- must not discuss matters that are currently under investigation or matters that are currently or will be under consideration by a hearing panel or the courts; and,
- must not discuss matters that could jeopardize the integrity of any investigation or release information that could be in breach of applicable privacy laws and legislation,

A Designated Spokesperson is encouraged to take part in interviews with journalists who:

- Identify themselves and any affiliation they may have with print, broadcast, or online Media outlets; and,
- Conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Canadian Association of Journalists' Principles for Ethical Journalism and Ethics Guidelines.

Designated Spokespersons may contact the Communications Officer for support and advice if needed in preparation for media interviews.

Non-spokespeople:

City employees who are not Designated Spokespeople are not authorized to make statements to the Media and/or in public discussion on behalf of the City unless authorized by the Chief Administrative Officer.

City employees who are not Designated Spokespersons must refer Media requests to the Communications Officer so that proper action can be taken and accurate responses made by the appropriate representative of the City.

City employees must refrain from expressing personal opinions on City related matters or Council decisions to Media.

References:

Policy Number:	
Policy Owner:	Communications Officer, Administration Department
Endorsed by:	
Final Approval:	
Date Approved:	
Revision Date:	March 6, 2023
Amendments:	
Related Policies:	Replaces Policy GE-4
Related Publications:	Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines Canadian Association of Journalists Principles for Ethical Journalism