

CITY OF CHESTERMERE

POLICY HANDBOOK

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 20, 2017	POLICY: 126
APPROVED BY: Council	SUBJECT: Media Policy
REVISED DATE:	PAGE NO.: 1 of 4
EXPIRY DATE:	POLICY FUNCTION: Corporate Services - Communications

PURPOSE AND INTENT

To establish guidelines for the City of Chestermere's media relations.

1. Definitions

- a. "C.A.O." means the Chief Administrative Officer of Chestermere, as appointed by Council;
- b. "Chief Elected Official" means the Mayor, or in his or her absence, the designated elected representative;
- c. "City Administration" means the staff members of the City of Chestermere;
- d. "The City" means the City of Chestermere;
- e. "Corporate Communications" means the internal Corporate Communications staff function of the City of Chestermere;

2. General

- a. The City recognizes the value of traditional media (e.g., community newspapers and magazines) as an important communication and engagement tool to share information.
- b. Proactive media relations efforts shall be used as a tool to reach the organization's corporate objectives and communications goals which includes providing residents with timely and accurate information. Reactive media relations shall be used as a way to build the City's reputation, correct misinformation, and ensure the City's perspective is represented in media stories.
- c. Corporate Communications shall oversee the City's media relations efforts.

- d. The City aims to respond to every media request of a relevant nature to the City and/or the community.

3. Council Media Interactions

- a. The Mayor, or designate, as set by Council, shall serve as the primary spokesperson for the City and shall represent the City as a whole for major items. This includes major announcements, events, council direction, council decisions, regional or provincial items, major issues, major project initiations or completions, general community vision and information, and emergency situations.
- b. If determined to be appropriate, the Mayor or designate may speak jointly with a member of staff. When speaking jointly, the spokesperson will represent the City as a whole and the Administrative spokesperson may offer technical or background information.
- c. During an emergency, the Mayor and Director of Emergency Management (DEM) share the role of official spokesperson. The Mayor is expected to speak on behalf of the community as a whole and the DEM is expected to speak about the response efforts. The Emergency Management team shall ensure the Mayor is prepared with the most recent and relevant information prior to an interview.
- d. During the Mayor's absence, the Deputy Mayor or Acting Chief Elected Official shall act as the official spokesperson for the City during non-emergency situations.
- e. All members of Council may speak to the media at their own discretion. If they are not speaking in the capacity as the Chief Elected Official, they should state that they are speaking as an individual member of Council, not on behalf of the entire organization.

4. City Administration Media Interactions

- a. When the media approaches City Administration or the City proposes a story to the media, the internal spokesperson shall be approved by Corporate Communications and the relevant department Director.
- b. The spokesperson may speak in conjunction with the Mayor or Chief Elected Official (see above).

- c. Staff may speak without an elected official for annual events or programs, standard operational items, project updates, or general public reminders but should not be perceived to speak on behalf of Council.
- d. In general, the spokesperson should be the person most familiar with the event, story or request or the person most qualified to speak about it.
- e. Identified spokespersons shall seek to be as responsive as possible to any requests for media interviews.
- f. For sensitive items, the relevant (or appropriate) Director or the CAO will serve as the spokesperson.
- g. Interviews with staff shall only take place after a spokesperson has been trained and prepared for the interview.
- h. Spokespersons shall seek to represent themselves, their department and the City in a way that builds the reputation of the City and in accordance with the applicable *Human Resources Policies*.
- i. Spokespersons will not comment on items outside of their area of expertise and shall not offer personal opinions.
- j. Spokespersons shall not divulge confidential information including but not limited to: in camera items, personnel matters, Emergency Operations Centre information, legal proceedings, ongoing investigations, and matters before Council.
- k. Spokespersons shall comply with all regulations set out in the *FOIP Act* and any other applicable provincial or federal laws.

5. Role of Corporate Communications

- a. Corporate Communications shall coordinate all media requests or proposals for the City and for the Mayor, or designate, as set by Council, in his or her role as the official spokesperson.
- b. Corporate Communications shall provide support, key messages, background information and media training to spokespersons as necessary.

- c. Corporate Communications shall track media interactions and provide pertinent information to the City Administration's senior leadership and Council on a regular basis.

6. Non-City related media relations

- a. Employees in their capacity as private citizens, may be asked to speak to the media and have the same rights of speech as other citizens subject to the following limitations as described below:
 - i. If any member of staff speaks to the media in a capacity other than as a City spokesperson, it is encouraged that they do not disclose that they are employed by the City.
 - ii. If they have disclosed that they work for the City, they must clearly identify that the views expressed are his or hers alone and do not reflect the views of the City or Council.
 - iii. All employees are expected to use sound judgement to ensure that their personal media comments are consistent with their obligations under the *Human Resources Policies* and do not compromise the professional, respectful and non-partisan performance of their official duties as public administrators.

7. Related Documents/Policies

- a. Human Resources Policies
- b. Confidentiality and Disclosure Policy
- c. FOIP Act
- d. Media Guidelines
- e. Media Training

Adopted by Council: March 20, 2017

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MAYOR



Acting
CAO