



## **ADMINISTRATION POLICY:**

### **Public Statements and Media Relations**

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<b>Policy number:</b>	<b>MP-001</b>
<b>ALT report:</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Administrative Leadership Team (ALT)</b>
<b>Effective date:</b>	<b>2008 / 03 / 11</b>
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<b>Department/BU:</b>	<b>Corporate Services / Customer Service and Communications (Corporate Marketing and Communications)</b>

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#### **BACKGROUND**

Effective media relations are critical to the Corporation of The City of Calgary (“The City”) and the way that The City is perceived by its stakeholders. The City of Calgary communicates information with respect to The Corporation, its services and performance to the media and the public on an ongoing basis. Properly managing media relations and responding to the public are important aspects of The City’s business activities.

While much of the public’s perception of The City is still as a result of media coverage, the advent of blogs, wikis, online forums and other technologies are increasingly being used by Calgarians seeking information on the Corporation and its business units. This policy provides guidelines for City of Calgary employee usage of these electronic media.

This policy is designed to provide employees with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding public statements and media relations. It also establishes a course of action for employees to use in providing timely and effective responses to inquiries from the public and the media.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Protect The City’s public reputation and ensure consistency and professionalism in how the Corporation and its employees communicate with our public stakeholders.
- Provide employees with an understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding public statements and media relations and establish a course of action for employees to use in providing timely and effective responses to inquiries from the public and the media.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to describe the rules governing how The City and its employees communicate with and respond to inquiries from public stakeholders and the media.

## **DEFINITIONS**

1. Public Statement – A declaration made by a City of Calgary employee in any public forum, which relates to The City of Calgary, its employees and / or its business units and includes statements made in weblogs (blogs), in online forums, on social networking sites, in wikis and elsewhere in the public record.

## **POLICY**

### **1.0. Scope/Exceptions**

#### **1.1. Scope**

This policy applies to City of Calgary employees.

#### **1.2. Exceptions**

This policy does not apply to members of The City of Calgary Council and the Calgary Police Service.

### **2.0. Consequences of Non-Compliance**

- 2.1. Any breach of this policy or the components contained herein will be treated as misconduct. Misconduct will be reviewed and may result in disciplinary steps being taken up to and including dismissal from employment or seeking restitution or both.

### **3.0. General Policy Statements**

- 3.1. It is essential to use authorized spokespeople for public and media inquiries, employing best practices to ensure that the organization speaks with one voice and presents clear and concise information.

### **4.0. Policies on Public Statements**

- 4.1. Do not defame, and / or speak negatively of The City, City personnel or The City's business units when making public statements.
- 4.2. Public statements are governed by the Respectful Workplace Policy (Administration Policy HR-LR-001).

- 4.3. Never disclose information, including textual or visual material, which is confidential or has been disclosed to The City by a third party.
- 4.4. As stated in the Corporate Brand Identity Policy (Administration Policy GN-023), the use of The City of Calgary's name, trademarks, official marks and other forms of intellectual property owned by The City without permission is prohibited.
- 4.5. If you write online, be prepared for your text to exist online in perpetuity once you publish it.
- 4.6. If a member of the media contacts you about the public statements that you have made, contact The City's media relations personnel or your department communications leader.
- 4.7. When posting information on public websites, blogs, discussion forums or wikis on work that you do in a City capacity, or when participating in discussions about The City, identify yourself as a City of Calgary employee.
- 4.8. When making a public statement as a private citizen on matters not related to your work, do not identify yourself as a City employee.
- 4.9. For additional guidance in utilizing social media tools, refer to the Social Media Communication Guidelines for City of Calgary employees.

## **5.0. Key Policies on Media Relations**

- 5.1. Speak to the media only if you are a designated and approved City spokesperson for that project or issue.
- 5.2. To be identified as a spokesperson, an employee must complete training through the current City media training course. Your application for training must be approved by your business unit director and your department communications leader.
- 5.3. If you are not a City spokesperson, direct media inquiries to The City's media relations personnel.
- 5.4. Inform The City's media relations personnel and your department communications leader prior to conducting an interview.
- 5.5. Before issuing news releases or editorials written on behalf of The City, contact your department communications leader. They will provide approval and the appropriate format, content and The City's communications standards. This content will then be distributed by The City's media relations personnel or by the appropriate department communications leader.

- 5.6. Do not defame, and / or speak negatively of The City, other companies, City personnel or other people when communicating to the media.

**6.0. Other Policies on Media Relations**

- 6.1. Be prepared for media interviews. Always work with your communications leader or business unit communications personnel to develop a list of key messages in advance and practice responses to these questions.
- 6.2. Call your communications leader or The City’s media relations personnel if you require coaching.
- 6.3. Make fact-based statements and avoid providing personal opinions.
- 6.4. Return calls to the media as soon as possible.
- 6.5. Do not use jargon or acronyms that will be unfamiliar to the average citizen.
- 6.6. If you are not sure of the answer, ask the journalist for time to respond.
- 6.7. Be honest with bad news or mistakes and provide appropriate context to the situation.
- 6.8. Be professional when interacting with the media. Their impression of each individual at The City affects their impression of the entire corporation, and may influence how they report the story.

**REVISION HISTORY**

Review Date	Description
2008 03 11	New Policy
2005	Revisions
2002	New Policy
1992 01 27	Chapter 6: Public Relations – Section 0603: News Media Relations (in the hard-copy-based editions of the Administration Manual)