



Creating a Culture of Communications

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026

Table of Contents

Our Values and Commitments.....	01
Our Core Narrative	04
The Communications Team: What We Do	08
Issues-based Key Messages.....	12
Supporting City Council Communications.....	15
Social Media.....	18
Crisis Communications	23
Media Relations.....	30
Goals and Evaluations.....	32
Appendix A: Templates	37
Appendix B: Canadian Press Style.....	41



The City of West Kelowna is situated on the traditional territory of the syilx Okanagan People. We recognize and honour these lands where we live, work, play and connect.

Our Values and Commitments

Information is empowering. For residents and for City of West Kelowna staff, being well informed helps build a sense of pride and belonging. It makes people safer. It makes life easier. It builds stronger connections in our community. That's why we see our work, as the City of West Kelowna Communications Team, as an important building block to the well-being of West Kelowna residents.

Communications is a Service

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team is here to provide service for every City of West Kelowna department, the public, and Council.

Our Commitments

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team has three main commitments to the public, staff and Council that form the foundation of our work.

1. We are committed to transparency.

It's our job to share with residents the things they have a right to know. That includes information about the municipal budget and progress on City Council's Strategic Priorities.

2. We are committed to education.

From safety information to instructions for paying a bill or protecting West Kelowna infrastructure, we cannot miss a beat when it comes to giving West Kelowna residents timely and accurate information about the services we provide.

3. We are committed to celebrating West Kelowna.

We love this city, and love to shine a spotlight on the natural beauty, supportive community, enviable lifestyle, and growing economy of West Kelowna. But we'll always make sure education and transparency come first – and celebrating the fun and flavour of our great city comes second.

We're Cultivating a Culture of Communications

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team commits to City Council and all our coworkers to be the builders of a culture of clear, accurate, proactive communications.

We connect and respect staff through information sharing. By cultivating a culture of communications at the City of West Kelowna, every team can be empowered.

By creating a culture of communications, we also de-risk every team's work. By putting a Communications Team member at the table with departments, projects and initiatives right from the beginning, we can identify and fix miscommunications before they happen, fill the gaps between what's happening and what West Kelowna households need to know, and empower City of West Kelowna teams to talk about their work with confidence.

When the Communications Team doesn't know what's happening, West Kelowna families don't know what's happening. Creating a communications culture makes it possible for the Communications Team to ensure West Kelowna residents have the information they need and deserve.

We Choose Proactive Communications

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team knows that proactive communications are always better than reactive communications. If something is worth saying and worth knowing, we don't wait to be asked – we find the right channel to tell people before they ask, whether that's through a social media post, a public service announcement, or a notice on our website.



Who We Communicate With

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team members, and the broader City of West Kelowna team, are part of a communications ecosystem. We are responsible for ensuring timely, effective, respectful communications with:

Residents

It's our role to provide timely information and education, to be transparent and to make it easy and accessible for West Kelowna households to get the information they need to build their best life in West Kelowna.

City of West Kelowna Staff

Information is empowering. The City of West Kelowna Communications Team has a responsibility to ensure information is shared between departments, and that City staff are well-informed at all levels of our organization. By sharing information, we empower and uplift our coworkers, and serve residents even better.

Mayor and Council

Our Mayor and Council are the authors and owners of our Strategic Priorities. It's our job to provide information they need to make strategic decisions that impact all of us in West Kelowna.

Media

Our job is to keep media informed so they can keep residents informed.

Regional partners and other governments

Our partners help West Kelowna families build a safe and healthy life. Although others at the City are most often the relationship holders and direct contact with partners like Westbank First Nation, the Regional District of Central Okanagan, the Government of British Columbia and local service providers, the Communications Team is responsible for producing communications products and communications that keep those partners in mind.

Our Voice

The Communications Team is the owner of the City's organizational voice. Our voice sounds like West Kelowna itself:

Our voice is accessible.

We don't put on formal airs, we tell it like it is. We use short, declarative sentences and choose the most specific, accessible word. We don't say precipitation when we mean rain.

Our voice is caring.

West Kelowna residents are our family, friends and neighbours. The City of West Kelowna is not just a corporation; it's a group of people who work to make West Kelowna a place where the people we care about can build their best life.

Our voice shows that we are a part of the community, connected and rooted in place.

We use first-person language wherever appropriate, and say "we" and "our" not "you" and "yours."

Our attitude is positive.

We love West Kelowna. We know there are challenges here and across the country, and we'll speak about them honestly — but we believe that this wonderful community is doing great things together, and that we can have a focus on solutions.

Our voice is honest and transparent.

We don't sugar coat or gloss-over the tough things. We tell it like it is, because this city belongs to us all so the truth belongs to us all.

We respect subject-matter experts.

The City of West Kelowna has engineers, scientists, planners, front-line workers, accountants and so many more people with specific expertise. While the City of West Kelowna Communications Team is your narrator and story-teller, we make space for experts to use their voice, and elevate the voices of the professionals that make the City of West Kelowna work so well.

CP Style

We standardize our communications by using Canadian Press style, which is used in most Canadian media publications. See Appendix B.



Our Core Narrative

Everyone who works at the City of West Kelowna has unique lived experiences and diverse backgrounds, cultures and views. People's language choices are a part of who they are. This diversity strengthens how we serve residents and engage with our community.

The City of West Kelowna has a core narrative, and the Communications Team distributes issues-specific key messages regularly to support staff. These tools provide a map, not a script; we always want City of West Kelowna spokespeople to communicate authentically. Our goal is to provide consistency, accuracy and clarity across all City communications, while allowing space for individual voice and lived experience.

City Council sets the strategic direction for the municipality. Staff across every department bring their expertise, professionalism and community knowledge to deliver on that direction with transparency and accountability.

Topline

The City of West Kelowna is a modernized local government, working with the community to make West Kelowna a resilient, welcoming, safe and inclusive place, rich with opportunity for all ages.

We are committed to transparent decision-making, responsible growth, and strong service delivery.

Our People

West Kelowna residents come from all walks of life. Some are new to West Kelowna, some are the children and grandchildren of West Kelowna's founders and builders, and some are syilx/Okanagan People and members of Westbank First Nation which has stewarded the land of this region for thousands of years. All belong, and are welcome here.

Our work is grounded in respect for this history and in building meaningful relationships with Westbank First Nation.

West Kelowna residents can count on emergency services to protect them, and count on the City of West Kelowna to put their safety first, at home and everywhere in our community. Through planning, preparedness and professional service delivery, we work every day to ensure the community's safety and well-being.

From young learners and first-time job seekers to career-builders and retirees, West Kelowna is a place of abundant opportunity – whether you're starting a business, finding your community through volunteering or building your best career.

We are stronger together. West Kelowna is a place where we stop to greet our neighbours, and look out for one another. Our resilience in the face of challenges comes from many sources, but none as important as pulling together as a community. The City plays a central role in supporting that resilience through communication, preparedness and community-led initiatives.

Our Place

West Kelowna is thriving. Our local businesses are growing, and people of all ages are finding opportunity at our doorstep.

From our sun-soaked beaches, parks and trails, to sports facilities, fields and courts to new infrastructure and amenities, West Kelowna is strengthening our community through shared spaces that connect us.

West Kelowna is steeped in agricultural charm and rural character. Life is beautiful here.

Our small town has grown into a thriving municipality and people want to stay, visit and explore all that is offered.

Our Future

West Kelowna's City Council has set four strategic priorities — a plan to build and grow a resilient, welcoming, safe and inclusive place, rich with opportunity for all ages. These priorities drive the proactive communications strategy and will be reflected in the core narrative of the City. As Council updates the priorities over their term, the changes will be reflected in messaging.

The Communications Team: What We Do

The Communications Team is an integral part of every organization. We play a key role in building trust and credibility in the community and with our partners. Bringing the Communications Team in early is important to have time to develop a comprehensive and proactive strategy to support you and your staff. The Communications Team supports the City by providing strategic advice and support to make sure information is communicated appropriately through various channels. We aim to provide the public and City staff with access to accurate, timely, and consistent information.

We support all departments of the organization with their communication needs and assist with issues management, strategic planning, and content development. We offer a critical eye to assess products and narratives before they are distributed or shared with the public. This helps make sure the information we share with the public is clear, informative and accurate, and meets a consistent standard across the organization.

We will work with you to plan for, develop, and implement communications initiatives which reflect each area's priorities and work plans as well as Council's Strategic Priorities.

Call the Communications Team ASAP if your project includes:

- Any mass distribution of information to residents (eg: a neighbourhood).
- Any issue that has been reported on in the news before.
- An announcement or change that requires residents to take an action.
- A new service.
- Any impact to people's commute or daily services like water, or facilities access.
- Any new cost for residents.
- Any issue that is new or unusual.
- An issue that's complex, and may need to be communicated to the public.
- An urgent or emergent issue that may need to be communicated to the public.
- An opportunity for residents to share their input.
- Any incorrect information about a city service or program.



When Should You Reach Out to Communications?

The Communications Team supports all departments in the City to proactively and strategically communicate with their audience. If you have a program or service that you think will benefit from reaching more members of the public or key stakeholders, we are here to help.

See us as a helpful resource to complement your work. We will work with you to develop strategic plans to meet your needs and goals and advise on best practices.



Communication Workflow

Contact the Communications Team to loop us in.

A member of our team will contact you to discuss your goals. Based on the complexity of your needs, they will develop a communications plan and tactics to meet your objectives.

The project owner (the subject-area expert or a department leader, usually) will edit and sign off on the communications plan, along with the communications manager.

The Communications Team will produce any materials your communications plan calls for, such as social media posts, letters to constituents, website updates, media releases, speeches or press events. The project owner will see and sign off on each of those items, along with the communications manager.

If a spokesperson is required, the Communications Team will work hand-in-hand with your department leader, subject-area expert or the Mayor to take on that role. The communications manager will approve the spokesperson.

The Communications Team maintains an annual workplan for the routine programs and services that have established communications tactics done each year. We will continue to work with staff to execute these tactics and refresh materials as needed.

Timelines

Early notice is always appreciated so we can make sure we can accommodate your timelines within our workload.

Calling the Communications Team right from your first meeting on a new project or issue is a good plan. When we join meetings from the outset, you don't have to explain the issue to us, later. Departments must provide enough time for the Communications Team to read, edit and sign off on any mass communications.



Types of Services

External Communications

Media relations:

We establish and maintain relationships with media, respond to media inquiries, arrange interviews, proactively pitch stories, and facilitate accurate depiction of activities, programs and services.

Content development:

We craft content to share information with the public in a clear, consistent, and compelling manner. Tactics include broad public notifications through items like news releases, public service announcements, council highlights, project updates, social media posts, or reports and handouts.

Issues management and crisis communication:

We're responsible for the accurate, timely and consistent distribution of information to the public, media and staff. We support staff and leadership in effectively addressing and responding to emerging and urgent issues.

Advertising:

We design and implement paid media campaigns and materials to build awareness of City programs and services and for regulatory requirements.

Digital and Web Communications

Websites:

We manage the content and appearance of the external websites westkelownacity.ca and OurWK.ca.

Social media:

We manage the City's social media accounts and the content that is posted on them. We maintain an active online presence to inform and engage with our community, monitor online conversations and respond to public comments.

Brand and identity:

We develop and manage brand and visual guidelines for the City to ensure all departments follow a consistent look, feel and tone that represents the City of West Kelowna values. This includes graphic design services for reports, and creating digital content.

The City will adopt a hybrid digital communications approach that combines established platforms (website, social media, email and alert systems) with the option to introduce a lightweight resident-facing portal or mobile application to improve access to information and services. This approach ensures the City continues to meet residents where they are, while progressively enhancing how information is organized, accessed, and delivered.

Community Engagement

We facilitate community engagement initiatives by developing communication materials, organizing public consultations, and coordinating outreach activities and events. Engagement may be done in person, online through OurWK.ca, or a combination of both. The Communications Team may either lead the engagement program, or support a consultant.

Grant Coordinator

We provide strategic advice to staff on grant programs and criteria, assist in coordinating the application process, support staff to make sure reporting requirements are met, and liaise externally with grant program staff. The Communications Team makes sure the sign and communication protocols are followed and we coordinate the filing of grant documents in a centralized system, and administer a database of received grants and conditions for claims, reporting, signage and communications in collaboration with Finance.

Issues-based Key Messages

Why Key Messages Are Important

The information the City of West Kelowna provides to residents keeps them safe in an emergency, gives them the tools they need to access the services they need or to pay their bills on time, and ensures all West Kelowna families are included in what's happening in our city.

When a potential issue or concern arises, issues-based key messages ensure that people get the same, clear information whether they're listening to a news report on the radio, calling City Hall, checking social media, or reading an insert in their water bill.

For the Communications Team to deliver effective issues-based messaging, we need to be advised of emerging issues from the outset, as early as possible.

Key Messages Workflow

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team works with staff experts to draft key messages for an identified issue.

Issues-based Key Messages

- Key messages always provide clear, concise and correct information that address the five Ws (**who, what, when, where, why**).
- Key messages will be organized using the AIDA method: **Attention, Information, Detail, Action**.
- Key messages will be drafted as soon as an issue has been identified.
- Key messages are informed by subject-area experts.
- Key messages should be efficient, sharing what residents need to know and do, but staying out of details people don't need.
- Key messages are updated as issues evolve.
- Key messages are the basis for media responses, news releases, social media, webpages, briefing notes, fact sheets, and any other communications from all City of West Kelowna departments.



Communications at the Table

It's the responsibility of team and project leaders to ensure the Communications Team is included from the earliest days of your initiative. If your project meets any of the criteria for when to contact the Communications Team, reach out to the communications manager and one of our team members will join your next meeting.

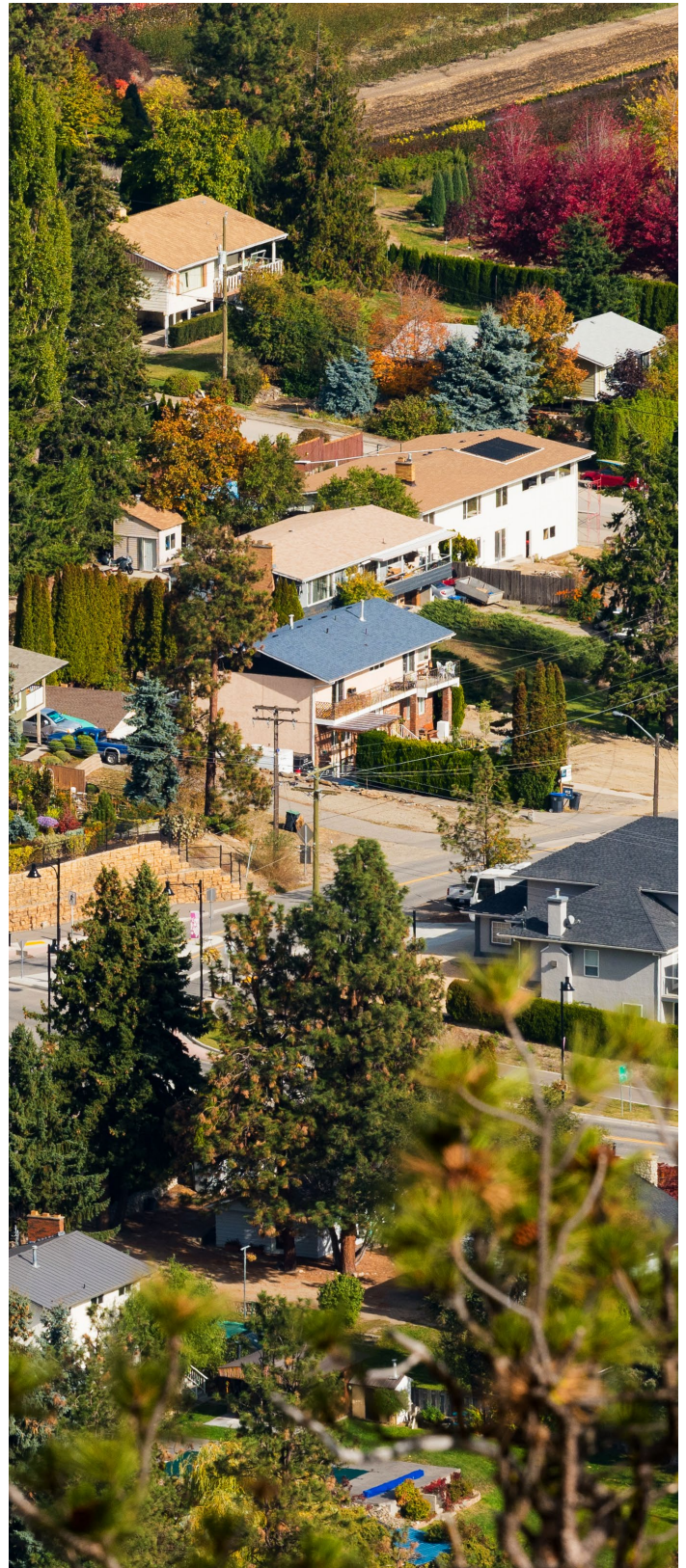
Message Development

The Communications Team will work with subject-matter experts to write clear, concise, correct key messages.

Sign-offs

The Communications Team is responsible for gathering each sign-off required on key messages.

- The relevant department manager, leader, or subject-area expert.
 - Responsible for ensuring key messages are accurate and transparent.
- The communications manager.
 - Responsible for ensuring key messages align with core narrative and Council's Strategic Priorities.
 - Responsible for ensuring key messages are accessible, clear and easily understood by all residents.
- The relevant General Manager, and/or the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), at the discretion of the communications manager.



Distribution

The Communications Team will distribute the approved key messages as required:

- Mayor and Council, via Daily Mail by sending to the executive coordinator.
- Senior Executive Team, via email.
- Designated subject matter experts, via email.
- Relevant department managers and front-line staff – always including staff that responds to inbound calls and emails from the public.
- Grapevine.

Set review schedule

The Communications Team and subject-matter experts determine how often the key messages should be reviewed and updated and set a schedule. In the case of emergency management, updates are given as frequently as needed (e.g. hourly), but on other files, reviews may take place monthly, quarterly or annually.

Remember to archive any previous versions of key messages on the same topic to avoid version confusion.



Supporting City Council Communications

The Communications Team supports Council by providing fact-based information on the City's services or initiatives to members of Council to support their communication with their residents. This includes sharing media releases, key messages, and updates on high-profile items with Council.

- News releases, public service announcements, council highlights, community announcements are shared with Mayor and Council via the eNews distribution list directly to their email.
- Key messages and background information on high-profile items are shared via Daily Mail.
- Direct support for Mayor and Council available at their request includes:
 - Speaking notes for community events (Mayor or their designate)
 - Media relations support: Scheduling interviews, providing key messages (Mayor or their designate)
 - Media training

Note:

Regular communications support is not available to Mayor and Council during municipal election periods.

Daily Mail

Daily Mail is the mechanism to share correspondence from the public and updates from staff with Council and is managed by the executive coordinator.

Daily Mail includes any correspondence sent to mayorandcouncil@westkelownacity.ca with the response included as well as any updates from senior staff on files and requests. The Communications Team is available to support drafting responses to the public as needed.

Communications Consideration in Reports to Council

A communications consideration section will be incorporated into Reports to Council to identify how residents will be informed on decisions that are made.

Communications advice should be sought in advance when a Report to Council may have broad impacts to residents in West Kelowna. In many cases, the regular Council agenda package publication and subsequent media coverage is sufficient. However, when additional communication needs are required, the report should outline the level of communications planned such as open houses, publications, or external promotions.

Spokesperson for the City

The Mayor, or their designate, is the primary spokesperson for the City. Only Council can speak to Council decisions. The Communications Team will support the Mayor or designate in preparing for media interviews. That can include preparing key messaging, writing briefing notes, and joining the Mayor or designate for a prep session.

The Mayor or their designate never need approval to speak with media. *See Pages 28 to 30.*

When to Alert Mayor and Council

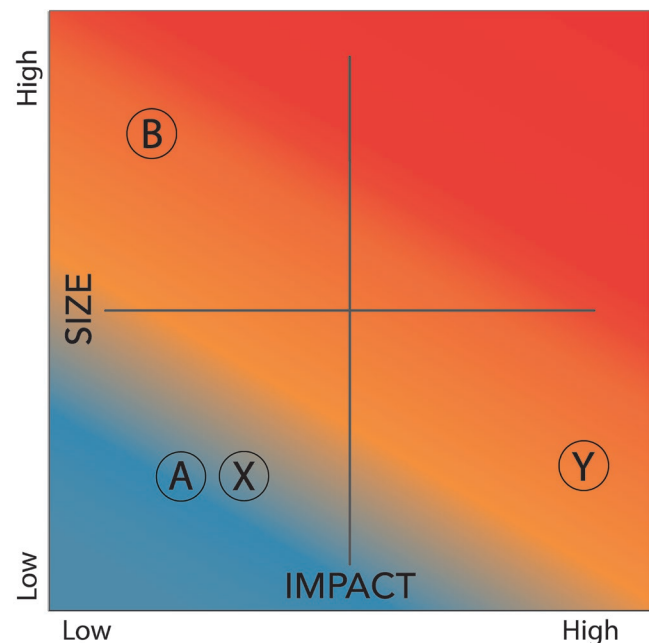
It's the role of the communications manager and the Senior Executive Team to determine when Mayor and Council should be made aware of an issue. While those staff members will apply judgment and experience, any of the following typically warrants communication with Mayor and Council.

- A new service or interruption of daily services like water or facilities access.
- Any new or increased cost for residents.
- Any issue likely to appear in the news outside of standard operations.
- Any issue that substantially impacts the City of West Kelowna's relationships with other municipalities, Westbank First Nation, the provincial government or the federal government.
- Any issue that is likely to have an impact on the City of West Kelowna's reputation.

The most important consideration is always how people are affected. Who is impacted, and how deep is the impact for them?

Legend

- Ⓐ A road construction project causes a dozen people to be late for work.
- Ⓑ A road construction project causes 200 people to be late for work.
- ⓧ A person sustained a minor injury at the City of West Kelowna Park.
- Ⓐ A person sustained a life-altering injury at a City of West Kelowna park.



Consider the urgency of a situation based on the many markers of impact. How many people have been impacted? How many people will feel concern, outrage or sorrow if they hear about this, and how deeply will they feel those things? Is the impact to individuals an inconvenience, an upheaval, or a serious injury? Does this event reflect poorly on the City of West Kelowna, or cause a loss of trust?

BLUE

All factors are low.

Size: A small number of people are impacted.

Impact: The impact on residents is inconvenience or frustration.

Concern: A small number of people may feel upset or concerned when they hear about it.

Reputation: Even if this isn't good news, it's not going to cause reputational damage to the City of West Kelowna.

ORANGE

When one or more factor cannot be considered "low," the urgency is orange. Mayor and Council must be notified.

Size: A greater number of people will be impacted, even if the impact is minor, like a small fee increase at a municipal facility.

Impact: The impact may be material, like a potential cost to residents or businesses; or the temporary closure of a municipal facility.

Concern: When residents hear about this, it will be troubling enough that they repeat it to friends and neighbours.

Reputation: Residents want and deserve an explanation from the City of West Kelowna in order to maintain trust.

RED

If any of the following things are true, this is the most urgent situation, and Mayor and Council must be notified immediately.

Size: Hundreds of residents or an entire neighbourhood is impacted.

Impact: There is an atypical cost to a category or group of residents.

There are serious injuries sustained by a staff member or resident on City of West Kelowna property. A crime has been committed on City of West Kelowna property, or alleged against a municipal staff member. Substantial damage has been done to municipal property.

Concern: When residents hear about this, they will feel sad, angry or troubled.

Reputation: This could meaningfully harm the reputation of the City of West Kelowna.

Social Media

The goal of official City of West Kelowna's social media channels is to keep residents informed about upcoming events and project updates, municipal programs, services and operations, and information that affects our community.

The Communications Team's commitment is to communicate on social media in a way that's transparent, accurate, relatable and timely. Social media channels will remain the primary tool for reach and awareness, directing residents to authoritative information on the City's website or future portal/app environment.

We aim to create a friendly, positive and engaging space that fosters two-way communications between the City and residents.

Active City of West Kelowna Social Media Accounts

Facebook: @cityofwestkelowna and @musicintheparkwestkelowna

Instagram: @westkelownacity

X: @westkelownacity

LinkedIn: City of West Kelowna

YouTube: @WestKelownaCity

The social media landscape is constantly evolving. As new platforms emerge, we will continue to evaluate their purpose and potential use, for example TikTok and BlueSky.

Why the City of West Kelowna Uses Social Media

To promote transparency.

We're building trust with our community by providing clear, current and accessible information.

To increase reach.

We're growing the number of people the City of West Kelowna interacts with by meeting people where they're at online.

To educate.

We provide helpful and accurate information to support the understanding of City initiatives, programs, services and infrastructure.

To reach people quickly in an emergency.

We post time-sensitive and emergency information quickly, giving people clear direction.

To celebrate our city.

We highlight good news, achievements, awards and the beauty of our community, and we shine a spotlight on service excellence.

To share partnership content.

Where it aligns with City operations and Council's Strategic Priorities, we share content from groups including, but not limited to, WildSafeBC, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Regional District of Central Okanagan and Visit Westside.

Social Media Strategy

The City of West Kelowna's social media strategy aims to enhance public trust and understanding of municipal services using visual, people-centred storytelling that clearly demonstrates how the City purposefully works to advance Council's Strategic Priorities and deliver high-quality and valued services, programs, events, and infrastructure to our community. A combination of organic and paid content is used to extend our reach in the community.

The content strategy prioritizes real photography and video over graphics to inform, educate and be transparent with our audience. The Communications Team has identified five content pillars:

- **Capital Projects**
 - "Projects before and after"
 - Goal: Show how we are investing in West Kelowna to make the City the place to be
- **City Operations**
 - "Behind the scenes works in action"
 - Goal: Build trust and transparency by showing what we do and the services we provide residents
- **People Behind the Work**
 - "Meet the team"
 - Goal: Humanize municipal services by showing the people who work at the City and what they do
- **Community Voice**
 - "Your community, your voice"
 - Goal: Increase relatability and program participation by sharing programs, events and engagement opportunities
- **Public Safety**
 - "Notifications affecting your neighbourhood"

- Goal: quickly, tactfully, and factually inform the community of notifications that may affect their homes, routines or health when related to City services

Per local government communications best practices and in alignment with ethical standards and conflict of interest policies, the City of West Kelowna's social media accounts cannot be used to:

- Share, promote or endorse non-City-related or non-partnership-related content or activities such as private events, fundraisers, or third party-led initiatives.
- Endorse or promote businesses, sell non-municipal products or services, or endorse or favour political parties, candidates, or partisan interests.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Communications Team has full control of official City of West Kelowna social media accounts. The department is responsible for aligning social media with the core message, using the appropriate tone, ensuring brand consistency, and maintaining alignment with Council's Strategic Priorities.

All social media activity is managed by the Communications Team. Any new official social media account must be approved by the communications manager.

The City's social media channels are monitored during regular business hours, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays.

In case of emergency management or a special event, the Communications Team may extend hours during which social media is monitored. The Communications Team will respond to comments, questions, and messages received on social media.

Social Media Comments

The Communications Team is responsible for maintaining a safe and respectful environment on our social media accounts.

Content or comments that create an unsafe environment for residents of any age will be removed or hidden. The Communications Team will always save a copy of removed or hidden content in our files and may provide that content to appropriate authorities. The Communications Team does not hide or remove comments simply because they're critical of the City.

The following content will be removed from social media channels:

- Libelous, defamatory, or inaccurate statements.
- Obscene, profane or sexually explicit language or content.
- Discrimination, harassment, bullying, hate or abusive language.
- Language that's threatening or the promotion, incitement or endorsement of violence or any illegal activity.
- Commercial advertising or promotion not approved by the City of West Kelowna.
- Political or partisan content, including promotion of candidates or parties.
- Links to third party, non-partnership or promotional materials including affiliate marketing or social media influencing.

Council Use of Social Media

The Communications Team does not manage the social media accounts of the Mayor and Council. The Communications Team will include links to notable social media posts in the Daily Mail both for awareness, and to make it convenient for City Council members who use social media to share official City posts, if they choose to.

City Staff Guidelines for Social Media

Staff should take care not to use their personal social media accounts to represent the City of West Kelowna or engage in a conversation on behalf of the City of West Kelowna. We're thrilled when staff like or share the City's posts, but we don't encourage staff to comment on the City's official social media content. Commenting carries risks, including having personal accounts become unintended conduits for service requests or criticism.



Requesting Social Media Content

Department or project leads should submit items for social media by emailing a Communications Team member with information and relevant graphics. We ask for two business days' notice whenever possible.

The Communications Team will assess whether social media content requests align with Council's Strategic Priorities, brand, standards, and best practices. This includes evaluating whether a post should be organic or supported through paid promotion.

Collaborative posts with partners or community organizations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must align with the City's communications objectives and policies, corporate operations, and/or Council's Strategic Priorities.

Any graphics used on the City of West Kelowna's social media platforms must be approved by the Communications Team.



Social Media Content

Content residents can expect us to consistently share on social media include:

- Announcements
- Capital project updates
- Community engagement initiatives
- City services and initiatives
- Recreation and culture or other public programming
- City events
- Council Highlights
- Road, park, facility and office closures
- Service delivery disruptions (i.e. watermain breaks)
- Reminders, including important dates or deadlines
- Job postings
- Public safety
- Emergency information (including sharing from Central Okanagan Emergency Management)
- Partnership content (i.e., Okanagan Basin Water Board, Regional District of Central Okanagan, WildSafeBC)

Social Media Guidelines During Municipal Election Period

- During the municipal election period, City of West Kelowna communications will avoid promotion of any candidate, including incumbents. This means we won't promote the activities, decisions or accomplishments of City Council.
- All messaging related to voting, election dates and procedures will be approved by the Chief Election Officer to ensure accuracy and compliance with election legislation.

Days of Significance

The City of West Kelowna recognizes that many days of significance are observed locally, provincially, and nationally throughout the year. The City will limit posts in celebration of commemoration to dates which include:

- Operational impacts (e.g., facility closures, service changes)
- City-led events, initiatives, policies or commitments (e.g., Remembrance Day services)

The City of West Kelowna uses the Government of Canada's and Province of British Columbia's protocols and flag protocols to help guide its decisions.

Our social media guidelines don't prevent us from marking days of significance in internal communications, such as Grapevine.

Online Style Guidelines

In addition to the voice guidelines in the first section, our online communications should:

- Not use all caps
- Always try to include a photo, graphic, video or link preview
- Avoid abbreviations or acronyms unless they're very common
- Use emojis to convey mood and support readability
- Use hashtags only on Instagram

Tagging

The City of West Kelowna accounts tag partner organizations when relevant. We avoid tagging individual people.



Crisis Communications

Note to Staff:

If there is a crisis and you have been contacted by media, do not respond. Immediately forward the inquiry to Ashley.Stewart@westkelownacity.ca or call 778-797-2223.

Introduction

The City of West Kelowna is committed to protecting the safety and well-being of residents, visitors, staff, volunteers, and first responders. Clear, timely, and compassionate communication is a core part of effective emergency response and public safety.

This crisis communications plan sets out how the City will manage communications during emergencies and crisis situations, including wildfires, evacuations, infrastructure disruptions, public safety incidents, and other events that may affect public safety or public confidence.

The plan outlines roles and responsibilities, escalation and notification processes, and approved channels for internal and external communications. It also provides guidance on when an issue becomes a crisis and how communications will be coordinated during Emergency Operations Centre activation.

This plan will be reviewed and updated annually, or following a major emergency, to reflect operational changes, staffing updates, and lessons learned.

Objective

The City's top priority during any emergency or crisis is the safety and well-being of the community, volunteers, and first responders.

During emergency situations, residents, stakeholders, and the media will look to the City for accurate and timely information. The City has a responsibility to act as a reliable source of information and to provide clear direction to residents as situations evolve.

Crisis communications will focus on:

- Providing timely, accurate, and actionable information
- Reducing uncertainty and misinformation, which thrive in a vacuum
- Maintaining public trust through honest and transparent communication
- Demonstrating empathy and care for those affected
- Supporting coordinated decision-making across the organization

Where possible, communications will reinforce confidence in emergency response efforts and highlight cooperation between residents, first responders, and partner agencies.



Communications

During emergency and crisis situations, it is essential that Mayor and Council, the Senior Executive Team and operational teams share a clear and consistent understanding of the situation. This supports timely decision-making and coordinated communications.

The High-Profile Incident Alert Protocol is an internal escalation and notification process used when an incident may affect public safety, service delivery, or the City's reputation. The protocol ensures early awareness and consistent information sharing across the organization.

The objectives of the protocol are to:

- Ensure key City staff and elected officials receive accurate information at the same time.
- Support coordinated decision-making and messaging.
- Enable timely notification of provincial and federal partners, where required.

Communications Approach

- Staff are empowered and expected to escalate any issue that may attract media attention, political interest, or public concern to their supervisor or manager immediately.
- Following initial review, issues are escalated as required through the High-Profile Incident Alert distribution list, erring on the side of over-reporting in the early stages.
- All media inquiries must be referred to Ashley.Stewart@westkelownacity.ca or communications@westkelownacity.ca.
- During Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) activation, communications are coordinated through the EOC structure.

Crisis Communications Philosophy

West Kelowna's crisis communications approach is guided by the following principles:

Lead with empathy:

Recognize the emotional impact emergencies have on individuals and families. Communications should convey understanding, care, and concern.

Provide information early and often:

Share as much verified information as possible, as soon as possible, to reduce uncertainty and speculation.

Focus on essential information:

Communications should be clear, concise, and easy to understand, prioritizing immediate risks, required actions, and what to expect next.

Paint a picture:

Help the audience understand the gravity of the situation using all five senses.

Be honest and transparent:

When information is incomplete, commit to providing updates as details are confirmed.

Use respectful, human language:

Where possible, ask rather than instruct, and thank residents for their patience, cooperation, and support.



EOC Integration

The Communications Team receives Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) training and serves as Information Officers (IOs) during EOC activation.

Communications staff work directly with EOC leadership to:

- Coordinate public messaging.
- Ensure consistency across all channels.
- Align communications with operational realities and safety priorities.

Media Engagement

During major events, media engagement will be prioritized as follows, subject to staff capacity:

1. Local media
2. Regional media
3. National media
4. International media

This approach ensures residents and directly affected audiences receive information first while maintaining sustainable operations during prolonged incidents.

In major emergencies that impact the broader region, such as large-scale wildfires or evacuations, the City may establish a regular media briefing or daily press conference. Where possible, these briefings should occur at a consistent time each day to provide updates, address key questions, and reduce speculation and misinformation.

Regular briefings are also an efficient and effective way to manage a high volume of media inquiries during fast-moving or prolonged incidents.

Audiences

- Residents and evacuees
- General public
- City employees
- Mayor and Council
- Emergency partners and agencies
- Provincial and federal governments
- Media

Crisis Communications Team

All urgent matters must be communicated using the **High-Profile Incident Alert** distribution list. This list includes, but is not limited to:

- Senior Executive Team
- Communications manager
- Fire chief / emergency management director
- Legal counsel
- Other department heads as required





Spokesperson

The spokesperson is the primary communicator for all external communications with media, government, and key stakeholders during a crisis or emergency.

A single spokesperson will be designated for each incident. The selection is based on the type of incident, the information needs of the public, and who is most qualified to speak with authority and expertise on the topic.

West Kelowna's experience with the 2023 wildfires illustrates this approach. That wildfire — the largest in the City's history, spread rapidly, prompted phased evacuation orders, and drew intense media and public attention. In that situation, the fire chief was the most appropriate spokesperson because of direct operational leadership, deep expertise in fire behaviour and public safety, and the need to provide clear guidance to residents and stakeholders. The Mayor was able to speak to the broader community, about the impacts of interruptions and resumption to businesses and tourism and speak to how the residents were feeling and reacting to the emergency.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the designated spokesperson may be:

- The fire chief or emergency services lead for wildfires, evacuations, or life-safety events.
- The CAO for incidents involving City operations, governance, or widespread service disruptions.
- A technical or operational lead for infrastructure failures, utilities, environmental hazards, or other specialized incidents.

All spokespeople will be supported with approved key messages, background information, and briefings as the situation evolves.

If contacted by media, City staff must not respond and must immediately direct the inquiry to the communications manager.

Crisis Classification

Level 1 Situation: Localized incident with no immediate risk to public safety

Examples include:

- Temporary facility or service disruptions.
- Localized infrastructure issues.
- Minor operational incidents.

Level 2 Situation: Immediate or potential risk to public safety

Examples include:

- Active emergencies requiring public action.
- Evacuations or alerts.
- Injuries or loss of life.
- Major service disruptions.

Level 3 Situation: Major emergency or reputational risk

Examples include:

- Large-scale disasters.
- Prolonged evacuations.
- Allegations affecting public trust.
- Incidents attracting sustained national or international attention.



Key Messaging Framework

In all crisis situations, communications should address:

1. What do we know right now?
2. What actions are underway?
3. What should residents do?
4. What can they expect next?
5. How are we acknowledging impact and concern?

Ongoing Monitoring

- Monitor traditional and social media continuously.
- Identify misinformation and emerging concerns.
- Adjust messaging and frequency as conditions evolve.
- Reassess communications strategy until the incident is resolved.

Staff Protocol

In an emergency, all media interactions on behalf of the City are coordinated through the communications manager. Media inquiries must be forwarded immediately. Employees and Council members should not contact media directly to seek coverage.

All City staff must ensure social media is not used in a way that could undermine public confidence, interfere with emergency response, or damage the City's reputation, particularly during emergency or crisis situations. To avoid becoming a primary source of information, City staff should restrict their own social media use (specific to the emergency situation) to sharing posts from official City of West Kelowna social media accounts.

Crisis Communications Checklist

The following information must be gathered, as applicable, for any incident with the potential to attract media attention, public concern, or political involvement. Information should be provided to the communications manager as soon as possible to support escalation, leadership notification, and coordinated communications.

Checklist	Assigned To / Next Steps
Gather detailed 5W information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What happened? <input type="checkbox"/> Who is impacted and how? <input type="checkbox"/> Where did it take place? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the situation ongoing, or resolved? <input type="checkbox"/> What caused the situation? <input type="checkbox"/> What action do we need residents to take? 	
What other levels of government or other municipalities or First Nations do we need to coordinate with?	
Which stakeholders and community organizations need to be notified?	
Indications that media have been notified? Who/which media outlet?	
Assign a spokesperson.	
Craft key messages and a communications strategy.	
Provide key messages and Q&A to Mayor and Council, the Senior Executive Team, and any impacted departments.	
Establish a schedule for updating the public.	
Establish how often the emergency response team will be reconvened to update information and review and update this list.	

Media Relations

Proactive Media Relations

The City of West Kelowna Communications Team is committed to proactively interacting with local media. Proactive media relations occur when the City is taking the lead in pitching and framing news stories. The City will pitch compelling stories that showcase the values and good work being done. This will allow the City to engage in agenda setting and the proactive release of information.

This includes a commitment to share the highlights of each Council meeting the following day.

Service Standards

The Communications Team commits to:

- Respond to incoming media requests within two hours during regular business hours.
- Give the reporter a clear timeline for providing a statement or booking an interview.
- Refer the journalist to the responsible agency when appropriate (e.g.: RCMP or the relevant government body, such as the Ministry of Housing).

Workflow and Service Standards for Incoming Requests

When a media request is received, the Communications Team will:

1. Promptly respond to the request, and clarify the journalist's deadline and requested format for response (e.g.: a statement for print, or an on-camera interview).
2. Assess what key messages exist or need to be created.
3. If the topic of the request is a new issue, key messages will be created in collaboration with the subject matter experts. Both the subject matter expert and the communications manager must sign off on key messages.
4. A spokesperson will be chosen.
5. The Communications Team will work with the spokesperson/spokespeople:
 - To write a statement based on the key messages. The spokesperson and communications manager must sign off, or
 - Book an interview and support the spokesperson with a prep session.
6. The Communications Team will monitor and distribute coverage.

How we Select Spokespeople

Picking the right spokesperson or spokespeople for both proactive and reactive media relations is critical. They will be the storyteller on behalf of the City of West Kelowna.

The Mayor or their designate is the primary spokesperson for the business and decisions of City Council.

For operational or administrative matters, the Mayor and CAO may decide that a City staff member should be the spokesperson. In these cases, a member of the Senior Executive Team (SET) or a staff member with subject area expertise will be chosen. Staff may not speak with media without prior sign off from the communications manager.

People who are authorized spokespeople include:

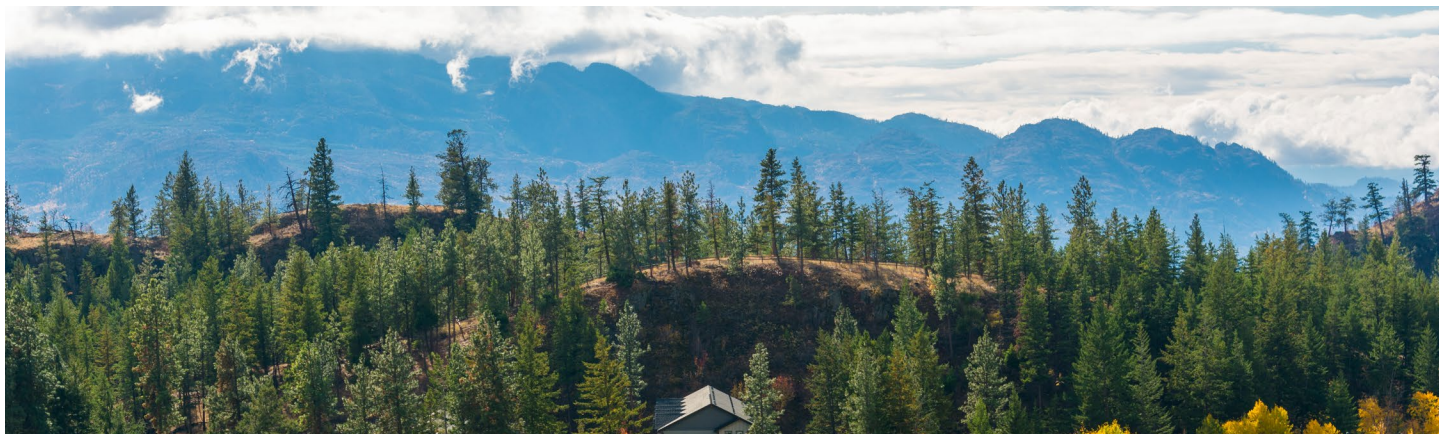
- The Mayor, or their designate.
- The CAO or a designated member of the Senior Executive Team.
- Subject-area experts as assigned by the CAO and approved by the communications manager.

The Communications Team will support preparation for all media interviews, regardless of spokesperson.

West Kelowna Fire Rescue provides direct communication to local media for any incidents related to their operations. The Communications Team maintains the media distribution list, and is available to provide support, including media training, at the request of the incident commander or chief. As well, the RCMP provides direct communication to local media for any incidents related to their operations.

Who Gives Media Interviews

- The Mayor is the primary spokesperson.
- The Mayor may designate a City Councillor.
- Only for operational and administrative matters, the CAO may determine that it's in the City's best interest for the CAO or their designate to do a media interview. That can be a member of the SET, or a subject-area expert.
- City staff must have prior sign-off from the communications manager to participate in a media interview.



Goals and Evaluations

Purpose

Evaluating progress is essential to understanding whether the City’s communications are effective, accessible, and meeting the needs of residents, Council, and staff. Regular measurement will help ensure that the Communications Team is supporting City priorities, building trust, and improving how information is consumed and shared.

This section outlines the key goals for the Communications Team and how success will be measured and reported.

Goals

The Communications Team is focused on four key priorities that guide how we share information, support leadership, and collaborate across departments:

Build public trust and understanding:

Make sure residents have access to clear, timely, and accurate information about City services, projects, and decisions—so they can stay informed and engaged.

Support council and senior leadership:

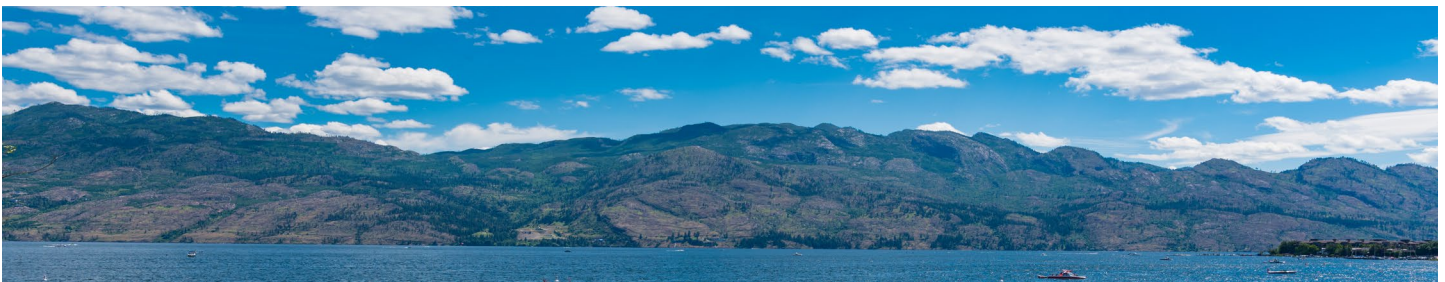
Provide communications that are coordinated and proactive, giving Council and senior staff the clarity they need to make decisions and speak confidently with the public.

Strengthen the culture of communications:

Work alongside other departments early in the process, so that messaging stays consistent, accurate, and aligned from the start.

Measure and improve performance:

Use feedback, data, and real-world insights to keep improving how we communicate—both with the public and within the organization.



Evaluation Framework

We’ll evaluate our communications using both hard data and real-world feedback—things like survey responses, media coverage, and public sentiment.

Media

By reviewing media coverage, we can see whether the City's messages are getting through clearly, whether the facts are being reported accurately, and whether we're providing timely, helpful responses to journalists. We'll focus on practical measures like tone, accuracy, and how quickly we respond—using standards that make sense for a public-sector environment.

- Monitor the number of media stories mentioning the City each month and assess tone (positive, neutral, negative).
- Review whether key messages and essential facts are reported accurately.
- Ensure accurate representation of key messages in most coverage, with follow-up provided when errors occur.
- Track misinformation trends or persistent areas of confusion affecting public understanding, and use the findings to inform proactive communication, media pitches, and briefing materials.

Media Goal for 2026

Set the narrative by making sure 65 per cent of media coverage is initiated by the City through pitches, media releases, agenda releases, etc.

Social Media

The Communications Team will look at whether the content we're sharing is connecting with residents, and if it's useful, timely and relevant to their lives.

- Track impressions, views, and reach, plus follower and subscriber growth.
- Make social media a two-way conversation space by responding to comments quickly.
- Identify recurring themes, confusion, or misinformation to strengthen future communications.
- Use high-performing video and carousel content weekly.

Social Media Goals for 2026

Facebook: Focus on reach. Earn 10 per cent more followers, hitting 7,700 by Dec. 31, 2026.

Instagram: Engage our existing audience with a 2x4 rule. Earn at least 200 engagements on at least four posts each month.

LinkedIn: Focus on audience. Increase followers by 10 per cent to hit 4,800 by Dec. 31, 2026.

Website and Digital Communications

The City will continue to position its website as the central source of trusted information, while exploring enhancements such as a resident portal and prioritizes high-demand services. Evaluation will focus on how easily residents can find accurate information quickly.

- Track total visits, unique users, and session trends.
- Identify recurring failed searches or high-search items that are difficult to find, and pages with high exit rates or signs of user confusion.
- Track website traffic generated from social media, e-newsletters, and digital campaigns.
- Maintain 100 per cent compliance on accessibility formatting.
- Evaluate how residents access City information across platforms and assess the effectiveness of any future portal or app in improving access, navigation, and service awareness.

Digital Goals for 2026

Increase overall website traffic by eight per cent reflecting steady and achievable growth.

Track and grow newsletter subscribers by 10 per cent and click-through to 5 per cent.

Grow the City's audience with a new digital advertising program, leveraging platforms like YouTube Ads, GoogleAds and Spotify advertising.

Engagement

Public feedback provides valuable insight into how residents experience City programs, services, and community priorities.

Evaluation will focus on whether engagement opportunities are accessible, inclusive, and meaningful.

- Track attendance and participation in all engagement events and monitor demographic reach where available (e.g., neighbourhoods, age ranges).
- Ensure that engagement opportunities are accessible, available in multiple formats, and clearly communicated.

Engagement Goal for 2026

Ensure all major engagement projects include both online and in-person participation options, wherever possible.

Support for City Council and Senior Leadership

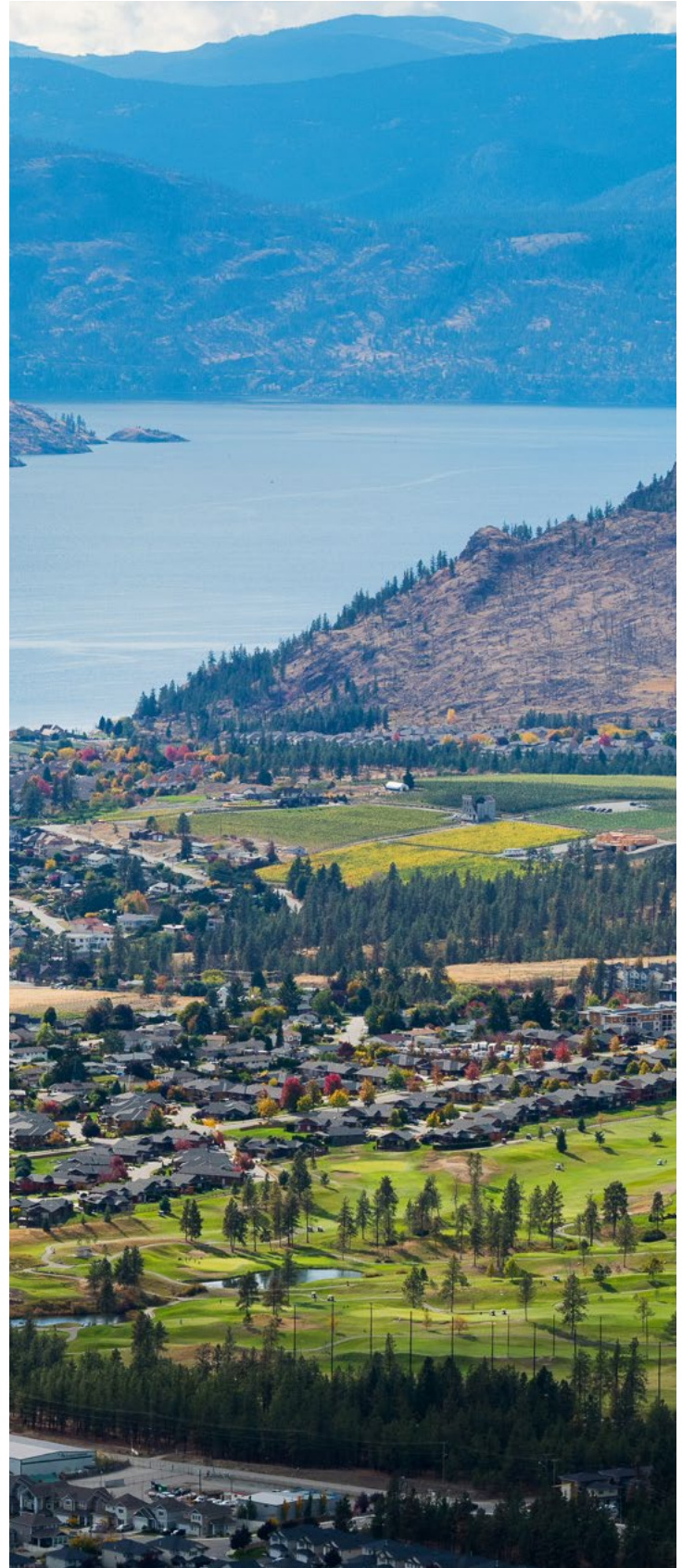
- Conduct quarterly check-ins to gather feedback on timing and usefulness of communications materials.
- Add a communications consideration section to Reports to Council to identify how residents will be informed on decisions that are made.
- Conduct post-project reviews with departments to identify lessons learned and how to improve processes.

Supporting Mayor, Council & Leadership Goals for 2026

Highlighting Council voices: The Communications Team will explore opportunities to expand the use of the Mayor or designate as spokesperson for the City including recurring and regular media interviews with local media, and op-ed submissions to highlight City advocacy.

The Communications Team will create a standard procedure for consistently posting Council meetings on YouTube.

The Communications Team will conduct a survey of City Council, Senior Executive Team and all managers at least twice during the year to solicit feedback on the usefulness of key messages, the timeliness of responses, and the consistency of department leaders in reaching out to the Communications Team.



Defining Success

Effective communication helps residents stay informed, Council make timely decisions, and City staff work together more efficiently.

Several signs indicate that the Communications Team is meeting its goals:

Residents are well-informed.

People can easily find information about City projects, services, and decisions— whether online, in person, or through media and social channels.

A culture of communications is growing.

Departments bringing Communications in at the beginning of new projects, helping ensure the right messages reach the right audiences at the right time. City Council receives regular updates on communications considerations. The Senior Executive Team keeps Communications in the loop, and keeps them in the loop, on major issues. Key messages are pinned up in workspaces and used regularly.

Messages stay consistent.

Whether coming from different departments or across platforms, the City's communications feel coordinated and aligned.

The public conversation stays constructive.

Local media and online discussions generally reflect a balanced view, and when confusion or misinformation arises, it's addressed promptly and factually.

Council and staff feel supported and empowered.

Mayor and Council receive updates that help them speak confidently about City priorities, and internal teams have access to the tools and guidance they need to communicate effectively.



Appendix A: Templates

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

[HEADLINE / NAME OF ANNOUNCEMENT]

(future-looking, action-oriented and specific)

WEST KELOWNA – [Event description, including as many five Ws as possible, often formatted as: On XdateX, XpersonX is doing XactionX because XreasonX].

DATE:

ANNOUNCEMENT:

LOCATION:

FORMAT: [Taking questions (media availability), photo and video only (photo opportunity), etc.]
Any notes for media here: eg: Parking instructions, if there's a digital option, requirement for media to register, etc.

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT

[phone and email for the Communications Team]

Media Advisories

- Alerts the press to an event that they are invited to attend and report on. Unless otherwise stated, photos and videos are permitted
- Advisories are not public-facing. They're for reporters only.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

[HEADLINE / NAME OF ANNOUNCEMENT]

(Short, specific and highlights the best part of the announcement.)

WEST KELOWNA – Lede paragraph is who, what, where, why and when stated in less than 25 words.

“A quote from a spokesperson follows the lede,” said spokesperson. “Try to keep quotes short.”

Information and detail follow the first quote.

“Additional quotes are welcome.”

Conclude with action, detailing the City’s next steps, and any action we’re asking residents to take.

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT

[phone and email for the Communications Team]

QUOTES

“This is where unlimited additional quotes from stakeholders or others can be placed.” [- Name, title, organization]

BACKGROUND

- Detailed facts that figures that would detract from the readability of the body of the release or PSA can go here. Prefer bulleted style over paragraph style for this section. Embed links to sources.

News Release

- News Releases are used to share new news, if the City has ownership over the announcement.
- Quotes can be in the body of the release, and in a quotes section at the bottom.

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

[HEADLINE]

(Short, specific and highlights the best part of the announcement.)

WEST KELOWNA – Mayor of West Kelowna Gord Milsom released the following statement in response to [issue / news]:

“The entire statement goes inside quotes.”

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT

[phone and email for the Communications Team]

Media Statement

- A statement is used when we’re responding to news, not generating it. It should clearly state which issue this statement responds to.
- The headline can help. eg: Mayor Milsom responds to provincial tariff response.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[DATE]

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: [HEADLINE]

WEST KELOWNA – Write the key details that people in the community need to know, keep it to the facts. This is written in the Voice of the City of West Kelowna.

QUOTE

“This quote is from the Mayor or a Councillor, and it’s an opportunity to lay out how the update covered in this PSA is a part of a larger Strategic Priority, and highlight council’s work on this project as a whole.”

STAY INFORMED

- [Add any additional links where updates will be posted]
- Sign up for updates at westkelownacity.ca/subscribe
- Follow the City on Facebook, Instagram and X

- 30 -

MEDIA CONTACT

[phone and email for the Communications Team]

Public Service Announcement

- A PSA is used to share basic information eg: A road closure or facility hours.
- Adding a quote from the Mayor, CAO or designated spokesperson is an opportunity to connect everyday work at the City to Council’s progress and Strategic Priorities.

Appendix B: Canadian Press Style

Numbers

- Write out numbers one to nine. Use numerals for 10 and larger.
- Spell out ordinals.
- When a number is at the start of a sentence, write it out.
- Round decimals to two places and report in numerals.
- Spell out per cent or percentage, instead of using a symbol.

Do This	Not This
We contacted 78 people over four months.	We contacted seventy-eight people.
Seventy-eight people agreed.	78 people agreed.
5.65	5.649992
Voter turnout was under 70 per cent.	Voter turnout was under 70%
Eleventh	11th

Dates

- Abbreviate months with long names only when also including a specific date.
- A comma only follows a specific date, not a month.
- Don't capitalize seasons.
- Never use ordinal suffixes.

Do This	Not This
June 7, 2026	07/06/26
Dec. 15, 2025	Dec. 15th, Jan. 1st
January 2026	January of 2026
Starting in winter 2027	Starting in Winter 2027

Times

- Notwithstanding the numbers rule, times are always written in numerals.
- Always write a.m. and p.m. in lowercase letters with periods.
- Avoid dashes to substitute for 'to' or 'between.'

Do This	Not This
10 a.m.	10:00 a.m.
10:30 a.m.	10 AM
11 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.	11-3:30p.m.

Capitals

- Capitalize proper nouns.
- Capitalize current titles, not former titles or titles without the proper noun attached.
- Capitalize Indigenous when referring to Indigenous Peoples, capitalize Black when referring to race.

Do This

- Prime Minister Mark Carney
- Former prime minister Justin Trudeau
- Canada's prime minister
- The University of Toronto
- All Canadian universities
- The Government of Canada
- She's a provincial government official

CP Spelling

Do This	Not This
Health care, health-care system	Healthcare
Child care, child-care fees	Childcare



CITY OF
WEST
KELOWNA