



Regional Board Policy

Media Relations Policy

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Office of Primary Responsibility: Communications		
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PURPOSE:

This policy guides the interactions of CRD staff, elected officials and designated CRD first responders with the news media to foster professional, transparent and mutually respectful working relationships that serve the information needs of the public.

POLICY:

Cariboo Regional District research has shown that traditional media remains a significant source of information for residents about the CRD's services and programs. While the Communications Department works towards having the CRD's communications channels become residents' first and preferred source of information, continuing to build productive and respectful relationships with the media is a valued part of delivering information to CRD residents and stakeholders.

The CRD has strong relationships with local media in the region and aims to continue building on those working relationships. It is the goal of the CRD to provide timely information to the media and be responsive and accommodating to their requests and deadlines. The CRD aims to always provide comment – "no comment" is not an acceptable response to a media inquiry.

The CRD's communication policies are based on the principle that communicating on behalf of the CRD is a shared responsibility throughout the organization. While media relations is the direct responsibility of the Communications Department, media can and may contact staff, Directors or first responders directly. This approach is supported; but, should be guided by this policy.

The following are the responsibility of communications staff:

- Integrate media relations into corporate and departmental communication strategies, plans, programs and projects;
- Coordinate interactions between spokesperson/subject matter experts and news media;
- Work with departments to identify appropriate subject matter experts;
- Coordinate or facilitate training of subject matter experts and spokespersons for engagement with the media;
- Provide coaching, support and advice to those designated to speak to the media.

When approached by the media, best practice for staff, Directors and designated CRD first responders is to:

1. Gather information from the reporter, find out their deadline, and commit to respond within that timeframe.
2. Contact the Communications Department to advise about the interview and receive assistance preparing, if necessary. The Communications Department will work with staff and Directors to ensure the best spokesperson or subject matter expert responds to the inquiry.
3. After preparing a response and coordinating with the Communications Department, staff, Directors and designated first responders are then authorized to complete the media interview.

For first responders, it is recognized that situations can vary. Best practice remains to stop and prepare and contact the Communications Department before responding to the media; however, it is acknowledged that this is not always possible. In all cases, though, extra care needs to be given before responding to maintain the safety of first responders first and foremost, ensure the safety of media on site, respect the confidentiality of those impacted and to avoid speaking on behalf of other agencies (i.e. RCMP or coroner).

In general, the following people serve as spokespersons for the CRD:

- The CRD Chair is the primary spokesperson for Board decisions, policies and activities, followed by the Vice-Chair or designate.
- Electoral Area Directors serve as the spokespersons for topics, issues and events relevant to their electoral area; however, at times, a subject matter expert may serve as the spokesperson instead.
- The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), or designate, or the Manager of Communications serve as spokespersons for personnel and administrative inquiries or when other spokespersons are not available.
- CRD managers or designates serve as the spokespersons for technical information relating to their department, or the Manager of Communications if needed.
- During an emergency or crisis, the lead Public Information Officer (PIO) or Chief Administrative Officer or designate will serve as the primary spokespersons for the CRD, unless otherwise determined by the PIO/EOC Director or CAO.
- When responding to an incident, CRD first responders should follow Incident Command System protocols where the Incident Commander is the Information Officer, unless an Information Officer is available.

POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy that:

- The CRD will strive to provide accurate information to media outlets and will correct misinformation when necessary.
- The CRD will seek balanced news media coverage. The CRD will value accuracy, impartiality and fairness in reporting over one-sided favourable or promotional coverage of its decisions, action, plans, programs, and activities.
- The CRD's official first release will be its website and other digital channels.
- The CRD will treat all news media outlets equally in the dissemination of information. As a general policy, the CRD will make information equitably available by posting news releases on its own channels at the same time as it releases them to the news media.
- The CRD will pursue professional and respectful relationships with all news media outlets and their representatives.
- The CRD will respond to media inquiries in a timely way and will provide a quality spokesperson who will represent the CRD well. Subject matter expertise notwithstanding, the "best spokesperson for success" will be authorized to speak for the CRD.

***** END OF POLICY *****

<u>Amended (Y/N)</u>	<u>Date Reissued</u>	<u>Authority (Resolution #)</u>