

CITY OF GRAND FORKS			
POLICY TITLE:	Communications	POLICY NO:	109
	Information to the Media		
EFFECTIVE DATE:	February 16, 2009	SUPERSEDES:	
APPROVAL:	Council	PAGE:	1 of 2

POLICY:

Employees may communicate with the media about specific operational, safety and prevention issues at their discretion and if that discretion is to be exercised, employees must obtain prior permission from their Supervisor, another designated Senior Manager or the City Manager.

Employees are prohibited from giving opinions to any media representative regarding City operations, City Council, a member of City Council, an employee, City Management and any appointed member of any of the City's Committees, Commissions and Boards.

Employees may give information on facts provided such facts are not prohibited from release by the Information and Privacy Act as determined by the Corporate Administrator/City Clerk, CFO or City Manager.

PURPOSE:

The Media plays an important role in providing communication to the public about City operations and every effort should be made to provide accurate information.

DEFINITIONS:

City Manager or his /her designate means the City Manager (CAO), Corporate Administrator/ City Clerk, or Acting City Manager as designated from time to time by the City Manager.

Opinions refer to matters which have no basis in fact.

Factual Information relates to such issues as financial plans and amounts for a service, permit fees, taxation, water and sewer rates, and any issues covered in any City Bylaws or policies.

PROCEDURE:

When a member of the media calls, the following procedures must be followed:

- _ the Employee shall take the questions and requests from the media;
- _ the Employee then researches and verifies information based on the questions asked;
- _ the Employee then contacts his/her immediate supervisor or the City Manager or his designate and provides and reviews the questions and researched information with them.
- _ The supervisor or the employee will contact the City Manager or his designate and both will determine whether the release will be done by the City Manager, a member of Council or the individual who was first contacted.

- _ If the employee is in doubt he/she shall seek clarification from the immediate Supervisor or City Manager.
- Calls to the media must be returned in a timely fashion.
- _ If the information or requests falls under the Information and Privacy Act, the information or requests will be handled under the provisions of the Act and the media will be notified by the Information and Privacy Officer (Corporate Administrator/City Clerk).
- _ The opinions of an employee must not be tied to the information requested and to the facts provided.
- _ If the request relates to a fact, a City Bylaw, a City Policy or a financial plan item, such information may be provided directly to the media provided such information has already been made public by the City elsewhere and in these circumstances, there will be no need to contact the Supervisor or the City Manager. If in doubt, an employee must check with their supervisor or department head.
- _ Employees should always keep in mind, there is no law requiring them to speak to the media and the media may be attempting to obtain information that should not be released. Employees should be "street smart" and ensure they are not releasing information without giving the proper thought and process. Employees shall always limit their remarks to questions of fact and make no "off the record comments".