



STATEMENT: Civil discourse and public engagement with Council

The City of Nanaimo administration wholeheartedly supports the proposition that freedom of speech is the cornerstone of our democracy and public institutions and public officials should be open to close scrutiny and lawful comment and criticism.

“Although the courts have made it clear public officials are entitled to protection from malicious defamatory attacks, the City of Nanaimo administration is not recommending that Council authorize or fund legal action over any defamatory statements to date concerning unelected or elected officials,” states Tracy Samra, Chief Administrative Officer, “Generally, libel lawsuits are not an effective use of public resources or taxpayer monies.”

The City intends to remain vigilant, however, alerting Nanaimo residents to misleading or inaccurate information about the operations of the administration or Council when appropriate. We are particularly concerned about deliberate falsehoods, distortion, or half-truths, which do not advance or promote an honest and transparent public discussion.

Citizens can engage directly with Mayor and Council by attending Council meetings, committee meetings, public hearings and community engagement sessions. Other ways to get in touch are to send a letter, write an email Mayor and Council at mayor&council@nanaimo.ca, ask for an in-person appointment at City Hall or call 250-755-4400.

The City of Nanaimo administration employs 700+ staff whose primary goal is to serve their community effectively and enjoy interacting with people at various civic facilities. “We deliver programs and services and keep the internal operations running smoothly. Our job is to carry out the will of Council,” notes Ms. Samra, “If the public does not agree with Council decisions they need to let them know.” If something is broken or you are not satisfied with the level of service you are getting from staff, you can contact the various City departments listed on our website.

The vast majority of people who communicate with City staff are civil and conscientious. However, recently City staff have experienced a surprising increase in uncivil telephone calls, belligerent emails and abusive posts on the City’s social media platforms. The City of Nanaimo, as would any responsible employer, chose to study the risks posed by increasing incivility for the safety and wellbeing of City staff in the workplace. In part, as a response to this phenomenon, the City reported some of the most virulent messages to the RCMP; in some cases, some users have been blocked from City Hall.

The City encourages residents to visit our website at www.nanaimo.ca, twitter and YouTube channel for important updates and information regarding City operations.

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