

# Foundational Principles Of Responsible Conduct

FOR BC'S LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

## Key Foundational Principles

- ◇ INTEGRITY
- ◇ ACCOUNTABILITY
- ◇ RESPECT
- ◇ LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION

PRODUCED BY THE WORKING GROUP ON RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT

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## What are foundational principles?

This document outlines four key foundational principles -- *integrity, accountability, respect, and leadership & collaboration* -- to guide the conduct of local government elected officials in B.C.

The foundational principles provide a basis for how local government elected officials fulfill their roles and responsibilities, including in their relationships with each other, with local government staff and with the public.

These principles are intended to guide both the conduct of individual elected officials and the collective behaviour of the local government council or board. The principles are also meant to guide local governments in fulfilling their corporate functions and responsibilities to their communities.

Responsible conduct at all of these levels is key to furthering a local government's ability to provide good governance to its community.

*"The foundational principles provide a basis for how local government elected officials fulfill their roles and responsibilities, including in their relationships with each other, with local government staff and with the public."*

## How do the principles "fit" with legal obligations?

It is the duty of elected officials to understand and abide by all legal requirements that apply to elected officials and local governments<sup>1</sup>, and nothing in this document should be interpreted as taking precedence over such legal obligations.

Local government elected officials should interpret the principles described below in accordance with the responsibilities and obligations set out in B.C.'s local government legislation, other applicable legislation, the common law and the policies and bylaws of the local government.



<sup>1</sup> Many legal obligations apply to elected officials and local governments, including but not limited to rules about: ethical standards such as conflict of interest; open meetings; protecting confidential information; workplace safety such as harassment; and expenditure of local government funds.

**Integrity:** being honest and demonstrating strong ethical principles.

- Be truthful, honest and open in all dealings.
- Behave in a manner that promotes public confidence in local government, including actively avoiding any perceptions of conflicts of interest, improper use of office, or unethical conduct.
- Uphold the public interest, serving citizens diligently to make decisions in the best interests of the community.
- Ensure alignment between stated values and actions, including following through on commitments, engaging in positive communication with the community, and correcting errors in a timely, transparent manner.

**Accountability:** an obligation and willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions.

- Be transparent in how an elected official individually, and a council/board collectively, conducts business and carries out their duties.
- Ensure information is accessible, and citizens can view the process and rationale behind each decision and action, while protecting confidentiality where appropriate or necessary.
- Accept and uphold that the council/board is collectively accountable for local government decisions, and that individual elected officials are responsible and accountable for the decisions they make in fulfilling their roles as council/board members.
- Listen to and consider the opinions and needs of the community in all decision making, and allow for discourse and feedback.

**Respect:** having due regard for others' perspectives, wishes, and rights; displaying deference<sup>2</sup> to the offices<sup>3</sup> of local government, and the role of local government in community decision making.

- Treat every person, including other members of council/board, staff and the public, with dignity, understanding and respect.
- Show consideration at all times for colleagues and staff, including by honouring people's values, beliefs, ideas, roles, contributions and needs.
- Create an environment of trust, including displaying awareness and sensitivity around comments and language that may be perceived as offensive or derogatory.
- Value the role of diverse perspectives and debate in decision making.
- Act in a way that is respectful of the roles and responsibilities of the offices of Mayor/Chair and Councillor/Director.
- Value the distinct roles and responsibilities of local government staff and the community in local government considerations and operations, and commit to foster a positive working relationship between staff, the public and elected officials.
- Call for and expect respect from the community towards elected officials and staff, and their roles and responsibilities within the local government system.

<sup>2</sup> Displaying deference is acting in a way that is respectful of both the tradition and legacy enshrined in the various local government positions, as well as their intended functions.

<sup>3</sup> 'Offices' of local government refers to the roles/responsibilities of the various roles and positions within the local government system, such as Mayor, Chair, Councillor or Director.

**Leadership and Collaboration:** an ability to lead, listen to, and positively influence others; coming together to create or meet a common goal through collective efforts.

- Demonstrate behaviour that builds and inspires public trust and confidence in local government.
- Calmly face challenges and provide considered direction on the issues of the day, while empowering colleagues and staff to do the same.
- Create space for open expression by others, take responsibility for one's own actions and reactions, and accept the decisions of the majority.
- Accept that it is the equal responsibility of the individual elected official, the council/board as a collective, the community and stakeholders to work together to achieve common goals.
- Be an active participant in ensuring the foundational principles are followed in all local government dealings (e.g., including among elected officials, between council/board members and staff, with community members, with other orders of government, in the decisions of a council/board, and in services and other activities of the local government).



*The Working Group on Responsible Conduct is a joint initiative between the UBCM, LGMA and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing. The Group was formed to undertake collaborative research and policy work around issues of responsible conduct of local government elected officials.*