



Municipal Democratic Integrity and Procedural Reform Brief 2026

**Proposed Amendments to Kelowna, West Kelowna,
Peachland, District of Lake Country, Penticton, Vernon,
Summerland, and the Regional District of Central Okanagan
Procedural Bylaws and the *Local Government Act* and
*Community Charter***

Restoring the Public's Right to Be Heard

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July 2026

Disclaimer

This brief is provided for educational and public advocacy purposes. While care has been taken to summarize relevant bylaws, legislation, and public participation issues, readers should review the original bylaws, statutes, and official records before relying on or applying this information. The purpose of this brief is to encourage discussion and reform of democratic processes, public participation rights, and Local Government Accountability

Executive Summary

This brief outlines critical barriers to public participation in Municipal and Regional District decision-making within Kelowna, West Kelowna, Peachland, District of Lake Country, Penticton, Vernon, Summerland and the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

These barriers arise from the combined impact of Provincial housing legislation, including the *Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023 (Bill 44)*, the *Housing Statutes (Transit-Oriented Areas) Amendment Act, 2023, (Bill 47)* recent Official Community Plan amendments, and restrictive Municipal and Regional District procedure bylaws.

Bill 44 has significantly reduced public participation in land-use decisions by prohibiting public hearings for many zoning bylaws that are consistent with an *Official Community Plan (OCP)* and permit residential development. *Bill 47* further restricts local planning discretion by requiring transit-oriented areas and minimum Provincially established density levels in those areas.

At the same time, local procedure bylaws often prevent residents from speaking directly to elected officials at regular meetings. In some communities, residents may speak only as pre-approved delegations. In others, public input is limited to short question periods, agenda-only questions, or public comment that requires special permission from Council or the Board.

The combined effect is a structural exclusion of residents from decisions affecting neighbourhoods, infrastructure, housing affordability, property interests, local services, environmental conditions, quality of life, and the democratic accountability of local government.

A key issue is the Oath of Office. Kelowna has adopted a custom Oath of Office that expressly connects elected officials' duties to the greater good of the community, integrity, and accountability. Other Municipalities and Regional Governments should consider adopting similar oath and procedure bylaw language so that elected officials' duties are clearly tied to the residents and communities they represent, not merely to the formal holding of office.

i. Executive Summary in the Provincial Context

The issues identified in this brief extend well beyond the Central Okanagan. They reflect a Province-wide shift in local governance resulting from *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*.

Together, these laws require Municipalities across British Columbia to amend each *Official Community Plans* and zoning bylaws to accommodate Provincially mandated housing and densification policies. *Bill 44* also removes public hearings for many residential rezoning applications that are consistent with an *Official Community Plan*, significantly reducing opportunities for residents to participate in decisions affecting their neighbourhoods.

These legislative changes are transforming communities throughout British Columbia. Higher-density development is being introduced into established neighbourhoods, creating significant implications for infrastructure, transportation, public services, environmental conditions, neighbourhood character, increased crime rates and property interests. While larger municipalities may have greater capacity to implement these changes, many smaller communities face significant financial and administrative challenges.

At the same time, a growing number of Municipalities (14 in total) across British Columbia have expressed concerns about the loss of local planning authority, reduced public participation, infrastructure pressures, and the cumulative impacts of Provincially mandated densification. Some have formally called for legislative changes, while others are pursuing legal or policy responses.

This brief argues that as Provincial legislation reduces opportunities for public participation, local governments should strengthen, rather than restrict, residents' ability to speak directly to elected officials. Although this report examines six local governments in the Central Okanagan, the issues and recommendations have broader relevance to Municipalities throughout British Columbia seeking to restore democratic accountability, meaningful public participation, and local decision-making.

This brief recommends that elected councils and the Regional District consider the following six actions:

1. Join other communities in British Columbia requesting the repeal or substantial amendment of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*, including their densification and transit-oriented development provisions, which have reduced public participation rights and undermined local democratic accountability.
2. Amend all applicable Municipal Council procedure bylaws and Regional District procedure bylaws to establish designated public speaking periods at regular meetings (five minutes on agenda items, no restrictions) and create regular monthly public forums for residents' input, (two hour minimum for all communities except three hours for Kelowna) questions, and feedback.
3. Advocate and lobby for meaningful changes to the *Local Government Act* and the *Community Charter*, including restoring requirements for public hearings on rezonings, variances, mandating robust consultation standards for *Official Community Plan* updates, and strengthening public participation provisions in all Municipal and Regional District meetings.
4. You are encouraged to adopt a customary Community Oath of Office for elected officials. The current oath you swore to take office is not sworn to the community. The KCSA has provided a Sample Community Oath of Office template attached for your consideration.
5. Commission an independent cumulative economic, social, infrastructure, environmental, and community impact analysis of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47* densification policies within all listed communities.
6. Adopt, promote, and submit resolutions to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) requesting the repeal of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*, restoration of meaningful public participation rights, and reform of Municipal and Regional District decision-making processes.

Genuine viable public input, with no performative or predetermined process, is essential for democratic integrity, transparency, public confidence, and accountable local government.

1. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this brief is to identify regional and local barriers to public participation and to propose practical procedural reforms, for Municipalities in British Columbia. The brief is intended to support Municipal councils and the RDCO Board in making changes that support increased public participation, local advocacy, and emergency UBCM resolutions; and to further support improved Provincial legislative changes to reflect public participation at the local level.

The brief focuses on Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, Penticton, Vernon, Summerland and the Regional District of Central Okanagan. These jurisdictions are addressed because their procedure bylaws, meeting practices, or regional decision-making roles affect whether residents can speak directly to elected officials before decisions are made.

2. Core Democratic Concern

Local government has traditionally been the level of government closest to residents. It is where citizens expect to speak directly to elected officials about zoning, land use, taxation, infrastructure, parks, roads, water, environmental protection, public health, public safety, and the overall character of their communities.

That democratic relationship is being weakened by two overlapping trends.

- Provincial housing legislation has removed or restricted important public hearing rights in many land-use decisions.
- Local procedure bylaws often do not provide a general right for residents to speak at regular council or board meetings.

As a result, residents may be affected by decisions but unable to speak directly to the elected bodies making those decisions. They may attend, observe, and watch, but often cannot address elected officials unless they are pre-approved, invited, or limited to narrow agenda-related questions.

3. Legal and Governance Framework

3.1 Procedure bylaws and open meetings

The *Community Charter* requires Municipal councils to establish, by bylaw, the general procedures to be followed by council and council committees in conducting their business. Regional District boards are also required to establish procedures for the conduct of meetings and business.

The *Community Charter* also establishes the general rule that council meetings must be open to the public except where a statutory closed-meeting provision applies. However, an open meeting is not the same as meaningful public participation. A meeting can be open to spectators while still excluding public input.

Reasonable meeting management is legitimate. Time limits, relevance standards, decorum rules,

and orderly agenda procedures are appropriate. The concern addressed in this brief is that current bylaws go beyond reasonable management and create barriers that prevent residents from being heard at all.

3.2 Natural justice, procedural fairness and meaningful representation

Where a public decision may affect a person's rights, freedoms, property interests, services, taxes, neighbourhood, or quality of life, principles of natural justice and procedural fairness and democratic accountability support a meaningful opportunity to make representations to the decision-makers.

This brief does not suggest that every person must be allowed unlimited time or that meetings cannot be managed. The point is that meaningful representation requires more than the ability to watch a meeting. Residents should have a practical and fair opportunity to be heard before decisions are made on matters that affect them.

3.3 Kelowna's custom Oath of Office as a community-facing model

The City of Kelowna has taken a positive step by adopting a custom Oath of Office in Council Procedure Bylaw No. 10705. The Oath states:

"I will truly, faithfully and impartially execute the office to the best of my ability and will not allow any private interest to influence my conduct in public matters. I will treat all people equally and ensure that all decisions are made for the greater good of the community, with integrity and accountability."

The Oath requires that decisions be made *"for the greater good of the community, with integrity and accountability."* While this is an important principle, it should be strengthened by adopting a Community Oath of Office that clearly recognizes elected officials as representatives of the people and holds them accountable to the communities they serve. The KCSA encourages all Municipal and Regional Governments to adopt their own Community Oath of Office and to use the below noted and attached Model Community Oath of Office as a template.

Community Oath of Office

I, [Full Name], having been elected to serve as [Position, e.g., Mayor/Councillor] of [Municipality], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that:

1. I will serve the public interest of this Municipality of {name of Municipality} first. I will prioritize the long-term well-being, safety, and prosperity of all residents in my decisions, resisting pressure from special interests, lobby persons and groups, developers, and personal gain.
2. I will act with integrity and honesty at all times. I will disclose all actual or potential conflicts of interest promptly and fully, and recuse myself from any matter where I cannot act or reasonably be

seen to act impartially. I will not accept gifts, favours, or benefits that could influence or reasonably been seen to influence my duties and decisions as Mayor/Councillor.

3. I will uphold transparency and accountability in the execution of my duties at all times. I will support and promote publicly open meetings, timely public access to information, and clear reporting on decisions, budgets, and performance. I will answer reasonable questions from residents honestly and without delay.
4. I will respect democratic participation. I will ensure fair public hearings, protect residents' rights to speak at Council meetings, and consider community and Municipal input and interests in good faith before voting on bylaws, rezonings, or major projects and all Municipal decisions. I will not unreasonably limit debate or silence dissenting voices.
5. I will steward community and Municipal resources responsibly. I will make prudent financial decisions, protect the environment and natural assets, and seek cost-effective, evidence-based solutions that respect residents and future generations.
6. I acknowledge that I hold this position of Mayor/Councillor as an office of public trust. I am a representative of the people of this community and Municipality, a steward of the public interest, and accountable to the community and Municipality I have been elected to serve.
7. I will uphold the rule of law and the Constitution of Canada at all times in the execution of my duties of the office of Mayor/Councillor, and the spirit of public service. I will faithfully execute the duties of my office according to the *Community Charter*, local bylaws, and the highest ethical standards, always remembering that I hold this position in trust for the community and Municipality, not for myself.

I make this commitment freely, faithfully, and without reservation.

So help me God. (or: I affirm the above.)

4. *Bill 44, Bill 47, and the Loss of Site-Specific Participation*

Bill 44 has changed the public hearing framework by prohibiting public hearings for many *OCP*-consistent residential zoning bylaws. This shifts public input to the *OCP* stage.

The difficulty is that *OCP* consultations are often broad, generalized, and disconnected from the concrete impacts of specific projects. Residents may not know which parcels will later be rezoned, what building massing will result, what infrastructure impacts will arise, or how a specific development may affect traffic, parking, views, trees, drainage, neighbourhood character, property interests, public services, and quality of life.

Bill 47 adds a second layer by requiring local governments to designate transit-oriented development areas and allow minimum Provincially established density levels in those areas.

Together, these changes reduce local discretion and reduce site-specific public participation. That makes municipal and regional procedure bylaws more important, not less important. When public

hearings are removed, regular council and board meetings may become one of the only remaining places where residents can speak directly to elected officials.

5. Community by Community Procedural Bylaw Assessment

5.1 City of Kelowna

Kelowna Council Procedure Bylaw No. 9200 creates significant barriers to public participation at regular Council meetings.

Section 4.2 provides that a person, other than a council member or City officer or employee, may only address Council if the person is providing a report or presentation scheduled on the agenda, or if Council has passed a resolution to hear from that person at that time.

Section 4.3 requires delegation requests to be made through the Office of the City Clerk, with written material including the request being made and any recommended Council resolutions. Section 4.4 states that requests outside City jurisdiction shall be refused. Section 4.5 allows the City Clerk to recommend alternatives, such as referral to staff or committees, rather than scheduling the delegation.

Section 4.10 allows public input at Committee of the Whole only on an item scheduled to an open Committee of the Whole agenda, limits speakers to five minutes, and states that public input is not permitted on items not on the Committee of the Whole agenda.

The concern is that Kelowna residents have no general right to address Council at regular Council meetings, even on matters of broad public importance. Public participation is filtered through agenda scheduling, delegation approval, staff referral, jurisdictional screening, and Council discretion.

5.2 City of West Kelowna

West Kelowna Council Procedure Bylaw No. 0258 also creates significant public participation barriers.

Section 15 requires agenda items to be submitted in advance and prevents Council from considering matters not listed on the agenda unless introduced as a late item.

Section 17 requires delegations seeking permission to appear before Council to submit a written request including the speaker's name and address, a description of the matter, and all materials to be discussed. Delegations are limited to five minutes and restricted to the topic outlined in the written submission. The number of delegations on any Council agenda is limited to four.

The Corporate Officer may screen delegation requests and refuse to place a delegation on the agenda if the issue is not considered to be within Council's jurisdiction. Repeat requests on the same issue may also be kept off the agenda where no new significant information is being provided.

The concern is that West Kelowna does not provide an open public comment period at regular Council meetings. Participation is limited by advance written application, five-minute speaking

limits, a four-delegation cap, staff screening, jurisdictional refusal, repeat-request exclusion, and post-public-hearing restrictions.

5.3 District of Lake Country

Lake Country Council Procedure Bylaw No. 1282, 2025 also restricts public participation.

Delegation requests must be submitted to the Corporate Officer and include the subject, the names of presenters, and any requests or recommendations to Council. Delegation requests require Mayor approval and are scheduled by the Corporate Officer. If a request is denied, the appeal goes to the CAO for final determination rather than directly to Council.

Members of the public may address Council only during a public hearing, when legislation identifies a right to be heard, as otherwise required by law, as a delegation, or by Council resolution. The public may not address Council where a public hearing has been held, waived, or prohibited under the *Local Government Act*.

The concern is that Lake Country residents do not have a general right to speak at regular Council meetings. The bylaw gives the Mayor approval authority over delegations, places appeal authority with the CAO, and restricts public comment where public hearings are held, waived, or prohibited.

5.4 District of Peachland

Peachland provides more public access than some neighbouring communities, but its bylaw still limits meaningful participation.

Peachland Council Procedure Bylaw No. 2063 provides for Question Period at the end of each Council meeting before adjournment. However, the protocol requires the speaker to ask a question, limits each speaker to three minutes, and limits the total question period to thirty minutes unless Council approves more time.

Peachland also maintains a delegation control process. A person seeking to make a broader presentation remains subject to the formal delegation process, including agenda control and potential refusal.

The concern is that Peachland's question period is better than no public comment period, but it remains limited. Speakers may ask questions, but the bylaw does not create a broader right to make statements, present concerns, or receive substantive answers.

5.5 City of Penticton

Penticton provides limited public question opportunities, but its bylaw does not provide a broad open public comment period.

Penticton Council Procedure Bylaw No. 2018-35 provides for a Public Question Period at the end of Council business. However, the format is restricted to questions about items on the current agenda. Each question is limited to two minutes, and the total Public Question Period is limited

to fifteen minutes unless extended by Council vote.

Penticton's delegation provisions require advance written notice. Delegations are limited to five minutes. A maximum of four delegations may be scheduled per Committee of the Whole meeting, and the Mayor or Corporate Officer may refuse to place a delegation on the agenda if the issue is not considered to fall within Council jurisdiction.

The concern is that Penticton's process allows some public questions, but only on agenda items, for two minutes each, within a fifteen-minute total cap. Broader community concerns require delegation approval and remain subject to screening, time limits, and caps.

5.6 Regional District of Central Okanagan

The RDCO Board Procedure Bylaw No. 1501 creates one of the strongest participation barriers in the region.

The bylaw states that Board and Committee meetings must be open to the public except where the *Act* and *Charter* apply. However, public comment on an agenda item is only available when invited by the Board or Committee with a two-thirds majority vote. Where comment is invited, each speaker receives five minutes.

This is more restrictive than the Municipal delegation systems because the public has no standing right to speak even on agenda items. Public comment depends on a two-thirds Board or Committee vote.

The RDCO also routinely holds Board meetings at 8:30 a.m., which creates an additional practical barrier for working residents, parents, caregivers, and others who cannot attend weekday morning meetings.

The concern is that RDCO residents may be affected by regional decisions but cannot speak unless the Board first votes by a two-thirds majority to invite comment on the specific agenda item.

6. Recommended Reforms

6.1 Recommendation 1: Join other communities requesting repeal or substantial amendment of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*

Each Council and the RDCO Board should formally request that the Province repeal or substantially amend *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*, particularly the provisions that remove public hearings, impose densification, restrict local planning discretion, and reduce site-specific public participation.

At minimum, public hearings should be restored for rezoning applications that materially affect neighbourhoods, infrastructure, density, height, parking, environmental conditions, property interests, public services, or community character.

6.2 Recommendation 2: Amend procedure bylaws to restore speaking rights

Each local government should amend its procedure bylaw to establish clear and practical public speaking rights.

- A designated public speaking period at every regular Council or Board meeting.
- A right for residents to speak on agenda items before Council or the Board votes.
- A monthly two-hour public forum for broader community concerns, questions, and feedback, and three hours for the City of Kelowna.
- A minimum of three public presentation spots per regular meeting, five minutes each, available for matters of community concern.
- Electronic participation options.
- Written reasons where a delegation request is denied.
- A right of appeal to elected Council or the Board, not only to staff.
- A requirement that questions or concerns raised during public comment be recorded in the minutes with enough detail to preserve the substance of the issue.

6.3 Recommendation 3: Advocate for changes to the *Local Government Act* and *Community Charter*

Local governments should advocate for legislative amendments that restore meaningful public participation. The *Local Government Act* should be amended to restore public hearings for rezonings that materially affect neighbourhoods, infrastructure, density, height, parking, property interests, environmental conditions, or public services.

The *Community Charter* should be amended to require every Municipal procedure bylaw to include a minimum public comment period at regular Council meetings, a right to speak on agenda items before decisions are made, transparent delegation criteria, written reasons for refusal of delegation requests, and an elected-body appeal mechanism.

6.4 Recommendation 4: Strengthen Oath of Office and duty-to-community provisions

Each local government should review its Oath of Office and procedure bylaw to ensure that elected officials' duties are expressly connected to the community they represent.

Kelowna's custom Oath of Office provides an important model because it speaks directly to acting for the greater good of the community, with integrity and accountability. This standard should be reflected not only in ceremonial oath language, but also in the actual procedures that govern whether residents can speak to elected officials.

An elected official cannot meaningfully act for the greater good of the community if the community is procedurally prevented from speaking. Public participation is therefore not separate from the Oath of Office. It is one of the ways the oath is honoured in practice.

6.5 Recommendation 5: Commission independent impact analysis of Bill 44 and Bill 47

Each local government should commission or support an independent economic, social, infrastructure, environmental, and community impact analysis of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*.

The analysis should examine housing affordability, infrastructure costs, taxation, property values, transportation, parking, healthcare, emergency response, schools, recreation, neighbourhood character, tree loss, stormwater, watershed impacts, air quality, environmental conditions, and whether the loss of public hearings has reduced democratic accountability and public trust

6.6 Recommendation 6: Adopt and submit UBCM resolutions

Each Council and the RDCO Board should adopt, promote, and submit resolutions to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities requesting repeal or substantial amendment of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*, restoration of public hearings for significant rezonings, restoration of local planning authority, mandatory public comment periods at regular meetings, stronger *OCP* consultation standards, and protection of the public's right to speak directly to elected representatives before decisions are made.

7. Model Procedure Bylaw Amendments

7.1 Public comment period

Each regular meeting of Council or the Board must include a public comment period of not less than thirty minutes. Each speaker may address Council or the Board for up to five minutes on a matter of municipal or regional concern, including but not limited to matters on the agenda, land use, infrastructure, public services, environmental conditions, public safety, taxation, property interests, neighbourhood impacts, and community well-being.

7.2 Agenda item speaking right

Before Council or the Board votes on an agenda item that may materially affect residents, property interests, neighbourhoods, infrastructure, services, environmental conditions, or community well-being, members of the public must be given a reasonable opportunity to address the decision-makers on that item.

7.3 Monthly public forum

Council or the Board must hold a monthly public forum of not less than two hours for resident input, questions, and feedback, and three hours for the City of Kelowna. The forum must allow residents to raise broader community concerns, including matters not listed on a regular meeting agenda.

7.4 Delegation refusals

Where a delegation request is refused, written reasons must be provided. The applicant must have a right to appeal the refusal to Council or the Board. Staff, the Corporate Officer, the City Clerk, the CAO, or the Mayor should not be the final decision-maker on whether an elected body hears from a resident on a matter of public concern.

7.5 Oath and duty-to-community language

Each Municipality and Regional District should consider adopting oath and procedure bylaw language confirming that elected officials have a duty to act in the greater good of the community, maintain integrity and accountability, protect meaningful public participation, and ensure residents can speak directly to elected representatives on matters affecting their community.

8. Proposed UBCM Resolutions

8.1 Repeal or substantial amendment of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*

WHEREAS: *Bill 44* and *Bill 47* have significantly altered local land-use planning by prohibiting public hearings for many OCP-consistent residential rezonings, imposing Provincial densification and transit-oriented development requirements, and reducing local discretion over neighbourhood planning;

AND WHEREAS: these changes have reduced meaningful public participation, weakened local democratic accountability, and limited the ability of residents to address the direct impacts of development on infrastructure, transportation, public services, environmental conditions, property interests, and neighbourhood character;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Union of British Columbia Municipalities call on the Province of British Columbia to repeal or substantially amend *Bill 44* and *Bill 47* to restore local government authority, restore meaningful public hearings for significant land-use changes, and protect the right of residents to participate in decisions affecting their communities.

8.2 Restoration of public participation in local government meetings

WHEREAS: many Municipal and Regional District procedure bylaws do not provide a general right for residents to speak at regular Council or Board meetings, including on agenda items before decisions are made;

AND WHEREAS: public attendance without a meaningful opportunity to speak does not provide adequate democratic accountability where decisions affect residents' property interests, neighbourhoods, infrastructure, services, environmental conditions, taxes, and quality of life;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Union of British Columbia Municipalities request amendments to the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* requiring *Municipal* councils and Regional District boards to provide designated public speaking periods at regular meetings, a right to speak on agenda items before decisions are made, transparent delegation rules, written reasons for refusal of delegation requests, and an elected-body appeal process.

8.3 Independent impact review of Provincial densification legislation

WHEREAS: *Bill 44* and *Bill 47* have imposed major changes to local planning, density, parking, public hearings, and neighbourhood development processes;

AND WHEREAS: the cumulative impacts of these changes on housing affordability, infrastructure costs, taxation, local services, transportation, environmental conditions, property interests, neighbourhood character, and public trust have not been adequately reviewed at the community level;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Union of British Columbia Municipalities call on the Province of British Columbia to fund independent local and regional impact assessments of *Bill 44* and *Bill 47*, including economic, social, infrastructure, environmental, and democratic accountability impacts.

8.4 Community-facing Oath of Office and public participation standard

WHEREAS: elected officials should be accountable to the communities they represent and should act for the greater good of the community, with integrity, transparency, and accountability;

AND WHEREAS: public participation is one of the practical ways elected officials honour their duty to the community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Union of British Columbia Municipalities request that the Province of British Columbia support amendments to the *Community Charter* and *Local Government Act* allowing and encouraging Municipal and Regional Districts to adopt community-facing Oath of Office provisions and procedure bylaw standards that expressly protect meaningful public participation in local government decision-making.

9. Conclusion

The issue addressed in this brief is not merely administrative. It is democratic.

Residents are being affected by decisions that alter neighbourhoods, increase density, strain infrastructure, affect public services, change environmental conditions, and influence property interests. Yet in many cases they have no direct right to speak to elected officials at the meeting where decisions are made.

Bill 44 and *Bill 47* have made this problem more urgent. When public hearings are prohibited or local discretion is reduced, councils and regional boards should expand public participation, not narrow it.

Kelowna's custom **Oath of Office provides** an important model. It recognizes that elected officials are not merely performing an office. They are acting for the greater good of the community, with integrity and accountability. That principle should guide the procedure bylaws of every municipality and regional government.

The public should not have to rely on permission, staff screening, special invitation, or a two-thirds Board vote simply to speak to elected representatives about matters affecting their community.

Meaningful public participation should be restored through local procedure bylaw amendments, Provincial legislative reform, independent impact analysis, community-facing oath provisions, and UBCM advocacy.

Public trust requires more than open doors. It requires open ears, accountable decision-making, and a genuine opportunity for residents to be heard before decisions are made.

Source Notes

This brief was prepared using the working KCSA draft material provided July 2026, including the six recommended actions, the Kelowna custom Oath of Office language, the RDCO comparison material, and the earlier Kelowna procedural bylaw analysis.

Public source materials reviewed include Provincial *Bill 44* public hearing guidance, Provincial *Bill 47* transit-oriented development area guidance, *Community Charter* sections addressing council responsibilities, oath of office, open meetings, and procedure bylaws, and the current procedure bylaws for Kelowna, West Kelowna, Lake Country, Peachland, Penticton, and the Regional District of Central Okanagan.

Appendix #1

Regional Comparison Table

Regional Comparison of Public Speaking Rights

Okanagan Municipal Councils and the Regional District of Central Okanagan

This table compares how each local government allows residents to speak directly to its elected Council or Board at regular public meetings. Although the meetings are open for public attendance, most do not provide a general right to speak about agenda items before a decision is made. Peachland and Penticton permit limited questions only. See Part 5 of the *Municipal Democratic Integrity Procedural Reform Brief*, and the applicable bylaws and delegation policies for full details.

Jurisdiction	Can residents speak to agenda items at regular public meetings?	How public input may be permitted	Principal barriers
Kelowna	No general right to speak on agenda items at regular Council meetings.	Approved delegation, scheduled presentation, Council resolution, or limited Committee of the Whole input on scheduled items.	Agenda control, written application, jurisdictional screening, staff referral, and Council discretion.
West Kelowna	No general right. Advance delegation approval is required.	Written request, five-minute presentation, and a maximum of four delegations per agenda.	Corporate Officer screening, jurisdictional refusal, repeat-request restrictions, and subject exclusions.
Lake Country	No general right. As an approved delegation, or by Council authorization.	Mayor-approved delegation, invited Committee of the Whole participation, and appeal to the CAO.	The Mayor and administration control access; Council is not the final appeal body for a refusal.
Peachland	Residents may ask questions at meeting's end, but cannot speak to agenda items before decisions.	Three minutes per speaker, 30-minute total. Broader presentations require delegation approval.	A question-only period does not allow residents to state a position, present evidence, object, or propose a solution.
Penticton	Residents may ask questions on current agenda items, but cannot speak before Council votes.	Two minutes per question, 15-minute total. Broader or non-agenda matters require an approved delegation.	Agenda-only questions exclude broader concerns and substantive presentations and may occur after decisions.
RDCO	No general right. Public comment requires a two-thirds Board or Committee vote.	Five minutes if invited. Separate delegation procedures may apply.	Residents need supermajority permission merely to address the elected Board or Committee.
Vernon	No general right. A scheduled delegation or two-thirds Council permission is required.	Five minutes, generally four delegations, prior staff referral, and Corporate Officer and Mayor approval.	Multiple approval layers and exclusions can prevent timely input on land-use matters and pending staff reports.
Summerland	Limited to two minutes per agenda item only.	Two minutes per question, 15-minute total. Must pertain to agenda items only.	CAO approval; five-minute time limit for delegations. Only address council four times/year.

Community Oath of Office

I, [Full Name], having been elected to serve as [Position, e.g., Mayor/Councillor] of [Municipality], do solemnly swear (or affirm) that:

8. I will serve the public interest of this Municipality of {name of Municipality} first. I will prioritize the long-term well-being, safety, and prosperity of all residents in my decisions, resisting pressure from special interests, lobby persons and groups, developers, and personal gain.
9. I will act with integrity and honesty at all times. I will disclose all actual or potential conflicts of interest promptly and fully, and recuse myself from any matter where I cannot act or reasonably be seen to act impartially. I will not accept gifts, favours, or benefits that could influence or reasonably be seen to influence my duties and decisions as Mayor/Councillor.
10. I will uphold transparency and accountability in the execution of my duties at all times. I will support and promote publicly open meetings, timely public access to information, and clear reporting on decisions, budgets, and performance. I will answer reasonable questions from residents honestly and without delay.
11. I will respect democratic participation. I will ensure fair public hearings, protect residents' rights to speak at Council meetings, and consider community and Municipal input and interests in good faith before voting on bylaws, rezonings, or major projects and all Municipal decisions. I will not unreasonably limit debate or silence dissenting voices.
12. I will steward community and Municipal resources responsibly. I will make prudent financial decisions, protect the environment and natural assets, and seek cost-effective, evidence-based solutions that respect residents and future generations.
13. I acknowledge that I hold this position of Mayor/Councillor as an office of public trust. I am a representative of the people of this community and Municipality, a steward of the public interest, and accountable to the community and Municipality I have been elected to serve.
14. I will uphold the rule of law and the Constitution of Canada at all times in the execution of my duties of the office of Mayor/Councillor, and the spirit of public service. I will faithfully execute the duties of my office according to the *Community Charter*, local bylaws, and the highest ethical standards, always remembering that I hold this position in trust for the community and Municipality, not for myself.

I make this commitment freely, faithfully, and without reservation.

So help me God. (or: I affirm the above.)