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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kelowna Citizens Safety Association Calls for Province Wide Restoration of Public Participation in Local Government

New democratic integrity brief urges Municipalities across British Columbia to restore residents' right to be heard and calls for reform of Bills 44 and 47

Kelowna, B.C. – July 22, 2026 – The Kelowna Citizens Safety Association KCSA has released a policy brief calling for reforms to Municipal public participation across British Columbia, citing a growing democratic deficit caused by recent provincial housing legislation and restrictive municipal procedure bylaws.

The Association has submitted its Municipal Democratic Integrity and Procedural Reform Brief 2026 to the City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, District of Peachland, City of Penticton, and the Regional District of Central Okanagan, requesting each place the recommendations on a public agenda.

While focused on eight Central Okanagan governments, KCSA says the issues affect municipalities province wide.

"Municipalities subject to Bills 44 and 47 have had to amend planning frameworks to meet provincially mandated housing and densification policies," said Lloyd Manchester, President of KCSA. "At the same time, Bill 44 removed public hearings for many residential rezonings, and many communities lack a general right for residents to speak at council meetings. Together, these changes have significantly reduced public participation."

KCSA says higher density development is reshaping neighbourhoods across British Columbia, affecting infrastructure, affordability, crime rate, transportation, public services, property values, environmental conditions, and community planning. Smaller municipalities, in particular, face financial and administrative challenges implementing these requirements.

The Association notes that several Municipalities across the province have raised concerns about Bill 44 and related legislation, including reduced local planning authority, infrastructure pressures, and diminished public participation.

A review of Central Okanagan procedure bylaws found communities face barriers to speaking with elected officials, including delegation approvals, agenda limits, staff screening, jurisdictional restrictions, strict time limits, and, in many cases, no opportunity for public comment at regular meetings.

"Residents are directly affected by decisions about their homes, neighbourhoods, taxes, and quality of life, yet often have little opportunity to address elected officials," Manchester said. "Public participation is fundamental to good government."

The brief recommends Six key reforms:

- Repeal or substantially amend Bills 44 and 47.
- Amend procedure bylaws to include public speaking periods at regular meetings (5 minutes on agenda topic with no restrictions), including a monthly two-hour open forum with the exception of Kelowna which would have a 3 hour monthly Public meeting.
- Advocate for amendments to the Local Government Act and Community Charter to strengthen participation rights.
- 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.
- Commission, ideally with other Municipalities, an independent assessment of the Densification and other impacts of Bills 44 and 47.
- Submit Emergency resolutions through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) calling for legislative reform and restored public participation.

KCSA says the brief is intended as both a Central Okanagan initiative and a model for Municipalities across British Columbia.

“We are offering practical reforms local governments can implement now, while encouraging Municipalities to work together to advocate for strong legislative change,” Manchester said. “Local government should remain the level closest to the people, and the most responsive to them.”

For more information or to request a copy of the brief please contact:

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