

Preparing for the Proposed Responsible Conduct Legislation

Responsible Conduct Update

September 2026



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of
Housing and
Municipal Affairs



Presentation Outline

- Background
- Why this is important?
- Legislative Overview (Process)
- Proposed Code
- Next Steps



Responsible Conduct in BC



Responsible Conduct in BC: Current Context

Collaborative, proactive approach

- Since 2016, provincial staff, UBCM, and LGMA have partnered to develop practical approaches to support local governments on responsible conduct.

Practical tools and resources and legislative changes in 2022

- Materials and principles developed to support responsible conduct (e.g., Model Code of Conduct, Forging the Path to Responsible Conduct, education module); requirement to consider a code of conduct

Increased uptake with local codes but no mandatory standards

- There is still no legal requirement to adopt a code of conduct, no prescribed standards for content, and no legislated sanctions for breaches.



Responsible Conduct in BC: What We Heard

Growing attention – Six UBCM resolutions since 2016

Key concerns raised (2024 discussion paper):

- ❖ Limited tools and inconsistent approaches
- ❖ Staff placed in unfair or inappropriate roles
- ❖ Lack of resources for administration and enforcement
- ❖ Risk of codes being weaponized against minority voices



Why this matters?

- Supports vulnerable and marginalized people
- Fairness, transparency and accountability
- Supports diversity of perspectives around the table



Bill 17 – Codes of Conduct Legislation

Proposed Legislation

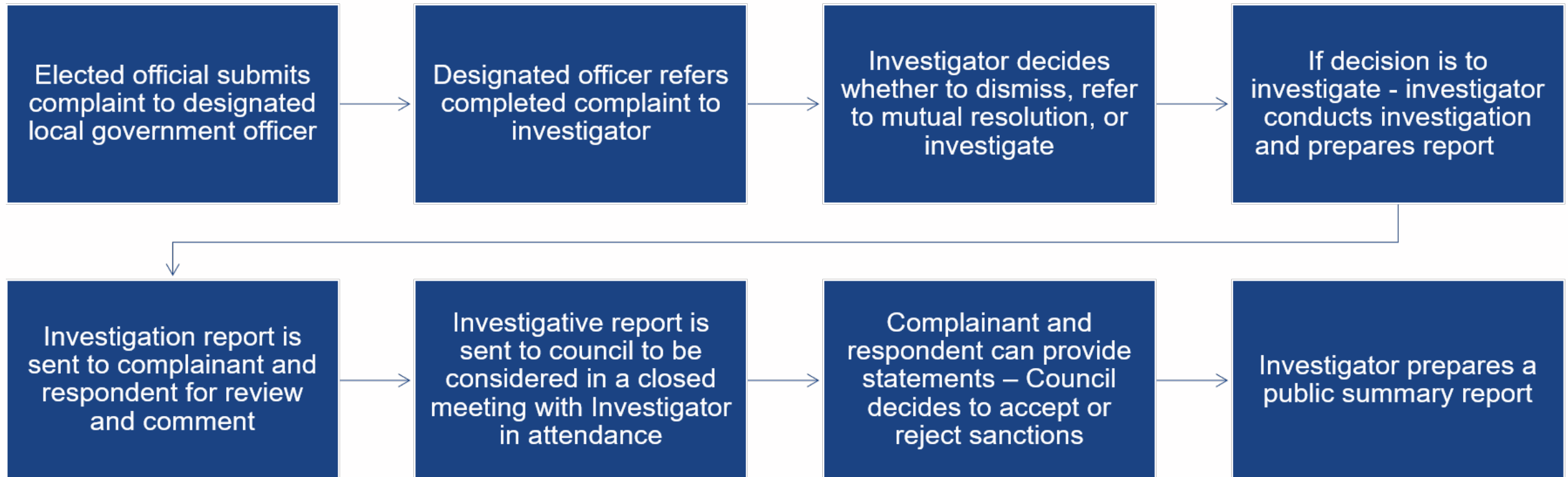
- Requires local elected officials to comply with a Code established by regulation
- Sets a standard code complaint, investigation and sanction process
- Requirement to use a third-party investigator
- Public reporting requirements

Timelines

- Legislation introduced on April 2, 2026
- Anticipate Bill 17 will continue readings in the fall session
- Regulation development is in progress
- Goal is to secure Royal Assent in the Fall 2026 session



Standard Code Complaint Process



Standard Sanctions

- At the conclusion of an investigation, an investigator may recommend one or more sanctions for a council or board to impose for a Code breach

Potential Sanctions	
Letter of Reprimand	Issuance of an apology
Completion of training	Suspension or rescission of appointment to a committee
If Mayor or Board Chair – suspension from specified duties	Reduction in remuneration for up to 90 days
Suspension of remuneration for up to 90 days	Suspension, without remuneration, from duties on council or board for up to 90 days



Anticipated Standards of Behaviour

Standards of conduct could include:

1. Respectful behaviour
2. Discrimination
3. Assault, sexual misconduct, emotional abuse and coercion
4. Disparaging statements
5. False or misleading statements
6. Confidential information
7. Use of local government property/resources
8. Directions to local government employees
9. Retaliation
10. Compliance with sanctions



Anticipated Standards of Behaviour:

Conduct to others

- Respectful and professional behaviour
- No discrimination
- No retaliation



Anticipated Standards of Behaviour:

Communication

- No disparaging comments about staff or municipality
- No knowingly (or ought to know) false statements



Anticipated Standards of Behaviour:

Use of Staff and Resources

- No directions to local government staff (through CAO, unless exception)
- No use of local government property for personal use/gain/elections



How will investigators be selected?

Anticipate the new framework to:

- Give local governments flexibility on choosing investigators, including creating shared rosters with other local governments
- Set out required qualifications, competencies, and experience for Investigators



Who will qualify to be an investigator?

Anticipate the new framework to mandate investigators to have some combination of the following:

- Lawyers or former lawyers
- Professionals with credentials in administrative or municipal law, or ADR
- Investigative experience in public sector
- Investigative experience involving elected officials
- Experience in administering disciplinary processes
- Experience in giving advice on public sector governance, dispute resolution, or ethics



Proactive Measures: Prepare & Mitigate

“How it starts is where it will go.”

Marcia Nelson
Former Deputy Minister to Premiers Notley and Kenney



Preparation: Have a Plan

- Pre-plan for who can do the work externally – align plan with municipal procurement processes
- Map processes to prepare for handling of complicated matters
- Treat this as you would any “emergency preparedness”
- Reflect, review, refine as you test the process

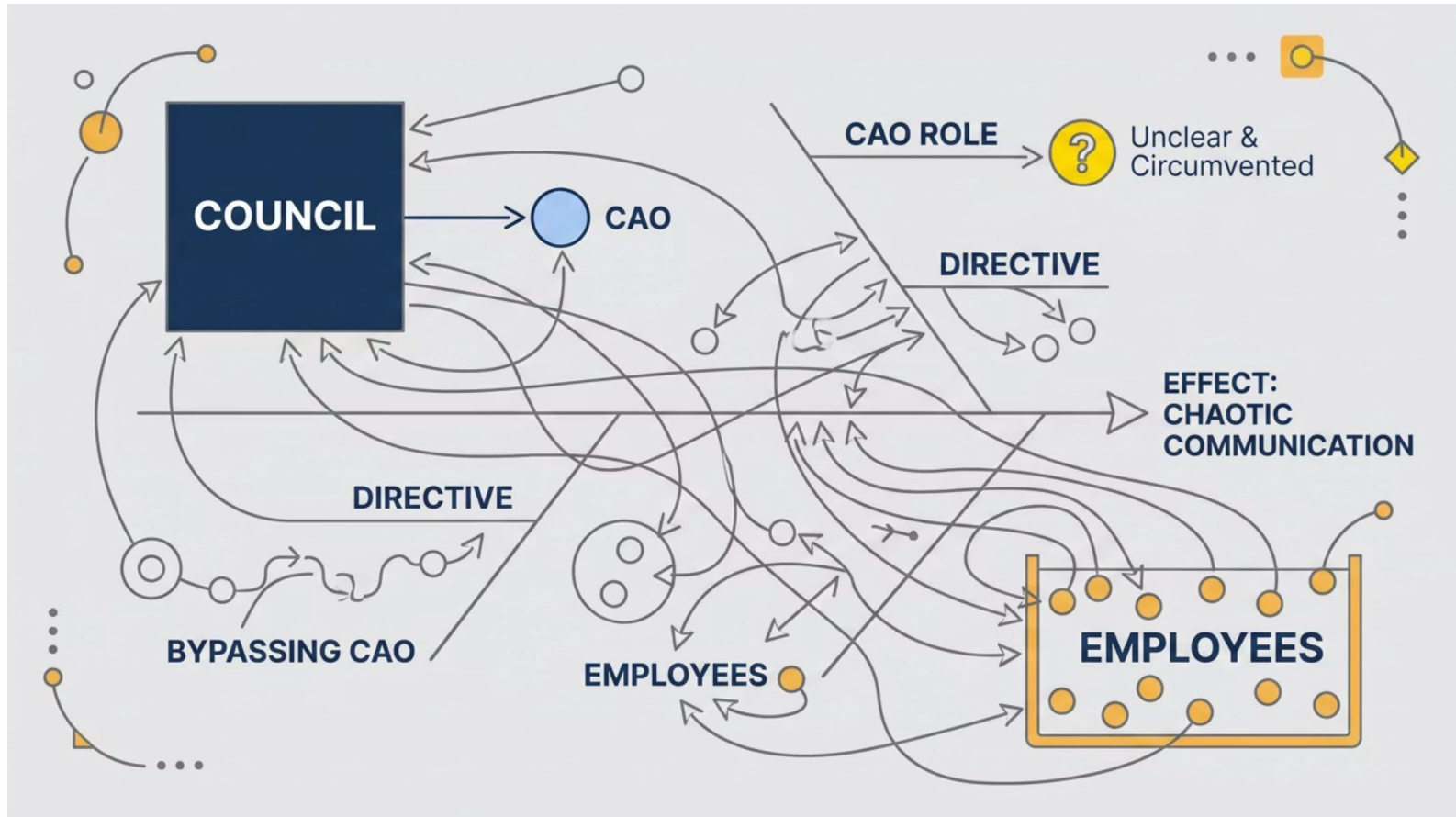


Mitigation Strategy: Communications Protocol

- What is the plan for communication flow from staff to Council?
- How is this communicated and understood by all?
- How is it enforced?
- What is your plan if there is a breach?



Communications Protocol: No Structure



Everyone talks to everyone — and no one is accountable.



Communications Protocol: Clear Channels



Clear channels benefit everyone and support accountability.



Benefits of a Good Transition



Shared Term Goals

Early alignment on priorities helps Council move together.



Role Clarity

Clear roles prevent interference and confusion.



Resilient Relationships

Respectful working relationships help navigate conflict.



Reduced Turnover

Stable leadership reduces costly turnover.



Better Governance & Service Delivery

Effective transition supports better outcomes and service delivery.



Why Now?

INTENTIONAL and COMPREHENSIVE
transition practices are more critical than ever

Fall 2026 Elections

New officials
will need
onboarding
and
relationship-
building.

Bill 17

New conduct
requirements
mean everyone
must
understand
their
obligations
from day one.

CAO Turnover

Elections often
trigger senior
leadership
changes,
adding urgency
to transition
planning.



Building a Self-Correcting Culture

Key practices we heard from 2025 UBCM participants include:

- Ongoing training in governance fundamentals (e.g., conflict resolution and respectful conduct)
- Understanding of the code by all local elected officials
- Regular reflection and review
- Team and relationship building are part of prevention
- Mutual accountability



Shared Reflections & Thoughts

- Codes of conduct, when paired with strong leadership, education, and genuine accountability, can serve as tools for cultural transformation, helping Councils and Boards focus on what truly matters: serving their communities with integrity, transparency, and respect.
- Creating conditions to support respectful, effective and accountable governance are supported by local government staff and local elected officials.
- Accountability and fairness of process must be balanced.
- Respectful, functional governance is both a practice and a discipline.

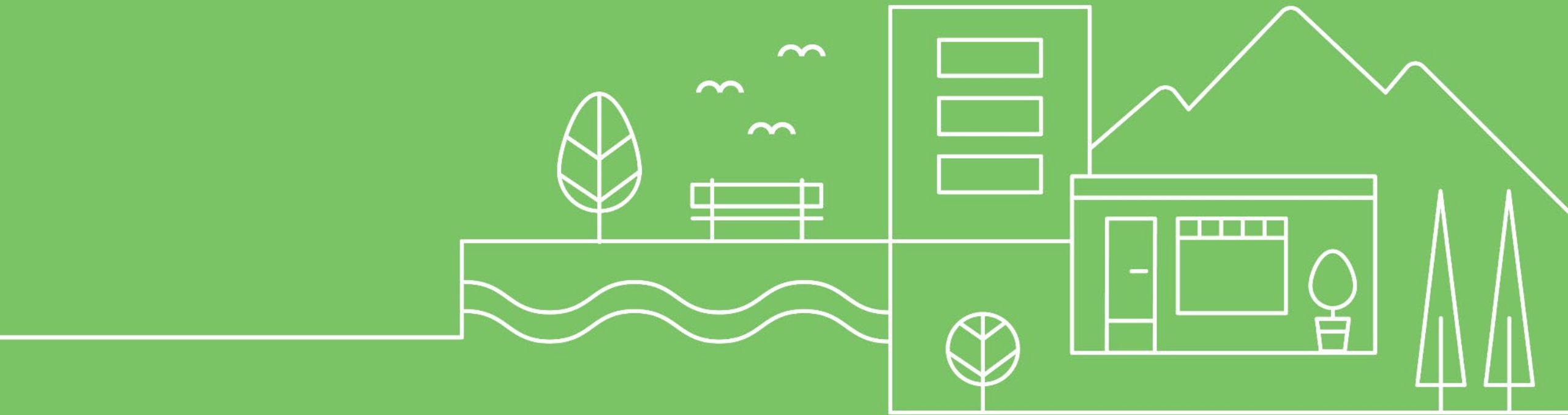


Next Steps

- Upon the new framework coming into force the Ministry plans to provide the following guidance materials:
 - Code of Conduct Guide for Local Elected Officials
 - Code of Conduct Guide for Local Government Staff
 - Code of Conduct Best Practice Guide for Investigators
- Continue to partner with UBCM and LGMA on the steps to implement the proposed framework
- Monitor for any further enhancements or adjustments (or guidance) that may be needed.



Questions?



Why a standard Code?

- To support communities experiencing the impacts of elected official misconduct.
- Recognition that neutral independent investigations are necessary to:
 - support responsible conduct and good governance;
 - reduce potential weaponization of a code;
 - recommend appropriate sanctions based on findings.
- Transparency and timelines for code processes are needed to support public trust and confidence.



Dismissal and Mutual Resolution

Complaints may be dismissed by an investigator when:

- it does not contravene the code
- it is vexatious or frivolous
- the substance of the complaint has been dealt with by another proceeding (e.g., law enforcement, courts)

Mutual resolution:

- May be used if both the complainant and the respondent agree
- Is a dispute resolution process (e.g., facilitated discussion or mediation)
- Must be completed within 4 months
- If not successful, the complaint must be investigated





COMMON
GOOD UBCM
2026



Vancouver Food Runners

In appreciation of our speakers today and with thanks for your contribution, UBCM has made a donation to the Vancouver Food Runners. Building connections between local businesses, nonprofits, and volunteers to ensure surplus food reaches essential community food programs. Vancouver Food Runners believe in turning surplus food into meaningful change. They believe good food belongs to people, not landfills!