

Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission – Council Resourcing Recommendations

ISSUE

This report provides information in follow up to City Council directives to the Administration, stemming from recommendations by the former Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission (SMRC) concerning resources allocated to City Councillors.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on April 30, 2018, considered the [Absences and Support for City Councillors report](#) and resolved:

“That the Administration be directed to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Legislative Budget including consideration of establishing an Office of the Councillors and other budgeting models for Councillors.”

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on November 21, 2022, considered the [Administration Response - Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission – 2022 Remuneration Report](#), and resolved in part:

1. That the City employ an independent professional human resources consulting firm or similar to review the work required of Council members and their council assistants, to determine what additional support may be required;
2. That the City reviews the multiple existing policies related to Councillor travel expenses and consolidates them into one clear and consistent policy document, including a section that specifies funding for attendance at SUMA and FCM events and updated language to reflect current committee structures;
3. That the City expands the City webpage - Council Member Expenses – so that it describes all Mayor and Councillor benefits and entitlements, and links to the described policies and expense reports.

CURRENT STATUS

The SMRC did not make a recommendation regarding moving the Councillor position from part time to full time but rather that the City employ an independent professional human resources consulting firm or similar to review the work required of Council members and their council assistants, to determine what additional support may be required.

Currently, members of Saskatoon City Council, except for the Mayor, are considered “part-time”, with the following three main resources currently allocated to Councillors to assist in their duties:

Office of the Councillors (Councillors’ Office) and Legislative Budget

An Office of the Councillors was established informally in 2017, administered under the Legislative Services Department in the City Clerk’s Office. In June of 2017 a full-time Councillors’ Assistant was hired to provide administrative support to members of City Council, excepting the Mayor. Based on workload, a second Councillors’ Assistant was hired in 2019, splitting the services provided between the two positions to five councillors each, with some shared office duties.

The legislative budget as outlined above is administered through the City Clerk’s Office. It is not apportioned by Councillor, excepting Councillor Travel and Training. Each Councillor is allotted funds annually for general travel and training, such as attendance at the annual Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) convention and Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference. The total amount budgeted for 2024 for all Councillors is \$35,000, with each provided \$3,500. There is also a common travel and training budget that is provided for Councillors to attend annual conferences or board meetings of any organization to which they are appointed as an official representative of the City of Saskatoon, or as a Board member. The total amount budgeted for 2024 is \$24,000 and is not apportioned to each Councillor. These amounts are prorated during an election year.

The legislative budget does not include any office space costs as the office is located within City Hall. The Councillors’ Assistants are employed by the City of Saskatoon and salary, training, and their office equipment is budgeted through the City Clerk’s Office.

Communications and Constituency Relations

In addition, City Council Policy C01-027 [Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance](#) (CCRA) provides an allowance to members of City Council to support communications with constituents as part of their role. The current funding level of the Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance (CCRA) is \$10,000 per Councillor per year, with amounts pro-rated during a civic election year as outlined in *The Code of Ethical Conduct for members of City Council Bylaw, 2019*.

Expanding the City’s Webpages

The City’s website was expanded in June of 2023 to include information on Council Member compensation, benefits, and entitlements including:

- Annual remuneration for the Mayor and Councillors
- Health benefits provided
- Options for retirement saving
- Parking provisions and car allowance

- Administrative support and tools

Council member expense reporting has been accessible via the City's website for many years and is updated regularly. The page includes annual reporting on current Council members' use of the CCRA and travel and training budget.

Councillor Support

Service Saskatoon assists in obtaining answers to residents' questions received by members of Council.

Review of Existing Policies

A fulsome review of the existing policies related to Councillor travel expenses with a view to consolidate them into one clear and consistent policy document, including a section that specifies funding for attendance at SUMA and FCM events and updated language to reflect current committee structures remains to be completed. Anticipated reporting is to occur in the third quarter.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

While some overlap is to be expected, all services provided by the Councillors' Assistants is administrative, rather than constituency communication related, and not within the scope of services provided for through other policies or resources. To better define constituency work to be completed through the CCRA versus administrative work to be completed by Councillors' Assistants, the following examples of services for each resource are included below:

Councillor Assistant Role

- Send out pre-drafted correspondence
- Book facilities for Councillor organized community meeting(s)
- RSVP to externally planned community meetings
- Respond to inquiries where a general response is appropriate
- Research on availability of City programming and resources and liaison between Councillor and departments for those resources

Communications and Constituency Relations (CCRA) Role

- Draft newsletters and constituent communications
- Organize and create agendas and content for community meetings
- Research solutions to issues outside of Council approved inquiries or existing City programs or initiatives
- Liaise with community stakeholder to come up with solutions and gauge community support
- Conduct regular outreach with the public to gain feedback on issues and proposals

- Respond to inquiries in a personalized manner on behalf of Councillors

Council could consider the following options to address the challenges of support and resourcing that were raised during the SMRC review:

Option 1 – Status Quo

This option would see no changes to current operations.

Pros:

- No changes to current structure, budget, policies, or bylaws required.
- The current model is not onerous to administer.

Cons:

- No additional support and resources provided.

Option 2 – Increase the Level of Resources

This option would increase the level of resources allocated to the Councillors, including a request for additional staffing in the Councillors' Office and/or increase to the CCRA to be used for additional support for Councillors should it be required.

Pros:

- Additional staffing, whether acquired in the Councillors' Office or through the CCRA can help with the Council members administrative duties (eg. Email and voicemail management).
- Enhanced constituent relations being better able to provide responses in a timelier manner.
- Increasing the CCRA has little administrative impact.

Cons:

- Increase to budget would be required.
- Additional staff to manage.
- Public perception of increased resources.
- Further reporting would be required.

Option 3 – Ward-Based Budget Model

This option would create a ward-based budget that would outline the allocation of funds specifically designated for Councillors respective ward offices and could include categories such as salaries for assistants, office expenses, communications, travel and training. The amounts would typically be split evenly for all wards. Each Member of Council would assume the responsibility for all employment aspects of their office,

including recruitment and hiring. For example, an assistant could be employed on a temporary (full- or part-time) contract basis, with an employment term tied to the term of office for the Member of Council.

It is important to note that coordination with the City is anticipated to be required, and this would not replace the existing Councillors' Assistant positions, rather supplement and work with them.

Pros:

Same as option 2 with the addition of:

- Provides flexibility to customize their team and office according to the individual Council member's requirements.

Cons:

Same as option 2 with the addition of:

- Lack of standardization
- With each member overseeing their hiring processes, this may result in discrepancies in recruitment practices, qualifications, and performance standards. Less continuity of internal knowledge with possible member changes following an election, but this is offset by retention of internal Councillors' Assistant positions.
- Further reporting would be required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Depending on direction that may be provided, policy and budgetary implications may arise, to be further reported on and considered.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

NEXT STEPS

Depending on the option chosen, future reporting would occur based on resourcing requirements, including potential hiring of an independent HR consultant for further review of a chosen option.

Report Approval

Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission – Council Resourcing Recommendations

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