

Council Resourcing

ISSUE

City Council needs to determine the level of assistance and resources councillors require to perform their duties as elected officials of the City of Saskatoon.

BACKGROUND

History

The Governance and Priorities Committee, at this meeting held on May 16, 2024, considered a report of the City Clerk regarding [Council Resourcing Recommendations](#) and resolved:

1. That the Administration report back outlining options to increase the levels of resources allocated to the Councillors, including options for additional staffing in the Councillors' Office and/or increase to the CCRA and travel/training allowance informed by further consultation and analysis of where those resources could be most beneficial; and
2. That Administration report on population thresholds and a jurisdictional scan of Canadian cities moving to a model of full-time councillors and associated staffing.

Current Status

At present, Saskatoon City Councillors serve in a part-time capacity.¹ The primary resources available to support their work include:

- Two full-time Councillors' Assistants, employed by the City of Saskatoon, who provide administrative support.
- The Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance (CCRA), which Councillors may use to fund additional support.

Saskatoon has historically maintained a part-time councillor model under the rationale that it allows individuals to serve while balancing other employment. Saskatoon City Council consists of 11 members, 10 Councillors plus the Mayor, representing a population estimated to be 308,400. As the city continues to grow, the increasing demands on Councillors' time raise questions about whether the part-time model remains sustainable in effectively representing constituents and managing workload expectations.

Councillors are also provided with an annual travel and training budget. As noted in previous reporting, the individual travel and training budget for each is \$3,500 and the

¹ Only the Mayor is considered to serve in a full-time capacity.

common budget is \$24,000 annually for all 10 councillors. These amounts have not increased in several years. The individual budget has not increased since 2002 and the common budget has not been increased since 2009.

Jurisdictional Review

Administration conducted a jurisdictional scan of comparable Canadian cities. A survey was distributed to the cities of Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Kelowna, London, and the Halifax Regional Municipality, to gather insights on council resourcing models. The City of London declined participation, and we obtained information via the website. This analysis highlights key differences in how Canadian municipalities support their Councillors. The results of this survey are attached as Appendix 1 and summarized as follows.

Survey - Council Size and Population

The size of city councils varies and is not necessarily determined by a city's population as referenced in the chart below.

City	Population (2021 Census)	Number of Councillors (Including Mayor)
Saskatoon	308,400 (2024 estimate)	10 Councillors + Mayor
Regina	230,000	10 Councillors + Mayor
Kelowna	222,162	8 Councillors + Mayor
Halifax	492,000	16 Councillors + Mayor
London	543,551	14 Councillors + Mayor
Winnipeg	749,607	15 Councillors + Mayor
Edmonton	1,010,899	12 Councillors + Mayor
Calgary	1,306,708	14 Councillors + Mayor

Survey - Full-Time vs. Part-Time Councillors

The larger municipalities surveyed classify their councillors as full-time with the other cities similar in size to Saskatoon, as part-time.

- Full-time Councillors: Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, and Winnipeg
- Part-time Councillors: Saskatoon, Regina, London, and Kelowna

Survey - Administrative Support for Councillors

Administrative support varies significantly between cities. Some municipalities provide dedicated support, while others require Councillors to hire staff using their office budget.

City	Administrative Support	Hiring Responsibility
Saskatoon	Two full time dedicated administrative assistants	Hired by City Clerk's Office. Councillors can use the CCRA for various matters including administrative staff support.
Regina	Three administrative employees provide general support.	Hired by the City Clerk's Office.
Kelowna	Indirectly, the Executive Office that supports Council consists of a Manager, a Communications person, and an Administrative Assistant.	Hired by the City.
Halifax	Each Councillor shares a Council Constituency Coordinator with another Councillor.	Hired by the municipality.
London	Unclear if City staff provided but appears that some Councillors hire contract assistants.	Contract Assistants likely hired by Councillor.
Winnipeg	No dedicated administrative support. Councillors must hire staff within their budget.	Hired solely by the Councillor.
Edmonton	Three administrative assistants for all Councillors, plus additional staff hiring allowed within ward budgets.	Administrative assistants hired by the Clerk's Office; other staff hired directly by Councillors.
Calgary	Councillors may hire staff using their ward budget.	Hired directly by Councillors.

Some municipalities, such as Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg, provide greater flexibility by allowing Councillors to hire multiple staff members.

In addition to administrative assistants, the survey outlined additional staffing.

- Calgary and Edmonton allow Councillors to hire executive assistants, communications staff, and constituent assistants within their budgets.
- Halifax has a dedicated Communications Specialist for Council.
- Regina assigns a Communications staff member from their Communications Department to assist Councillors.
- Winnipeg provides a liaison and receptionist for general office duties.

Survey - Budget for Travel & Training

Councillors in all surveyed cities have access to funding for travel and training, but the amount and structure vary.

City	Travel & Training Budget
Saskatoon	Individual travel/training budget \$3,500; Common travel/training budget \$24,000.
Regina	\$10,000 for travel and communications; additional \$3,800 for home office equipment.
Kelowna	No budget number provided but attendance at regional, provincial, and federal municipality association conventions allowed.
Halifax	\$15,000 Councillor Expense Account (includes travel, advertising, event tickets, etc.).
London	Council Members' Expense Policy with annual allocation of \$13,500 (includes travel, advertising, event tickets, etc). There appears to be other sources to access funds for travel and training as well.
Winnipeg	Travel expenses must be covered within the General Expense Account.
Edmonton	Common travel budget of \$73,002 for 2024. Training expenses from Ward Budget.
Calgary	Paid from Ward Budget; some travel covered by common budget.

Survey - Budget Models for Councillors

Municipalities follow different budget allocation models for councillors, with some providing a fixed ward-based budget and others using a combination of discretionary and centralized funds.

City	Budget Model
Saskatoon	CCRA, Travel/Training, Car Allowance managed by City Clerk's Office
Regina	Councillors manage their travel/communications fund and office expenses.
Kelowna	Encompassing budget for all, with exception of the Mayor.
Halifax	Discretionary account + community groups + district capital projects.
London	Appears to be individually based, but unsure.
Winnipeg	Councillors manage their General Expense Account, which covers various costs.
Edmonton	Ward-based budget per Councillor
Calgary	Ward-based budget per Councillor (covers staffing, office expenses, travel, and training).

Model - Councillor Positions Part-time vs Full-time

The jurisdictional review shows that the municipalities we looked at with populations over 400,000 have full-time councillors. The City of Calgary moved to full-time status in 2003 following a review from its Compensation Committee at the time, siting "40 hours a

week were required to be effective in the role, and that 60-hour work weeks were typical for councillors, spent preparing for meetings, in Council meetings, or meeting with the community”. There was no indication from any of the municipalities when or at what population level or other triggers they moved to full-time status. The City of Regina has indicated there was interest raised in the past but nothing formal has been proposed. The City of London is undergoing a review of Councillors workload and remuneration. Some of its Councillors believe the workload is full-time. The City of Kelowna indicated the topic was raised when it did a remuneration review in early 2024 but Councillors remain part-time.

If Saskatoon transitions to a full-time councillor model, considerations will need to include salary adjustments, as well as potential changes to office space and staffing. Currently, councillors work in an open-concept office with cubicles, which offers limited privacy and is not well-suited for constituent meetings. The two Councillors’ Assistants currently operate out of the City Clerk’s Office.

At this time, a transition to full-time councillors is not being recommended. Instead, the focus is on enhancing the resources available to councillors to better support their increasing workload.

Options to Increase Levels of Resources Allocated to Councillors

The [reporting](#) that occurred in May of 2024 outlined three options: 1. Status quo, 2. Increase the level of resources, and 3. Move to a ward-based budget model.

These options 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 Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance (CCRA) to be used for additional support for Councillors should it be required.

Option 1 – Increase the CCRA (recommended)

As noted in the previous [reporting](#), while some overlap is to be expected, all services provided by the two Councillors’ Assistants are administrative in nature, and not within the scope of services to be provided for through other policies or resources. For services considered to be political or constituent related, the councillor should consider using the CCRA to resource those services. It is acknowledged and expected that individual councillors will require differing services. Therefore, increasing the CCRA would allow for individual councillors to increase their resources as outlined in the policy and each could determine their own level of resources required as opposed to hiring additional City of Saskatoon staff.

The City Clerk’s Office looked at past usage of the CCRA and determined the following annual **average** spend for each, again, some utilizing almost the full \$10,000 allotment with others only using a small portion. Election years of 2020 and 2024 were not included as the amounts are pro-rated those years.

2021 – \$7,082

2022 - \$6,704

2023 - \$7,516

Although the expenses varied individually, most of the dollars were spent on advertising, newsletter creation and mailouts. Smaller allocations went to administrative support, website hosting, sponsorships, and event attendance. Some comments were made that the \$10,000 allotment was not sufficient to cover the cost of hiring administrative support.

Increasing this allowance does not fully address the administrative demands placed on existing staff. In addition to standard and routine tasks performed by the Councillors' Assistants, some councillors also rely on the Councillors' Assistants to manage constituent telephone calls and email management. The current allocation of two full-time equivalents (FTEs) is not sustainable for ongoing support to all councillors. To help manage administrative tasks, calls to the Councillors' Office are now routed through the general City Clerk's line which are handled by front-end employees.

It is recommended that the CCRA be increased by \$15,000 for each Councillor. This would bring each individual Councillor to \$25,000 for their CCRA.

Rationale:

Option 2 - Increased Dedicated City Administrative Support for Councillors

This option proposes increasing the level of dedicated administrative resources within the Councillors' Office. Specifically, this would involve hiring additional City staff to support councillors in their day-to-day administrative functions, including telephone and email management, scheduling, and other operational tasks.

As noted in previous reports, while some overlap is to be expected, all services provided by the existing two Councillors' Assistants are administrative in nature and do not extend to political or constituent engagement. While CCRA provides a mechanism for councillors to supplement their support, its limitations—including confidentiality concerns regarding email management—make it an insufficient substitute for dedicated administrative staffing.

Furthermore, given confidentiality requirements, situationally, it may not be appropriate for externally hired personnel under the CCRA to manage @saskatoon.ca emails. If telephone and email management are identified as essential services required by all councillors, additional staffing within the City Clerk's Office/Councillors' Office is the most appropriate solution.

To ensure sustainable and equitable administrative support, this option proposes an additional full time equivalent (FTE) be allocated to the Councillors' Office.

Option 3 – Combined Approach: Increased CCRA and Additional Administrative Support

This option proposes a balanced approach by both increasing the CCRA and adding administrative support staff to the Councillors' Office. It recognizes that while some councillors may prefer to manage their own resources through the CCRA, others require consistent administrative support that can only be provided through dedicated City staff.

Option 4 – Increased City Council Travel and Training Expenses (recommended)

[Policy C01-023, City Councillors' Travel and Training](#), enables City Councillors to attend appropriate meetings, conferences, seminars and training sessions which facilitate the performance of their duties. Through the policy, budgetary provision is allocated for Councillors' Common Travel and Training and Councillors' Individual Travel and Training.

Individual Travel and Training

Each councillor is allotted funds annually for general travel and training such as attendance at the annual SUMA convention and FCM conference. The amount budgeted for 2025 for all Councillors is \$35,000.00 or \$3,500.00 each.

Common Travel and Training

A Common Travel and Training Budget is also provided for Councillors to Councillors are entitled to use this fund in order to attend conferences, training sessions/forums or similar, or board meetings of any organization on which he or she sits as an official representative of the City of Saskatoon, conferences where the City of Saskatoon is entitled to voting delegates through its membership (e.g. Canadian Urban Transit Association), or for sessions related to designated strategic priority areas. The total amount budgeted for 2025 is \$24,000.00. This amount is not delegated individually.

Like all expenses, costs associated with travel and event attendance have increased over time. As noted earlier, the individual budget has not increased since 2002 and the common budget has not been increased since 2009.

Although overall spending has stayed within budget, training opportunities have often been limited due to financial constraints. Historically, not all Councillors have attended the annual Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) conference, but those who have attended often exceeded the current \$3,500 individual allotment, particularly when factoring in travel costs to distant locations. Attendance at the annual SUMA Convention further increases the likelihood of exceeding this limit.

To ensure all Councillors have access to professional development, it is recommended that the individual travel and training budget be increased to \$5,800 per Councillor,

totaling \$58,000 annually, an increase of \$23,000. The recommended increase accounts for inflation and would allow Councillors to attend both FCM and SUMA while also supporting participation in other relevant training and events.

An increase of \$14,400 to the common travel and training budget of \$24,000 is being recommended for inflation and to support actual spending.

Pension and Other Training

The councillors that are appointed to the various Pension Boards are provided training and corresponding travel which are paid through those Pension Plans and not the City's budget. As council makes some decisions regarding the Pension Plans of the City, a \$7,000.00 budget was approved for 2025 for those councillors that do not sit on a pension board to obtain pension training. There are virtual training options and the \$7,000 could have three councillors achieve training. If in person training is preferred, the costs go up for travel and expenses limiting amount of training opportunities annually. It is not being recommended to increase this amount.

There are various other Boards that councillors are either appointed to or have a vested interest in that fall outside of the above travel and training budgets. For example, those that are appointed to the Board of Police Commissioners are provided opportunities for travel and training paid through the Saskatoon Police Service budget. Another example is SREDA provides opportunities for council members to attend various conferences/forums and pays for their attendance and expenses through its budget.

Council should consider if it wants to continue with the Pension Training budget and reporting of attendance and corresponding expenses at events paid by other sources. If so, it is recommended that the City Councillors' Travel and Training Policy be updated accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that the following items be included in the 2026 indicative budget for consideration at the 2026/27 budget deliberations:

1. That the Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance be increased by \$150,000 (\$15,000 increase for each Councillor) as per Option 1;
2. That the individual travel and training budget be increased by \$23,000 (\$2,300 increase for each Councillor) as per Option 4;
3. That the common travel and training budget be increased by \$14,400 as per Option 4;
4. That pension related training budget remain status quo; and
5. That City administrative support levels for Councillors be reviewed again in advance of the 2027 mid-year budget.

RATIONALE

Option 1 – Increase the CCRA

The CCRA amount has not been reviewed or increased since the policy was introduced in 2017. The recommended increase accounts for inflation and provides additional funds for Councillors to access additional support. Increasing the CCRA provides councillors with greater autonomy in determining their resource needs, allowing them to allocate funds for services such as contracting assistants, communications, research, advertising, or event coordination. This approach recognizes the varied ways in which councillors utilize the CCRA, ensuring those who require additional support have the means to access it.

Option 4 – Increased City Council Travel and Training Expenses

The individual travel and training budget has remained unchanged since 2002, and the common budget has not increased since 2009, despite inflation and rising travel costs. With rising costs, councillors may struggle to attend conferences and events within the current budget.

While pension training remains available, it is funded separately through pension plans or a designated \$7,000 budget for non-board members. No increase is recommended here to maintain fiscal responsibility.

The policy update will ensure clear reporting of attendance and expenses related to external board training and travel, reinforcing transparency.

SUMMARY

Model to move Councillors from part-time status to full-time status

Maintain status quo.

Increased Resources in the Councillors' Office

- Council to determine if an increase to the CCRA from \$10,000 to \$25,000 for each councillor should be included in a future budget deliberations (2026/27).

Increased Travel and Training Allowances

- Council to determine if an increase to the individual and common budget should be included in future budget (2026/27)
- Council to determine if it keeps the separate pension training amount of \$7,000 and if so, direct an update to include this in the Travel and Training Policy.

- Council to determine whether reporting on other paid attendance at events should be required and if so, direct an update in the Travel and Training Policy to include this.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial implications are addressed under each option. All decisions regarding budget increases would be made during City Council's 2026/27 budget deliberations.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

NEXT STEPS

If the recommendation is adopted, the budgetary asks would be considered during City Council's budget deliberations held in November.

APPENDICES

1. City of Saskatoon Council Resourcing Survey

Report Approval

Written by: Shellie Bryant, Deputy City Clerk – Director of Legislative Services
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Approved by: Adam Tittlemore, City Clerk

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