

Protocol Policy

ISSUE

Should amendments be considered to Council Policy No. 01-028, *Protocol Policy*?

BACKGROUND

2.1 History

At its meeting held on [August 14, 2024](#), the Governance and Priorities Committee (“GPC”) resolved, in part:

1. That the Administration report back on provisions in the policy with regards to raising flags from other nations; and
2. That the Administration report further in regard to requests for resolutions of support to either:
 - a. Require any organization that is requesting for Council to pass a Resolution of Support to get a sponsoring member of City Council to bring that item forward through the Notice of Motion process; or
 - b. Add additional criteria for Administration to consider to determine whether the matters merit or are appropriate for City Council debate.

The *Protocol Policy* (“Policy”) was the result of several reports over several years.

At its September 4, 2015 meeting, the Executive Committee (now GPC) directed the Administration to report on the issue of protocols in other cities.

A series of City Council resolutions followed the initial September 4, 2015 resolution. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the reporting on the Policy and the resulting direction of City Council.

2.2 Current Status

The Policy has now been in place since August of 2024.

2.3 Public Engagement

This Policy has been before City Council several times. Consideration of the Policy would have been noted on agendas of meetings. There has been no specific public engagement with respect to this report.

2.4 City of Saskatoon's Current Approach

Part 3 of the Policy - Flag Raisings, Proclamations and Lighting Displays

This portion of the Policy has been in effect since October of 2019. It is currently Part 3 of the Policy. The Policy currently allows for flag raisings and proclamations with respect to other countries if the Government of Canada has diplomatic relations with that country.

Part 4 of the Policy – Letters and Resolutions of Support

Letters and Resolutions of Support is Part 4 of the Policy. These provisions were put in place in August of 2024. Currently, the Policy provides criteria for the City Clerk to consider requests and if they meet these criteria the matter would be put on the agenda of a meeting. The Policy then provides a list of factors for Council to consider in determining any action they wish to take when a request for a resolution of support is on an agenda.

2.5 Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

Flag Raisings, Proclamations and Lighting Displays

Different jurisdictions handle the issue of proclamations and flag raisings in different ways. The cities of Waterloo and Winnipeg do not issue proclamations. However, the City of Winnipeg does allow for flag raisings and lighting displays. Other municipalities issue proclamations based on criteria set out in bylaw or policy. Like Saskatoon, most municipalities that allow for the raising of other country's flags tie the approval of those flag raisings to countries who have diplomatic relations with the Government of Canada.

In January of 2025 City Council of the City of Regina considered a report from the City Clerk and resolved to discontinue the practice of raising the flag of nations on the ceremonial flagpole located in the courtyard, in recognition of that nation's National Day/Day of Independence with a couple of exceptions noted in the resolutions. Regina also decided to discontinue the practice of issuing a proclamation commemorating any country's National Day/Day of Independence.

Requests for Resolutions of Support

Other cities do have policies regarding requests for letters of support, but the Administration could not find another municipality that had a policy with respect to requests for resolutions of support. However, this issue is tied to communications to Council and how those communications get put on agendas. Requests for resolutions of support come as either a request to speak to Council or a letter to Council requesting a resolution of support. Each municipality has different policies with respect to how matters are placed on agendas. Some municipalities only allow speakers or correspondence to be placed on agendas that relate to items already on the agenda of the meeting. As a result, requests for resolutions of support may not be placed on the agendas of meetings.

OPTIONS

Part 3 of the Policy - Flag Raisings, Proclamations and Lighting Displays

The Administration was requested to report back regarding the practice of flying the flags of other countries. This portion of the report provides options with respect to this issue.

Option 1: (Status Quo) Continue to Allow for the Raising of Other Country Flags

Under this option it is proposed that the City continue with the status quo and continue to allow for the raising of the flags of other countries based on the criteria currently in the Policy.

Advantages:

- No change is required to be implemented.
- Allows for the recognition of other countries by the flying of their flags.

Disadvantages:

- Administratively can be difficult to manage when conflicting requests are received.
- Opens the City to criticism for larger geo-political events occurring in the world which are outside the City's control.

Option 2: Discontinue the Raising of Other Country Flags

Under this option it is proposed that the City discontinue the practice of flying the flags of other countries. Included in this option the City would stop issuing proclamations with respect to other countries. It is typical that both requests come in recognition of an annual day of celebration in that country often related to independence similar to celebrations on July 1st in Canada.

Advantages:

- Creates less operational work for the Administration.
- Removes the City from larger geo-political events occurring in the world which are outside the City's control.

Disadvantages:

- Will require a change to be implemented.
- Will result in the refusal to fly other country's flags which will be a change for certain groups in the City that make annual requests.

Part 4 of the Policy – Letters and Resolutions of Support

The Administration was also asked to report back regarding enhanced criteria or processes with respect to resolutions of support. This portion of the report provides options with respect to that issue.

Option 1: (Status Quo) Continue with Current Rules

Under this option no amendments to the Policy are proposed. Initial requests will continue to be considered by the City Clerk and then placed on an agenda for consideration of City Council based on the criteria outlined in the Policy. City Council will then need to consider the matter and may use the factors outlined in the Policy to assist with their decision.

Advantages:

- Will allow more time to determine if current rules will work.
- Provides more transparency as more items are placed on public agendas.

Disadvantages:

- Does not always use meeting time efficiently.
- More things will be placed on agendas which may not be within the jurisdiction of the City.

Option 2: Amend the Policy to Require a Notice of Motion to Bring Items Forward

Under this option the Policy would be amended to provide discretion to the City Clerk to not put requests for resolutions of support on agendas and instead refer them to the City's online file sharing service for access by Council members. In addition, the City Clerk may send requests for resolutions of support to the Administration. If a member of Council wishes to bring a matter forward for the consideration of Council the notice of motion process in *The Procedures and Committees Bylaw, 2014* could be used. The factors for Council to consider in deciding on the matter are proposed to remain in the Policy.

Advantages:

- Only matters having some support from Council will come forward for consideration.
- More efficient use of meeting time.

Disadvantages:

- All requests to Council will not show on a public agenda and instead only those items having support of a Councillor will be placed on public agendas.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend to City Council that:

1. Subclause 3.4.4(d) of Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* be amended to prohibit the flying of other country's flags in accordance with option 2 contained in this report;
2. A definition for charitable and non-profit organizations be added to Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* to provide clarity that these organizations must be legal entities and registered;
3. Clause 3.4.4(b) of Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* be amended to provide clarity that requests can be considered from city departments and other government organizations;
4. Clause 3.4.4(c) of Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* be amended to require the organization requesting the flag raising, proclamation, or light display to be located in Saskatoon or have a clear connection to Saskatoon;
5. That Part 4 – Letters and Resolutions of Support of Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* be amended as outlined in accordance with option 2 contained in this report;
6. That the City Clerk's Office be instructed to amend Council Policy C01-028, *Protocol Policy* as outlined in this report; and
7. That the City Solicitor's Office be instructed to amend *The Procedures and Committees Bylaw, 2014* as outlined in this report.

RATIONALE

Part 3 of the Policy - Flag Raisings, Proclamations and Lighting Displays

Flag Raisings – Other Countries

Currently, the Policy is tied to countries that have diplomatic relations with the Government of Canada. Global Affairs is the Government of Canada office that manages Canada's relations with other countries. Canada maintains diplomatic relations with 100's of countries across the world.

The geo-political environment across the world is increasingly complex. The Administration at the City has no expertise or knowledge in this area hence the reason for relying on the Government of Canada in this regard. However, this still makes municipalities that fly the flags of other countries susceptible to criticism arising from situations where a flag raising occurs while there is armed conflict, political unrest or human rights violations in that country. The City has no jurisdiction in this area and these world events are outside the City's control.

The City is not required to fly the flags of other countries and the complexity of reviews, approvals, and logistics is taking more administrative time each year. There have been situations where a flag change needed to occur at noon to accommodate the requests of competing groups with respect to the flying of other country flags.

Administration is recommending that the City discontinue the practice of flying the flags of other countries. The City of Regina recently implemented a similar decision. Saskatoon will continue to have the Canadian Flag, the Saskatchewan Flag, the Treaty 6 Territory Flag and the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan Flag permanently displayed. Three flag poles are proposed to continue to exist as guest flag poles. The Policy allows for the raising of flags in specified circumstances for other reasons.

Other Amendments

The City Clerk's Office is responsible for administering this portion of the Policy. Other amendments are being requested by the City Clerk's Office with respect to flag raisings, proclamations and lighting displays. It is proposed that the following other amendments be made to this portion of the Policy:

- Charitable and non-profit organizations be defined as organizations that are registered as non-profit corporations in the corporate registry;
- Provide clarity that requests can also be considered from City departments and other government authorities; and
- Requests be limited to organizations that are located in Saskatoon or have a connection to Saskatoon like Part 4 of the Policy.

A blackline copy of the Policy with the amendments proposed is attached as Appendix 2.

Part 4 of the Policy - Letters and Resolutions of Support

The rules we currently have in place were implemented in August of 2024. The City has not yet had an opportunity to substantively use the new rules. However, when they were approved it was noted by Council that they may not achieve the intended result, and the Administration was asked to report back on further options.

Protocol Policy

Requests for resolution of support are defined in the Policy as:

“any type of request received from a third party for a resolution from City Council and may include requests:

- (i) to support federal or provincial matters such as support for proposed legislation;
- (ii) for City Council member representation on a committee or other body; and
- (iii) for endorsement of a cause.”.

Often these requests relate to matters under the jurisdiction of other levels of government, and support of the City is being requested by a third party to support lobbying other levels of government.

The Administration has reviewed the last five years of requests to Council and determined that there have been approximately twenty-five different requests that would meet the definition of requests for resolutions of support. Each of these matters was considered at a committee of Council and sometimes by Council after the committee. In fifteen instances the matter was either received as information, referred to the Administration or referred to another body such as the Board of Police Commissioners. In six instances Council either chose to pass resolutions in support of the cause or asked the Administration to report back on the matter. In four instances presentations were made to Council under the rules regarding requests to speak. Collectively, consideration of these matters would have taken several hours of time at meetings. Again, often the matters outlined in the requests are not within the City’s jurisdiction.

The Administration is recommending Option 2 - Amend the Policy to Require a Notice of Motion to Bring Items Forward. This option came as a suggestion at the GPC meeting where the Policy was approved. After considering the last five years of data and how this process might work the Administration feels it is the most appropriate option.

The Policy would be amended to provide the City Clerk with discretion with respect to requests for resolutions of support. These matters whether coming by written communication or a request to speak would not be put on an agenda. Instead, these requests would be placed in the City’s online file sharing service for access by Council members. In addition, the mater may be referred to the Administration depending on the request. Organizations could also contact Councillors directly. It would be up to members of Council to decide whether they wanted to bring one of these matters forward for the consideration of Council using the notice of motion process currently provided in *The Procedures and Committees Bylaw, 2014*. The factors for Council to consider when determining whether to support a request for a resolution of support as outlined in the Policy would remain.

Protocol Policy

A blackline copy of the proposed changes to the Policy are attached as Appendix 2.

This process would also necessitate an amendment to *The Procedures and Committees Bylaw, 2014*. As these matters start as communications to Council or requests to speak to Council, the Bylaw needs to be amended to provide the City Clerk with the authority and/or discretion to not place these items on agendas. Instead requests for resolutions of support will be filed by the City Clerk in the online file sharing service for access by Council members.

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

Public notice will be provided when the amendments to *The Procedures and Committees Bylaw, 2014* comes back to City Council for approval. Public notice is required for amendments to this Bylaw.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

If these amendments are improved the City Clerk's Office will update the City's website with respect to these amendments to provide clarity to the public on the amended Protocol rules.

APPENDICES

1. Protocol Policy History – City Council Resolutions
2. Blackline copy of Council Policy C01-028

Report Approval

Written and Approved by: Cindy Yelland, City Solicitor
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Adam Tittlemore, City Clerk

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