
Meeting Expenses - Council Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance

Recommendation

That the Governance and Priorities Committee consider recommending to City Council additional items for inclusion in the Council Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance, dealing with meeting expenses, as detailed in this report.

Topic and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Governance and Priorities Committee with information gathered from a request for review and report on the potential addition of eligible meeting expenses funded by the Council Communications and Constituency Relations Allowance (CCRA).

Report Highlights

1. The current CCRA Policy (C01-027) allows meeting expenses to be charged by members of City Council.
2. The City Clerk's Office has reviewed similar allowances in comparable Canadian cities, including any facilitatory assistance for attendees.

Strategic Goal(s)

This report supports the Strategic Goals of Continuous Improvement, Asset and Financial Sustainability and Quality of Life by providing options to guide City Council in using their CCRA in ways that are industry-leading, open, accountable and transparent, and are an investment for both the City and the community.

This report also supports Council's Strategic Focus Area of Community Safety and Wellness (Lead: Councillor Gough) by considering methods of assistance for invaluable attendees, particularly those with first-hand experience in the work of Council's Committees.

Background

At its Regular Business Meeting of May 23, 2017, City Council considered a report of the City Clerk regarding the CCRA in relation to the General Entertainment section of the Policy and passed a number of amendments. City Council also resolved that the City Clerk review and report on the potential for addition of the following to the list of eligible meeting expenses under Policy C01-027:

- a. facilitatory assistance for attendees through provision or reasonable reimbursement of:
 - i. transportation assistance;
 - ii. interpretation assistance (translation, transcription, etc.);
 - iii. childcare; and

- b. 1st Voice (lived experience) participation honoraria.

Report

The current CCRA Policy adopted June 27, 2016 allows for members of City Council to charge meeting expenses for i) Facility rental; ii) Catering order for meetings including non-alcoholic beverages, snacks and light foods; and iii) Venue set-up fees, including audio-visual equipment, flip charts, cleaning charges.

A review of the Council and Communications Relations Allowance was undertaken and presented to City Council in 2016 and the subsequent policy was drafted to set out the criteria for use of the communications and constituency relations allowance.

There are no regulatory requirements which would limit the use of the allowance for the suggested purposes; therefore, adding these items is at the discretion of City Council.

A review of comparable Canadian cities' meeting expense coverage was conducted, with inquiries made specifically into any offerings of the above-noted facilitatory assistance for attendees. The responses included:

London

- reasonable expenses related to a ward meeting, accommodated within annual expense allocation - items not specifically addressed
- if interpretation assistance is required to meet accessibility requirements, Ontario law requires reasonable accommodation to be provided—the “discretion” for those purposes is superseded by provincial law

Toronto

- no reimbursement for attendees' expenses; however Councillors can arrange and pay for translation services and arrange for childcare for attendees at their community meetings

Winnipeg

- Councillor Ward Allowance speaks to Community Events, yet no definition - was added to the policy recently for Councillors to cover the cost of hosting ward events such as community clean-up days
- likely would approve costs to bring in a speaker for a community event, bus to transport citizens, translation services, sign language, etc.
- section is purposely vague - each cost for a community event would be evaluated individually

Regina

- Councillors have a Communications budget to spend at their discretion – City Clerk vets; however ultimately up to each Council member to be accountable for their expenditures

Calgary

- meetings hosted by the Councillor are not reimbursed under any Policy

Edmonton

- meeting expenses at the Councillors' discretion from his/her own ward budget

Halifax

- no refreshments etc. are covered for smaller meetings; for larger meetings like a town hall meeting, Councillors can choose to have refreshments come out of their advertising account
- when required, (twice in 12 years) provide sign language translation
- no honorarium is ever paid to attendees, guest speakers etc.

Although it appears funding is available in some Cities for transportation and interpretation (translation, transcription, etc.) assistance and childcare, First Voice (lived experience) participation is a relatively new initiative to the municipal sector. Social inclusion guidelines - that address financial assistance and participation honoraria - are currently in use by agencies such as the Saskatoon Health Region and Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership (Attachments 1 and 2) and are included for the Committee's review and information.

The Governance and Priorities Committee may choose to recommend inclusion of the proposed additional meeting expense items into its policy.

Options to the Recommendation

In accordance with Section 4.4 of the CCRA Policy, the Governance and Priorities Committee may forward recommendations to City Council regarding any proposed policy amendments.

Other Considerations/Implications

There are no policy, financial, environmental, privacy or CPTED implications or considerations at this time.

Public Notice

Public Notice pursuant to Section 3 of Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice Policy, is not required.

Attachment(s)

1. Saskatoon Health Region, Health Promotion Department – Social Inclusion Guidelines
2. Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership – Creating a Culture of Inclusion

Report Approval

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Reviewed and Approved By:

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