

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Revision to Council Expense Policy (G 050)

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: March 6, 2023

Report Number: FS 10-23

Department(s) Responsible:

Financial Services Department

Submitted by:

Fuwing Wong, Commissioner, Financial Services & Treasurer

Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer

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1. **Recommendation:**

1. **That the revised Council Expense Policy (Policy # G050), Attachments 1 and 2 to Report FS 10-23, be approved.**

2. **Highlights:**

- Revisions and updates to the Council Expense Policy are summarized in this report;
- The proposed policy is included as Attachment 1 with updated guidelines included as Attachment 2

3. **Background:**

The Town's Council Expense Policy (Policy # G 050) is meant to provide consistent rules and guidelines for Members of Council on expenditures that support Members of Council in fulfilling their duties as elected officials. The Policy was last updated December 16, 2019 and is comprised of two documents:

- 1) The main policy document; and
- 2) Guidelines for Expenses for Members of Council (Appendix A to the Policy)

The proposed updates consider common issues and questions related to Council business expenses over recent years and incorporates best practices / policy wording from other Durham Lakeshore municipalities at this time. Further, draft changes to the Policy were presented at a Council Education Session held on February 13, 2023. The attached Policy also incorporates feedback from the February 13th Council Education Session.

4. Discussion:

A revised Council Expense Policy is included in Attachment 1 and 2 to this report. Below is a summary of some of the key changes:

- Updated Special Election Year rules in the policy:
 - New definition of Election Period (being the first day prescribed for the filing of nominations in accordance with the Municipal Elections Act and ending when the new Council takes office) was added as the period in which there would be restrictions for Council business expense reimbursements;
 - Specifically, no reimbursements under the Communications, Advertising, and Constituency Meetings category of expenses and no Ward Town Hall Meetings, and no Annual Publication/Magazine costs to be incurred during the Election Period;
 - Previously the restrictions applied for the “Election Year” which was defined as January 1 to December 31 of the year in which there is a municipal election;
 - Annual Expense Budgets will be pro-rated in an Election Year (11/12 months for Members of Council to the end of the term and 1/12 months for Members of Council starting the new Council term);
- Removed option to use personal cell phones and the associated \$60/month reimbursement;
- Clarified the following for event tickets:
 - Ineligible expenses include event tickets that are for a raffle, silent auction costs, and event tickets where each ticket holder is guaranteed a prize or gift other than token gifts, such as a souvenir or memento or a commemorative gift that is given in recognition of attending the event.
 - For clarity, event tickets where all tickets are entered into a draw where the number of gifts/prizes is less than the total number of tickets entered into the draw are Eligible Expenses.
 - Also added a condition that event tickets must be purchased from an organization not a “reseller”/individual;
- Updated the training, seminars, and conferences section to:
 - Clarify that eligible reimbursements may be provided in advance to encourage Members to book in advance and take advantage of “early bird discounts”;
 - Added a condition to place an onus on Members of Council to reimburse the Town for discounts or refunds received (e.g., if a Member received

reimbursement prior to the event but is not able to attend and subsequently receives a refund directly from the hotel or organization hosting the training, seminar, or conference);

- Updated provisions to allow for mileage claims (on a per kilometre basis) for business travel outside of Town limits; and
- Updated eligible expenses under books & subscriptions and constituency meetings to include electronic subscriptions and cost of hybrid meetings, respectively.

5. Financial Considerations:

Annual expense budgets for Members of Council are as follows:

- \$13,000 for Ward and Regional Councillors;
- \$17,000 for the Mayor

Further, a budget of \$25,000 will be included in the 2024 budget for the annual publication and \$300 will be included in the 2024 budget for the Ward Town Hall meetings (e.g., \$75 per meeting for refreshments x 4 meetings per year). For the 2023 year, these expenditures will be offset by other operating budget savings across the Town.

As noted in the draft policy, the budgets noted above will be indexed annually based on the Consumer Price Index (Ontario – All Items).

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Not Applicable.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

The proposed revisions include research on Council Business Expense policies/guidelines in place at other Durham Lakeshore municipalities and incorporates feedback received at the February 13, 2023 Council Education meeting.

8. Strategic Priorities:

Not Applicable.

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Policy G 050 – Council Expense Policy

Attachment 2 – Guideline for Expenses for Members of Council (Appendix A to the Council Expense Policy)

