



Staff Report to Community Advisory Committee

DATE: Tuesday, October 29, 2024
DEPARTMENT: Administration
SUBJECT: Travel Expenditure Policy Refresh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City's Travel Expenditure Policy titled "Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expense" (POL-0042-FIN) is often utilized by Staff and Council when conducting business of the municipality, including professional development. Council have prioritized this policy to be reviewed, and therefore staff are bringing forward the recommended amendments for the Committee's consideration. The intent of the amendments is to provide clarity, expand further on aspects within, and ensure the City is transparent and accountable.

BACKGROUND:

At the September 3, 2024 Regular meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

THAT Council direct staff to bring forward any pertinent City policies that align with the mandate of the Community Advisory Committee for review and recommendation prior to the documents coming forward to Council, with priority to be given to the Council and Staff Travel Expense Policy.

AND

THAT Council direct staff to provide additional mandatory training to all committee members to clarify the process for considering, debating and/or amending matters prior to the commencement of the policy review.

POL-0042-FIN has been in place since 2006 and has not been reviewed or amended in that time. This policy has been used by staff and members of Council since its inception. Staff are working to review long-established policies, both internal policies (sometimes referred to as administrative policies), and external policies (or Council policies). POL-0042-FIN is a Council policy, meaning any amendments require Council consideration and approval.

The City of Langford 2023 Annual Report also identified the following priority for 2024:

“Update Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expenses Policy - The City will update the Council and Staff Reimbursement Policy to ensure clarification and transparency and to ensure travel reimbursement amounts remain updated”.

COMMENTARY:

The Community Advisory Committee provides recommendations and input regarding the City’s financial matters. This report has been prepared for Committee review, and to provide suggestions, and forward the amended policy to Council for approval.

Per Diem Proposed Updates:

Per diems are intended to cover meals and incidental costs. The intent of the policy is to clearly set out the expectations and financial obligations assumed by those impacted, and to provide clarity and parameters for Council and staff members. The Policy is not intended to incentivize or provide a profit for those conducting the business of the municipality offsite.

Average per diem rates between comparable communities:

Community Name:	Per Diem Rate:
Langford	\$60.00
Campbell River	\$85.00
North Vancouver	\$75.00
Penticton	\$69.00
West Kelowna	\$70.00 - \$107.00 (depending on destination/location of travel)
North Cowichan	\$85.00
Port Coquitlam	\$99.00
Saanich	\$75.00

Staff are recommending a per diem rate of \$80.00, equal to the low end of the average among comparable municipalities. Staff note, this is an increase of \$20 from the current policy, established in 2006 and not adjusted for inflation since. Research was conducted regarding the average costs of breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals as well as daily incidentals. The policy breaks down the per diem rate for each meal category. When meal costs are included in a registration fee, no further claims may be made for equivalent meals. For example, if a conference event registration fee includes a dinner, no claim for a dinner for this date will be accepted.

To keep policies up to date, some jurisdictions connect their travel expenditure policies with the CPI (Consumer Price Index). Staff are in favour of this system as it will continue to ensure the policy stays current.

Accommodation Related Updates:

Conferences/events typically offer a special rate for accommodations such as group or government rates. To utilize taxpayer money efficiently, these rates should be booked whenever possible.

Through policy research, staff noted that there is often a provision within the policies that provide a nominal fee to a person attending to City business if they choose to stay with family or friends instead of a formal accommodation choice. Research places this dollar value between \$30.00 and \$75.00 per night. Staff are proposing \$40.00 per night within the updated policy.

General Updates:

Previously, the policy did not include any guidance or information regarding the combination of personal travel with business travel. For example, a person may wish to travel to the conference location prior to or stay after the event to explore the area or make a vacation out of it. In these instances, the person will pay for that portion of expenses, including accommodation, incurred for the dates outside of the required and approved work travel. The cost of travel, including airfare, will not be the responsibility of the traveller unless it is a more expensive flight on the extended dates. The policy has been expanded to include guidance about trip cancellations and emergency scenarios that may occur outside of a person's control.

Proposed Addition of Non-Compensated Expense List:

Staff noted that many travel expenditure policies clearly outline which items are not compensable by the local government. For example, traffic violations, entertainment, alcohol, travel upgrades, accommodation upgrades, items for personal use, non-mandatory valet and gym costs qualify as non-compensable. Staff are suggesting that this be built into the City's policy to provide further clarity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

If the per diem values are amended as proposed, the City will be paying \$20.00 more per day per person. While the addition of the proposed flat rate of \$40.00 per night in lieu of formal accommodation (if choosing to stay with friends or family) is a new fee that would be payable by the City, this cost is significantly lower than any commercial accommodation's nightly rate and would be a significant savings to the municipality when utilized.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

5 - Good Governance

OPTIONS:

Option 1

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve POL-0042-FIN titled "Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expense" as presented.

OR Option 2

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve POL-0042-FIN titled "Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expense" with the following changes:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

OR Option 3

THAT the Community Advisory Committee recommend that Council take no action regarding POL-0042-FIN titled "Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expense" at this time.

SUBMITTED BY: Melisa Miles, Manager of Legislative Services

Concurrence: Donna Petrie, Senior Manager of Communications & Economic Development

Concurrence: Yari Nielsen, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Concurrence: Matthew Baldwin, RPP, MCIP, Director of Development Services

Concurrence: Leah Stohmann, RPP, MCIP, Director of Community Planning and Climate Change

Concurrence: Katelyn Balzer, P.Eng., Director of Engineering and Public Works

Concurrence: Michael Dillabaugh, CPA, CA, Director of Finance

Concurrence: Marie Watmough, Director of Legislative & Protective Services

Concurrence: Braden Hutchins, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

Concurrence: Darren Kiedyk, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Draft Amendment to POL-0042-FIN "Council and Staff Reimbursement for Expense"

Attachment 2: Current Policy (POL-0042-FIN)