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## **The Corporation of the City of Stratford Policy Manual**

<b>Policy Number:</b>	F.xx.xx
<b>Policy Section:</b>	Financial and Fiscal
<b>Department:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>Date Adopted:</b>	November 25, 2024
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<b>Policy Type:</b>	Council-adopted Policy

### **Travel and Conference Expense Policy**

#### **Policy Statement**

This policy is to provide the business rules and guidelines for travel and conference expenditures that support city business. This policy replaces T.1 and T.2 effective upon adoption.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide the business rules and guidelines for expenditures that support the Mayor, Members of Council, management and employees in performing their roles and in representing the community when attending conferences or events. The Mayor, Members of Council, management and employees are accountable to the public for the type and level of expenses incurred and are expected to exercise good judgement while incurring such expenses.

#### **Guiding Principles**

The City encourages elected officials, management and employees to become involved in conferences, conventions, training courses and workshops to network with other professionals, levels of government and to further develop their skills and knowledge to perform their duties.

Further, it is recognized that travel is sometimes required to conduct regular city business and that some of these costs are reimbursable.

It is municipal policy to reimburse elected officials, management and employees for specific expenses as provided herein incurred on the City's behalf while on authorized

corporation business. Such expenses must be reasonable in the circumstances and must be necessary and incidental to the performance of municipal business. The policy is not intended to reimburse elected officials and employees for expenses of a purely personal nature.

Failure to comply with any parts of the policy may result in an expense claim being denied.

### **Definitions**

“Elected Official” means the Mayor and any member of Council.

“Management” means members of the City’s leadership and management teams.

“Leadership team” means the Chief Administrative Officer and all Directors of departments.

“Employees” means staff not part of the leadership and management teams.

“Authorized person” means a person who has received approval to attend a conference or travel to a specific event or on corporate business.

### **Application**

This policy will apply to elected officials, management and employees. It will also apply to members of local boards and other citizens with necessary modifications, provided that prior approval for attendance to training or conferences is received either through the budget process or by resolution of Council. This policy is not intended to cover members and employees of the Police Services Board and Library Board which are governed by their own policies, unless this policy is adopted by their respective boards.

Any elected official, management or employee must have approval to attend a conference in advance of the event as outlined in this policy and are expected to bring back relevant information and materials that could benefit others that did not attend.

### **Authorization – Elected Officials**

Conference and travel costs are funded by an allocation in the annual budget for the Mayor and Council.

Approval to attend a specific conference or convention for any Member of Council requires authorization from the Mayor and Chair of Finance and Labour Relations Subcommittee, with confirmation by the Director of Corporate Services that sufficient budget dollars are available to accommodate the expenditure. Specific authorization is not required for the Mayor to attend a specific conference subject to available budget.

Consideration shall be given to equity between Members of Council, the value to the community, and the balance of funds available in the approved budget. The Member wishing to attend a conference must present an estimated budget of the total cost of

attendance when seeking approval. Sample form is attached as Appendix A, subject to administrative revisions.

### **Authorization – Management and Employees**

Conference and travel costs for management and employees are funded by an allocation in the annual budget within each department and divisional annual budgets.

Approval to attend a specific conference or convention for management and employees requires authorization from the applicable leadership team member. There is no approval required for leadership team members if there is sufficient detail in the approved budget and funding is included in the budget to accommodate the expenditure.

Consideration shall be given to impact on service delivery, the value to the Corporation, necessary requirements to maintain professional designations held, and the overall impact on the approved budget. Management and employees must ensure that the expected expenditures can be accommodated within the approved budget.

Authorization for third-party meals must be obtained from the CAO in writing in advance of the expenditure and accompany any claims for reimbursement or purchasing card supporting documentation.

### **Travel**

All transportation arrangements must be approved as established under the **Authorization** section of this policy and must be the most practical method of travel to minimize time and total cost. For example, if flying, flights booked well in advance are typically at lower rates than those booked at the last minute. Attempts must be made to obtain the best possible pricing and value.

In determining total cost, consideration should be given to the travel time required. For example, when a conference starts at 2:00 p.m., a flight may allow the attendee to travel the morning of the event, whereas a lower-cost method of travel may require the approved person to travel the day prior and necessitate an extra night's hotel stay. Whenever possible, approved persons attending the same event should travel together (i.e. carpooling) if there is an opportunity to minimize costs.

If a person is approved to travel by train or air, the City will cover reasonable costs to and from the hotel and terminal, such as community or airport transportation, taxi, uber or other. Travel to and from the conference venue for personal excursions will be the responsibility of the approved person and will not be eligible for reimbursement.

### **Vehicle Travel**

If an authorized person is travelling by vehicle, the City will reimburse reasonable costs for parking and highway tolls, however any vehicle infractions are the responsibility of the authorized person and not eligible for reimbursement.

Where an authorized person has access to a City-owned vehicle, such vehicle should be utilized for the purposes of travel, consistent with the City's Fleet policy.

If a personal automobile is used because of personal preference, reimbursement will be limited to the lesser of mileage and parking expenses or an alternative transportation which could be used to travel there within one day.

Authorized travel by personal vehicle on City business will be reimbursed at the prevailing Canada Revenue Agency rate for > 5,000 kilometers (plus \$0.01).

Authorized persons who use a personal vehicle regularly for City business are required to carry a minimum \$2,000,000 liability limit and are required to advise their insurer that their vehicle is used for City business and ensure their policy is rated correctly for that use. Proof of limits may be requested by the Director of Corporate Services at any time to support expense claims submitted for mileage or at the City Insurer's request. Elected officials should review their personal Automobile Accident Benefit limits to ensure that their coverage satisfies their individual needs.

#### Management and Employees:

Within a 75km radius of the City of Stratford, those using their own vehicles for approved work or Council-related business may claim mileage from the lesser distance from either the employee's normal place of work to approved destination or from employee's home to approved destination.

For travel outside a 75km radius of the City of Stratford, employees must check with the Fleet Supervisor for availability of a City vehicle before using a personal vehicle or rental car. If a Fleet vehicle is not available, the use of a personal vehicle or rental car is appropriate.

If a Fleet vehicle is reasonably available and a personal vehicle is used out of personal preference, reimbursement will be limited to actual gas receipts submitted.

#### **Accommodation**

Where possible, attendees should stay in the accommodation recommended by the conference organizer, if applicable, to take advantage of any negotiated reduced rates. Authorized persons should seek further approval if they are unable to book the reduced rate or find similar alternate accommodation at a similar rate. For this policy, 'similar' shall be a rate not more than 10% higher than the lowest posted negotiated rate of the specific accommodation. Where there is no pre-negotiated room rate, a reasonably priced accommodation should be selected.

In the case where a third-party booking company or website is used, the authorized person must ensure that appropriate receipts are available which itemize the accommodation costs, any incidental add-ons and all taxes separately. Separation of any fees and taxes is required for the City to claim any eligible HST rebates.

Reimbursement of accommodation will not occur without this detail, or may be at a reduced rate, to ensure maximum rebates can be claimed by the City.

Accommodation expenses are only eligible within any or all the following periods:

- the actual days of the conference, convention, training course or workshop;
- the day previous if the function begins before noon;
- the day following if the function ends after 6:00 p.m.;
- additional days required for travel if authorized per the **Authorization** section of this policy.

### **Event/Conference Registration**

An authorized person attending approved functions shall have the actual amount of the registration fee reimbursed by the City of Stratford. Wherever possible, capturing early registration discounts is encouraged.

Attendance of some types of conferences virtually may be a lower cost and more environmentally friendly alternative to travel. Both staff and elected officials are encouraged to explore these options when appropriate.

### **Companion Travel**

Registration fees and travel costs for companions, if the option is available, will not be reimbursed by the City of Stratford, and are the responsibility of the authorized person.

### **Meals and Incidentals**

Where event registration includes meals, no reimbursement for meals in those periods will be allowed. Where meals are not included in the registration, the cost of meals will be reimbursed as noted below.

An authorized person attending approved functions shall be eligible for reimbursement for meals plus taxes and gratuities to a maximum daily value of \$100 including taxes or gratuities.

Original itemized receipts showing what was purchased, breakdowns of tips and applicable taxes including HST are required to be eligible for reimbursement.

In the absence of original itemized receipts, the City will reimburse for meals in accordance with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) regulations currently in effect and described as the Simplified Method for claiming Meal Expenses. This method uses a flat

rate and is limited to the lesser of any amounts defined in this policy and the CRA maximums. Details of event attended, attendees, purpose and other details may be requested as supporting documentation and this method must be explicitly requested on the claim form.

If more than one eligible person is present at a meal and there is one bill, only one person may pay, and make the claim for the meal, noting the eligible individuals present.

### **Third-Party Business**

It is understood that as part of their positions, elected officials and members of the leadership team may be required to attend municipal government events customarily involving alcohol, such as municipal networking events, meetings with representatives from other levels of government or cultural events that result in furthering City business.

The reimbursement of **up to 2** alcoholic beverages per person in attendance with the elected official or leadership team member is permissible provided that:

- Approval has been obtained per the **Authorization** section of this policy;
- The circumstance is appropriate and reasonable for conducting City business;
- Best judgment and discretion must be used when determining whether alcohol purchases constitute a necessary expense for conducting the business at hand and evidence of such reasonability must exist;
- Consumption of alcohol must be reasonable, moderate and appropriate for conducting City business and all City policies and laws governing the consumption of alcohol, including the operation of a motor vehicle, must be adhered to;
- The detailed receipt for reimbursement must be accompanied by the name(s) of persons with whom the claimant is meeting as well as the reason for the meeting.

### **Ineligible expenses**

Examples of ineligible expenses are noted and may not be limited to:

- Room or travel upgrades beyond the lower cost options, such as from a room to a suite, or from economy to first class;
- Spousal or family expenses;
- Personal entertainment (hotel bar charges, pay-per-view, etc.);
- Personal side trips or outings while travelling for the specific event;
- Flight insurance premiums;
- Charges for excess personal luggage;
- Fines, late fees or other penalties incurred by an approved person;
- Meals, where meals were part of a registration/conference package.

### **Other Matters**

Detailed receipts are **required** to support eligible expenses.

If a Corporate Purchasing Card is an available option, this should be used for eligible expenses. Use of personal credit cards is discouraged when a purchasing card is available and should only be used in cases of emergency or where there is no purchasing card.

Expense claims are encouraged on a monthly basis. Claims for reimbursement must be submitted to Finance within 60 days or they will not be paid. All approved payments will be made electronically via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

Every reasonable effort shall be made by the approved person to give appropriate cancellation notice to avoid penalty or cancellation fees for accommodation and event registrations when the circumstance arises. Notification and/or confirmation of cancellation should be directed to the approver.

Any conventions, conferences, training courses and workshops outside the Province of Ontario and within North America shall not exceed one per year for any authorized person and no more than one authorized person may attend any one function outside the Province of Ontario. The only exception is where the authorized person has been invited to participate and the costs are all, or substantially covered by the organization extending the invitation. Any functions for elected officials outside North America must be approved by resolution of Council.

The limitations in the above do not apply to elected officials or employees who sit on national boards and committees who meet regularly throughout the year.

It is recognized that, from time to time, circumstances may arise that do not fit within the preceding guidelines. For management and employees, the Director of Corporate Services shall have discretion to make minor exceptions to this policy and for elected officials, the Chair or Vice Chair of the Finance and Labour Relations Committee shall have discretion to make minor exceptions to this policy that, in their opinion, fall within the overall spirit and intent of this policy.

The Director of Corporate Services has responsibility for administering this policy but shall not, unless otherwise outlined in the policy, have discretion or authority to approve other than minor exceptions.

This policy is effective immediately upon passage by Council and unless otherwise directed by Council, shall be reviewed every 5 years or at the discretion of the Chief Administrative Officer or Director of Corporate Services.

**Legislative Authority:**

- Not applicable

**Related Documents:**

- By-Law 20-98 Remuneration for Members of Council
- Purchasing Policy P.5.1



## **Appendix A – Sample Authorization Form**

Today's Date:

Name:

Email address:

Phone number:

Purpose /Event:

Anticipated outcomes from attending the event:

Date of Event/Conference (Start Travel/End Travel/Number of days):

Mode of travel:

Expected kms expected to be reimbursed (if applicable):

Anticipated total costs (include registration and any travel costs, as well as expected meal or other allowances expected):

Authorized by:

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Mayor and Chair/Vice Chair of Finance & Labour Relations Committee