STRATHCONA COUNTY

Policy

Elected Officials Business Expense Policy

Cross-reference: GOV-001-013 Elected Officials' Remuneration
Council Code of Conduct Bylaw 27-2018

Policy Statement

To address matters affecting Strathcona County, the County's Elected Officials must meet with stakeholders and participate in various community, committee, regional, and national events.

Elected Officials' duties often occur outside regular work hours require time away from family and personal life.

The Business Expense Policy provides clarity on which expenses will be reimbursed by the municipality and which expenses will not. Events listed in the policy are exemplary and not exhaustive. Expenses categorized as Public Relations or Professional Development, subject to conditions set out in the policy, are to be charged from the approved Elected Officials' operating budgets.

The reimbursement of expenses adheres to the following principles:

- Taxpayer dollars are used prudently and responsibly with a focus on accountability and transparency;
- Expenses for travel, meals, and hospitality support County business objectives;
- Plans for travel, meals, accommodation, and hospitality are necessary and economical with due regard for health and safety; and
- Only legitimate authorized expenses incurred during the course of undertaking County business are reimbursed.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction on Elected Officials' business expenses; enhance public confidence in the oversight of expenses incurred by the County's Elected Officials; and to enhance accountability and transparency through routine reporting of Elected Officials' business expenses.

Definitions

Elected Officials – Mayor and Councillors for Strathcona County.

Hospitality Event - an event or function where the provision of food, beverage, accommodations, transportation, and other amenities are provided, at public expense, to people who are not engaged in work for Strathcona County.

Resident Meeting - a meeting of a small, focused group of Ward residents for informing or discussing a specific issue of interest or concern to those residents rather than to the Ward as a whole. A Resident Meeting may be initiated by an Elected Official or by Administration. A Resident Meeting is generally held at a County facility or within a facility in a Ward.

Ward Goodwill Function - an event primarily targeted to residents within a specific Ward and which is not endorsed or approved by Council or contained within a Council-approved budget. Examples of a Ward Goodwill Function include Elected Official-hosted Christmas parties, barbeques or similar gatherings. Functions such as County park or facility openings (irrespective of location) are not Ward Goodwill Functions but are rather County-endorsed events. A Ward Goodwill Function may not be charged to a Public Relations Budget; any expenses for Ward Goodwill Functions shall be an Elected Official personal expense.

Ward Open House - an informal gathering of Ward residents for providing an opportunity to meet their Ward Councillor and to learn about issues of general interest to the Ward or the County as a whole. A Ward Open House is generally held at a County facility or within a facility in the Ward. County staff are not expected to attend a Ward Open House.

Working Session - a function where food, beverage, accommodation, transportation and other amenities are provided only for people who work for Strathcona County.

Guidelines

1. Boards and Committees Functions

   Elected Officials can charge the ticket or registration fee for a function related to any Council Committee to their Public Relations Budget.

2. Community Events, Charitable and Non-Profit Fundraisers

   a. Tickets and registration fees:

   Elected Officials invited to a community or regional charitable event or non-profit fundraiser by the charitable organization can charge the ticket or registration fee to their Public Relations Budget.

   b. Sponsorships:

   Elected Officials may provide door prizes or auction items for community events, charitable and non-profit fundraisers.

3. Federal Political Events

   The Federal *Canada Elections Act*, SC 2000, c. C-9, as amended, provides that no person or entity other than an individual who is a citizen or permanent resident shall make a contribution to a registered party, a registered association, a candidate, a leadership contestant or a nomination contestant. A municipality, being a corporation, is an ineligible contributor and cannot make contributions. Accordingly, any tickets, registration fees or donations to any federal registered party, registered association, a candidate, a leadership contestant or a nomination contestant are personal expenses of an Elected Official.

4. Provincial Political Events

   The Provincial *Election Finances and Contributions Act Disclosure Act*, RSA 2000, c. E-2 provides that a municipality is a prohibited corporation and may not make any contributions to a registered party, registered constituency association or registered candidate. Any ticket purchases or contributions, including items for door prizes, auctions, and the costs of attending political conventions, shall be Personal Expenses. An Elected Official attending a fundraiser, if attendance has been approved by County Council, may claim a meal expense as set out in Schedule "A" hereto.

5. Mayor's Representative

   If a Councillor is designated by the Mayor to represent the Mayor in an official capacity, the cost of the tickets for that Councillor and his or her spouse or guest, where applicable, pursuant to subsection 6 (b), will be charged to the Mayor's Public Relations Budget.

6. Guests

   a. If a guest accompanies an Elected Official to an out-of-town conference or convention, any expenses of the guest for travel, meals, or registration is considered a personal expense.
   b. Notwithstanding section 6 a., when a guest accompanies the Elected Official to a banquet or reception, their ticket may be charged to the Elected Official's Professional Development budget.
   c. When an Elected Official is invited to a social or fund-raising function in an official capacity, the ticket for a guest may be paid from the Elected Official's Public Relations Budget.

7. Resident Meetings/Ward Open Houses

   a. A Councillor may hold up to twelve (12) Ward Open Houses per year and charge expenses for newspaper advertising, facility rental and light refreshments to his or her Public Relations budget. Any additional Ward Open Houses will be considered a Councillor personal expense.

   b. No Ward Open Houses will be held after June 30 in an election year and until after the organizational Meeting immediately following an election.

   c. Elected Official-initiated Resident Meetings may be held at the discretion of the Elected Official and expenses for facility rental and light refreshments may be charged to their Public Relations budgets. Expenses incurred for resident meetings initiated by Administration will be charged to the County department initiating the meeting.

   d. An Elected Official may book space at a County facility for committee meetings to which the Elected Official serves in their capacity as an Elected Official. There will be no rental charges for rooms booked in a County facility. In the event space in a community hall is booked for a meeting, the rental cost, if any, will be reimbursed. After hours security costs for events before or after normal business hours and the costs of any refreshments, if required, will be charged to the hosting Elected Official's Public Relations budget or to the committee holding the meeting.

   e. County Hall or Community Centre conference rooms may be booked by Elected Officials for community meetings only if they will be in attendance. There will be no

rental charges for conference rooms booked in County Hall or Community Centre, provided the Elected Official is present at the meeting.

8. Business Expenses

Business expenses must remain within the individual operating budget of an Elected Official. Expenses which will exceed an Elected Official's total annual budget must be authorized by Council resolution prior to the expenditure being made. If expenses exceed an Elected Official's total annual budget and have not been authorized by Council prior to the expenditure, then an Elected Official may not use funds from any other ward budget to cover the excess and the Elected Official is personally responsible to reimburse the municipality for these costs.

9. Cell Phones and Mobile Devices

a. Cell phones and Mobile Devices are provided to Elected Officials in order to conduct County business. All fees and charges will be charged to individual Elected Officials' operating budgets.

b. While travelling, business-related cell phone and internet use may be made at the Elected Official's discretion and, where possible, cell phones should be used to avoid excessive charges levied through hotels.

c. The Elected Official shall contact Administration to ensure that adequate coverage plans are purchased to avoid excessive roaming charges.

d. Elected Officials who use their personal cell phone for County business will be reimbursed based on a reasonable allowance as per County procedure.

10. Criteria for Reimbursement of Expenses

a. Mandatory Requirements - General

i. Alcohol will not be reimbursed as part of Travel or Meal expense except for Hospitality Events.
ii. Hospitality is only provided when the event involves participants from outside the County. Functions involving only people who work for the County are not considered Hospitality Events; they are considered Working Sessions.

b. Elected Official's Responsibilities

i. Identify and review required business expenses to ensure cost effective options for travel, accommodation, etc. are selected.
ii. Submit a completed Councillor Professional Development, Convention and Conference Expense Report (FIN 12018-T) to the Chief Financial Officer for each event attended.
iii. Submit Councillor Expense Reports (FIN 12018-T) accompanied by all necessary receipts and/or documentation on a monthly basis. Receipts must be detailed and show the GST amount and GST registration number. A Visa/Mastercard slip is not a receipt for business expense purposes.

c. Reimbursement of Expenses

i. Travel: The most direct, economical and time efficient mode of transportation shall be utilized or, if an Elected Official chooses an alternate method, then reimbursement shall be limited to an amount equal to the cost of the most direct, economical and time efficient mode.
ii. Airfare: Economy class is preferred for travel durations of less than 4 hours. For travel durations greater than 4 hours, business class may be booked. Business class may also be booked or if a medical condition or business reason necessitates an upgraded travel class.
iii. Ground Transportation: Taxis or Ride Share are the preferred method of ground transportation. In a situation where a rental car is practical, the size and type of rental car should be appropriate for the number of people in the car, road conditions, and nature of need.
iv. Accommodations: When an Elected Official is required to travel on County business and accommodation away from the Elected Official's regular residence is necessary, the Elected Official may claim the actual cost of accommodation for a single room rate or a per diem for stays in a private residence in an amount set out in Schedule "A".
v. Meals: While conducting County business, an Elected Official may claim for meals in accordance with Schedule "A", and in the event of meal expenses exceeding the Schedule rates due to location of stay or economics of the location, reimbursement will be based on actual receipted expenses including gratuities. If more than one meal is purchased, provide name(s) of guests including the company represented and the purpose of the business meal. Gratuities are a reimbursable expense and should be appropriate to the location, service level and local protocol and are never to exceed 20% of the total bill.
vi. Transportation and Communication: An Elected Official may claim the following expenses with a receipt: bus fare, railway fare, limousine/taxi fare, parking charges, air fare, automobile rental, facsimile or e-mail charges.
vii. Kilometer Rates: An Elected Official who uses their personal vehicle for County business shall provide a driver's abstract if required by Human Resources. Elected Officials using personal vehicles for County business purposes shall be reimbursed for travel as per Schedule "A". All Elected Officials claiming kilometer rate reimbursement may be required to provide a statement from an insurance agent indicating if business insurance is or is not required when using a personal vehicle on County business (minimum $1,000,000 liability insurance). The cost of additional automobile insurance will be reimbursed based on a receipt or letter from the insurance agent.
viii. Medical Insurance: An Elected Official authorized to travel outside of Canada, who is not covered by Extended Health Care, shall arrange for and may claim for the cost of medical insurance to cover the period of authorized travel. The cost of passports for travel out of Canada and the cost of immunization for travel outside North America will be reimbursed.
ix. The Miscellaneous category of expenses is to provide for personal items as set out in Schedule A.
x. Special Provisions: If an Elected Official incurs business expenses not specifically authorized by this policy, the Chief Commissioner may, subject to availability of funds in an appropriate budget, authorize payment of such a business expense claim.
xi. A receipt is not required for a reimbursement of an expense for which an allowance can be claimed. This includes expenses such as meal allowances, mileage claims and meter parking.

11. Additional Expenses

    a. In addition to those expenses authorized for Elected Officials in the policy, Elected Officials may have additional business expenses arising from the promotion of the interests of Strathcona County which, subject to availability of budget funds, and subject to normal administration approvals, will be treated as Public Relations expenses.

    b. Hospitality Business Expenses: An Elected Official engaged in authorized County business may claim for alcoholic beverages purchased at special events for consumption while promoting the interests of Strathcona County. Functions or events of this nature are considered Hospitality Events. A detailed expense claim stating the names of all individuals involved and the purpose of the Hospitality Event shall be included with any such claim.

12. Administration

    The administration of the regulations set out in this Policy is the responsibility of each individual Elected Official in cooperation with the Chief Financial Officer. The Chief Financial Officer must approve each expense claim prior to payment.

13. Public Disclosure of Elected Official's Business Expense

    Elected Officials' expense reports will be posted on the Strathcona County public website.

    Expense reports must, at a minimum, include the following components:
    - name of Elected Official who incurred the expense;
    - date of transaction(s);
    - transaction amount(s); and
    - expense category (travel, including transportation, accommodation, meals and incidentals; and hospitality).

    Information that would normally be withheld under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, such as personal information, must be redacted from supporting documentation and will not be publicly disclosed.

14. Recording of Joint Elected Officials' Expenses

    In the event that two (2) or more Elected Officials agree to contribute funds towards a joint expense, such as, but not limited to, promotional items for a Ward event, the financial commitment will be recorded in writing using the an administrative form and a copy of the form will be retained.

Policy Record

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Replaces: N/A

Lead Role: *Governance Advisory Committee*

Administrative Review: Corporate Finance

SCHEDULE "A"
Councillor Business Expense
Fee Schedule

Section 1 Mileage

Reimbursement for business travel outside Strathcona County at 1 cent below CRA Canada Revenue Agency Rate;

Reimbursement for business-related mileage within Strathcona County at a rate of 30.5 percent of CRA rate.

Section 2 Meals

Reimbursement for meals will be equivalent to the Federal Government rate.

Section 3 Miscellaneous Reimbursable Expenses

- Laundry and dry cleaning when travel is longer than four consecutive nights.
- Internet connectivity in hotel, airplanes or other public places.
- Personal items such as tips and the purchase of small items such as tooth brushes, etc.

Section 4 Conventions

- Registration
- Transportation
- Meals
- Receipted Hotel Charge or $40.00 /night in private accommodations (No receipt required)