

Corporate Policy and Procedure



Policy	City Council Expense Policy
Category	Departmental
Authority	City Clerk's Office
Related Policies	Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Local Boards Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Travel and Expense Policy
Approved By	City Council
Effective Date	January 28, 2025
Revision Date	N/A

Policy Statement

The City of Guelph is dedicated to maintaining fair, transparent, and responsible financial practices regarding the expenditures necessary to support elected officials in their statutory roles.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish and provide guidance for members on the procedures and practices for the reimbursement of expenditures related to attending events, participating in educational programs and public communications.

Guiding Principles

The following guidelines shall be applied with respect to the application and interpretation of this Policy:

1. Code of Conduct – members must comply with the Code of Conduct for City Council and Local Boards.
 2. Accountability – members are stewards of City resources and are accountable to the public for the expenses they incur. Reimbursement of an expense should not result in a member receiving any product, service or asset for personal use, benefit or gain.
 3. Transparency – the public has a right to know how public funds allocated to members are spent.
 4. The use of City funds for any election related purposes/activities (as defined in the City's [Use of Corporate Resources During an Election Policy](#)) is not permitted.
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Definitions

Event – Includes an organized annual general meeting, conference, congress, convention, exposition, forum, program, session, summit, workshop, or similar engagement, targeted to a municipal government audience.

Educational Program – An educational program or course offered through a university, college, municipal government organization, municipal association, or other third party which offers a certificate or other proof of completion, and covers topics targeted to a municipal government audience.

Member – An elected official at the City of Guelph, including the Mayor and all City Councillors.

Municipal Government Organization – Includes, but is not limited to, such entities as the Canadian Urban Institute, the Institute on Governance, Municipal Government Institute, ICLEI-Municipal Governments for Sustainability, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Community Heritage Ontario, etc.

Municipal Association – Includes, but is not limited to, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Ontario Municipalities, the Ontario Good Roads Association, and sub-groups of these associations.

Town Halls, Public Meetings and Public Consultations – Includes meetings hosted/organized by a member that are open to the general public and held for the purpose of collecting feedback and/or sharing information.

General Communications – Includes the production, printing and distribution of physical or digital newsletters, brochures, pamphlets or similar materials, for the purpose of sharing information with the general public and advertising related to town halls, public meetings and public consultations.

Policy Application and Exclusions

This Policy applies to members:

1. When participating in municipal government events, educational programs, or events where the Mayor, or designate, is representing the City as the head of Council.
2. When communicating with community members through town halls, public meetings and public consultations as well as general communications.

The allocation provisions of this Policy are in addition to expenses incurred by members of Council relating to their service on the board of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and/or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Allocation of Funds

The provisions of this Policy with respect to the allocation of an equal share of approved budgets do not apply to the Mayor.

Government Events and Educational Programs

Each member will be allocated an equal share of the approved budget for attendance at municipal government organization events and educational programs. Unused funds may not be carried over into future years.

Communications

Each member will be allocated an equal share of the approved budget for expenses related to town halls, public meetings, public consultations and general communications. Unused funds may not be carried over into future years.

Approval for Spending Beyond Allocation

The City Clerk may approve requests that exceed the allocation assigned to an individual member in cases where the overall budget is likely to be underspent by year end. Despite this, the City Clerk may not approve any spending which exceeds the overall approved budget.

Mandatory Requirements

General Administration

1. Permitted expenses may be incurred directly by members or by Mayor and City Council Office staff using corporate purchase cards.
2. Reimbursement claims for expenses incurred directly by members must follow basic accounting and audit principles:
 - a. Expenses must be directly incurred. Expenses incurred by third parties cannot be expensed.
 - b. Expenses must be consistent with what is permitted in this Policy.
 - c. Proper documentation must be provided for all expenses, including original detailed receipts, invoices or bills.
 - d. Invoices, bills, and receipts must include a description of the goods purchased or services rendered, the cost, taxes and HST registration number, if applicable.
 - e. Any funds remaining unspent at the end of the year cannot be carried over into future years.
 - f. Expenses must be submitted for reimbursement within 60 calendar days of incurring the expense.
 - g. Expenses will not be reimbursed if the total amount to be reimbursed is less than \$15. Expenses totaling under \$15 can be accumulated and submitted once per year.

Eligible Expenses

Members may expense costs associated with the following activities, if those activities are associated with their statutory role as elected officials:

- transportation
- accommodation
- event and educational program registration
- meals and incidentals
- town halls, public meetings or public consultations
- general communications

Ineligible Expenses

The following activities may not be expensed or reimbursed:

- alcohol purchased for/during meetings only involving City staff
- claims for loss of personal effects
- companion registration fees and expenses
- entertainment
- gifts and hospitality
- medical and hospital treatments in excess of City sponsored health care benefit limits
- personal effects (luggage, clothing, magazines, etc.)
- personal memberships
- personal services (shoeshines, valet, spa treatments, hair styling, etc.)
- personal vehicle costs (maintenance, repair costs, towing fees, car washes, etc.)
- movie or cable/satellite television fees charged by hotels or airlines
- sporting events
- side trips including stopover charges and additional accommodation costs for personal or private reasons
- sightseeing tours
- traffic and parking fines

Transportation

Transportation costs include:

- air, rail, bus fare or automobile; members are encouraged to select the most cost and time effective method of transportation
- automobile mileage will be reimbursed at the rate established in the staff Travel and Expense Policy
- expenses associated with the use of a rented automobile for travel to and from the function, provided the expense does not exceed the cost of automobile mileage for the same purpose (use of the automobile for personal business is not an allowable expense)
- parking
- travel cancellation insurance
- incidental travel by taxi or public transit
- departure taxes from transportation terminals
- travel to and from public transportation terminals
- toll highway charges
- long-term parking for air travel exceeding 24 hours

Accommodation

If an overnight stay is required, accommodation will be reimbursed at a rate in accordance with the single room rates charged for the function, or the hotel's rate for a standard single room, whichever is less. Reimbursement of accommodation expenses for additional days may be approved. The reason for the approval (i.e. lower air fare, time change, etc.) must be documented on the expense claim form.

Event and Educational Program Registration

Registration and other fees (e.g. textbooks) associated with participation in events and educational programs may be expensed or reimbursed in full. To be eligible, all events and educational programs must be targeted to a municipal government audience or be related to City business.

Meals and Incidentals

Meals are expensed or reimbursed at actual costs upon submission of appropriate receipts. Elected officials will be reimbursed for meal expenses up to a daily maximum as outlined in the staff Travel and Expense Policy.

It is understood that as part of their position, members may be required to attend municipal government events customarily involving the consumption of alcohol, such as cultural events and meetings with non-City staff. Purchases of alcohol for personal consumption may be eligible for reimbursement if they are reasonable and appropriate for conducting City business. Members should use discretion when determining whether alcohol purchases constitute a necessary expense.

Town Halls, Public Meetings or Public Consultations

Costs associated with organizing and hosting town halls, public meetings or public consultations may be expensed or reimbursed at actual costs upon the submission of appropriate receipts. Costs may include, but are not limited to, facility rental and cleaning fees, materials (posters, printouts, markers, etc.), catering and necessary technology (e.g. microphone and speaker rental fees, etc.), etc.

General Communications

Costs associated with general communications may be expensed or reimbursed at actual costs upon the submission of appropriate receipts. Costs may include, but are not limited to, the production, printing and distribution of physical or digital newsletters, brochures, pamphlets or similar materials for the purpose of sharing information with the public and advertising related to town halls, public meetings and public consultations.

All communications from members must comply with the following criteria:

- is not misleading or a false representation
- does not contain inappropriate content or language
- does not adversely affect public safety
- does not include violence or hatred
- is not offensive in style, content or method of presentation
- the visual style and content is clearly distinct and separate from official City of Guelph corporate communications
- is appropriate in the context of the proposed display location where applicable (e.g. a playground versus the Sleeman Centre).

Approvals and Dispute Resolution

Members are responsible for submitting expense claims that comply with this Policy and the City Clerk is responsible for approving expense claims which comply with this Policy. In the event of disputes or extraordinary circumstances which may arise regarding the interpretation of this Policy, the City Treasurer will meet with the City

Clerk and the member submitting the claim and make every reasonable effort to resolve the matter.

Disputes or extraordinary circumstances that cannot be resolved will be referred to City Council for final decision.