



MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE

REPORT NO. LS-007-24

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Director of Legislative Services/Clerk
MEETING DATE: April 15, 2024
SUBJECT: Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops Policy Review

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. LS-007-24 **BE RECEIVED** for information;

AND THAT Council **CONSIDER** the workshop expense submitted by Deputy Mayor Smibert;

AND THAT Council **APPROVE** the Revised Draft "Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops," as attached and staff **BE DIRECTED** to bring forward an implementing By-Law at a future meeting of Council.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is in response to Council direction for staff to review the current "Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshop" Policy (C-B-2.1), as attached, and provide a draft of an updated policy, for Council's consideration.

In line with the current policy, the purpose of this report is also for Council to consider the expense submitted by Deputy Mayor Smibert respecting a Procedural By-law Workshop by AMCTO.

BACKGROUND:

As per Council Policy C-B-2.1, "Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops", members of Council may attend seminars and workshops requiring no overnight accommodations, subject to the approval of Council in the form of a resolution. Therefore, a resolution approving the expense is required prior to staff approving this expense.

At the February 26th Council meeting, Council directed staff to review the "Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops" Policy (C-B-2.1). Staff have completed this review and have included a draft of an updated policy, based on comparisons

to other Middlesex County and area municipalities' policies. Below are highlights of the staff recommended changes to the policy for Council review:

One of the main changes is no longer requiring a Council resolution to approve attendance at seminars and workshops along with the most frequently attended conferences:

- Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
- Ontario Good Roads Association (ORGA)
- Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM)
- Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA)

Registration will be subject to available allowances, and if a conference/convention is held outside of the province; a Council resolution would be required. Members can still request to attend alternate conferences/conventions and would require approval in the form of a Council resolution prior to registration.

Currently the policy sets an annual allowance of \$6,000 per member of Council for conventions/conferences, seminars and workshops, but this amount does not include registration fees. Staff reviewed the last 5 years (2019-2023) amounts as reported as part of the annual remuneration reporting (which includes registrations in the amounts) and found that over this period an average of \$2,070.22 per member was spent. It was determined that in this policy to just state the amount is determined annually as part of the budget process. By not predetermining the amount for the budget in a policy, it provides flexibility for Council, more accurate budgeting and in future the allowances will include the costs of registration. The provision for allowing other members of Council to use parts of un-utilized allowances, with Council approval, is still in effect and will allow for more flexibility if needed for special circumstances.

Currently, the policy says the registration is not to be counted into the allowance, however after some investigation it was discovered that the registration was removed in 2018, when the 1/3 tax exemption for Council expenses was taken away. Since 2018, only twice have members of Council used more than \$6,000 and the registration is included in the annual reporting of Council expenses.

The updated policy also provides clarity on a few items:

- Alcohol purchases are not eligible expenses.
- Social activities such as golf tournaments are not eligible expenses.
- That Municipally organized training to all members of Council does not count towards their total allowances.
- No reimbursement for meals if they are provided at the conference/training
- Travel per diems (1/2 day only) will apply if travel to destination is greater than 300 kms away.
- Legislative Services will register and book the accommodation if required and that they need to be notified to do any cancellations.
- That left over allowances cannot be carried over into future years.

- Expenses are to be submitted to Legislative Services, who will review and ensure they meet the requirements of the policy, and they will ensure with Finance the expense is within the allowances.

This policy is set to be reviewed within the first year of each new Council term, this will provide a good opportunity for the new Council to learn the policy and provide any comments. It can also be brought forward at any time, at Council's discretion.

COMMENTS:

Staff have reviewed a number of policies relating to attendance at conventions/conferences, seminars and workshops and feel that this policy provides clear guidance to all and provides efficiencies by removing the need for Council resolutions for common events such as the ROMA conference.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

No implications for the 2024 budget year, however, it may alter the amounts in the 2025 budget, allocated for Council conventions/seminars, which would be part of the budget approval process.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Pillar: *Sustainability*

Goal: *Ensure that the Municipality maintains fiscal prudence, along with affordable and sustainable taxation levels*

CONSULTATION:

E. Schinbein, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer
N. Bowery, Financial Analyst/Purchasing Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

DRAFT - Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops Policy
CURRENT - Attendance at Conferences/Conventions, Seminars and Workshops Policy
Workshop reimbursement request.

Prepared by: J. Nethercott, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

Reviewed by: D. Barrick, Chief Administrative Officer