

**COUNCIL REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Corporate Services

**Date:** January 2, 2024

**Subject:** Council Travel – NCLGA, UBCM, LGLA Costs and Policy

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council receives this report for information.

**BACKGROUND:**

During the December 11, 2023 Regular Council Meeting, Council requested that Staff bring forward a report that calculated the cost for all council members to attend the yearly NCLGA, UBCM, and LGLA conventions. Currently, each Councillor has a budget of \$5,000 (\$10,000 for the Mayor), to spend at their discretion to attend conventions and webinars throughout the year. Council has identified three conventions which they are considering allocating a budget for all council members to attend annually and not affect their individual budgets.

**ESTIMATION:**

Staff have reviewed attendance fees and hotel room prices to estimate what costs would be for all Council Members to attend these three conventions. Table 1 presents 2023 costs for hotel, convention attendance, and expense reports as a sum total, then estimates what the cost would have been if all of Council had attended that convention.

**Table 1: 2023 Costs**

Convention	# of Council Members (2023)	Hotel Booking cost total (2023)	Convention Costs Total (2023)	Claimed Expenses (2023)	Total 2023 Cost	Estimated Cost for 7 Council Members
NCLGA	3	\$2,496.65	\$2,362.50	\$457.94	\$5,137.09	\$11,986.54
UBCM	3	\$6,751.85	\$3,045.00	\$1,807.46	\$11,604.34	\$27,076.79
LGLA	4	\$1,112.50*	\$1,890.00	\$585.70	\$3,588.20	\$6,557.36**

\* One Councillor stayed for only one night, so the total price for 4 hotel rooms for the entire duration of the convention would be \$1,271.36

\*\* This value is calculated assuming that all attendants would have required hotel bookings for the entire duration of the convention

**Table 2: Estimated 2024 Costs**

This table provides an estimated calculation of convention costs. Absent hotel and expense data has been replaced with the 2023 amount, adjusted by the 2023 CPI (3.1%), then adjusted to account for a difference in the number of attendants, and written in red.

Convention	# of Attendants	Hotel Booking cost total	Estimated Convention Costs Total (2024)*	Estimated Expenses (2024)**	Estimated total 2024 Cost	Estimated Cost for 7 Council Members
NCLGA	4 Council Members	\$2,919.12	\$3,464.16	\$629.52	\$6,796.29	\$13,809.09
UBCM	5 Council Members	\$9,632.00	\$5,182.35	\$3,105.85	\$17,920.20	\$25,088.28
LGLA	1 Council Members	\$727.32	\$495.00	\$603.25	\$1,825.57	\$12,778.99

\* Calculated from the convention fee, not the Convention Costs Total (2023) from Table 1

\*\*The Estimated Expenses (2024) Column in Table 2 is oversized. Expenses are not usually uniform between Council Members, and the estimated values are likely to be lower than represented in Table 2.

### Analysis

The sum of total 2023 costs for the three conventions was \$20,329.63. The estimated cost for 7 members attending the three conventions is \$45,620.69. The sum of estimated total 2024 costs for the three conventions is \$26,542.06. The estimated cost for 7 members attending the three conventions is \$51,676.36. As estimated claim expenses are not representatives of future estimated expenses, these totals can be reduced by cost-saving measures such as using District vehicles, flying when airfare is cheaper than gasoline costs, and travelling in groups.

## **Policy Creation**

In addition to determining whether a separate budget for these conventions is established for Council, it is staff's recommendation that Council proceed with developing a policy and procedure that outlines the expectations and approval process for attendance at conferences. This will not only provide transparency for the public on travel expenditures and activities of Council, but also aid in future budget creation and administration.

For example, the City of Fort St. John Policy No. 20/20 addresses council memberships, conference attendance, and travel policy. This policy determines nine associations with conferences that Mayor and council are authorized to attend, as well as deciding who is authorized to attend a given conference. This policy also allows miscellaneous conferences to be attended by Council members provided the conference topic is one of their portfolio responsibilities and a resolution is passed to authorize attendance.

## **Decision Options**

Council may wish to consider one or a combination of the following options for next steps:

- Increase the budget to accommodate for more Councillor Travel
- Create a Policy that determines a list of conferences that Councillors will have access to a bespoke budget to attend at their discretion.
- Create a Policy that establishes a list of annually attended conventions and a procedure to authorize Council Members to attend conventions not on this list as Miscellaneous Conventions.
- Create a Policy that identifies cost-saving measures that minimize travel expenses incurred.
- Leave the budget, individual allocations, and approval process as is.

## **BUDGETARY IMPACT:**

The current conference and travel budget for Mayor and Councillors is \$40,000. The Mayor is allocated \$10,000 and each Councillor is allocated \$5,000. Table 2 of this report estimates a total cost of \$51,676.36 for the three conferences in 2024.

If Council wished to maintain the current individual budget allocations for discretionary travel as well as set aside funding for all of Council to attend LGLA, NCLGA, and UBCM, the 2024 budget would need to be increased.

Staff have identified a funding source for a portion of this increase – the \$34,870 previously allocated for the Northeast Resource Municipalities Coalition. The remaining shortfall of \$16,806.36 could be made up several ways – either through property tax collection (0.32%



increase) or reducing individual budget allocations (\$5000/\$10,000) now that the major conference expenses would be covered.

**COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

**Community and Social Development**

- Our investment in the municipality's services and infrastructure, our commitment to principles of social equity and well-being, and our belief in the value of resident engagement, creates a healthy community in which everyone feels valued and enjoys a high quality of life.

**Strong Governance and Finances**

- As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Rowan Paulsen, Local Government Intern

**Reviewed By:** Corporate and Financial Services

**Approved By:** Chief Administrative Officer