SUBJECT: Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences - Amendments (FCS04065(b)) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences as amended - attached hereto as Appendix “A” to Report FCS04065(b) be approved

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences has been revised and is attached as Appendix “A” to Report FCS04065(b). This policy outlines the expenses eligible for reimbursement and authorization requirement for attendance at business events, seminars and conferences by Elected Officials and City of Hamilton employees. Changes are being made in an effort to tighten controls and ease the administration of the policy.

BACKGROUND:

On May 12, 2004, Council Report #04-008, Item 7, Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences was approved by City Council. Since that time an annual review of the policy has been done to identify areas of concern brought forward by Internal Audit reports or employees, and to ensure the policy is current.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The policy has been amended as follows:

- Section 2 Advance and Expense Reimbursement Authorization – Travel advances will not be made for less than $250.
- Section 9 Reporting – Due date for submitting expense claims has been increased from 20 days to 30 working days.
- Section 9 Reporting – Expenses submitted with amounts unsubstantiated by proper receipts will automatically be adjusted and processed for the lesser amount. In addition, if the amount advance exceeds the amount due to the employee, the City reserves the right to have monies deducted from the employees pay. The appropriate authorization will be included in the application form for Advance payments.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

As a result of a policy review, the Policy for Business Travel, Seminar and Conferences has been revised.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

N/A

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Approving the attached policy, Appendix “A” to Report FCS04065(b), will result in the revision of the current Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences most recently approved by Council on June 15, 2005.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

The Policy for Business Travel, Seminar and Conferences has been amended to increase internal controls over the reporting process.
CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
A policy enabling the administration of business travel supports learning opportunities for public servants.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
A policy enabling the administration of business travel supports learning opportunities for public servants.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
A policy enabling the administration of business travel supports learning opportunities for public servants.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☑ Yes ☐ No
A policy enabling the administration of business travel supports learning opportunities for public servants.

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No
Life-long learning is supported.
A policy enabling the administration of business travel supports learning opportunities for public servants.
POLICY

This policy applies to all business travel where an overnight stay is required and provides for the reimbursement of expenses incurred by those persons authorized to attend. The employees of the Police Services, Hamilton Entertainment Convention Facilities Inc. and the Hamilton Public Library are to follow this travel policy as approved by their individual boards.

1. ATTENDANCE AUTHORIZATION

Conditional upon the availability of funds provided in the current budget.

All members of Council will follow and uphold the requirements of this policy to substantiate travel expenditures submitted for reimbursement. Supporting documentation must include and clearly identify the event attended, date of the event, purpose of the event and, when applicable, identification of all individuals whose expenses are reimbursed with their submission.

Attendance by Elected Officials at any conference, seminar or other business travel requires Council Approval where applicable.

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<tr>
<th>Traveler</th>
<th>Travel within Canada &amp; United States Approved by:</th>
<th>Travel outside Canada &amp; United States Approved by:</th>
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<td>City Manager</td>
<td>City Manager</td>
<td>Mayor</td>
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<td>General Manager/ Executive Directors</td>
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<td>Directors</td>
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<td>Other employees</td>
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Approval for travel must be obtained before the trip is taken. An approved Travel Advance Form must be submitted to Accounts Payable before the travel if an advance is being requested or attached to the payment requisition for registration or other travel expenses being paid in advance.

2. ADVANCE AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT AUTHORIZATION

Travel advances will not be made for less than $250. If the estimated cost of out of pocket expenses is less than $250, the employee must claim for a refund upon submission of final travel expenses. Requests for cash advances are not mandatory and discretion should be used when determining the requirement for each trip.

Application for travel advances will be signed indicating authority for the City to recover through the Payroll system any advances unaccounted for.

Travel advances are subject to the approvals granted under Section 1 above.

Actual travel expenses that are less than 10% greater than the original approved estimated cost of travel can be approved by departmental signing authority.

Actual travel expenses that are greater than 10% over the original approved estimated cost of travel must be approved by the approver of the travel as outlined in the approval chart in Section 1 above.

In exceptional circumstances, the City Manager may approve staff expenses over or outside the limits of this policy.

3. REGISTRATION

Subject to the approvals granted in Section 1 above, request for payment of the registration fee for the delegate to attend the conference or meeting is forwarded to the Financial Services Division. Advance discounts should be realized where possible.

An approved Travel Advance Form must be submitted to Accounts Payable with the request to pay registration fees or other travel expenses in advance of the trip.

Copy of course, conference or seminar agenda is required providing information on cost, location, dates and meals.

This information must be attached to the Travel Expense Form when submitted for final accounting. Any fees paid prior to the conference are to be reflected on the Travel Advance/Reimbursement Form to be submitted to Financial Services.
4. TRANSPORTATION

The most economical and efficient mode of transportation is as follows:

- Economy airfare including all applicable taxes, surcharges and cancellation insurance:

  NOTE: Upgrades from economy airfare will be acceptable for non North American air travel to no higher than business class in recognition of the travel times involved.

- Train/bus fare when applicable.

- Transfer fees to and from transportation terminals at points of departure and arrival should be the most economically feasible method available as circumstances warrant. Parking expenses should be included in this cost decision.

- Car rental, including fuel purchases, instead of public transportation may be claimed providing it is more economical or if required under certain circumstances. Authorization as per Section 1 must be received prior to departure and must be clearly indicated on the Travel Advance Form. A reputable rental company must be used to ensure adequate insurance coverage is secured. A national rental chain is considered to be a reputable company as opposed to a local operation. Optional insurance on rental cars should be specified and pre-approved.

- Where an individual uses his/her own car for business travel their personal insurance rates may be affected. Employees are responsible for ensuring that they have adequate insurance coverage. If personal insurance assessments are increased due to the use of a personal car for business travel, a request for reimbursement including documentation substantiating the claim can be made to Accounts Payable for an amount as approved by Council or in the collective agreement. The current applicable mileage rate for the use of personal automobiles on City business will be reimbursed. This rate is determined by the current corporate rate, or by collective agreements for unionized employees. While operating a personal automobile on City business, the individual is responsible for all vehicular costs, for example, repairs, fines, fuel insurance, deductibles, etc. Mileage will be reimbursed from the regular place of work, or from the employee’s residence, whichever is less.
• Unless exceptional circumstances apply (see note below), the charges for the use of a personal automobile shall not exceed the equivalent cost of economy airfare, plus airport parking and transfers.

• Shared transportation is encouraged when appropriate.

**NOTE:** Written justification (supported cost comparison) for use of personal automobile when air or train travel appears to be the most appropriate means of transportation must be obtained at the time of initial authorization to attend.

Use of personal automobile may be appropriate when traveling with bulky displays or traveling in groups.

5. ACCOMMODATION

Reasonable accommodation expenses where overnight accommodation is required are allowable as follows:

• The accommodation chosen should be the most economical and advantageous to the conduct of City business.

• The actual cost of a single room will be allowed provided such cost does not exceed the “Government Rate” when available.

• Receipts are required in support of all such expenses and must show the place, date and number of days or part days and the rate per day for single occupancy.

6. PER DIEMS

Per Diem represents the maximum that will be paid without receipts when overnight stay is required. Department heads may approve a lesser amount.

A “Per Diem” expense allowance, at a rate approved by Council from time to time, to cover the costs of meals, gratuities, personal telephone charges (other than reasonable telephone charges for calls to family at home which is not to exceed one per day) and all other expenses not covered by Sections 3, 4 and 5 will apply only when overnight accommodation is required. Where some meals are provided, the per diem will be reduced as follows:

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<th>Meal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
<td>$15.00</td>
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<td>Dinner</td>
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• One per diem is allowed for each official registered full day of the event attended when overnight accommodation is required. Including the ½ day per diems for travel days, reimbursements generally equate to one per diem for each night of accommodation.

• Reasonable expenses incurred while traveling to and from the event or partial registration days will be reimbursed either by submission or receipts as evidence of the expenses incurred or by claiming one half of the per diem reduced accordingly by meals provided. If no receipts are submitted for travel days, the ½ day per diem will be reduced by the meals provided which could result in no reimbursement for that day.

• Under extenuating circumstances, people traveling under this policy may be reimbursed for meals upon submission of receipt even if the meal is supplied by the conference. In this circumstance, there must be a valid reason for the person not being able to attend the meal as supplied by the conference, and this expenditure must be pre-approved.

• When overnight accommodation is not required, personal meal expenses will be reimbursed based upon submitted receipts to a maximum of the above table.

• Per diem claims for all approved travel in the United States and abroad will be paid in U.S. dollars to compensate for any additional expenses.

• For non North American travel only, reimbursement in excess of this maximum will made if the actual expenses are reasonable in the opinion of the department head and proper receipts are submitted for all expenses. Approval of these expenses in excess of maximum per diem rates will be made on an individual basis, subject to their merits and general policy for reimbursement of allowable expenses.

• While this policy addresses the maximum that the City will pay for travel, the individual may choose to upgrade at his/her own expense. If paid directly by the City, reimbursement must be received at time of registration. Examples include additional accommodation expenses for an accompanying spouse or extended stays.

7. MEDICAL INSURANCE

City employees and Elected Officials have coverage under the City’s group plan for in country travel. Employees and Elected Officials will be reimbursed for additional medical coverage they choose to purchase for out of country travel only. An appropriate receipt substantiating this claim is required when submitting this expense.
8. EXTENDED STAYS

At times, and with prior written authorization, special travel savings may be available to the City if the individual traveling stays longer than the duration of the business stay. Reimbursement of costs for extended stay will be made only if it can be demonstrated that there are overall cost savings associated with the extended stay. Any loss of work days due to the "extended" travel must be charged to the employee’s vacation entitlement. Savings must be substantiated by airline quotes, etc.

Sometimes employees pay for extended stays themselves. This is allowable as long as it can be proved ahead of time that there is no cost to the City for this extended stay, and the employee uses their vacation time.

9. REPORTING

All expense claims/reimbursements must be submitted to the Financial Services Division within 30 working days of the event. Claims without travel advances are subject to the same deadlines. Reimbursements of advanced funds must be accompanied by a receipt issued by the Financial Services Division. It is the employee’s responsibility to deposit all refunds of travel advances to the City of Hamilton bank account.

If an employee’s expense claim “actual” is overdue under this policy, the individual will be notified in writing with a copy to the General Manager. Elected officials with an overdue “actual” expense claim form will be notified in writing. Additional expense claims/advance requests including mileage claims and all other reimbursements will not be processed until the past due actual has been received.

Expenses unsubstantiated by proper receipts are not allowable. Travel expenses which have been submitted without receipts will automatically be processed in Accounts Payable by deducting the unsubstantiated amount. If this action causes the advance to exceed the adjusted claim, the employee will be notified and required to pay the difference. Should the payment not be made within a reasonable time period, the city reserves the right to deduct the amount owing to the City from the employee’s pay.
A minimum one-page evaluation report on any conference, seminar or field trip requiring overnight accommodation shall be completed and filed with the final expense claim, with a copy to his/her immediate supervisor. In the case of a General Manager, a copy shall be filed with the City Manager. Elected officials are exempt from preparing this report. The standard report format is attached as an Appendix to this policy.

ITEMS NOT ALLOWABLE

Claims for reimbursement will **not** be allowed for:

- **Personal Effects and Services** – Claims for loss of personal effects, for medical and hospital treatment, for purchase of trunks, hand luggage, clothing and other personal equipment, or for personal services such as, shoe shines, valet services and other personal expenses.

- Items not substantiated by receipts, except for per diem claims, will not be reimbursed.

- Gratuities are covered by the per diem. They are to be excluded from reimbursement unless justifiable circumstances (see note below).

**NOTE:** Handling charges for bulky items such as exhibits are permissible provided they are indicated separately on the advance form and pre-approved. Receipts should be obtained where at all possible; however, expenses without receipts will be reimbursed if they were pre-approved and are reasonable (in the opinion of the department head) and equal to or less than the pre-approved amount.

- Long distance phone calls are covered by the per diem. They are to be excluded from reimbursement as appropriate **unless** these calls were made for City business and in consideration of being out-of-town on City business, one call per day to family at home will be allowed. These must be properly identified on the hotel and/or cell bill.

**REFERENCE**
Forms: Travel Expenses
Standard Travel Report Conference Findings
### Conference Findings

Employee Name:  
Employee Position:  
Division:  
Event (and dates attended):  
Location:  
Total Cost:  

Describe in one or two paragraphs (or in point form) one or more findings from your attendance at this event that should be shared with your fellow employees or senior management of the Department and Corporation. Consider how it may improve the job performance of others, or result in improved public/service delivery and customer service, or contribute to improved budgetary performance by your Division, our Department and the City (new revenues, cost reductions, greater productivity, etc.). Include networking opportunities or learning experiences that resulted by your attendance.

__________________________

__________________________

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Will this information help the Department, and City, achieve their goals and, if so, which goals in particular?

__________________________

__________________________

**Please rate the Conference** *(1 is very poor, 10 is excellent)*

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Recommended future attendance by self or others  

Please fill out this form to evaluate business travel when overnight accommodation is required.