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

RECOMMENDATION:
That the Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences as amended – attached hereto as Appendix “A” to report FCS04065(c) be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
The Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences has been revised and is attached as Appendix “A” to report FCS04065(c). 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 to tighten approval levels and as a response to issues raised by users 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 two reviews of the policy have been done to identify areas of concern brought forward and to ensure the policy is current. The most recent review was done in June 2006.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

The current policy has been amended as follows:

- The approval levels have been changed to reflect that all out of Province travel must be approved by the General Manager.
- Out of pocket expenses incurred in advance of the travel can be reimbursed by making a notation on the Travel Advance Form.
- The cost of airplane seat selection is a reimbursable expense.
- Expenses incurred to change travel plans are allowable provided the changes are a result of mandatory City business.
- Internet fees for business use will be reimbursed.
- Wording has been included to enforce that incidental expenses on hotel bills that are covered by the per diem will not be reimbursed.
- Allowable claim for breakfast has been increased from $10 to $15.
- The half a day per diem on travel days has been eliminated and replaced with one full per diem for each overnight stay plus actual expenses for the final day of travel.
- Foreign travel per diems have been established at $100 Canadian for travel in the United States and $125 Canadian for travel outside of North America.
- Pre-approval for car rental, and pre-approval for purchasing meals when meals are supplied by the conference is no longer required.

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(c), will result in the revision of the current Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences most recently approved by City Council on June 21, 2006.
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

All Departments and Boards were canvassed for input into the revisions to the Policy for Business Travel, Seminar and Conferences. Internal Audit was supplied with the proposed revisions and their feedback was incorporated into the final document.

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 over night 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. All members of Council will follow and uphold the requirements of this policy.

1. ATTENDANCE AUTHORIZATION

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

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

Employee travel requires the following approvals:

a) Travel within Ontario must be approved by the immediate supervisor and the Director or above.

b) Travel outside of Ontario but within Canada must be approved by the immediate Supervisor and the General Manager or above.

c) Travel outside of Canada must be approved by the immediate Supervisor and the City Manager. The City Manager’s travel outside of Canada must be approved by the Mayor.

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 the submission.

Documented approval for travel must be obtained before any travel expenses are incurred or committed to. Payment for travel expenses incurred or committed to prior to obtaining documented approval will be the sole financial responsibility of the employee if the travel request is denied. An approved Travel Advance Form must be submitted to Accounts Payable before the travel only if an advance is being requested, or be attached to the payment requisition for registration or other travel expenses being paid in advance.
2. ADVANCE AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

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 by the claimant indicating authority for the City to recover through the Payroll system any advances unaccounted for.

In order to receive early discounts, and confirm registration, employees may incur out of pocket expenses in advance of the travel dates. These expenditures can be recovered by making a notation on the Travel Advance Form requesting an early release of the advance.

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 for payment of 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 either to the Travel Expense Form when requesting an advance, thus allowing accurate calculation of the per diem, or if no advance requested to the Travel Expense Form when submitted for final accounting.

Any fees paid prior to the conference, referred to as prepaid expenses, are to be reflected on the Travel Advance/Reimbursement Form to be submitted to Financial Services. All costs related to the travel must be included on the form so the approver is aware of all costs related to the travel, and so the total cost of travel is reported on one form.

4. TRANSPORTATION

The most economical and efficient mode of transportation should be used 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.

  The cost of seat selection will be reimbursed.

  Expenses incurred to change travel plans are allowable provided the changes are a result of mandatory City Business. Only charges relating to the employee are reimbursable.

  Luggage cost charged by airlines is reimbursable.

  The cost of passports will not be reimbursed.

- 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. 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.

• 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 specified 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 to/from the regular place of work, or to/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.
- Subject to budgetary funding, double occupancy may be required at the discretion of the Approver providing the employee is in agreement.
- 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.
- Internet charges for business use on hotel bills will be reimbursed. Other incidental expenses detailed on the hotel bill such as movies or meals will not be reimbursed because they are covered by the per diem reimbursement.

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 is to cover the cost 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 incidental expenses not covered by Sections 3, 4, 5 and 7 and will apply only when overnight accommodation is required.

- One full per diem can be claimed for each overnight stay. Expenses can be claimed for the final day by submitting actual receipts.
- Where some meals are provided by either the event registration or the airline, the per diem will be reduced as follows:

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<th>Meal</th>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Dinner</td>
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• Under extenuating circumstances, people traveling under this policy may be reimbursed for meals upon submission of receipts 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.

• When overnight accommodation is not required, personal meal expenses will be reimbursed based upon submitted receipts to a maximum of $15 for breakfast, $15 for lunch and $25 for dinner.

• For non North American travel only, reimbursement in excess of these maximums will be 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.

• To accommodate the potential higher cost of meals outside of Canada, increased per diems are allowable. For travel within United States, $100 CDN per diem ($20 breakfast, $20 lunch, $35 dinner, $25 incidentals) can be claimed for each overnight stay. For travel outside of North America, $125 CDN per diem ($25 breakfast, $25 lunch, $45 dinner, $30 incidentals) can be claimed for each overnight stay. Expenses can be claimed for the final day by submitting receipts and translating at an estimated exchange rate of the country of travel, to a maximum of the above foreign daily per diem allowances.

• When it is necessary to entertain clients while traveling, detailed receipts must be submitted indicating what was purchased, who was entertained and the reason. An amount will be deducted from the per diem for the employee meal claimed as part of this entertainment receipt.

• Currency rates used should reflect the prevailing rate at the time of exchange as closely as possible. Reasonable estimates using the exchange rate during the time of travel are acceptable and should be used if actual rates are not available.

• 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 claim submission. 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.

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

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