



TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL

Committee of the Whole

June 17, 2008
SRCAO.08.26

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Strategic Initiatives Division

SUBJECT: Foreign Travel Policy for Council Members (SRCAO.08.26)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to recommend a policy for foreign travel for members of Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Foreign Travel Policy for Council Members attached as Appendix A to SRCAO.08.26 be approved.

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Submitted by:

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Director of Strategic Initiatives

Approved by:

M. Joan Anderton
Chief Administrative Officer

BACKGROUND:

At it's meeting of April 22, 2008, Council approved the following:

“That staff be requested to prepare discussion papers with respect to the creation of a Code of Conduct for members of Council and the creation of guidelines and policies with respect to foreign travel for members of Council.”

The Code of Conduct for members of Council is being prepared as a separate report to Council and is targeted for a future Committee of the Whole meeting. This report provides information pertinent to the development of a foreign travel policy for members of Council and a proposed draft policy for Council's consideration.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

There are a number of key items to be considered when preparing a policy on foreign travel for Council, including the purpose of a foreign travel policy, the policies of other municipalities, guiding principles for development of the policy and process for policy implementation. The following is a brief discussion of each of these items.

Purpose of a Foreign Travel Policy

There are times when it is beneficial to the Town for members of Council to travel to locations outside of Canada as representatives of the Town. These instances include, but are not limited to:

- participating in a trade or investment mission/meeting/event;
- participating in a cultural exchange;
- attending a conference or training;
- visiting the cities and town's with whom there is a twinning/sister city/friendship/economic alliance relationship; and
- visiting other cities who may be leaders in a particular field of endeavour.

There are numerous benefits to the municipality with such travel. Participating in trade or investment missions can further the economic development goals of the municipality by attracting investment to Richmond Hill or facilitating trade between the Town's businesses and other parts of the world, important in a global marketplace. Visiting cities who are environmental leaders provide opportunities to learn on the ground and transfer that knowledge and approach for the benefit of the Town.

Adopting a policy on foreign travel will help to ensure transparency for Council and the public by setting out the justification for foreign travel, the cost of the travel, how it is being funded and the benefits to the municipality.

Policy Principles

The following guiding principles form the foundation for the proposed policy:

- The decision making process for participating in foreign travel must be open and transparent;
- Foreign travel must be justified and have a demonstrated benefit to the Town;
- The Town of Richmond Hill will cover the costs of all travel, lodgings and food for members of Council representing the Town on foreign missions/meetings/events; and
- The benefits derived from the travel should be shared with the remainder of Council and the public upon return.

Policies of Other Municipalities

Information gathered from selected municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area, identified below, reveals that many do not have policies in place that govern foreign travel for Council.

City of Vaughan: No policy in place but in February 2008 Council requested that staff prepare a "Policy for Economic Trade Missions and Business Travel for Members of Council and the Senior Management Team". At the time of writing of this report, the policy was not available.

Town of Markham: There is no policy, only Town practice. Any overnight travel by members of Council must be approved by Council. Approved travel by a member of Council can be funded through each Councillor's travel budget (about \$6,000 annually) or if the travel is related to a Town-authorized program (e.g. Economic Development, the report to Council may require the expenditure to be funded through a budget approved program budget). All Economic Development travel must be authorized by Council based on written reports by the Director of Economic Development and his/her staff. Councillors who desire to take part in Economic Development travel must be identified within these reports and specifically authorized to have their travel expenses paid by the Economic Development budget program budget. Generally only the Mayor and the Economic Development Chair travel on Economic Development budget funded basis.

The *Town of Oakville and the Cities of Burlington and Mississauga* do not have a policy governing foreign travel. The *City of Toronto* does not have a specific policy related to foreign travel for missions. General guidelines related to receipt of gifts, general travel policy for conferences etc. (reimbursement of mileage, etc).

Process for Considering Councillor Requests for Foreign Travel

The most appropriate method for open and transparent decision making is for Council to approve all foreign travel prior to any travel expenses being incurred or committed and this is what is being recommended in this report. To ensure that foreign travel is justified and has a demonstrated benefit to the Town, it is recommended that for foreign travel requests other than those for economic development and trade, a report be prepared by members of Council providing detailed information concerning the request. The report should include: justification for travel; a description of the opportunity, destination and expected benefits; the organization leading the event; the timing and duration of the event; an itinerary and details of any scheduled meetings; the cost to the Town; and funding source for travel.

In the case of travel for economic development trade and investment missions/meetings/events, it is recommended that there be a different approach. This is required to ensure consistency with another staff report under consideration by Council on an International Investment Program (SRCAO.08.25) where it is recommended that the Mayor be the Council designate for all economic development missions/meetings/events. There may be instances where the Mayor will designate a member of Council to travel in his place, or that more than one member of Council attend the event. In this case, the Mayor will decide who will accompany him.

Given this, any member of Council may bring forward a request to attend a foreign economic development event, but with the knowledge that they may not necessarily be the one who travels. It is proposed that all requests be forwarded to the Mayor, CAO and Director of Strategic Initiatives, providing the same level of information described earlier. Strategic Initiatives staff will then prepare a report outlining the request and also evaluating the opportunity against the Town's economic goals, the International Investment Program and available budget. Based on this evaluation, a recommendation would be made to Council regarding the appropriateness of the travel and level of staff support required.

In order to ensure that that the process is open and transparent from start to finish, it is proposed that the benefits derived from the travel be shared with the remainder of Council and the public upon return. It is therefore recommended that a report to Council be prepared by the member of Council (staff member if in attendance) providing this information within approximately sixty days of the event.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH

The purpose, principles and process described in this report form the basis for the draft Foreign Travel Policy for Council being recommended by staff. The draft policy is attached as Appendix A to this report.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

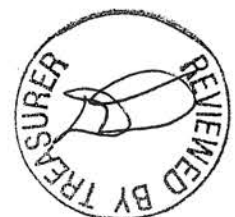
It is recommended that the Town cover the costs of all travel, lodgings and food for members of Council representing the Town on foreign missions/meetings/events. It is proposed that the source of funding for foreign travel not economic development related be the located in Council member's budgets. In the case of foreign travel for economic development trade and investment missions/meetings/events, it is recommended that there be funding in a separate account in the Strategic Initiatives, CAO Department budget. Currently funding is not available for this purpose but will be requested in the 2009 budget process should Council adopt staff's recommendations regarding an International Investment Program.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN:

One of the goals of the Town's Strategic Plan is to enhance and expand economic opportunities. The recommendations in this report support this goal by identifying an approach to furthering the Town's international economic alliances.

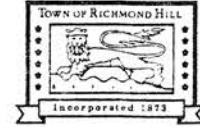
CONCLUSION:

The Foreign Travel Policy for Members of Council described in this report provides Council with an open and transparent approach to foreign travel with a clear process for foreign travel requests.



APPENDIX A

TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL



FOREIGN TRAVEL POLICY FOR MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Effective Date: June 25, 2008

PURPOSE

There are times when it is beneficial for members of Council to travel to locations outside of Canada as representatives of the Town. These include, but are not limited to:

- furthering the economic development goals of the municipality by participating in a trade or investment mission/meeting/event;
- participating in a cultural exchange;
- attending a conference or training;
- visiting the cities and town's with whom there is a twinning/sister city/friendship/economic alliance relationship; and
- visiting other cities who may be leaders in a particular field of endeavour.

This policy establishes the circumstances under which members of Council of the Town of Richmond Hill will participate in this type of travel.

POLICY STATEMENT

Council recognizes the value of foreign travel, when appropriate, and the need for a foreign travel policy that has an open and transparent approval process. Members of Council will therefore seek the approval of Council for all foreign travel prior to incurring any expenses or committing funds and will satisfy the conditions outlined in this policy.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all foreign travel by members of Council.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy, foreign travel is defined as all travel outside of Canada.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

- The decision making process for participating in foreign travel must be open and transparent.
- Foreign travel must be justified and have a demonstrated benefit to the Town.
- The Town of Richmond Hill will cover the costs of all travel, lodgings and food for members of Council representing the Town on foreign missions/meetings/events.
- The benefits derived from the travel should be shared with the remainder of Council and the public upon return.

PROCESS FOR COUNCILLOR REQUESTS FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL

Foreign Travel for Economic Development Related Trade and Investment
Missions/Meetings/Events

1. Members of Council will advise the Mayor, CAO and Director of Strategic Initiatives of an opportunity for foreign travel, including the following details:
 - justification for travel;
 - a description of the opportunity, destination and expected benefits;
 - the organization leading the event;
 - the timing and duration of the event;
 - an itinerary and details of any scheduled meetings;
 - the cost to the Town; and
 - funding source for travel.
2. Strategic Initiatives staff will evaluate the opportunity against the Town's economic development goals and prepare a report to Council on the opportunity, advising whether there is a match with the economic development goals and objectives of the Town, the Town's International Investment Program and available budget, and the mission/meeting/opportunity. Staff support for the mission/meeting/event will be outlined in the report as will a recommendation regarding staff attendance at the event. A sufficient amount of lead time is required to allow time for staff to undertake a qualitative evaluation of the opportunity and preparation of the staff report.
3. Based on the evaluation and information included in the staff report, Council will make a determination on whether the Town should participate in the opportunity. No expenses are to be incurred or committed prior to Council's decision.
4. The Mayor (or designate) will attend all economic development missions/meetings/events and will determine whether other member(s) of Council should also attend and who.

All Other Foreign Travel

Members of Council will prepare a report outlining the travel request and submit it to a Committee of the Whole or Council meeting for Council's consideration and approval prior to incurring or committing any expenses. The report should include:

- justification for travel;
- a description of the opportunity, destination and expected benefits;
- the organization convening the opportunity,
- the timing and duration of the event;
- an itinerary and details of any scheduled meetings;
- the cost to the Town; and
- funding source for travel.

PROCESS FOR REPORTING UPON RETURN

The elected official (staff member if in attendance) shall file a written report to Council within approximately sixty (60) days of the event outlining the event, benefits derived from the event and follow-up if required.

RELATED POLICIES

Municipal Business, Conference, Training and Tuition and Expense Policy
Mileage and Transportation Allowance Policy