

Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of April 17, 2025

To: Committee of the Whole Date: January 24, 2025

From: Tom Zworski, City Solicitor

Subject: Update to City Policy on Reimbursement of Council Members for Conflict Legal

Advice

RECOMMENDATION

That Council increase the maximum limit for reimbursement for the cost of obtaining independent legal advice regarding potential conflict of interest from \$500 to \$1,000 for each instance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, recognizing the importance of all Council members participating in Council deliberations and decisions, Council established a policy for partial reimbursement of legal costs incurred by Council members in obtaining independent legal advice on potential conflicts of interest (see Appendix A). By assisting Council members in obtaining independent legal advice, it was hoped that there would be fewer instances where Council members declare conflict "out of abundance of caution", thus ensuring full participation in Council decisions. At the same time, Council established an annual budget of \$10,000 for this purpose.

During the past six years, a number of Council members have been reimbursed for obtaining legal advice on conflict matters up to \$500 per occasion, but the annual budget has never been spent in full. Indeed, the total expenditure during the past six years is less than \$2,200.

At the time the \$500 limit was established, it was considered sufficient for most common conflict of interest inquiries. However, due to steady increase in legal fees, it is no longer considered adequate. Therefore, the City Solicitor recommends increasing the per occurrence limit to \$1,000 from \$500 to ensure that the policy reflects the current costs of obtaining independent legal advice. Given past experience, no increase to the overall budget is recommended.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Zworski City Solicitor

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments: Appendix A – March 2019 Policy

{00167666:3}