



Council Member Motion
For the Council Meeting of December 12, 2019

Date: December 5, 2019

From: Councillor Ben Isitt

Subject: Briefing Note to Inform Governance Review and Review of Council Remuneration

Background:

The City of Victoria Strategic Plan 2019-2022 identifies actions including a Governance Review and a review of Council remuneration.

The current duties of Victoria Councillors include the following, some of which are mandated by statute in the *Local Government Act*, and others which arise from the complexity of municipal operations in a capital city and the expectations of residents and stakeholders:

- Participating in formal City Council and Committee meetings (approximately 10-20 hours per week; 550 hours in 2019 to date);
- Reading agenda reports to supervise city expenditures, staff and operations (approx. 5-20 hours per week; 250-1500 pages);
- Responding to correspondence and telephone calls from the public and media (approx. 10-20 hours per week; approx. 400 emails, 40 telephone calls and 10 hard-copy letters);
- Participating on Boards and Commissions as appointed by Council (approx. 5-10 hours per week);
- Meeting with stakeholders who request individual meetings (approx. 5-15 hours per week).

These duties of Victoria Councillors can be compared to duties of councillors in other municipalities in the region, such as the District of Saanich. While Saanich has a substantially larger population than Victoria (115,000 people compared to 90,000), as a suburban municipality outside the central business district of the Capital Region, there appear to be differences in the complexity of municipal operations, the volume of Council business and expectations for stakeholder engagement. In 2019 to date, Saanich has convened approximately 140 hours of formal Council and Committee of the Whole meetings. In contrast, the City of Victoria has convened approximately 550 hours of formal Council and Committee of the Whole meetings.

Examining the impact of these variations in municipal business on the duties and employment options available to councillors, in Saanich the Council Meetings and Committee of the Whole meetings are scheduled in the evenings, permitting Saanich Councillors (who are compensated at the rate of approximately \$47,000 annually) to engage in regular external employment (which is admittedly challenging for Councillors working full-time based on Council duties).

In contrast, the volume, duration and schedule of Council Meetings and Committee of the Whole meetings in the City of Victoria (and associated duties including reading staff reports and managing correspondence and stakeholder engagement arising from municipal business) precludes regular external employment for Victoria Councillors. Victoria City Councillors are currently compensated at a rate of \$24 per hour based on a 35-hour work week (approximately \$45,000 annually). While this level of remuneration exceeds the statutory minimum wage and the living wage (and is therefore substantially more generous than the level of compensation earned by many working people in the city), this level of remuneration falls substantially below the income expectations of many early- to mid-career professionals who lack access to one of the following income subsidies: family wealth; business income; spousal income; pension income; subsidized housing through unearned real estate equity.

As a result of the current duties and remuneration for Victoria Councillors, early- to mid-career professionals who lack access to one of these income subsidies have been substantially underrepresented on Victoria City Council. This results in a lack of diversity in representation and decision-making.

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information, to inform the Governance Review and the review of Council remuneration identified in the Strategic Plan.

Options and Analysis:

An analysis of current duties and remuneration of Victoria City Councillors supports three possible policy directions for the city:

Alternative 1:

Status quo. Remuneration of \$45,000 per year indexed to inflation. Full-time duties compensated at the hourly rate of \$24 based on a 35-hour week. No option for regular external employment due to the volume and duration of daytime meetings and the workload arising from meeting preparation, correspondence and stakeholder engagement. Acceptance by the City that the status quo is inaccessible to early- to mid-career professionals and others who lack one of the following subsidies to municipal service: family wealth; business income; spousal income; pension income; subsidized housing through unearned real estate equity. Acceptance that people without access to these subsidies will either live in low-income or be under-represented on City Council.

Alternative 2:

Status quo remuneration, reduced duties. This would enable City Councillors to engage in regular external employment, making the position accessible to early- to mid-career professionals and others who lack access to one of the income subsidies identified above. Reduce the scope of Councillor duties in the following areas: (1) Shift to evening meetings like Saanich, absorbing potential overtime costs arising from staff attendance at evening meetings. (2) Reduce the level of Council oversight of municipal expenditures, staffing and operations. (3) Reduce public responsiveness to residents, including reduced email, telephone and face-to-face access with Councillors. (4) Reduce proactive work by Councillors with community stakeholders to address social, environmental and governance issues.

Alternative 3:

Salary adjustment to reflect current duties and make the role of City Councillor accessible to early- to mid-career professionals and others who lack one of the following income subsidies: family wealth; business income; spousal income; pension income; subsidized housing through unearned real estate equity. Determine the appropriate level for this salary adjustment through a citizens' task force, an external consultant review, a scientifically sound public opinion poll or a referendum.

Recommendation:

That Council receive this report for information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Isitt', is written over a faint, larger signature.

Councillor Isitt

Attachments:

1. Council Remuneration Bylaw, No. 08-103
2. Report of Citizens Committee on Council Remuneration (2006)