

Appendix 2

COUNCIL REMUNERATION AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT FINAL REPORT

SUBMITTED ON

MARCH 27, 2023

SUBMITTED BY

2022/2023 COUNCIL REMUNERATION REVIEW
COMMITTEE

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	4
Scope and Guiding Principles	4
Approach and Methods	5
Objectives and Recommendations	6
Committee Declaration	13

Acknowledgments

The Council Remuneration Review Committee was comprised of five St. Albert residents, appointed by the Chief Administrative Officer. They include:

1. Valerie Ganske (Chair)
2. Joshua Wafler-Thomas (Vice-Chair)
3. Janice Miller (Member)
4. Dawn VandeVyvere (Member)
5. Ray Watkins (Member)

These individuals volunteered their time, energy, and thoughts to fulfil the mandate prescribed by the City of St. Albert Bylaw 43/2021 [1].

In addition to the Committee, administrative support services were provided by City employees. The primary staff members included:

1. Kerry Hilts, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
2. Shawn O'Connell, Manager, Human Resources and Safety
3. David Leflar, Director, Legal and Legislative Services

Many thanks to these individuals for answering the questions Committee members put forth, as well as providing the volumes of information that were deemed relevant and necessary to this review. Other City staff also contributed to the success of the completion of this report, and we extend a genuine thank you to them.

Other municipalities provided information and data regarding their Council remuneration and benefits. Their willingness to share without hesitation was appreciated.

Introduction

In 2021, the City of St. Albert passed Bylaw 43/2021[1], a Bylaw to establish and define the functions of the Council Remuneration Review Committee. This Committee was to be tasked with reviewing and making recommendations on the remuneration, including benefits, to be paid to members of Council, and on other matters that may affect remuneration. These recommendations were to include:

1. Salary for Mayor and Councillors, including methodology, comparators, and frequency
2. Whether Councillors should continue to be classified part-time or has the role evolved to full-time, and if so, what impact this would have on compensation
3. Per diem – amount and application
4. Benefits
5. Parental Leave
6. Other matters that may affect remuneration

Scope and Guiding Principles

While the Committee was determined to extensively research comparable municipalities in Alberta, we were equally determined that the following recommendations were kept with a made-in-St. Albert mindset, reflective of the uniqueness of our city.

We want to maintain a level of fairness to those that currently serve, while looking to those that will serve in the future. By creating recommendations that are inclusive and mindful of the uniqueness of individuals, we hope to eliminate barriers that may prohibit members of our community from becoming involved in the building of our city.

Approach and Methods

Document Review

The Committee collected and reviewed existing and proposed Council Remuneration policies from Airdrie, Spruce Grove, Red Deer, Strathcona County, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, Leduc County, Beaumont, Stony Plain, Sturgeon County and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. Existing City of St. Albert policies were also reviewed. (Appendix 5)

In-Depth Interviews

The Committee completed interviews with the St. Albert Mayor and all six City of St. Albert Councillors. Additionally, the Committee interviewed two past City of St. Albert Councillors. An invitation was made to a third former City Councillor, along with a current City of Edmonton Councillor, however, these attempts were unsuccessful. The questions and summary of the results of these interviews are attached as Appendix 4.

Public Survey

On January 26, 2023, the Committee published a City of St. Albert Public Survey using the conversation@stalbert.ca website. This survey included seven (7) questions related to Council Remuneration, public understanding of City Council's role, and any appetite a resident may have to be a candidate for City Council. The questions and a summary of the results of this survey are attached as Appendix 3.

Disclaimer

Information gathered was done by the Committee Members between October and December of 2022. The data obtained on comparative municipalities was obtained through internet research on each municipality. Interviews were conducted in-person with Council members present and past. If there are any changes to information, this may have happened after completion of the research done by the Committee.

Objectives and Recommendations

The following represent the instructions to the Committee as per Section 17 of BYLAW 43/2021.

Objective 1 - Base Remuneration for Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Committee Chairs, and Councillors

Committee Recommendations:

The Committee determined:

1. ***The Mayor of St. Albert's salary (remains unchanged) should not change.***
The committee believes the Mayor's current salary structure is both fair and competitive. The salary reflects the performance requirements and duties that are required to be undertaken.
 - a. The main comparators outlined in the Bylaw included Strathcona County; Medicine Hat; Red Deer; Grande Prairie; Lethbridge; Airdrie and Wood Buffalo. At the time of data collection, the lowest Mayor salary in this comparator group was \$103,588 (Red Deer) and the highest was \$165,790 (Wood Buffalo). The average salary for these 7 municipalities was \$130,077. The salary for the Mayor of St. Albert was \$149,675 (April 1, 2023).
 - b. The Committee does not have information related to increases in the other municipalities for Cost-of-Living adjustments.
 - c. Interviews with current and former members of Council; all interviewees agreed that the compensation package for Mayor was satisfactory, and no review or changes were needed.
2. ***There will be no remuneration for Deputy Mayor duties.***
Based on the role of the Deputy Mayor and input from City Councillors, it was determined that additional pay is not required, this aligns with the existing policy.
 - a. In the Council interviews, 6 of 9 persons interviewed agreed that, as Deputy Mayor duties are rotating, there should be no additional compensation for these duties.
3. ***Committee Chairs should not receive any additional remuneration.***
It was determined that acting as a Committee Chair is part of the responsibilities of Councillors and does not warrant additional pay.
 - a. In the Council interviews, 6 of 9 persons interviewed agreed that Committee Chair duties do not require additional compensation for these duties.
 - b. Two members thought that if elected to Committees that are outside of regular Council duties they should be allowed to collect per diems as they bring added value to community.
4. ***The salary for City Councillors should be \$70,000. (see objective 4)***
Based on interviews with current and previous Councillors, it was determined that

Councillors spend on average 30 or more hours per week engaged in Council-related work, which matches the Government of Alberta's definition of full-time employment. (<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3VD.pl?Function=getVD&TVD=114437&CVD=114437&CLV=0&MLV=1&D=1>)

- a. The main comparators outlined in the Bylaw included Strathcona County; Medicine Hat; Red Deer; Grande Prairie; Lethbridge; Airdrie and Wood Buffalo. At the time of data collection, the lowest was \$44,000 (Medicine Hat) and the highest was \$86,751 (Strathcona County). The average salary for these 7 municipalities was \$58,735. At the time of data collection, the salary for the St. Albert Councillors is \$58,586.99 (April 1, 2023).
- b. The Committee does not have information related to increases in the other municipalities for Cost-of-Living adjustments.
- c. The recommended salary increase in recognition of the status change to full-time work as opposed to current status of part-time (defined at 30+ hours by the Government of Alberta), would result in an increase of \$975 gross monthly income - from current (\$58,306) to recommended (\$70,000).
- d. Councillors would no longer receive monthly subsidies for cell phones (see Objective 3 Recommendations). This would be a deduction of the \$1,500 cell/internet yearly subsidy that Council now receives (\$70 Internet / \$55 cell phone per month).
- e. There is no increase to the budgets allotted to Councillors for Training and Development or Travel and General expenses. It would be maintained at \$10,500.
- f. Given the nature of the work and the fluctuating demands throughout the year (i.e., hours required at budget time), as we learned through the interview process, it is difficult for a Councillor to secure other paid employment to increase personal income.
- g. There is an expectation that Councillors be available outside of what is considered regular business hours to respond to citizens' concerns.
- h. Offering a fair salary that properly reflects the workload and hours required may attract candidates that may not have considered the role of an Elected Official, especially if they are required to leave secure full-time employment.
- i. Salary should not be a barrier in preventing a range of demographics from running for Council.
- j. According to the Alberta Living Wage Network (ALWN), St. Albert is tied with Calgary for third position in the living wage required to live comfortably in a community. St. Albert and Calgary are behind only Canmore and Fort McMurray.
- k. From the Council Surveys, 8 of 9 persons believed that current compensation did not reflect the work done in the role as a Council Member. Specific compensation was not discussed; only that the remuneration did not align with compensation and expectations conveyed when first running for office.
- l. In the public survey, respondents indicated that as a **part-time position** the current salary was satisfactory. A quote from a respondent: *"Although many councillors are not the sole income earner in their family, \$51,000 is awfully close*

to the poverty line for Canadian families. Say a single wanted to run for a council seat, they would be putting their family in/near poverty, which is an example of how running for public office continues to be limited to a select few able people in our community." This comment was a theme that was repeated in the committee on attracting a diverse slate of candidates.

Objective 2 - Methodology to be used to establish future adjustments to remuneration, including comparators and frequency

Committee Recommendations:

1. The Committee found that the current methodology should be maintained.
 - This methodology has been used in the past and would maintain consistency over time.
 - Other municipalities utilize similar methodologies, including Spruce Grove and Grande Prairie.
 - In Council Member interviews, all Council Members were appreciative of a Committee from the community that would make recommendations that represented the community perspective.

Objective 3 - What Employment Benefits should apply to which positions listed in clause 17 (a) and at what level.

Committee Recommendations:

The Committee found that:

1. **The annual cost of living adjustment for the Mayor and Councillors should be aligned to City of St. Albert staff annual increase, rather than the current practice of aligning to Edmonton CPI as is defined in the current policy. It is recommended that this Policy be changed prior to the next scheduled Cost of Living increase in April 2024.**
 - a. The difference between the City of St. Albert staff salary increase (2.5% (2023)) and the Mayor/Councillors (COLA for 2023 is 5.5%) is substantial and the Committee believes the two should be aligned. This should be in policy to remove any perceived conflict of interest of Council.
 - b. It is estimated that COLA based on Edmonton CPI for the next two years would only slightly decrease from 5.5%.
 - i. Projected COLA Increases based on the committees recommended policy as compared to the current policy to November 1, 2025, are shown below:

Year	Recommended COLA Policy	Salary Increase adjustment	Current COLA Policy	Salary Increase adjustment
2023 (April 3)				
2024	2.5%(estimate)	\$59,764 (estimate)	5%(estimate)	\$61,221 (estimate)
2025	2.5%(estimate)	\$61,258 (estimate)	5% (estimate)	\$64,282 (estimate)

- c. If Council approved a July 1, 2023 salary adjustment, projected COLA Increases based on the committees recommended policy as compared to the current policy to November 1, 2025, are shown below:

Year	Recommended COLA Policy	Salary Increase adjustment	Current COLA Policy	Salary Increase adjustment
2023 (April 3)				\$70,000
2024	2.5%(estimate)	\$71,750 (estimate)	5%(estimate)	\$73,500 (estimate)
2025	2.5%(estimate)	\$73,544 (estimate)	5% (estimate)	\$77,175 (estimate)

2. The current funds available for Mayor and Councillors for Training and Development and Travel and Other Expenses remain the same.

- a. Maintain current policy that does not allow these funds to be used for spouses to attend events. (exception Deputy Mayor duties when assigned by Mayor)
- b. The amount that is currently available is considered sufficient for the requirements of the role (\$10,500).
- c. Councillors receive many invitations to attend events in the community. A great number include a financial cost and the Mayor and Councillors should not incur out-of-pocket expenses associated with these events.
- d. Councillors should have access to an appropriate amount of funds to continue to grow their skills and knowledge to benefit the City of St. Albert.

3. **The Mayor and Councillors no longer receive a monthly subsidy for a cell phone.**
 - a. Of the seven main municipality comparators: Strathcona County; Medicine Hat; Red Deer; Grande Prairie; Lethbridge; Airdrie and Wood Buffalo, only two municipalities provided a subsidy for cell phones.
 - b. For City of St. Albert Councillors who may not wish to use their personal cell phone to conduct City business, a cell phone can be provided for Councillor use.
 - c. Committee Members believed that Cellular Telephones are now commonplace, and individuals would choose to own a cell phone regardless of status as a Councillor or community member. Any Member of Council who does not have a cell phone may obtain one from the City of St. Albert.
4. **The Mayor and Councillors no longer receive a monthly subsidy for technology (internet).**
 - a. Of the seven main municipality comparators: Strathcona County; Medicine Hat; Red Deer; Grande Prairie; Lethbridge; Airdrie and Wood Buffalo, only two municipalities provided a subsidy for internet/technology.
 - b. Committee Members believed that internet services are now commonplace in homes and individuals would choose to have internet services in their homes regardless of status as a Councillor or community members. Any Member of Council who does not have an internet service provider may utilize the internet services available at the City of St. Albert.

Objective 4 - At what point Councillors should be considered full-time, and what remuneration level should apply to a full-time Councillor, taking into account such factors as:

- **Hours spent on Council business**
 - Council Meetings, preparation/reading/research for Council Meetings, Committee of Council Meetings, resident engagement (in person, telephone, email), regional and provincial meetings and business of Council.
- **Status of Councillors in comparator municipalities**
- **Other relevant information**
- **Parental leave**

Committee Recommendations:

The Committee found that:

1. **The role of Councillor should be deemed Full-Time.**
The committee believes that based on the average hours undertaken by current and past Councillors, are greater than 30+ hours a week. The Government of Alberta concludes that Full-Time is “when you work more than 30 hours a week”¹.

¹ Source: Choose the Way You Work - alis (alberta.ca): <https://alis.alberta.ca/look-for-work/work-options/choose-the-way-you-work/#:~:text=When%20you%20work%20more%20than,day%2C%205%20days%20a%20week.>

- a. Councillors interviewed indicated an unpreparedness for the workload as the position was advertised as part-time. Previous indications that the position of Councillor was “part-time” was misleading to 8 of the 9 persons interviewed. This may be misleading to potential candidates who would not be aware of the actual number of hours that are required to be successful in the position.
 - b. Councillors interviewed indicated that, on average 30+ hours per week are devoted to Council business and this had become their primary focus. Three persons interviewed had full-time employment outside of Council Business when first elected; one person used all holiday time to attend meetings, events during working hours and the other two persons resigned their positions within months of being elected due to the inability to fulfil the commitments of their other employment. One person was able to adjust their work to accommodate meetings.
 - c. Strathcona County considers their Councillors to be full-time and pays \$86,751/year to recognize the hours worked.
 - i. Strathcona County, as per their Elected Officials’ Remuneration Policy, “Not all duties and commitments can be identified in actual time, nor can the level of responsibility that is required to properly handle all functions of an Elected Official be assessed on a daily rate. Due to their roles and responsibilities, the time and commitment expectations for Elected Officials are equivalent to full-time employment.”
 - d. Sturgeon County remuneration rate is \$78,872 for Councillors in recognition of the time required to fulfil their responsibilities.
 - e. In the Public survey many respondents felt the category 25-40 was too broad a range of hours worked. 53% of respondents believed the salary was sufficient, noting the position was part-time believing they had other opportunities to generate additional income. In actuality as per interviews Council Members are challenged in obtaining employment that is flexible to the changing demands and time commitment of Council duties.
2. **That the Mayor and/or Councillors be eligible for a sixteen (16) week parental leave, paid at their normal remuneration rate.**

The Committee found that parental leave amongst comparable municipalities for Council Members is seemingly rare, with only three offering a variation of leave. While some municipalities do not offer specific parental leave, Council Members have the ability to request unpaid leave (ex. Leduc); others offer a range of paid leave.

Spruce Grove provides up to 26 weeks leave, with the first 10 weeks at full pay. Beyond the 10 weeks, Council Members receive a percentage of remuneration based on duties performed.

Strathcona County offers up to 26 weeks leave and while on parental leave, Council Members will receive remuneration equal to the current maximum Employment Insurance benefit entitlement available to employees of the County.

Sturgeon County offers up to 15 weeks maternity leave for Council Members who have given birth or are about to give birth. For the first week, Council Members receive 100% of salary, with the remaining leave receiving 95% of normal remuneration. An additional 11 weeks for parental leave is provided and is paid an amount equal to Employment Insurance benefits.

- a. Three members of Council indicated they would not support a Paternity leave policy. The six other persons indicated a policy should support Canada Labour Standards.

Objective 5 - Appropriate *per diem* levels (amounts and purpose) and when a Councillor should be eligible for a *per diem*.

Committee Recommendations:

The Committee found that:

1. There should be no change to per diem policy for the Mayor and Councillors.
 - a. Council Members indicated that appropriate compensation for work done would not require any changes to a per diem policy.
 - b. Two Council Members indicated if you are elected to a seat on a board outside of your Council duties per diem should be allowed from the outside agency.

Objective 6 - Other matters that may affect remuneration

Committee Recommendations:

The Committee found that:

1. **These recommendations take effect on November 1, 2025 (except for Objective 3 Recommendation 1, which recommends a policy change to COLA before the next adjustment is scheduled in 2024).**
 - a. Most municipalities make salary adjustments (outside of annual increases for cost of living) applicable at the next election so that future Councillors are aware of the salary and benefits. These include, Grande Prairie and Spruce Grove, who also use external Committees/Task Forces to recommend Mayor and Council remuneration.
 - b. City of Red Deer remuneration is determined through a review process by the City Manager to take effect after the next election.
 - c. City of Airdrie and City of Medicine Hat review salaries of Mayor and Councillors every four years and make adjustments based on Review Formulas.
 - d. The current salary of Council Candidates was known to City Councillors when they ran for office.
 - e. The recommended salary increase determined by a recognition of the change to full-time to part-time, would result in an increase of \$975 gross monthly income - from current (\$58,306) to recommended (\$70,000) in 2025. See Objective 3 1(a)

and 1(b) to see how the compensation may adjust with COLA to November of 2025.

- f. In the Council Member interviews, two persons indicated that the compensation recommendations should be effective immediately. No other Council Members indicated a preference.

Committee Declaration

We the undersigned members of the Council Remuneration Review Committee assert and declare that to the best of our ability, we have reviewed all pertinent information and materials related to this review; and further, that the recommendations we have offered fulfill our Guiding Principles.

Valerie Ganske (Chair)

Joshua Wafler-Thomas (Vice-Chair)

Janice Miller (Member)

Dawn VandeVyvere (Member)

Ray Watkins (Member)