

Councillors approve building framework to publicly report on expenses related to conferences, events

Council members will soon need to report to their colleagues and the public on the value of attending conferences, seminars, and events.

Last week, Council formally signed off on tasking staff with developing a new reporting framework that will require those lawmakers attending such events to report back on what they learned and how what they learned could impact the Aurora community.

The decision follows a motion brought forward by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo at April's Committee of the Whole meeting.

[The motion] directs staff to create a formal reporting framework for Members of Council who attend conferences, seminars, or external events paid for by the Town, said the Town of Aurora following last week's Council meeting. The framework will require Councillors to publicly report key details including event information, costs, sessions attended, key learnings, and any best practices relevant to Aurora through a Council or Committee agenda within a set timeframe.

Staff will also review and report back on any administrative, financial, or procedural implications of implementing this new requirement, including how it aligns with existing policies, as well as setting limitations to the number of conferences a member may attend.

Councillor Gallo's motion passed unanimously at both the Committee and the Council level, and was supported at the podium by resident John Hartman.

Most companies expect the same thing if not stronger reporting requirements and a photo or social media is not formal reporting, said Hartman. Why does this Town need to send six Council members to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities [conference] in June in Edmonton of this year?

I applaud Councillor Gaertner for not going as she is leaving Council [at the end of this term], but why is the Town allowing funding for anyone not running in 2026 or who we all know won't be here next year moving north, he continued, referring to Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who now lives primarily outside the community but maintains a rental presence in Aurora. If your platform is fiscal responsibility or if you're not running, don't go and save taxpayer money. In the future, a possible addition to the motion is a Councillor gets to go to two FCM conferences in a four-year term with the exception of the Mayor.

I'm sure the next Council could collaborate and determine who should go in any one year based on the issues and the agenda posted. During these economic times, especially during election years, it requires more prudent, transparent, and accountable use of our tax dollars. You need to find efficiencies in common sense expense management from windrows to conference attendees. Let's rethink some things and truly lead by example and rethink our current realities.

Limits on how many conferences any one member of Council can attend in a calendar year is something Councillor Gallo said was worth exploring later on in the meeting.

I've had a few people question that, he said. When it comes back, whether we want to add another point to it or take it under advisement just to see when it comes back to provide us with some recommendations. Maybe other municipalities do it, a little bit of research just to give us a sense of what others do and whether or not that would be something to be included.

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