



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: April 9, 2024
Contact: Natalie Schmid
Contact No.: 604.673.8305
RTS No.: 15984
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: April 23, 2024
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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: City Clerk
SUBJECT: Flag (Civic Protocol) Policy Amendments

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve amendments to the City's Flag Policy, which is to be renamed as the Civic Protocol Policy as outlined in this report and Appendix A.
- B. THAT Section 1.3 of the Civic Protocol Policy take effect following a collaborative event with the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, tentatively planned for the third quarter of 2024.

PURPOSE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to recommend amendments to the City's Flag Policy for Council approval. These amendments are intended to update outdated aspects of the policy, reflect the City's commitment to Reconciliation, improve clarity, and simplify decision-making.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Flag Policy was approved by Council on October 8, 2002. As a Council policy, any amendments to the policy are to be approved by Council.

On May 16, 2016 a [Memorandum](#) provided an update on the City of Vancouver Flag Policy and Illumination Guidelines and Procedures.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval of the foregoing.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Corporate policies are reviewed on a regular basis by the Department with the most direct subject matter expertise on the policy's contents (the "Policy Owner"). Reviews are conducted to ensure a policy's continued relevance and alignment with Council and Corporate goals, organizational values and principles, legislation, and industry standards and best practices. The Flag Policy was identified for amendments during a recent policy review.

The City's Flag Policy was approved by Council in 2002 to provide direction with regard to Canadian Flag etiquette, half-masting policies and procedures, guest flags, and responsibility and maintenance of city flags. An update to the Flag Policy and Illumination Guidelines and Procedures was provided on May 11, 2016 via a [Memorandum](#).

On November 15, 2022, a [Memorandum](#) provided an update on Council approved Annual Events, including the flying of flags for such events.

On October 25, 2022, Council approved the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\) Strategy for Vancouver](#). Amongst its foundational Calls to Action, the following action area was identified: 'Establish a process for the City to look for embedded colonialism within its systems, and re-shape its own internal policies, procedures and by-laws in ways which recognize and respect the laws and governance of x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm, S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh, and sə̱lilw̱ətał, and align with UNDRIP to create systemic change.' In consultation with City of Vancouver Indigenous Relations, suggested amendments to the Flag Policy speak to the permanent display of local First Nation Flags and half-masting at the request of the x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm, S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh, and sə̱lilw̱ətał Nations.

DISCUSSION

Policy updates have been identified in 6 areas:

1. First Nations Flags:

A jurisdictional scan has shown that several municipalities have moved to include a permanent display of flags representing local First Nations as a symbol of their commitment to reconciliation. This includes Toronto, Winnipeg, Ottawa and Port Alberni, amongst others. Half-masting to honour the day of the funeral or the memorial service for local First Nations Chiefs/Leaders have also been added into some municipal Flag Policies (e.g., Calgary). In light of the City's UNDRIP Strategy and in consultation with the Indigenous Relations Office, the following Policy amendments are recommended:

Add in Section 1:

- I. The flags of the x̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm, S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh, and sə̱lilw̱ətał Nations will be flown permanently on the three tall poles in the centre of the flag island located at 12th and Cambie Street.

(Note: The remaining thirteen poles on the flag island will be available for guest-flagging requests and temporary flagging displays.)

Add in Section 2.2 (List of Half-Masting Occasions):

- II. Upon the request of a representative of the x^wməθk^wəyəm Skw^xwú7mesh, or səliłwətał Nations Councils.

2. Decision-making Authority for additional Half-masting:

Section 2.2 of the Civic Protocol Policy identifies occasions for half-masting as a sign of mourning for specific scheduled events and for specific unscheduled occasions such as the death of a Sovereign, political dignitaries and identified elected officials. Section 2.2 also includes the additional provision that flags may be flown at half-mast upon the death of a person or an event which Council wishes to recognize which is not covered under the current policy. A jurisdictional scan of the Flag/Protocol Policy of other cities (see Table 1) indicated that in the majority of the municipalities surveyed it is the Mayor, not Council, who has decision-making authority for identifying additional unscheduled half-masting occasions.

Table 1: Jurisdictional Scan – Decision-makers for identifying additional half-masting occasions:

City	Has a Policy and/or Procedure that defines occasions, authority, process for half-masting + display of flags	Decision-maker(s) for identifying additional half-masting occasions:
Toronto	Yes	Mayor, or in their absence the Deputy Mayor
Edmonton	No Flag Policy per se, but Civic Protocol Policy provides some high-level direction re. flag raising	Manager of Corporate Communications provides advice and direction of flag etiquette
Lethbridge	Yes	Decided by the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Acting Mayor
Red Deer	Yes	Mayor
Ottawa	Yes	Mayor. In the Mayors' absence, the City Clerk will have the delegated authority to decide on the half-masting of flags
Calgary	Yes	Protocol Office
Surrey	Yes	Mayor can direct half masting for additional occasions
Kelowna	Yes	Mayor (Should seek Council resolution where possible)
Brampton	Yes	Mayor in consultation with CAO and Protocol Office
Vancouver	Yes	Council

Discretionary half-masting decisions typically have to be made on very short notice, and it is not always possible or viable to convene Council on such short notice. To address the time constraints associated with half-masting and to align with common standards in other municipalities, it is recommended that decision-making authority for identifying additional unscheduled half-masting occasions should be amended so that the Mayor, or in their absence, the Acting Mayor, or in the Acting Mayor's absence the Deputy Mayor or in the Deputy Mayor's absence, the Duty Councillor may make these decisions.

3. Other Updates to Half-masting Practices and Occasions

A jurisdictional scan of eight Canadian municipalities indicated that half-masting on the death of a Mayor or Councillor or former Mayor or Councillor typically takes place regardless of length of time served on Council. Policy language is amended to allow the City to half-mast for current and former City of Vancouver Council members upon their passing, regardless of time served in office.

Additional occasions for which the City would half-mast have been added to the Policy. These occasions include requests of a representative of the x^wməθk^wəyəm Skwxwú7mesh, or səliiwətaʔ Nations Councils and additional Special Days as identified by the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage:

- April 9 – Commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge,
- June 23 - National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism,
- 2nd Sunday of September – Firefighters' National Memorial Day,
- last Sunday in September – Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day,
- September 30 – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and
- November 8 - Indigenous Veterans Day.

4. Half-masting Timelines

Updated to reflect current practices.

5. Amendment to Guest Flagging and Responsibility and Maintenance of Flags Section and Integration of other Civic Protocol matters – Proclamation and Illumination Program

The Guest Flagging section requires update as the City no longer operates a ceremonial flagpole at City Hall. The City's ceremonial flagpole was demolished in 2017, as part of the East Wing demolition of City Hall and consequently ceremonial flag raising pertaining to flags of other sovereign nations, non-profit societies and other local organizations at the City Hall ceremonial flagpole has been discontinued.

Guest-flagging requests and the flying of Banners for flag islands, which are located throughout the city, continue to be managed and administered by the City's Engineering Department.

The decision to display the flag of another sovereign nation during visits by dignitaries or in acknowledgment of sister-city affiliations shall rest with the discretion of the City Clerk.

The City's Proclamation and Illumination Program has become increasingly popular in recent years. To that end, both programs have now been integrated into the Civic Protocol Policy. Combining core aspects of civic protocol in one policy provides a better public awareness and promotes better understanding of Protocol related matters.

6. Other Minor Policy Amendments

Other minor policy amendments include updates to reflect current flagpole locations, an updated

policy name and an updated policy number. Flag Policy AG-013-01 is to be renamed as COUN-009 Civic Protocol Policy.

IMPLICATIONS/RELATED ISSUES/RISK

FINANCIAL

There are no financial implications associated with the report's recommendations.

LEGAL

There are no legal implications associated with this report's recommendations.

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POLICY TITLE	Civic Protocol Policy
CATEGORY	Council
POLICY NUMBER	COUN-009 (formerly AG-013-01 Flag Policy)
POLICY OWNER	City Clerk's Office
ACCESS	Public

PURPOSE

To govern Civic Protocol related matters, including the flying of flags by the City of Vancouver, the City's Proclamation Program and the City's Illumination Program.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all flags flown by the City of Vancouver, as well as other civic protocol related matters outlined herein. This policy does not apply to the City's Street Banner Program.

Bookings for the City flag islands to display guest flags and banners shall be the responsibility of Engineering Services.

INTERPRETATION

All references in this policy to an employee, elected official, officer, or other representative of the City is deemed to include any designate, deputy, or anyone else properly authorized in writing or by Council resolution to act in that person's position.

Where a position title is changed following the adoption of this policy, the City Manager and City Clerk will have the joint authority to amend this policy to reflect such change or reorganization.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1 General Flag Etiquette

- 1.1 The Canadian Flag shall always be displayed in the position of priority:
 - When flags are displayed at the same height, the Canadian flag is flown on the left as seen by the observer of the flags.
 - In a line of three flags, the Canadian flag should be in the centre.
 - When flags are displayed on an angle such that the centre flag is higher than the other flags, the Canadian flag is flown in the centre.
- 1.2 It is acceptable to fly the Canadian flag at night.
- 1.3 The flags of the x^wməθk^wə'yəm (Musqueam), S^kwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and

səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations will be flown permanently on three tall poles in the centre of the flag island located at 12th and Cambie Street.

2 Half-masting

- 2.1 Flags are flown at half-mast as a sign of mourning. The flag is brought to the half-mast position by raising it to the top of the mast and immediately lowering it slowly to half-mast. When one flag is flown at half-mast, all flags flown together should also be at half-mast.
- 2.2 All Canadian flags that are displayed on flagpoles with halyards will be flown at half-mast, **when operationally feasible** on the following occasions:
- On the death of a Sovereign or a member of the Royal Family related in the first degree to the Sovereign, the Governor General, the Prime Minister, a former governor general, a former prime minister, or a federal cabinet minister;
 - On the death of the Lieutenant Governor or the Premier;
 - On the death of a Member of the House of Commons or a Member of the Legislative Assembly when that member represents a Vancouver riding;
 - On the death of the Mayor, former Mayor, a current Vancouver City Councillor or a former City Councillor ~~who has served at least 10 years~~;
 - On the death of a Vancouver city employee when their death has occurred as a direct result of performing their duties;
 - **On the Commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge (April 9);**
 - On the Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace (April 28) ~~from sunrise to sunset~~;
 - **On the National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism (June 23);**
 - **On the Firefighters' National Memorial Day (second Sunday in September);**
 - **On the Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day (the last Sunday in September);**
 - **On the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation (September 30);**
 - **On the Indigenous Veterans Day (November 8);**
 - On Remembrance Day (November 11) from 11 a.m. until sunset;
 - On the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6) ~~from sunrise to sunset~~;
 - Upon the request of a representative from x^wməθk^wə'yəm, Skwxwú7mesh, or səlilwətał Nations' Councils;
 - ~~On the death of a person to whom Council wishes to bestow this honour or an event that Council wishes to recognize.~~ On the death of any person or persons or event as identified by the Mayor as a symbolic gesture of community mourning. In the Mayor's absence, this decision may be made by the Acting Mayor or in their absence, the Deputy Mayor or, if the Deputy Mayor is unavailable, by the Duty Councillor.

- 2.3 In the case of a death, flags shall be flown at half-mast from the ~~day notification~~ of death until sunset on the day of the funeral, or from sunrise to sunset on the day of the memorial service or on a designated day as directed by the City Clerk's Office, External Relations and Protocol.
- 2.4 The flags to be flown at half-mast will include all flags flown from rooftops of City buildings ~~and all of the flags flown on the City's flag islands~~. In the event of the death of a former Vancouver City Councillor, the flag on the roof of City Hall will be half-masted. Where a Canadian flag and a British Columbia flag fly near to one other, both flags should be lowered to half-mast.
- 2.5 In the event of a death or a day of recognition not specified in this policy, the City of Vancouver will follow the direction of the Federal Department of Canadian Heritage.
- 2.6 When half-masting has been deemed appropriate based on 2.2 or 2.5 above, the City Clerk or designate will notify ~~the following by e-mail:~~ relevant internal and external stakeholders and provide advice to City Departments/Business Units on matters regarding flags.

- ~~• The Corporate Management Team~~
- ~~• An assigned representative for Engineering Services, Electrical Design~~
- ~~• The Building Services Manager and Supervisor~~
- ~~• The Superintendent of Manitoba Yards~~
- ~~• The Director of Civic Theatres~~
- ~~• The Director of Corporate Communications~~
- ~~• The Mayor's Communication Assistant~~
- ~~• The City Clerk's administrative support staff~~
- ~~• Vancouver Fire Department~~
- ~~• Vancouver Police Department (for information)~~
- ~~• Vancouver Public Library (for information)~~
- ~~• Vancouver Park Board: Director of Planning and Operations, Manager of Major Maintenance, Communications Coordinator, and the Supervisor of Trades, Evans Yard (for information)~~

~~3 Guest Flags and Banners~~

- ~~3.1 At the discretion of the City Clerk, the city will fly the flags of other sovereign nations, non-profit societies and other local organizations upon request.~~
- ~~3.2 Flags of other sovereign nations will be displayed on the East side of the main entrance of City Hall. In these cases, the flags normally flown will be removed so that only the guest flag will be flown in that location (in the centre flagpole).~~
- ~~3.3 In the event of an overlap, more than one guest flag may be flown. All guest flags will be displayed on the East side of the main entrance of City Hall. In~~

~~the case of two flags being displayed, the outside flagpoles will be used rather than the centre flagpole.~~

- ~~3.4. The City reserves the right to decide whether or not to fly the flag of a nation when there is political unrest or conflict in that country. The decision to fly the flag of any nation neither implies nor expresses support for the politics of those nations.~~
- ~~3.5. Flags or banners of non-profits organizations may be displayed on the East side of the main entrance of City Hall or on the flag islands throughout the City.~~
- ~~3.6. Parties wishing to have their flags displayed by the City are required to supply the flag(s). These flags should be 36"x72" and must be in good condition. The Building Services Supervisor may be asked to store such flags for use in annual events.~~
- ~~3.7. Events involving flag raising ceremonies may be held at City Hall upon request and at the City's discretion. Corporate Communications should be contacted to make arrangements for such events.~~
- ~~3.8. All guest flag activities will be recorded in the City Flags calendar by the City Clerk or designate. The designate is also responsible for ensuring the records are properly kept and stored based on the City Clerk's records procedures.~~
- ~~3.9. The City Clerk or designate shall notify the Building Services Supervisor of all bookings pertaining to City Hall. Booking for the City flag islands shall be the responsibility of Engineering Services, Transportation.~~

~~4.3~~ **Responsibility and Maintenance of Flags**

- ~~4.1~~ 3.1 ~~The City Clerk has the responsibility and authority for making decisions regarding the flying of guest flags, half masting and any other discretionary matters. The decision to display the flag of another sovereign nation during visits by dignitaries or in acknowledgment of sister-city affiliations shall rest with the discretion of the City Clerk.~~
- ~~4.2~~ 3.2 ~~Maintenance of the flags flown at City Hall is the responsibility of the Corporate Services Group, Building Services, Real Estate, Environment, and Facilities Management.~~
- ~~4.3~~ 3.3 ~~Maintenance of the flags flown on flag islands throughout the City is the responsibility of Engineering Services.~~
- ~~4.4~~ 3.4 ~~Maintenance of the flags in other departments will be delegated within each Department as appropriate.~~

4 Illumination Program

- 4.1 The City's Illumination Program directs the Illumination of the City Hall Building and the Burrard Street Bridge for recognition of important events and cultural occasions.
- 4.2 Important events and cultural occasions eligible for Illumination include:
- i. Ongoing, annual official celebrations and observances as approved by City Council; and
 - ii. One-off events or awareness campaigns, based on requests received that are meeting eligibility criteria and are approved by the City Clerk. Members of the public, charities and non-profit organizations registered in Canada or Consulate Offices can submit requests.
- Eligibility criteria:
- Events of national and international significance; and/or
 - Local festivals or community events; and/or
 - Local, national, or international awareness issues that build community or are related to community health¹ issues; and/or
 - Events or occasions that contribute to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Vancouver.
- Illumination requests will be ineligible if the request:
- Does not align with the above criteria; and/or
 - Contravenes City policies or By-laws; and/or
 - Are mainly personal, political, religious, or commercial in nature; and/or
 - Are from organizations that do not have a presence in Canada and/or;
 - Does not meet application deadlines specified by the City Clerk.
- 4.3 The City reserves the right to decline requests from countries where there is political unrest or conflict. The decision to illuminate for a national day or independence day neither implies nor expresses support for the politics of that country. In the event of extenuating circumstances, approved Illumination requests may be subject to revision.
- 4.4 The City Clerk is granted the authority to approve community requests that meet eligibility criteria as defined in section 4.2 and 4.3 of this policy.

5 Proclamation Program

¹ Important note: Health-related requests must be aligned with Health Canada's Calendar of Health Promotion Days, or it can be reasonably determined that the awareness campaign, event, or activity could significantly impact the community.

- 5.1 The Proclamation Program supports the recognition of important events and cultural occasions.
- 5.2 The Proclamation Program has two streams:
 - i. Ongoing annual Proclamations connected to Official Celebrations and Observances as proclaimed by the Mayor. This program stream is supported by the City Clerk’s Office, External Relations and Protocol.
 - ii. Mayor’s Proclamations based on requests by members of the public or community-based organizations. This program stream facilitates one-off Proclamations which meet eligibility as approved by the Mayor. This proclamation stream is administered and managed by the Office of the Mayor.

RELATED POLICIES AND LINKS:

<https://vancouver.ca/doing-business/banners-flags.aspx>
<https://vancouver.ca/your-government/request-a-proclamation.aspx>
<https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/city-hall-lights-program.aspx>
 AG-011-01 [Street Banner Policy](#)

APPROVAL AND REVIEW HISTORY:

Version 1 recommended by:	City Clerk	
Approved by:	City Council	10/8/2002
Version 2 approved by:	City Clerk	
	City Manager	
	City Council	

Next review date

(to be reviewed again in 4 years)