



## COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: August 7, 2024  
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Meeting Date: September 25, 2024  
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**TO:** Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities  
**FROM:** City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Civic Protocol Policy Amendments

### **Recommendation:**

THAT Council approve amendments to the City's Civic Protocol Policy, as outlined in this report and attached as Appendix A.

### **Purpose and Executive Summary**

As part of the City's proactive approach to policy review, this report recommends amendments to the City's Civic Protocol Policy for Council's consideration. These amendments aim to prioritize local events in the City's Illumination Program, streamline decision-making, improve operational efficiencies, and enhance clarity around eligibility. The proposed criteria suggest focusing exclusively on local events, by removing international recognitions. This approach aligns with practices in other municipalities and further supports a strategic focus on local community events and recognitions.

### **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.

The Flag (Civic Protocol) Policy amendments were approved by Council on April 23, 2024.

## Context and Background

The City's Civic Protocol Policy governs 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.

### Illumination Program

The City's Illumination Program was established in 2016 to recognise important local events and cultural occasions through the illumination of City Hall and the Burrard Street Bridge.

While the intent of this program was to recognize local Vancouver events and occasions, request data reflects a clear upward trend in requests for illuminations of other countries' national days and independence days, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in Table 1. This increase reduces the availability of illumination dates for local events and is not in keeping with the intent of the original program.

*Table 1. Requests to illuminate City Hall in recognition of other countries' national days of significance*

Year	Request to celebrate national days of other countries	Total requests	Percentage for national days (of total requests)
2018	1	75	1.33%
2019	1	76	1.32%
2020	8	114	7.02%
2021	16	158	10.13%
2022	21	195	10.77%
2023	21	176	11.93%
2024 (to June)	27	163	16.56%

### Flag Policy

The established practice governing the 12-foot by 24-foot flags displayed on the 80-foot poles on the North Lawn of City Hall, which traditionally fly the British Columbia and City of Vancouver flags year-round, requires that these flags can only be changed through a formal Council motion. However, this approval requirement is not currently reflected in the Civic Protocol Policy.

## Discussion

### Jurisdictional Scan

Staff are recommending amendments to the Civic Protocol Policy to better align illuminations of major civic assets with local events and occasions and to clarify and document procedural matters related to the changing and flying of flags.

The proposed amendments were informed by the jurisdictional scan below (Table 2.), which provides a comparison of illumination policies in other municipalities. All municipalities referenced prioritize local events and issues, and do not include reference to the national days or independence days of other countries.

*Table 2. Jurisdictional Scan*

<b>City</b>	<b>Est. Population</b>	<b>Criteria and Process</b>	<b>Evaluation Method</b>	<b>Illuminations for Other Countries' National Days</b>
<b>Port Moody</b>	37,676	Written requests via email, reviewed by Council.	Council reviews and decides.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Burnaby</b>	283,593	Charitable, cultural, awareness campaigns. No divisive or irrelevant requests.	Reviewed based on criteria.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Langley</b>	33,634	Submit application forms, community services review.	Reviewed by Community Services department.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Maple Ridge</b>	104,414	Non-denominational, non-political, significant events. Requests for dignitaries welcome.	Case-by-case, 45 days prior.	Supports dignitaries. No mention of other countries' national days.
<b>Parksville</b>	14,497	Non-denominational, non-political, significant events.	Considered case-by-case.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Medicine Hat</b>	66,381	Non-denominational, non-political, charitable events.	City discretion.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Toronto</b>	3,025,647	Non-commercial, non-political, non-denominational.	Reviewed by Chief of Protocol.	Specifically indicates no lighting for other countries' national days.
<b>Winnipeg</b>	820,474	Significant Canadian dates, local festivals, awareness issues.	Case-by-case, priority to Canadian dates.	Priority to Canadian dates, dignitaries. No mention of other countries.
<b>Mississauga</b>	717,961	Registered charities/non-profits, health-related causes.	Reviewed for alignment with criteria.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Ottawa</b>	1,083,550	Public awareness, significant events, community contributions.	Reviewed based on community significance.	No mention of illuminating for other countries
<b>Edmonton</b>	1,563,571	National/international significance, local festivals, awareness issues.	Case-by-case, processed in order received.	Acknowledges dignitaries. No mention of other countries' national days.

City	Est. Population	Criteria and Process	Evaluation Method	Illuminations for Other Countries' National Days
Brampton	826,998	Organizations within Brampton, significant community contribution.	Reviewed by Protocol Office, first come, first served.	Direct connection to Brampton required. No mention of other countries.

### Proposed Illumination Program Amendments

To provide better access and promotion of local events and cultural occasions relevant to Vancouver and enhance operational efficiencies, staff recommend that Council approve amendments to the eligibility criteria for illumination requests. The proposed updated criteria suggest an exclusive focus on local events, eliminating international recognitions. This approach aligns with standard practices across other municipalities and ensures that eligible events reflect local community health issues, events of local significance, and Vancouver's cultural fabric, thereby focusing resources more effectively on local opportunities.

Prioritizing local events and explicitly limiting involvement with international matters, including other countries' national days, which are typically managed by the Federal Government, aligns with Council's strategic priorities to foster a vibrant, community-focused city while managing civic resources efficiently.

In addition to proposing the new eligibility criteria focus on local events, the proposed amendments to the Illumination Program also aim to provide clearer guidelines for illumination requests. These updates ensure that requests for illuminating City Hall align with Council priorities, emphasize local significance, and focus on Vancouver, Canada and xʷməθkʷəy̅əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. Additionally, major sporting events held in Vancouver, and Vancouver's sports teams, are now proposed to be eligible for illumination. These amendments are reflected in detail in Appendix A.

### Proposed Flag Policy Amendment

The proposed amendment is being introduced to ensure that the written policy accurately reflects longstanding practice, thereby providing clear guidelines for the management of the flags on the north lawn, which serve as important civic symbols. It has been specifically noted that this update will preserve the annual tradition of raising the Pride and Trans flags for Vancouver Pride Week.

### **Financial implications**

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

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**APPENDIX A**  
**CIVIC PROTOCOL POLICY AMENDMENTS**

**Please see the attached.**

<b>POLICY TITLE</b>	Civic Protocol Policy
<b>CATEGORY</b>	Council
<b>POLICY NUMBER</b>	COUN-009 (formerly AG-013-01 Flag Policy)
<b>POLICY OWNER</b>	City Clerk's Office
<b>ACCESS</b>	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 xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (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;
  - 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);
  - 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);
  - Upon the request of a representative from *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm*, *Sḵwxwú7mesh*, or *səlilwətał* Nations' Councils;
  - 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 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. 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 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 relevant internal and external stakeholders and provide advice to City Departments/Business Units on matters regarding flags.

### 3 Responsibility and Maintenance of Flags

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Maintenance of the flags flown at City Hall is the responsibility of Building Services, Real Estate, Environment, and Facilities Management.
- 3.3 Maintenance of the flags flown on flag islands throughout the City is the responsibility of Engineering Services.
- 3.4 Maintenance of the flags in other departments will be delegated within each Department as appropriate.
- 3.5 The BC flag and Vancouver Flag fly on the 80-foot poles on the North Lawn of City hall. A Council motion is required to change these flags, notwithstanding the annual tradition of raising the Pride and Trans flags on these poles during Vancouver Pride Week.

### 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 **local** events and cultural occasions relevant to Vancouver.
- 4.2 Important events and cultural occasions eligible for Illumination include:
  - i. Ongoing, annual official celebrations and observances as approved by City Council; and

One-off events or awareness campaigns, based on requests received that are meeting eligibility criteria and are approved by the City Clerk.

Requests may be submitted by xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations Members, ~~of the public,~~ charities and non-profit organizations registered in Canada, ~~or Consulate Offices and sports organizations.~~

Eligibility criteria:

- ~~Events of local significance 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 health<sup>1</sup> issues; ~~and/or~~
- Events or occasions that contribute to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of Vancouver.
- ~~Recognize Vancouver's professional sports teams or major national or international sporting events hosted in 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 Vancouver and/or~~;
- ~~Represents a Nation or country other than Canada or xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, or seeks to commemorate a cultural or heritage day/month linked to another nation.~~
- 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.~~ 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

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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- 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:**

<b>Version 1 recommended by:</b>	City Clerk	
<b>Approved by:</b>	City Council	10/8/2002
<b>Version 2 approved by:</b>	City Clerk	04/09/2024
	City Manager	04/12/2024
	City Council	04/23/2024

**Next review date: September 25, 2028**