

City of St. John's Corporate and Operational Policy Manual

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| Policy Title: Protocol Policy | Policy #: 09-16-01 |
| Last Revision Date: March 10 2025 | Policy Section: Community Services>Protocol |
| Policy Sponsor: City Clerk | |

1. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is:

- (i) to outline the types of activities considered to be Protocol Events,
- (ii) to establish protocol guidelines that ensure such events are conducted according to accepted standards of protocol (including external protocol requirements, where appropriate), and
- (iii) to ensure that such events maintain and enhance the reputation of the City.

2. Definitions

Dignitary(ies) – Dignitaries may include, but are not limited to, members of the Royal Family or their representatives, the Prime Minister and members of the House of Commons, officials from each level of government in Canada, and officials from foreign governments.

Flag Protocol – Addresses topics such as the order of precedence in which flags are flown, half-masting requirements and procedures, and the disposal of flags.

Flag Raising Ceremony – A ceremony in which a flag is raised at City Hall or City owned and/or operated site in recognition of an event or organization.

Freedom of the City – Highest award conferred by the City of St. John's, recognizing the outstanding efforts and/or achievements of an individual or group who have given exemplary service and/or recognition to the City.

Half-Masting – Flags are flown at half-mast as a symbol of mourning, to commemorate significant dates such as Remembrance Day, or to observe solemn events.

Letter of Recognition/Congratulations/Greeting – A ceremonial document recognizing an individual, event or organization in the community.

Proclamation – A ceremonial document designating a given period of time (day, week or month) to recognize the efforts and commitments of an event or organization that enhances the community, encourage public awareness, and/or provide recognition for events that are significant to the City.

Protocol – Written and unwritten convention, etiquette, and rules guiding interaction and communication.

Protocol Event – A City of St. John’s hosted event of significant public profile, requiring official participation by the City, external dignitaries, external organizations and/or the public. Other types of activities such as half-masting of flags, flag/banner raisings, City Hall lighting, official gift giving, proclamations, and/or letters of recognition/congratulations/greeting are also considered to be Protocol Events.

3. Policy Requirements

3.1. Types of Events

Protocol Events, include, but may not be limited to:

- Receptions/Awards/Announcements Hosted by the City
- Freedom of the City
- Flag Protocol
- Requests from Outside Organizations for Flag/Banner Raisings and/or Ceremonies, City Hall Lighting, or Proclamations
- Requests from Outside Organizations or Individuals for Letters of Recognition/Congratulations/Greeting
- Official Visits by Dignitaries
- Official Gift Giving or Receiving

3.2 Prohibited Events

The City shall not host Protocol Events that are:

- a) affiliated with organizations that discriminate based on any prohibited grounds as defined by the **Human Rights Act, 2010**;
- b) non-compliant with municipal, provincial or federal legislation;
- c) deemed to be political in nature (with the exception of any activities required as part of election legislation);
- d) deemed to be commercial in nature;
- e) deemed to be religious in nature; and/or
- f) in the City's sole opinion, not directly related or directly of interest to the City's vision and values, authority or role.

3.3 Receptions/Awards/Announcements Hosted by the City

The City of St. John's hosts a variety of Protocol Events such as receptions, award ceremonies and announcements. These may include receptions for those individuals or groups awarded the Freedom of the City, awards for seniors and youth, grand openings of City or partner facilities, or funding announcements.

Funding announcements with funding partners shall consider any requirements of the funding agreement/contract related to partner notification and/or involvement.

The Office of the City Clerk shall work with the Marketing and Office Services Division to determine the required level of involvement of the City. Given the variability of these types of events, a customized protocol process, incorporating best practices and in accordance with this policy, shall be developed as required.

3.4 Freedom of the City

Individuals or groups shall be nominated for the honour by a member of Council. For nomination for this award, the nominee shall demonstrate exemplary service and/or contribution to the community, which may relate to the arts, science, business and commerce, humanities, politics, community service, sports or professional endeavours and uniformed service (police, fire and/or military).

The nomination and its supporting documents shall be reviewed by Council at its Special Meeting. The recommendation from the Special Meeting shall be presented to Council at its Regular Meeting for ratification. The awarding of the honour requires the unanimous approval of Council.

3.5 Flag Protocol

Flags that are flown at City Hall on a permanent basis (and at other City buildings, as designated by the City Clerk), shall be flown in accordance with this policy and the **Flag Protocol Procedures**.

3.6 Requests from Outside Organizations for Flag/Banner Raisings, and/or Ceremonies or City Hall Lightings

- a) The City of St. John's shall only consider requests for flag raisings, proclamations, lightings or ceremonies by organizations in accordance with section 3.1 b) of this Policy. Requests submitted from individuals not representing an eligible organization shall not be considered.
- b) The requesting organization shall:
 - i. be based in the St. John's area;
 - ii. have a local St. John's area chapter or contact representing the organization; or
 - iii. be a Canadian or international organization supporting a cause significant to the City and the St. John's community.
- c) Final authority to approve or deny requests rests with the City Clerk. Approval is a one-time approval and does not indicate or guarantee approval on an annual basis nor for any subsequent requests.
- d) The courtesy flagpole at City Hall may be used to recognize occasions or events of local, provincial, national or international significance.
- e) An organization shall request permission to fly a flag on the City's courtesy pole as outlined in the **Requests by Outside Organizations/Individuals Procedures**. The procedures document also outlines the process for requesting banner raisings and/or ceremonies or requesting that City Hall light up for a specific cause.

- f) Outside of Protocol Events (such as visiting delegations), flags of nations shall not be eligible.
- g) Flags shall not be flown on the courtesy pole during periods of half-masting. If an event occurs requiring half-masting while a flag is flying on the courtesy pole, the flag on the courtesy pole shall be removed during the half-masting period.

3.7 Proclamations and Letters of Recognition/Congratulations/Greeting

All proclamations and letters shall be issued in accordance with this policy and the **Requests by Outside Organizations/Individuals Procedures**.

An organization does not have exclusive rights to the day, week or month of their proclamation.

Letters of recognition/congratulations/greeting may be issued from the Mayor/Council to groups, organizations, businesses or individuals as noted in the procedures.

A letter of recognition/congratulations/greeting may be considered as an alternative where the Proclamation criteria (as noted in the definition) have not been met.

National, independence and republic days shall not be eligible for proclamations or letters from the City, but it is recognized that many arts and cultural celebrations may coincide with such days.

Final authority to approve or deny requests for proclamations or letters of recognition/congratulations/greeting rests with the City Clerk.

3.8 Official Visits by Dignitaries

Once the City has confirmed an official visit by a dignitary or dignitaries, the Office of the City Clerk and the Marketing and Office Services Division shall develop an appropriate protocol response for the visit depending on the nature of the visit and the visiting dignitaries.

Any official visits by federal, provincial, or foreign federal/state/provincial/municipal governments, or members of the Royal Family (or their designates) shall also involve notification of protocol officials from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

3.9 Official Gift Giving or Receiving

3.9.1 Giving Official Gifts: During Protocol Events, Council members or City officials may present an official gift to dignitaries or other individuals. Information for obtaining the City's official gift (or in exceptional circumstances, an alternative gift) is contained in the **Official Gift Giving and Receiving Procedures**.

3.9.2 Receiving Official Gifts: Any gifts of significant value presented to Council members or City officials through their participation in a Protocol Event shall be considered to have been accepted on behalf of, and belong to, the City. For this purpose, 'significant value' is considered to be historic value or monetary value (estimated worth of \$250 or more). Such gifts shall be managed by the Office of the City Manager.

4. Application

This Policy applies to all Protocol Events hosted by the City.

There are many other recurring events hosted by departments that are not considered to be Protocol Events and are not required to comply with this policy. If staff are unsure whether an event or activity is covered by this policy, they are advised to contact the Office of the City Clerk for clarification.

In certain exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the City Manager, this policy may be applied to a particular event not generally considered to be a Protocol Event. In such an instance, the affected department(s) shall be advised by the Office of the City Clerk.

5. Responsibilities

- 5.1 Senior Executive Committee (SEC)** is responsible for:
- a) Advising and engaging the Office of the City Clerk for Protocol Events relating to their departments.
- 5.2 Office of the City Clerk** is responsible for overseeing and coordinating Protocol Events, including:
- a) Overseeing the preparation, organization, and implementation of all elements of this policy.
 - b) Overseeing Protocol Events, gift giving and receiving, and special recognitions materials (for proclamations and letters).
 - c) Providing advice and direction on flags, banners and other City symbol protocol and etiquette.
 - d) Approving requests for flags, banners, lighting, proclamations and letters under the policy.
 - e) Ensuring Protocol Events are managed in accordance with existing external protocols and relevant external protocol officials are notified, where applicable.
- 5.3 Executive Assistant to Mayor/City Manager** is responsible for:
- a) Advising the Office of the City Clerk of requests related to Protocol Events.
 - b) Assisting the Office of the City Clerk with administrative requirements associated with the policy.
- 5.4 Marketing and Office Services Division** is responsible for:
- a) Coordinating Protocol Events with the Office of the City Clerk.
 - b) Developing a communications action plan (when required) with appropriate departments/divisions and/or external groups.
 - c) Promoting Protocol Events via news releases (in cooperation with external organizations, where applicable), social media and other appropriate media.
 - d) Developing required public relations materials required for protocol events, such as invitations, speaking notes, etc.

6. References

- 09-16-01-01 Flag Protocol Procedures

- 09-16-01-02 Requests by Outside Organizations/Individuals Procedures
- 09-16-01-03 Official Gift Giving and Receiving Procedures
- Proclamation Template

7. Approval

- Policy Sponsor: City Clerk
- Policy Writer: Policy Analyst
- Date of Approval from
 - Corporate Policy Committee: September 27, 2018
 - Senior Executive Committee: November 2, 2018
 - Committee of the Whole: December 5, 2018
- Date of Approval from Council: December 17, 2018

8. Monitoring and Contravention

The Office of the City Clerk shall monitor the application of this policy.

Any contravention of the policy may be brought to the attention of the City Manager for further investigation and potential follow up disciplinary or legal action.

9. Review Date

Initial Review: 3 years, Subsequent Reviews: 5 years