

# NEWS BRIEF



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## THE SCOPE OF CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE BY CITY OF TORONTO OFFICIALS

Considerable attention is being directed to the matter of attendance by local officials at conferences and conventions held outside of Metro Toronto. This interest has taken on generally negative tones as far as elected officials are concerned. In this News Brief, the Bureau explores the nature, magnitude, and cost of recent conference attendance, or approvals for attendance, by elected and appointed officials of the City of Toronto.

Few would question the advantages and benefits, both direct and indirect, which derive from conference attendance by local appointed officials in this age of rapid technological change and innovation. What can be lost sight of in the criticism of attendance by aldermen and controllers is the somewhat unique character of local government in Canada, and, in particular, in Ontario. Elected officials of the City must become, and keep themselves, considerably more knowledgeable in administrative matters than is the case with their counterparts elsewhere. This is so because our Board of Control form requires that elected officials become closely involved in day-to-day administrative detail.

Before examining the level and nature of conference attendance by local officials, four points should be commented upon:

- (1) Sponsoring organizations select attractive and interesting conference sites, whether these organizations are governmentally-oriented or serve private enterprise.
- (2) A differentiation must be made between conferences and in-service training programmes. The latter category is excluded from this analysis
- (3) Sound administrative control should be maintained over the determination and processing of conference attendance requests. Under a unified executive form of local government, which Toronto does not have, attendance by appointed officials is controlled by the mayor or city manager. In Toronto, this responsibility falls mainly to the standing committees, Board of Control, and City Council. Generally-accepted procedure, with which Toronto is in concert, involves: (a) request for attendance, with conference in question usually having been included in the approved departmental estimates; (b) authorization for travel and other expenses prior to incurment; (c) (re)estimate of costs; and (d) review of expense report and reimbursement request.
- (4) Attendance by elected officials is determined by the legislative body itself.

Table I indicates that the total level of spending for conference attendance has been modest; that actual expenditure by departments is usually well within budgetary estimates (in 1965 it fell below estimates in 16 of 18 departments and constituted 78.6% of estimates, while in 1966 it was below estimates in 15 departments and totalled 88.0% of estimates); and that City Council expenditure has exceeded the estimates by 13.2% in 1965 and 49.7% in 1966. While this last fact suggests that Council might be more

realistic in its own conference budgeting, it should be realized that Council frequently is unaware of forthcoming conferences until department heads bring them to the attention of standing committees.

TABLE I  
TOTAL DEPARTMENTAL EXPENDITURE AND ESTIMATED AND ACTUAL EXPENDITURE FOR CONFERENCES, CITY OF TORONTO DEPARTMENTS AND FUNCTIONS UNDER DIRECT COUNCIL CONTROL

Department	1 9 6 5				1 9 6 6			
	Total Ex- penditure	Conference Expenditure Est'ed.	Actual	% of Es- timate Actually Spent	Total Ex- penditure	Conference Expenditure Est'ed.	Actual	% of Es- timate Actually Spent
City Council	\$317,034	\$7,500	\$8,487	113.2%	\$319,996	\$9,600	\$14,369	149.7%
Audit	247,493	150	70	46.7	262,086	150	91	60.7
City Clerk's	466,646	1,361	736	54.1	813,371	1,367	1,053	77.0
City Surveyor	461,366	1,200	897	74.8	584,903	1,037	1,255	121.0
Development	134,722	1,350	749	55.5	239,939	1,565	1,212	77.4
Finance	1,511,863	1,225	831	67.8	1,665,117	1,770	1,541	87.1
Legal	454,442	1,000	735	73.5	450,881	1,500	957	63.8
Personnel	119,019	800	792	99.0	134,955	800	789	98.6
Purch.&Supply	658,657	1,000	1,093	109.3	516,801	1,000	955	95.5
Real Estate	128,608	2,000	1,213	60.7	205,735	1,800	1,711	95.1
Buildings	1,075,844	2,890	2,336	80.8	1,331,013	2,200	1,629	74.0
Comm.of Adj.	41,602	400	135	33.8	44,976	700	585	83.6
Property	3,758,217	1,282	730	56.9	4,708,579	1,141	721	63.2
Fire	8,117,317	2,065	1,637	79.3	8,655,363	1,435	1,314	91.6
Parks&Rec.	4,819,559	2,264	2,035	89.9	5,107,147	2,001	2,030	101.4
Pub.Health	3,312,140	2,650	2,285	86.2	3,633,985	3,210	2,895	90.2
Pub.Welfare	12,629,781	1,290	852	66.0	13,297,141	1,258	996	79.2
Pub.Works	6,429,451	2,245	2,043	91.0	6,057,385	2,435	2,497	102.5
Streets	9,698,496	1,478	1,694	114.6	10,319,365	1,700	1,581	93.0
Totals	\$54,382,257	34,150	29,350	85.9%	58,348,738	36,669	38,181	104.1%
Departments only				78.6%				88.0%

Our next approach involved inspection of conference attendance requests and recommendations which went from standing committees through Board of Control to City Council during the period from January 1st, 1968, through May of 1968. Thus, while it is incomplete, this analysis is concerned with those requests which entailed the full range of legislative consideration.

We examined the origin and date of request, person(s) who were to attend, duration, location, and nature of conference, and estimated total cost. Our findings are as follows:

- The average time between date of request and opening date of conference was 9.6 weeks, and ranged from two to 26 weeks.
- Thirteen different aldermen were involved (3 of whom had a second conference approved), plus three controllers, for a total of 19. Of the 25 appointed officials involved, five were department heads and 20 were senior or middle-level administrators. None of the 25 was involved in a second conference during the five months analysed.

- The conferences attended and to be attended by elected officials averaged 5.0 days in duration, exclusive of travel time, and ranged from two to seven days; those involving appointed officials averaged 4.6 days, exclusive of travel, and also ranged from two to seven days. The Moscow exhibition trip, because it involved other visits, has been excluded from these calculations re duration.
- Expenses of the 19 elected officials were estimated at \$9,638, for an average cost of \$507, while the 25 appointed officials' expenses were estimated at \$9,181 and an average of \$367. This difference in average cost may be attributed in part to the policy of elected officials usually estimating air travel costs on a first-class basis, even though tourist class is normally used.

TABLE II

LOCATION, CLASS AND NUMBER OF OFFICIALS ATTENDING, NATURE OF CONFERENCE, AND ESTIMATED TOTAL COST, AS PROCESSED BY CITY COUNCIL, JANUARY THRU MAY, 1968  
(By Date of Request)

Conference Location	Number Attending		Nature of Conference	Estimated Total Cost of Attending	
	Elected	App'ed.		Elected	App'ed.
Memphis, Tenn.	-	1	Annual Fire Instr'ors Conf.	-	\$400
Los Angeles, Cal.	1	1	Amer. Concrete Institute	\$640	634
Detroit, Mich.	-	1	Institute of Dry Cleaning	-	232
Washington, D.C.	1	1	Amer.Cong.of Surveying,etc.	392	350
Cincinnati, Ohio	1	-	N.Amer. Snow Conf.	314	-
New Orleans, La.	1	-	Amer. Public Works Assn.	342	-
Vancouver, B.C.	1	1	Canadian Standard Assn.	500	350
Niagara Falls, Ont.	-	1	Ont.Munic.Fire Prev.Assn.	-	80
Vancouver, B.C.	1	2	Can.Publ.Health Assn.	600	450+450
San Francisco, Cal.	1	-	Amer.Soc.Planning Off's.	725	-
Vancouver, B.C.	2	1	Can.Building Officials	575+575	575
Atlanta, Ga.	1	1	Nat'l.Fire Protection Assn.	409	400
Niagara Falls, Ont.	-	2	Ont.Mun.Recreation Assn.	-	142+142
Moscow, U.S.S.R.	1	1	Mun.Serv.&Equip. Exhib.	900*	900*
Louisville, Ky.	2	2	Int'l.Assn.Fire Chiefs	430+430	425+425
Kelowna, B.C.	1	1	Can.Assn.Fire Chiefs	705	550**
Denver, Colo.	1	1	Int'l.Signal Assn.Conf.	458	475
Utica, N.Y.	-	2	Nat'l.Assn.Hous.&Relevel.	-	180+180
Banff, Alta.	-	1	Reg'l.Conf.on Pollution Cont.	-	450*
Lake Placid,N.Y.	-	1	Amer.Soc.Heat.,Refrig.,Air Cond. Engineers	-	250
Miami Beach, Fla.	1	1	Amer.Public Works Assn.	545	430
London, Ont.	1	2	Parks & Recr.Assn.of Can.	250	188+188
Chicago, Ill.	2	1	Int'l.Shade Tree Conf.	424+424	335
Totals	19	25		\$9,638	\$9,181
Averages				\$ 507	\$ 367

\* Bureau estimates since other business involved.

\*\* Bureau estimate since no figure given with request.