



Town of St. Lawrence

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REMOTE MEETING ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Councillor

Amanda Slaney
Councillor

Amanda Edwards
Clerk/Manager

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AUTHORITY:

Section 414 (2) *Municipalities Act, 1999*
Council Discretion

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy has been developed by the Town Council of St. Lawrence under the provisions of the *Municipalities Act, (1999)*.

Explanation Sections 24 and 51 of the *Municipalities Act, (1999)* authorizes the following:

"(2.1) A town council may allow a councilor to participate in a meeting by electronic means where the electronic means enables the councilor to listen to the proceedings and to be heard"

"(2.2) A councilor participating in a meeting by electronic means attends the meeting. Furthermore, the ability to remotely attend by electronic means applies to public, privileged, and special meetings.

(A) The intent of the **Remote Meeting Attendance Policy** is to support participation of all members of council. The preference is for all members of council to attend in person; however, if accommodation is required for work, family commitments, or illness, and in-person attendance is not possible, a virtual link will be provided. The ability to attend

meetings remotely will allow greater flexibility for Councillors to attend meetings while juggling other commitments and will assist Council with continuing to conduct business even when Members of Council are not able to attend in-person. Furthermore, the ability to remotely attend by electronic means applies to Public, Special and Committee Meetings. **Section 206 of the *Municipalities Act, (1999)*** continues to apply when determining whether a councillor's seat has become vacated.

2.0 POLICY

1. The chairperson must attend the meeting and **cannot attend remotely.**
2. Remote meeting attendance shall only occur when in-person attendance is either impossible or impractical.
3. There shall be no more than three (3) Members of Council remotely attending. There must be four (4) Members of Council attending in person.
4. Voting or a resolution is permitted through electronic attendance of meetings by members of council. For any such resolution that requires a 2/3 vote, in-person attendance is required, see **Appendix A – Remote Meeting Attendance – Best Practices (d)**
5. General, In-Camera and Privileged Meetings can be attended virtually
6. Councilors requesting remote attendance will inform the Town Office at least 24 hours in advance of meetings.
7. Technology that can be used, but not limited to, is Zoom (preferably) and speaker telephone or equivalent technology.
8. Any Councilor attending remotely should call in at the start of the meeting or no more than 10 minutes after the start of the meeting and ensure they are in a private and unoccupied space to discuss meeting content.
9. If communication is lost, a ten-minute recess will be called to try and re-establish the link. If the link cannot be re-established, after the recess, the electronic participant is deemed to have left the meeting. If this means there is no longer a quorum of Councillors in attendance, then the meeting is adjourned.

Appendix A

Remote Meeting Attendance - Best Practices

A jurisdictional scan has identified the following best practices for remote meeting attendance:

(a) In-person Attendance vs. Remote Meeting Attendance

Remote meeting attendance should only occur when in-person attendance is either impossible or impractical. It would be useful for councils to clearly outline under what circumstances remote meeting attendance will be allowed. As an example, councils may require that the Chair must always attend in-person; and/or limit the number of times a councilor may attend meetings remotely each year. It is also important for councils to determine whether remote meeting attendance is allowed for special and privileged meetings, as well as public meetings. While the amendment applies to all meeting types, councils can determine when remote meeting attendance is permissible. As examples, councils may want to consider requiring in-person attendance for any resolution where a 2/3 majority is required (e.g., appointing or suspending a town manager and/or clerk); and/or not allowing remote meeting attendance for privileged meetings.

(b) Technology Requirements, Options and Associated Costs the legislation requires that anyone attending meetings remotely must be able to listen to the proceedings and to be heard by all in attendance. Technology options can include videoconferencing. However, a simple telephone with a speaker feature at the meeting location will allow the person attending remotely to be heard by everyone in attendance. The only additional requirement being that the person attending remotely must be able to hear the proceedings. Any capital or operational costs associated with technology used to allow remote meeting attendance will be borne by the municipality. If the municipality offers a per diem for attendance at meetings, the council will need to determine whether the per diem will apply to remote meeting attendance as well as in person attendance, or if a reduced rate will be applied for remote meeting attendance.

(c) Procedures for Remote Meeting Attendance Materials should be provided in advance for anyone attending by electronic means. If materials are of a private nature, council may need to use encryption technologies to protect confidentiality. For example, Microsoft Office offers the ability to protect Word and Excel documents using password protection. Anyone wishing to participate remotely should be required to notify the clerk within a specified period (e.g., 3 days before the meeting). This will allow time to organize the necessary logistics (e.g., meeting materials and the necessary technology are both available). Councils should also determine how technical difficulties will be addressed. For example, if communication is lost to one or more electronic participants during a meeting, a 10-minute recess is called to try and re-establish the link. If the link cannot be re-established after the recess, the electronic participants are deemed to have left the meeting. If this means there is no longer a quorum of councillors in attendance, then the meeting is adjourned.

(d) A Councillor attending remotely will be registered as attending the meeting and will vote on all matters except the following motions requiring a 2/3 vote.

As outlined in *the Municipalities Act, (1999) ...*

Section 14 (2) & (3)

Creation changes or repeal of a ward system

Section 17 (2)

Separate election for Mayor

Section 53 (1)

Position and appointment of Town Manager

Section 59 (1)

Appointment of Town Clerk

Section 67 (1) & (2)

Suspension of Town Manager, Clerk or Department Head

Section 68 (1)

Dismissal of Town Manager, Clerk or Department Head

Section 111 (1)

Exemption, Remission or deferment of taxes

Section 111 (2)

Tax agreements and tax incentives

Section 205 (1)

Remuneration for Council members

Section 220 (1)

Holding of plebiscites

3.0 POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed annually or sooner by the Town Clerk/Manager and the Mayor as may be necessary.

Reference:
Approved Motion

IN WITNESS WHEREOF this policy is sealed with the Common Seal of the TOWN OF ST. LAWRENCE.



MAYOR



TOWN MANAGER