



Canadian Library Association
Association canadienne des bibliothèques

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Finance Committee
FROM: Don Butcher, Executive Director
DATE: November 6, 2007
SUBJECT: Division Executive Committee eligible expenses

Background

At the September 2007 Executive Council meeting, some Councillors requested clarification of the application of the Expense Policy to Divisions. I refer you to the unofficial Notes attached.

Discussion

I quote from the existing Travel Policy:

“ Application

This policy applies to the following persons for travel under the following circumstances: ...

Division executives for attendance at divisional meetings in connection with division assignments for which travel reimbursement has been approved by the Division.”

The Travel Policy goes on to set out the rules for travel and accommodation. In preparation for the September meeting, it was proposed that for clarity, the existing Conference Expense Guidelines be repeated in the Travel Policy, so that readers would have all the relevant policies and guidelines in one place. *No changes were proposed to the content of the Conference Expense Guidelines.*

Divisions (and Committees, Chapters and Sections) are all subject to the Travel Policy and the Conference Expense Guidelines as approved by Executive Council.

If the Division decides to hold a meeting and decides to cover travel and accommodation, then individuals are covered within the rules and guidelines.

Conference Registration Fee Discussion

I speculate what sparked Council asking Finance Committee to discuss this issue is the coverage of Conference registration fees.

Historically, CLA covered travel and accommodation for Executive Council meetings outside of Conference, but did not cover any travel or accommodation for Executive Council for the

meetings at Conference. I expect that the rationale was there was an expectation that Councillors would have financial support from their institutions to attend Conference, so there were no extra travel and accommodation costs to cover attendance at the Council meetings schedule at the same time.

In order to open up governance opportunities to more CLA members, starting in 2003, CLA has covered the cost of travel and accommodation for Executive Council for all Council meetings, including those at the time of Conference. Thus leadership positions are not restricted to those from richer institutions or to wealthier individuals to the same extent.

Yes, it just so happens that as long as CLA has Executive Council meetings at the same time and place as the Conference, this policy means that Councillors will be in same city at the same time as the CLA Conference. If Councillors choose to spend their non-governance time attending Conference, that's their right. But that's not the reason for the policy: the rationale is that governing CLA is important enough for CLA to cover the costs of travel and accommodation for all Council meetings.

From time-to-time in the past, CLA provided a free Conference registration to Executive Councillors; however, it has not done so for at least six years (except for the President). The rationale behind this is that there's no compelling benefit to the membership at large to providing Councillors with free professional development, and we should not be spending members' money on something that doesn't benefit the members. There is a compelling benefit to the membership to having the President at the Conference, so her/his registration fee is waived.

Divisions can cover the cost of travel and accommodation for Division Executive Councillors to division meetings, but they are not required to do so: CLA Executive Council has left that decision up to the Divisions. In general, Divisions have been following CLA Executive Council practice, although at times when a Division was facing its cap on governance expenses, some individuals have covered their own travel and accommodation to keep the Division from exceeding the cap.

Based on the "compelling benefit to membership" argument, Divisions should not be covering the cost of Conference registration fees for their Division executives. However, I know of no policy that prevents them from doing so. A Division might argue that there are no restrictions on how it chooses to recognize its volunteers, so if it chooses to fund their participation in the Conference, the Division is entitled to do so.

Excerpt from Notes from September 16, 2007 Executive Council meeting

6.04 Travel Policy

Terri: This is just for clarity – we have to be specific on travel for Council membership and respectful of time as much as money and we wanted to ensure both meld together (e.g. train cheaper but took more time). As well, it's in more detail. We followed the federal government policy and set it out and described it. It's been a best practices approach for Council to consider.

Shelagh: Question about donating expenses. Another association I work with we do that regularly. We were encouraged if we don't submit expenses to the office, we submit as a donation – seems to work well.

Don: We have done it in other places that I have worked but Revenue Canada regulations say you have to submit your expenses. We have done it also at CLA. You have to submit the expenses, we issue a cheque, then you donate the same amount. In theory we could do it "on the spot". There has to be a paper trail. The other way is just don't submit your expenses but then there is no tax receipt.

Judy: Question re conference expenses – guidelines for Council, was that in the old one?
Don: It's unchanged.

Terri: We will work that back in. Guidelines for Executive Council members – if going to a conference and also going to meeting.

Judy: CLA does not support conference registration or travel to the conference.

Lawrence: So CLA has never encouraged its executive – they don't think it's important enough to pay for registration at a conference? At BCLTA, we think it's important for them to be there to help promote the organization. Some of our executive members would not be there if we didn't pay their travel, etc. We meet after but we also pay their travel.

Don: This is more generous than it used to be. If you want to have a policy discussion on that, I think it's appropriate.

Ingrid: Make it clear in this policy that meetings that are around the conference and exceptions under the guidelines.

Linda: Meetings are acceptable – it's too vague the way it is – referring to "financial hardships".

Alvin: Those Division business meetings are covered regardless of where they take place.

Ingrid: Maybe add that then.

Lawrence: I said, if divisions have meetings prior to the conference, e.g. last year we had

pre and post-conference meetings. So if a member wanted to register with the conference he has to pay for it out of his pocket? If CLA expects to have a meeting before/after, it makes sense. Then, in between, what does he do? They should be registered if they want to go to the conference.

Susan: Made a suggestion that the division could make that decision on whether to incorporate conference registration or not. In most cases, the Library Program and the Libraries will pay but that may not always be the case. Your point is an excellent one – it's where they pay out of pocket or not be there. Maybe it should be more flexible where there are no funds it would be from the division funds.

**Motion by Terri that clarification be obtained on division expenses for conferences.
2nd Ken**

Further Discussion:

Terri: So, I can go back and make this an item for Treasurer and as part of my upcoming teleconference call and I will have something drafted for that meeting and bring it to Council and Finance in February after consideration and discussion – is that acceptable?

Judy: That's only part of it. It's becoming a slippery slope because as members of executive council we have some expectations, i.e. going to conference. I don't think we want to go down that road too far. We can't have the association paying for our involvement on this board above what we already do. We have to be careful.

Cheryl: Except if it's important, employers and libraries do not allow for that.

Terri: Yes, then we have a hardship case. Sometimes something happens – i.e. budget cuts – those exceptions are covered there.

Cheryl: We want to encourage a diverse board.

Judy: Was the old policy is if you have to pay for every meeting?

Alvin: The old policy was: meetings away from the conference were covered.

Don: You might ask Finance Committee to make a recommendation because it will have financial implications. You might ask Finance Committee to look at it in November. The issue is conference registration fees and clarify travel to the conference.

**Motion by Alison to defer to the February meeting
2nd Lawrence
Carried unanimously**