



City of Kingston
Report to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee
Report Number EDI-25-006

To: Chair and Members of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee

From: Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services

Resource Staff: Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Community Development, Wellbeing & IIDEA

Date of Meeting: May 27, 2025

Subject: Illumination Policy

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 4. Foster a Caring and Inclusive Community

Goal: 4.5 Promote and support diversity.

Executive Summary:

This report outlines proposed updates to the City's First Capital Place Illumination Policy, which guides how City Hall and Springer Market Square are illuminated to mark significant events and community causes. The revisions aim to enhance alignment with community needs, improve transparency, manage growing demand, and support the City's strategic and equity-related priorities.

Following committee feedback and a review of practices in other municipalities, the revised policy introduces a cap of 90 illuminations per year with 18 predetermined dates and 72 dates available for qualified public requests. The new criteria prioritize non-profit and locally based organizations, exclude politically or ideologically controversial requests, and reinforce alignment with equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles.

As part of the City's commitment to reconciliation, City Hall will continue to be illuminated monthly to honour residential school victims, in coordination with community-led sacred fires.

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A targeted communication strategy is also being developed to promote the revised process and improve public understanding of the program's purpose and community-driven nature. These changes aim to preserve the integrity and impact of the illumination program while fostering broad, inclusive community participation.

Recommendation:

That the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee recommend to Council:

That the current First Capital Place Illumination Policy (POL-47), be rescinded, and the proposed First Capital Place Illumination Policy, attached as Exhibit A to Report Number EDI-25-008, be approved.

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Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Jennifer Campbell,
Commissioner, Community
Services**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Lanie Hurdle, Chief
Administrative Officer**

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Growth & Development Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Neil Carbone, Commissioner, Corporate & Emergency Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
David Fell, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Ian Semple, Acting Commissioner, Transportation & Infrastructure Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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Options/Discussion:

The City’s First Capital Place Illumination Policy (Exhibit A) establishes guidelines for illuminating First Capital Place (City Hall and Springer Market Square) to mark occasions such as celebrations, commemorations, promotions and raising awareness of local history, special events or community issues. Staff have revised this policy to better align with the evolving needs of the community, enhance public engagement and support the City’s strategic priorities.

In August 2024 through [Report Number EDI-24-006](#), staff provided an overview of how this illumination offering was being utilized, identified challenges and sought recommendations from this committee. During this meeting, staff received two key pieces of feedback from committee members. First, that it was not necessary to limit illumination requests; and second, to add Overdose Awareness Day to the predetermined illumination dates.

As shown in Figure 1, the number of illumination requests has steadily increased over the years, with 106 requests in 2022, 120 in 2023, 134 requests in 2024 and 98 as of May 5, 2025. This upward trend presents two main challenges; concerns that City Hall is being illuminated too frequently, which may diminish the impact of each display, and the associated costs related to staff labour and resources. Additionally, there is a lack of community understanding that these illuminations are requested by the community, rather than being driven by the City itself.

Figure 1:



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Staff researched illumination policies and processes from other municipalities (Toronto, Ottawa, Vaughan, Windsor) and found the following:

- Cities without limits on illumination requests typically have digital infrastructure in place to manage the process.
- Some municipalities charge approximately \$1,000 to cover the costs of rental equipment for illumination requests.
- Most policies require illumination requests to be connected to the community, be non-denominational, and aligned with equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles, excluding political parties or controversial ideological matters.

Based on the feedback from the committee in August 2024 and the research from other municipalities, staff propose a new structure for the policy that includes a total of 90 illuminations per calendar year. This would consist of 18 illuminations on predetermined dates, with the remaining 72 available for public requests that meet the criteria outlined in the First Capital Place Illumination Policy. Priority will be given to requests from non-profit or charitable organizations based in Kingston or with a local chapter. This updated approach aims to balance public engagement with operational costs and ensures that the illumination of First Capital Place reflects Kingston's cultural, historical and significant observances, while maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for residents. Additional revisions to the policy include:

- Illumination requests will not be approved for active events or ongoing national or international conflicts.
- Requests will not be approved for matters of political controversy, ideological positions or individual convictions.
- All requests (approved/not approved) will be reviewed by the EDI Advisory Committee on a routine basis. Applications for illumination must be received at least four months prior to the illumination date. All requests received four weeks before the scheduled EDI Advisory Committee will be included in the update report.
- As part of the City's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and communities, and at the request of a group of local Indigenous community members, City Hall is illuminated once a month as a visible commitment to community healing and in honour of the victims of residential schools. Community led sacred fires typically occur at the same time as these illuminations with flexibility if the date of illumination and sacred fire coincide with a previously scheduled event.

To promote this new process and increase community awareness, staff are developing a targeted communication strategy. This strategy will focus on reaching both the groups and

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individuals traditionally engaged in the initiative, as well as the broader community, ensuring inclusive and effective communication.

Staff will monitor the implementation of the revised policy and report back to the Committee in Q1 2026 or earlier on the overall program effectiveness.

These updates to the policy will help maintain the integrity of the First Capital Place illumination program, ensuring it remains a meaningful and inclusive feature for the Kingston community.

Existing Policy/By-Law

Illumination Policy

Notice Provisions

None

Financial Considerations

None

Contacts:

Vanessa, Mensah, Manager, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, 613-546-4291 extension 1344

Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Kevin Gibbs, Director, Heritage Services

Derek Ochej, Deputy City Clerk, Clerk's Office

Christine O'Connor, Committee Clerk, Clerk's Office

Kaitlyn Green, IIDEA Advisor, Community Development, Wellbeing & IIDEA

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A Illumination Policy

POL-XX - FIRST CAPITAL PLACE ILLUMINATION POLICY

Policy #	POL-XX
Effective Date	June 17, 2025
Status	DRAFT.
Final Approver	Corporate Management Team

1.0 Interpretation

1.1 In this policy, unless the context requires otherwise:

"CAO" means the person appointed as chief administrative officer for the *City*;

"City" means The Corporation of the City of Kingston;

"City Clerk" means the person appointed as clerk of the *City* pursuant to the *Municipal Act, 2001*;

"City employee" means a person who performs work or supplies services directly to the *City* for monetary compensation under an employment contract and includes senior staff persons and by-law enforcement officers but does not include council members;

"CMT member" means a member of the *City's* corporate management team and includes the person appointed chief administrative officer by the *City*, the person appointed treasurer by the *City*, and a commissioner responsible for the leadership and operation of a portfolio of *City* departments; and

"director" means the director of a *City* department.

In this policy, "include", "includes" and "including" indicate that the subsequent list is not exhaustive.

- 1.2 A reference to any legislation, regulation, by-law, rule, policy or provision thereof includes a reference to any legislation, regulation, by-law, rule or provision thereof enacted in substitution thereof or amendment thereof.
- 1.3 A reference to legislation includes all of the regulations made thereunder.
- 1.4 A reference to the position or title of any *City employee* includes a reference to any position or title created in substitution thereof.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:
- (a) establish guidelines for considering requests to illuminate First Capital Place for the purpose of celebrating, commemorating or creating awareness of local history, special events or issues important to the community;
 - (b) establish an administrative process to coordinate requests to illuminate First Capital Place; and
 - (c) support the recommendations in the Kingston Culture Plan related to Kingston City Hall as a national historic site, the need to tell community stories through the development of a cultural heritage strategy and to highlight the City of Kingston's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

3.0 Requirements

- 3.1 The illumination of the following areas within First Capital Place shall be administered in accordance with this policy:
- (a) City Hall exterior (Ontario Street façade, City Hall dome, and Market Wing);
 - (b) Springer Market Square;
 - (c) the D.A. McNevin Memorial Fountain in Springer Market Square; and
 - (d) the Confederation Park Fountain.
- 3.2 The illumination of the areas identified in subsection 3.1 shall be administered by the *City* to enhance the architecture of Kingston City Hall as well as to showcase the building and surrounding area as a destination for residents and visitors. The illumination system consists of two components:
- (a) floodlights that provide a general wash of colour; and
 - (b) projectors use gobos to add specific design elements.
- 3.3 Most illuminations require the use of floodlights only with projectors being used in exceptional circumstances for seasonal and/or targeted recognitions and promotions.
- 3.4 The *City* aims to ensure that the community has an opportunity to inform the illumination calendar each year and that it reflects the current needs, identities, and priorities of its residents. The *City* is committed to ensuring that illuminations

remain effective and impactful. As such, the total number of illumination days will be limited to 90 per calendar year to better amplify community voices.

- 3.5 18 annual illumination days have been identified through consultation with the *City's* Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Advisory Committee. Additionally, up to 72 dates of illumination may be filled through public requests. All requests will be reviewed by the EDI Advisory Committee on a routine basis. Applications for illumination must be received at least four months prior to the proposed illumination date.
- 3.6 In accordance with dates most relevant to the Kingston community and in alignment with the *City's* current equity, diversity and inclusion priorities and Council's Strategic Plan, the following dates must be illuminated annually:
- (a) Food Insecurity Day (January 14);
 - (b) Black History Month (February 1);
 - (c) Anti-Bullying Day/Pink Shirt Day (last Wednesday of February);
 - (d) International Women's Day (March 8);
 - (e) Earth Hour (lights off from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., late March);
 - (f) Kingston Pride (June 15);
 - (g) National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21);
 - (h) Canada Day (July 1);
 - (i) Emancipation Day (August 1);
 - (j) Overdose Awareness Day (August 31);
 - (k) International Day of Peace (September 21);
 - (l) Franco-Ontarian Day (September 25);
 - (m) National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30);
 - (n) World Homeless Day (October 10);
 - (o) Remembrance Day (November 11);
 - (p) International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3);
 - (q) National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (December 6); and

(r) New Year's Eve (December 31).

3.7 Public requests to illuminate the areas in subsections 3.1 (a) and (b) shall be considered through an application process with requests being submitted to the City EDI Office. The EDI Advisory Committee will be consulted routinely, and the City will approve up to 72 public requests for illumination to ensure that illuminations remain impactful and reflective of the needs of the Kingston community. Only floodlights will be used and there will be no fee charged. However, all public requests must meet the following criteria to be approved:

- (a) the request must foster inclusion among and respect for Kingston residents as part of an increased emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion;
- (b) the request must promote events, activities and/or issues that affect Kingston residents, take place in Kingston and promote a sense of community;
- (c) the request must include a justification and the event, activity and/or issue to be promoted will already have a recognizable colour or colours associated with it;
- (d) the request must be submitted by a representative of a non-profit or charitable organization based in Kingston, or with a Kingston chapter; and
- (e) the application must be submitted at least four months in advance of the date of the request to illuminate a particular area for basic requests.

3.8 Public requests to illuminate the areas in subsections 3.1 (a) and (b) must generally be illuminated for one night from dusk until dawn, unless to accommodate events based on the priority of illuminations listed in subsection 3.10. No areas identified in subsection 3.1 shall be illuminated when:

- (a) the subject denigrates ideological, religious, political or other beliefs, promotes hate or is contrary to any law;
- (b) the subject is spontaneous in nature, such as a world event or natural disaster;
- (c) the subject is an active event or current national or international conflict;
- (d) the subject is a matter of political controversy, ideological position, or individual conviction; or
- (e) the subject is intended for profit-making purposes.

- 3.9 The *City* reserves the right to refuse or cancel requests to illuminate the areas identified in subsection 3.1 when:
- (a) the ability to illuminate the area is needed for an event of municipal significance;
 - (b) the equipment is unavailable for maintenance or any other reason;
 - (c) the application is for an organization or group that does not have a presence in Canada; or
 - (d) the request does not comply with this policy or for any other reason the *City* deems appropriate.
- 3.10 Priority for illuminating the areas identified in 3.1 (a) and (b) shall be given to requests that have the purpose of celebrating, commemorating, promoting or creating awareness of local history, special events or issues important to the community that have municipal, national, or international significance in the following order:
- (a) *City*-led;
 - (b) requests from agencies, boards and other similar municipal organizations;
 - (c) requests from third party organizations or community groups; and
 - (d) requests related to commemorations, which shall be administered in accordance with the Commemorations Policy.
- 3.11 As part of the *City's* commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and communities, and at the request of a group of local Indigenous community members, City Hall is to be illuminated once a month as a visible commitment to community healing and in honour of the victims of residential schools. Community-led sacred fires typically occur at the same time as these illuminations with flexibility if the date of illumination and sacred fire coincide with a previously scheduled event.
- 3.12 Projectors, together with floodlights, may be used for *City*-led events or in relation to requests from agencies, boards and other similar municipal organizations with the understanding the applicant will be responsible for covering all expenses related to the purchase and installation of specialized gobos and the programming and operations of the projectors.
- 3.13 The D.A. McNevin Memorial Fountain in Springer Market Square and Confederation Park Fountain shall be illuminated during the normal operational season (May until

September), as determined by the *city*, to help draw residents and visitors to the downtown core.

4.0 Administration

- 4.1 *CMT members* must take reasonable steps within their authority to direct compliance with this policy.
- 4.2 The *CAO* must take reasonable steps within their authority to:
- (a) resolve any issues or conflicts as needed in accordance with this policy in consultation with the *Director of Heritage Services, Director of Arts & Culture Services, Director of Recreation & Leisure Services, Director of Community Development, Wellbeing and IIDEA and the Manager of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion*; and
 - (b) approve individual requests under special circumstances pertaining to the *City's equity, diversity and inclusion vision*.
- 4.3 The *City Clerk* must take reasonable steps within their authority to coordinate approvals with the *Director of Facilities Management & Construction Services*.
- 4.4 The *Director of Facilities Management and Construction Services* must take reasonable steps within their authority to:
- (a) establish procedures, protocols and controls to safeguard the integrity and the use of the programmable flood lights; and
 - (b) ensure the illumination technology is programmed as scheduled or as directed by the *City Clerk* for external requests.
- 4.5 The *Director of Communications & Customer Experience* must take reasonable steps within their authority to promote and communicate illuminations as approved in section 3.6 and 4.2 (b) to the public in consultation with *Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*.
- 4.6 The *Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion* must take reasonable steps within their authority to:
- (a) receive and approve applications in accordance with this policy;
 - (b) coordinate with the *CAO* in case of an issue or conflict and any unusual request not covered by this policy;
 - (c) provide applicants with a response in the event a request is refused; and

(d) consult with the *Director* of Community Development, Wellbeing & IIDEA, in recommending last-minute changes to any illumination based on recent incidents, or events that affect residents of Kingston with respect to *city's* equity, diversity and inclusion vision.

4.7 *Directors* must take reasonable steps within their authority to submit illumination requests for City hosted events to the Manager of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, in accordance with this policy.

4.8 A *City employee* who breaches this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

5.0 Application

5.1 This policy applies to all *City employees*.

6.0 Approval Authority

Role	Position	Date Approved
Quality Review	Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	
Subject Matter Expert	Manager of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	
Legal Review	N/A	
Management Review	Directors	
Final Approval	Corporate Management Team	

7.0 Revision History

Effective Date	Revision	Description of Change
June 17, 2025		POL-47 rescinded and POL-XX approved.