



City of Hamilton Report for Consideration

To: General Issues Committee
Date: June 11, 2025
Report No: **HSC25026**
Subject/Title: Commemorating September 30th National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
Ward(s) Affected: (City Wide)

Recommendations

- (a) That a representative(s) of the Mayor and Council be requested participate in the City's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Event to speak about the meaning of the day and the City's reconciliation efforts;
- (b) That no other City events or Committee of Council meetings be held on September 30th;
- (c) That staff be directed to lower City flags to half-mast on September 30th in recognition of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation; and,
- (d) That People Leaders allow and encourage staff to attend the City's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation event, where operationally feasible, without requiring the use of personal time.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to address a request from United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UCFW) to designate September 30th, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Day, as a municipal holiday.
- After discussions with the Urban Indigenous community in Hamilton, the feedback indicated that more work is needed toward reconciliation before recognizing the day as a municipal holiday.
- As a result, it is not recommended that September 30th be declared a municipal holiday at this time.

- The recommendations are based on the discussions with Urban Indigenous groups such as Circle of Beads (COB), and the Professional Association of Aboriginal Networking Group (PAANG), and the Indigenous Well-Being and Advisory Circle.
- The recommendations focus on making the day more impactful and accessible for City staff and residents.
- The City of Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy action item # 29 seeks to provide education to all city staff about Indigenous peoples and the Indigenous-Settler history. Staff will explore options for required training about Residential Schools, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, for staff and bring back a cost breakdown.
- Until such time that September 30th is declared a statutory holiday by the Province, the City is not required to recognize it as such. However, as an employer, the City may choose to declare the day as a municipal paid holiday for its employees.

Financial Considerations

The alternative option would be to designate September 30th as a municipal holiday for all City of Hamilton employees. Designating it as such would result in an estimated additional cost of \$775,100, based on 2025 salaries, to cover holiday pay and ensure coverage of critical services. This amount is in addition to the approximately \$2 million already budgeted for the day, which would be applied to fund holiday pay for union staff and full-time salaried staff. These estimates exclude Police and Fire services, as their current collective agreements already recognize September 30th as a holiday.

Background

On September 25, 2024, Mayor Horwath put forward the following motion:

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff, with support from the Indigenous Relations Team, be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee in Q2 2025, with recommendations on the process the City of Hamilton would follow in order to recognize 'National Truth and Reconciliation Day', as a municipal holiday beginning in 2025 (September 30, 2025), including:

(i) a jurisdictional scan of the processes other municipalities have followed in recognizing their municipal holidays.

(ii) any potential Human Resources, Financial or Legal impacts; and

(b) That the Mayor and Council forward a letter of support to Premier Ford to make the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation a Provincial statutory holiday.

Motion Carried"

Analysis

For this report, a small working group was assembled to consider Legal, Human Resources, Finance, and Indigenous Relations implications.

Indigenous Engagement

Discussions with members of the Urban Indigenous community in Hamilton was a critical component in shaping this report and recommendations. The Indigenous Relations team initiated these conversations with the Urban Indigenous community to obtain their feedback and better understand perspectives on the potential declaration of the day as a municipal holiday.

Much of the feedback received emphasized that more work remains for the City in advancing reconciliation, and that September 30th should remain a day of remembrance, education, and engagement – particularly to honour Residential School survivors and children who never returned. Community members expressed concern that declaring the day a paid holiday could reduce participation in educational activities. There would be even less opportunity for staff to educate themselves on Residential Schools and 94 Calls to Action.

There was strong encouragement for the Mayor and Council Members to be present, and for a representative to speak at the City-led event on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, offering reflections on the meaning of the day, affirming the City of Hamilton's commitment to reconciliation, and speaking about how the City will continue its reconciliation journey.

Legal implications or legislated requirements

Until such time that September 30th is declared a statutory holiday by the Province, the City is under no obligation to treat it as such. However, as an employer, the City may voluntarily choose to declare it as a paid municipal holiday.

Human Resources

An email survey was sent to several municipalities to determine how they mark Truth and Reconciliation Day. Of the municipalities that responded, some recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day with a paid holiday while others host and/or promote activities in which employees and the public are encouraged to participate. (See Appendix "A" to Report HSC25026 - Truth & Reconciliation Day Comparison Chart.)

Labour Relations

If Council were to proclaim the Day of Truth and Reconciliation as a municipal holiday for all City of Hamilton employees, all unionized employees would get the additional municipal holiday outside of the bargaining process. An alternative approach would be to direct the City's bargaining teams to seek inclusion of this day as an improvement (i.e., increase in statutory or proclaimed holidays) during future rounds of collective bargaining. However, the majority of the City's collective agreements do not expire until 2027, and this approach could result in inconsistencies across bargaining units depending on each Union's priorities and the duration of bargaining processes.

On July 15, 2024, an interest arbitrator awarded the Hamilton Professional Fire Fighters' Association (HPFFA), Local 288 the Day of Truth and Reconciliation as an additional statutory holiday through their collective agreement. No other City bargaining unit (with the exception of Hamilton Police) currently has an entitlement to this holiday.

In summary, while the City has the authority to recognize September 30th as a municipal holiday, at this time, it is believed that meaningful reconciliation is best advanced through education, visible leadership, and sustained engagement with Indigenous communities - an approach that aligns with the feedback received.

Alternatives

Should the General Issues Committee wish to pursue a different approach, the following alternative is presented for consideration:

Designate September 30th as a Municipal Holiday

Council may choose to formally recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a paid municipal holiday for all City of Hamilton employees.

As outlined in the Financial Considerations section, this option would result in an estimated additional cost of \$775,100 in 2025, over and above the approximately \$2 million already budgeted for unionized and salaried staff holiday pay.

While this would align with how the day is recognized in some other jurisdictions, feedback from Urban Indigenous community in Hamilton emphasized that reconciliation should be prioritized through education, engagement, and reflection rather than time off from work. There is also a concern that declaring September 30th as a holiday could reduce opportunities for meaningful staff participation in learning activities or City-led events.

Regardless of the chosen approach, it is recommended that:

- The City hosts a Day of Remembrance event to provide an opportunity for staff and residents to attend and reflect; and
- Staff explore options for mandatory training on Residential Schools and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, as this would support Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy Action #29.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

See [2022-2026 Council Priorities, Outcomes & Measures of Success | City of Hamilton](#) for more information on Council's Priorities.

3. Responsiveness & Transparency

3.3 Build a high performing public service.

Indigenous engagement is very important when making decisions in relation to reconciliation, and the feedback was clear that the city has much work to do before designating this day as a municipal holiday. Providing for more opportunities for learning, and involvement of staff in this day will also aid in the implementation of the Urban Indigenous Strategy. The UIS is not just the work of the Indigenous Relations team it is a corporate wide strategy and the more that there is an understanding of the role of Residential Schools and Indigenous history overall among staff, the higher functioning the corporation can become.

High functioning corporations must be able to meet the needs of their clients. There is a high population of Indigenous people in the city, and it is vital that staff, both frontline and People Leaders should have a good foundational knowledge of Indigenous history, and the effects of Residential Schools that still impact the population today.

Previous Reports Submitted

N/A

Consultation

- Stacey Applebee; Solicitor, Corporate Services
- Nenzi Cocca; Director, HR Systems & Operations
- Yakov Sluchenkoy; Director – Employee Health & Labour Relations, City Manager's Office
- Katherin Platt; HR Policy & Planning Specialist, City Manager's Office
- Julie Shott; Manager, Labour Relations, City Manager's Office
- Kayla Fleming Petrovsky; Supervisor, Budgets and Financial Planning, Corporate Services
- Circle of Beads members
- PAANG – Professional Association of Aboriginal Networking Group
- Indigenous Well-Being Advisory Circle – City of Hamilton, Public Health

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: Truth & Reconciliation Day Comparison Chart

Prepared by: Katelyn LaForme, Director Indigenous Relations
Healthy & Safe Communities, Indigenous Relations

Submitted and recommended by: Katelyn LaForme, Director Indigenous Relations
Healthy & Safe Communities, Indigenous Relations