



Report to: General Committee

Meeting Date: January 20, 2020

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**SUBJECT:** City of Markham's Community Flag Raisings and Flag Protocol Policy  
**PREPARED BY:** Alida Tari, Manager, Access & Privacy (ext. 2082)

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the report entitled "City of Markham's Community Flag Raising & Flag Protocol Policy" be received; and,
- 2) That Appendix "A" of the current Policy (see Policy included as **Attachment "B"**) be amended to include the following additional Solemn Days of Commemoration in accordance with the Federal Government's National flag etiquette guidelines: June 23 (National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism); Second Sunday of September (Firefighters National Memorial Day); and the last Sunday in September (Police and Peace Officer's National Memorial Day); and further,
- 3) That staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide General Committee information relative to the City of Markham's current Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy (see Policy and Civic Centre Flag Protocol included as **Attachment "A"**).

**BACKGROUND:**

The City has been raising flags for decades and recognizes that flags, as symbols of nations, territories and community organizations, are important to Markham residents.<sup>1</sup> As a matter of practice, Markham has used special flag raisings to enhance public awareness of activities such as national/independence days, multicultural events, fundraising drives, and historical commemorations important to residents. The City has also flown flags at half-mast to mark periods of official mourning or to commemorate solemn occasions important to residents.

In 2011, Markham City Council adopted the Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy, establishing a framework to govern requests for flag raisings received from the community and to establish a consistent protocol for the flying of flags at all municipal buildings, properties and facilities (see 2011 staff report included as **Attachment "B"**). At this same time, Council delegated authority for approving or denying those requests for Community Flag Raisings to the City Clerk: 1) that have been previously approved by Council within five years of the request date; and 2) during Council's summer recess (if required), subject to the terms of the Policy. Council also

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<sup>1</sup> A review of City records show references to flag raisings as far back as 1978.

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approved the installation of two additional flagpoles at the Markham Civic Centre to serve as Community Flagpoles<sup>2</sup>.

In accordance with the Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy, the following three general principles are to be used to interpret the Policy: 1) the City will use flags to celebrate Markham's diversity and to honour those who have contributed to the life of the City; 2) the flying of flags at a City facility will not be contrary to the principles of any other Markham policy; and, 3) the City will only fly flags (national) that are approved or recognized by federal, provincial or municipal governments of Canada.

The Policy also establishes criteria for approving or denying requests to use the Community Flagpoles. Specifically, the Community Flagpoles may be used to fly flags to: honour national or independence days important to the residents of Markham; to support fund-raising drives important to the residents of Markham; and, to celebrate multi-cultural and civic events important to the residents of Markham. The Community Flagpoles are not to be used to fly flags of the following: political parties or religious groups, in support of fund-raising drives that are political or religious in nature or in support of groups, organizations or events that promote beliefs contrary to any other City policy. In accordance with the policy, the City Clerk (or her designate) is responsible for providing advice (as necessary) on the applicability of any of the above criteria to any application received for Community Flag Raisings.

The flying of flags at the Civic Centre is not to be interpreted as the City of Markham's support for the politics of nations, ethnic groups, or organizations but instead as recognition of those residents who have made the request to raise a flag. Since the adoption of the Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy in 2011, the City has approved over 150 flag raisings at the Markham Civic Centre. A copy of the current 5 year list of approved flag raisings is included as **Attachment "C"**. In October, 2019, concerns were raised by some members of the public regarding a request from the Federation of Chinese Canadians in Markham (FCCM) to fly the Chinese flag at the Markham Civic Centre on October 5, 2019. At the October 22, 2019 General Committee meeting, staff were requested to report back on the City's current Policy (see General Committee meeting extract included as **Attachment "D"**).

## **DISCUSSION:**

Municipalities across Ontario, including the City of Toronto, allow for public flag raisings. In York Region, the Town of Newmarket, the Town of Aurora, the City of Richmond Hill and the City of Vaughan all conduct flag raisings - in addition to the City of Markham (see Table below). As you will note, most of the policies in York Region are quite similar (see municipal policies included at **Attachment "E"**).

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<sup>2</sup> The first Community Flagpole is at the centre right flagpole of the *Civic Centre Flag Display* (as defined in the Policy) and the second Community Flagpole is located in the grassed area immediately north of the Jerusalem Rose Garden next to the Peace Garden.

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Table of Flag Raising in the City of Toronto and other York Regional Municipalities

Municipality	Does municipality approve flag raising requests?	Approved flag raising policy?
City of Toronto	Yes	Yes
Town of Newmarket	Yes	Yes
Town of Aurora	Yes	Yes
Town of East Gwillimbury	No	In process of creating one
City of Richmond Hill	Yes	Yes
King City	No	No
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	No	No
City of Vaughan	Yes	Yes

Since the adoption of Markham's Community Flag Raisings & Flag Protocol Policy in 2011, the Federal government has amended its National flag etiquette guidelines to include the following Days of Commemoration for which the National flag is to be lowered:

- June 23 (National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism);
- Second Sunday of September (Firefighters National Memorial Day); and,
- the last Sunday in September (Police and Peace Officer's National Memorial Day).

Staff are recommending that the City's current Policy be amended to add the above-noted three days to the list of Solemn Occasions annually recognized by Markham (see proposed Revised Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy included as **Attachment "F"**).

When the City adopted the current Policy in 2011, one of the stated purposes was to build upon, while maintaining, the rich heritage associated with the flying of flags. For the past several decades, the City has been offering the opportunity for communities to raise National and community flags at the Markham Civic Centre as a chance to celebrate together the strength of Markham's diversity and inclusivity.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

#### **ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The City's Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy allows for the recognition of various community groups and organizations within Markham. It also aligns with the strategic focus for community engagement that promotes significant involvement and participation of both residents and businesses which results in improved citizen engagement.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not applicable

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

Trinela Cane  
Commissioner, Corporate Services

Kimberley Kitteringham  
City Clerk

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Attachment “A”** – Current Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy and Civic Centre Flag Protocol

**Attachment “B”** - 2011 Staff Report

**Attachment “C”** - Current 5 Year List of Approved Flag Raisings

**Attachment “D”** – October 22, 2019 General Committee resolution

**Attachment “E”** – Sample Municipal Policies in York Region

**Attachment “F”** – Proposed Revised Community Flag Raisings Policy & Flag Protocol Policy