



Hospitality Policy

1. Effective Date

This policy, approved by the Clerk of the House of Commons, comes into effect on February 1, 2021 and replaces the previous version issued in 2005.

2. Principles

The policy is governed by the following principles:

- **Accountability:** Cost-effective, consistent, responsible and appropriate management practices apply to expenses related to hospitality events.
- **Propriety:** Hospitality expenses are reasonable and consistent with both the status of the attendees and the nature and purpose of the hospitality event.
- **Transparency:** All hospitality expenses must withstand public scrutiny.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- outline the responsibilities of House of Commons Administration managers and employees when offering hospitality; and
- document accountability for hospitality-related decisions.

4. Application

This policy applies to all House of Commons Administration employees who offer hospitality.

Employees organizing and supporting hospitality events for committees, as well as parliamentary associations and exchanges, must refer to the following guides for further direction:

- *Financial Management and Policy Guide for Committees;*
- *Financial Management and Policy Guide for Parliamentary Associations; and*
- *Financial Management and Policy Guide for Parliamentary Exchanges.*

5. Requirements

5.1 General

Hospitality consists of the provision of meals, beverages, [refreshments](#) and sometimes social activities or entertainment at authorized events.

Managers must ensure that all hospitality expenses withstand public scrutiny. Their decision to offer hospitality must be carefully considered with due regard for the need, nature, frequency, purpose and cost of events. All employees with delegated financial signing authority must exercise due diligence and take appropriate measures to minimize costs as much as possible.

All hospitality expenses are subject to proactive disclosure under *An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*.

5.2 Authorized events

There are two types of authorized events, defined as follows:

- **Business-related events** are typically conducted in the normal course of business of the House of Commons. They may include training sessions, sponsored [conferences](#), business meetings, and retreats.
- **Official events** are typically held across the House of Commons, within a service area, or as a matter of courtesy, diplomacy or protocol.

5.3 Exclusions

Hospitality is not permitted in the following circumstances:

- for regularly scheduled meetings or staff meetings;
- for employees' personal milestones, such as promotions, departures, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries; and
- when employees work beyond normal working hours and claim a meal allowance.

In addition, hospitality must not be extended to [consultants](#) in the normal course of business, nor are consultants permitted to offer hospitality on behalf of the House of Commons Administration.

Furthermore, hospitality must not be extended to suppliers or offered on behalf of suppliers as it could be perceived to impact the impartiality, judgment and fairness of employees in the performance of their duties or to give preferential treatment to any supplier.

Accepting hospitality extended by suppliers is not permitted. Employees must pay for their own meal and may claim the related expenses (see Travel policy for more information).

5.4 Attendees

5.4.1 External guests

Hospitality may be extended to [external guests](#) who attend meetings that facilitate House of Commons Administration business or events that are held as a matter of courtesy, diplomacy or protocol, such as:

- business meetings to discuss official matters;
- hosted [conferences](#) by the House Administration or business-related events; and
- official events.

5.4.2 Employees

Hospitality may be extended to House of Commons Administration employees who attend:

- periodic meetings that require continuous participation, such as town hall meetings, training sessions or workshops, or professional development activities;
- operational meetings or events that extend beyond normal working hours when restaurants or food outlets located in the vicinity are closed;
- hosted conferences by the House Administration; and
- official events hosted by the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Deputy Clerks, the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel or service area heads.

5.5 Hospitality authorization

5.5.1 Business-related events

All hospitality expenses for business-related events must be approved before planning or organizing the events. The *Request for Hospitality Approval* must be completed, reviewed, and approved by the appropriate delegated authority.

Delegated managers may only authorize and initiate hospitality expenses within the limit of their financial signing authority, in accordance with the *Delegation of Financial Signing Authorities Policy*.

However, delegated managers cannot pre-approve hospitality expenses for events that they will attend or benefit from, or where their attendance could be perceived as a personal gain. In these situations, managers must seek approval from a higher authority.

5.5.2 Official events

All hospitality expenses for official events must be approved before planning or organizing the events. The *Request for Hospitality Approval* must be completed, reviewed, and approved by a service area head.

5.5.3 Blanket hospitality approval

The *Blanket Hospitality Approval* (BHA) can be used to pre-authorize expenses for recurring hospitality events when obtaining pre-authorization for every hospitality event is not administratively efficient.

The BHA is restricted to service area heads. It is only valid for one fiscal year and one event type. A new BHA must be submitted at the beginning of every fiscal year and approved by the Clerk of the House of Commons or the Deputy Clerks.

The limit of the BHA and its use must be monitored by the service area head to whom it was granted. If there are any substantive changes to the purpose of the BHA or to the event type covered by the BHA, or if the approved limit of the BHA is exceeded before the end of the applicable fiscal year, a new BHA must be submitted for approval.

5.6 Payment of hospitality expenses

Employees who use an acquisition card or a petty cash fund to pay for hospitality expenses must respect the provisions of the *Corporate Credit Card for Acquisitions Policy* and the *Standard on the Use of Petty Cash and Change Funds*.

5.7 Approval of hospitality expenses

A hospitality expense claim must be completed and submitted within 15 business days after the event. All expenses must be supported by receipts, invoices or a purchase order. Managers may exercise their delegated financial authority to approve hospitality expense claims.

If the hospitality expense claim exceeds the amounts estimated and approved on the *Request for Hospitality Approval*, justification for the excess must be provided. The expense claim must then be approved by the manager who initially approved it or by the manager's superior if the revised amount exceeds the manager's delegated authority.

All hospitality expenses related to the same event must be charged against the budget of the manager who hosted the event.

5.8 Hospitality costs

5.8.1 Cost limits for business-related events

Every effort should be made to minimize hospitality expenses. Therefore, the expected costs for meals, beverages and [refreshments](#) for business-related events must fall within the limits set out in Table 1 – Hospitality Cost per Person. The allowances per event type are based on the *Rates and Allowances*.

The standard cost per person is the expected meal cost per person to be applied in normal circumstances for business-related events.

Table 1 – Hospitality Cost per Person		
Event type	Standard cost per person	Maximum cost per person
Breakfast	1.5 x breakfast allowance	1.5 x standard cost per person
Refreshments	0.5 x breakfast allowance	
Lunch	2.0 x lunch allowance	
Reception	2.0 x breakfast allowance	
Dinner	1.75 x dinner allowance	

Costs associated with social activities are not permitted on a stand-alone basis (i.e. without being part of a retreat, or a training session or a town hall). Social activities that are part of a retreat, a training session or a town hall of a service area must be pre-approved by the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Deputy Clerks or the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel overseeing the service area.

5.8.2 Cost limits for official events

Hospitality costs for official events should be based on the maximum costs per person presented in Table 1 – Hospitality Cost per Person. Costs exceeding the maximum costs per person are permitted for official events in exceptional circumstances only and must be justified by the nature of the event and the participants of the event.

Event costs that are expected to exceed the maximum costs per person must be pre-approved by the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Deputy Clerks or the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel overseeing the service area.

5.8.3 Shared hospitality expenditures

Hospitality expenses may be shared by two or more managers who are hosting a joint event. In these situations, the total cost of the event must be used to determine the level of financial approval required.

Before hosting a joint event, managers must determine what portion of the total cost is to be charged to their respective budgets. Cost-sharing must be documented on the *Request for Hospitality Approval* form, and each manager must have sufficient funds available to cover their portion of the anticipated cost of the event.

Once the event is held, a hospitality expense claim must be completed, and approved by the managers who hosted the event so that expenses can be divided according to the agreement and charged to each manager’s respective budget.

5.8.4 Facilities

5.8.4.1 Facility rentals and associated costs

Expenses for facility rentals are only considered hospitality expenses if they cannot be differentiated from other associated hospitality costs on an invoice.

5.8.4.2 Use of a private residence

The use of a private residence to host an event must be approved in writing by a service area head. When the use of a private residence has been approved, no rental or other accommodation costs may be incurred for the event.

5.8.4.3 Use of an external facility for business meetings or related activities

Business meetings and related activities must be held in the House of Commons meeting rooms. The use of an external facility and/or location must be approved by the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Deputy Clerks or the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel overseeing the service area, and its cost properly justified.

5.8.5 Alcoholic beverages

Alcoholic beverages are only permitted at approved official events including those held as a matter of courtesy, diplomacy and/or protocol. In all cases, when alcohol is to be provided, prior written approval from the Clerk of the House of Commons, the Deputy Clerks or the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel overseeing the service area is required.

If alcohol is served, reasonable limits must be placed on the quantity served at the event.

5.8.6 Bottled water

The cost of bottled water is considered a hospitality expense when bottled water is provided as part of the refreshments at events.

This does not apply to general office expenses for water coolers or bottled water provided on an ongoing basis (i.e. for health or safety reasons), which are charged to the manager's office supplies budget.

5.9 Policy non-compliance

Managers and employees who fail to comply with this policy may have some or all of their delegated financial signing authorities revoked.

Any exceptions to this policy must be approved in advance by the Clerk of the House of Commons.

6. Responsibilities

Position	Responsibilities
Clerk of the House of Commons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Establish policies pertaining to expenses and claims by House of Commons Administration employees in consultation with the Deputy Clerk, Administration.</i>• <i>Approve this policy.</i>
Chief Financial Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Approve any supporting documents such as guidelines and procedures in consultation with the Deputy Clerk, Administration.</i>
Deputy Chief Financial Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Implement and update business processes related to hospitality expense claims to meet the requirements of this policy.</i>

7. References

- *An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*
- *Delegation of Financial Signing Authorities Policy*
- *Guide on Hospitality for House Administration Employees*
- *Conflict of Interest Policy*
- *Standard on the Use of Travel Cards*
- *Standard on the Use of Acquisition Cards*
- *Standard on the Use of Petty Cash and Change Funds*

8. Definitions

Conference: A seminar or symposium or other formal gathering that is usually organized by an external party.

Consultant: A person hired under a service contract.

Employee: A person hired by the House of Commons Administration.

External guest: A person who is not an employee of the House of Commons.

Protocol: A set of conventions governing the conduct of official visits.

Refreshments: Beverages and/or light snacks that are typically served between meals.

Service area heads: Members of the Clerk's Management Group.

9. Contacts

For general enquiries, please contact Heather Bradley, Director of Communications, Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons, by email at heather.bradley@parl.gc.ca.