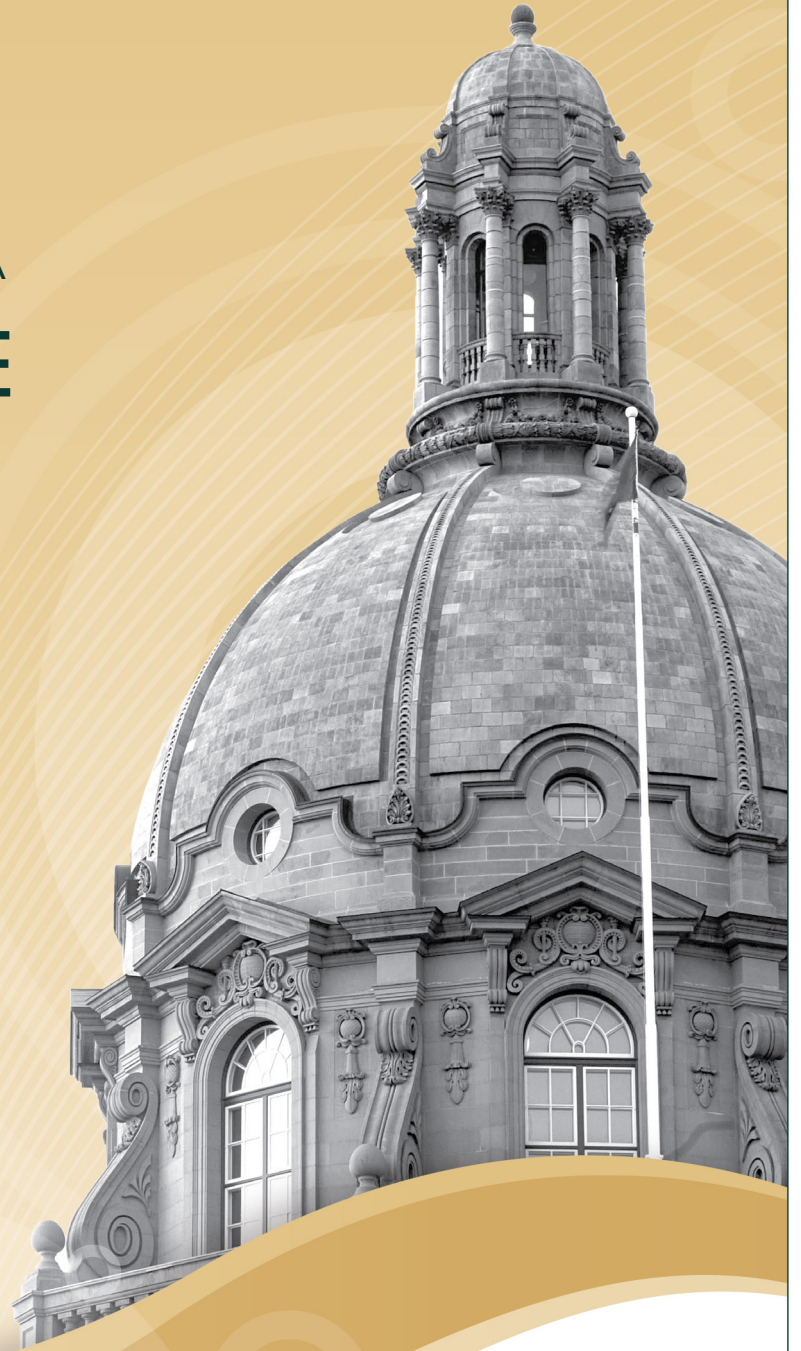


LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

# EXPENDITURE GUIDELINES

FOR MEMBERS OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



# **Legislative Assembly of Alberta**

## **Expenditure and Allowance Guidelines for**

### **Members of the Legislative Assembly – 30th Legislature**

#### **Introduction**

These guidelines are in place to assist Members in understanding which expenditures are eligible for reimbursement pursuant to the *Members' Services Committee Orders*. **If Members have any questions about whether or not a particular expense will be reimbursed, they are strongly encouraged to contact Financial Management at 780.427.2477 or [laofinance@assembly.ab.ca](mailto:laofinance@assembly.ab.ca) prior to incurring the expense.**

The Legislative Assembly Office may pay vendors directly or reimburse Members or their staff for expenses incurred by a Member for the purchase of goods and services to which the Member is entitled as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. The *Members' Services Committee Orders* detail the type and nature of allowable expenditures that, for the most part, relate to the Member's representation of constituents. Any expenses incurred in relation to a function of the executive branch of Government, caucus or a political party are not within the purview of the legislative branch.

If a Member is appointed to a position with an entity or department that is part of the executive branch, that entity or department would be responsible for reimbursing the Member for expenses relating to the duties of that position.

#### **Expense Disclosure**

Approved expenses related to Members' accommodation, travel, meals, hosting and event tickets over \$100, as authorized by the *Members' Allowances Order*, *Constituency Services Order* and *Transportation Order*, are reported in the Expense Disclosure Report (EDR). A quarterly EDR for each Member is disclosed to the public on the Legislative Assembly of Alberta website.

#### **Claim Process**

Detailed invoices and receipts are required to support a charge or reimbursement to assess compliance with policy, to perform reasonability checks and to document the transaction. **Specifically, detailed receipts are submitted through the online expense portal, OnTap 2.0, to support all invoices, personal expense claims and credit card purchases.** The Member then retains the original invoices and receipts. Personal expense claims also require explanatory comments, detailing the nature, purpose and number of participants at the event that gave rise to the expenditure. Without the supporting information it is not possible for LAO staff or the Auditor General to assess compliance or reasonability and verify proper support for claim reimbursement.

To assist the LAO in carrying out these reasonability checks, **we request that all Members submit their claims and accompanying receipts on a monthly basis.**

## **Appeals**

The *Members' Services Committee Orders* provide for an appeal if a Member disagrees with the decision of the Legislative Assembly Office regarding expenses under certain Orders. An appeal is made in the first instance to the Speaker. If a Member disagrees with the Speaker's decision, the matter can be further appealed to the Members' Services Committee.

## **Member's Services Allowance**

The *Constituency Services Order*, RMSC 1992, c. C-1 (CSO), provides for an annual allowance for Members known as the Member's Services Allowance, or MSA, which is used by Members to pay for goods and services to facilitate the carrying out of the Member's duties on behalf of constituents within the province of Alberta.

The CSO sets out the types of expenses that may or may not be authorized and under what conditions they may be incurred. Generally most MSA expenditures fall within one of the following categories:

1. Constituency office operations and related constituency travel expenses
2. Gifts and promotional items
3. Communication with constituents/advertising/hosting
4. Event tickets
5. Residential security systems

Each of these categories is discussed in more detail below.

### **The MLA is the sole authorized expenditure officer of the Member's Service Allowance.**

The Member's approval is required on all staff personal expense claims, invoices and recommendations to contract.

### ***Restriction on Partisan/Political Activity in Constituency Offices***

Section 1.1(1) of the CSO provides that

No amount of the Allowance shall be applied to payment for partisan activities or for materials that relate to, reference or promote partisan activities.

Members are encouraged to review the definition of "partisan activities" in section 1.1(2) of the CSO, which includes "the solicitation of money or votes to be given to a candidate or political party" and "the distribution or display of materials that include references to or use of political party logos, websites or publications."

In addition, section 10 of the CSO contains restrictions on political activity:

A constituency office may not be used for promoting political party activities; holding party events; conducting election, nomination or leadership campaigns; storing or distributing party material or information; sale of party memberships; or soliciting of financial contributions.

Reimbursement from the MSA will be denied if the relevant claim pertains to any of the prohibited activities cited in the CSO.

### 1. CONSTITUENCY OFFICE OPERATIONS AND RELATED STAFF TRAVEL EXPENSES

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
Rent, operating costs and utilities for constituency office(s)	The LAO is the tenant of all constituency office locations and enters into a lease agreement on the Member's behalf. The Member decides where to locate their office.
Constituency office signage	Constituency office signage must comply with section 11 of the CSO.
Office and computer equipment Office furniture and fixtures Office supplies, first aid supplies and stationery Newspaper or magazine subscriptions Office security systems Maintenance expenses for equipment purchased through the MSA Services for the office, including snow shovelling, cleaning/janitorial, courier (beyond what is provided by Service Alberta), research, writing and communications services	The LAO provides a standard package of IT equipment, furnishings and a security system to each office. The MSA may be used for additional items in this category beyond the standard package.  Certain services provided to constituency offices may require a contract. The LAO has standard-form agreements that may be used. Members should contact Financial Management if they are unsure whether a contract is required.  Note: All items expensed/paid for by the LAO become property of the Crown, with the exception of residential security systems (refer to page 8).
Mobile devices	

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<p>Voice and data charges (beyond what is provided by the LAO), including out-of-country plans</p> <p>Applications or software relating to constituency office operations</p> <p>Extra telephone or fax lines</p> <p>Internet charges (beyond what is provided by the LAO)</p>	
<p>Staffing costs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salaries and wages</li> <li>- Employer contributions</li> <li>- Professional development for staff relating to their duties (e.g., conference and course fees)</li> <li>- Staff travel expense reimbursement</li> </ul>	<p>Employee travel costs may be reimbursed through the MSA when an employee is required to travel (a) to Edmonton or to the Member's constituency or (b) within the constituency. A Member may also transfer to an employee a certain number of kilometres from the Member's budget for general travel (see Member Travel section below).</p> <p>There is no provision for reimbursement for expenses relating to professional development for a Member, excepting expenses for learning another language (see Communication with Constituents section below).</p>
<p>Reimbursement of living expenses (e.g., accommodations, meals) connected with constituency travel where an overnight stay is required</p>	

**2. GIFTS AND PROMOTIONAL ITEMS**

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<p>Tangible items appropriate for MLAs to give in the course of their duties for a particular occasion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lapel pins</li> <li>- Flags</li> <li>- Art or craft items</li> <li>- Collectibles</li> </ul>	<p>The following items are <b>not</b> permitted as gifts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Items valued over \$400</li> <li>- Services (paid for or reimbursed)</li> <li>- Alcohol (or any item such as a gift card that could be used to purchase alcohol)</li> </ul>

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commemorative items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currency in the form of cash, cheque, bank draft or money order</li> <li>- Cash in kind where its use is unrestricted</li> <li>- Items given to another Member</li> <li>- Items given under personal or partisan circumstances</li> </ul>

**3. COMMUNICATION WITH CONSTITUENTS/ADVERTISING/HOSTING**

**Note: Government of Alberta and Caucus communication/advertisements are not eligible for reimbursement out of the Member’s Services Allowance (MSA).**

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<p>Printed or electronic items (e.g., constituency/MLA reports, newsletters and survey brochures) to be sent to constituents and related expenses (including design, production and delivery expenses)</p>	<p>Delivery expenses include business reply charges or bulk/unaddressed mail postage expenses for printed items and distribution costs for electronic items.</p> <p>Printed communications must be restricted to residents within constituency boundaries.</p>
<p>Postage for mailing correspondence from the constituency office</p>	
<p>Expenses relating to MLA or constituency office websites or social media presence (including hosting, website design, content development, maintenance, registration of domain names)</p>	<p>The content of a Member or constituency website or social media presence should be clearly voiced from that perspective if related expenses are to be claimed from the MSA. As with all other expenditures under the MSA, political party content is not permitted. The LAO recommends that Members select service providers and web hosts that do not store data outside of Canada.</p>
<p>Advertisements</p> <p>Temporary signage expenses (e.g., sandwich boards)</p>	<p>Advertisements may include the provincial coat of arms, Legislature Building graphic and/or symbols of the Legislative Assembly. Only branches of the LAO may use the Legislative Assembly of Alberta logo (see <a href="#">Visual Identity page</a>).</p>

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
Community event advertising (e.g., banners, booths, brochures)	<p>Like other communication expenses, advertisements must be intended to facilitate communication between the Member as an MLA (i.e., not as a Minister or member of a caucus) and the Member’s constituents.</p> <p><b>Expenses for advertisements that do not identify the Member as an MLA are not compliant.</b></p> <p>Members should be cautious when purchasing tiered advertising at third-party events so as to ensure that value for money is being received.</p> <p><b>There is no provision for sponsorship (whether charitable or commercial) under the Orders.</b></p> <p>Advertising that appears on or is associated with social media accounts will be reviewed for compliance based on the content of the advertising, not the social media account with which it is associated (e.g., issued from a Member’s personal social media account). However, in no circumstance may Members advertise through the social media accounts or websites of political parties.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Online advertisements, including paid promotions on social media, should be targeted to residents within the constituency boundaries as much as is reasonably possible (e.g., using geotargeted Facebook ads).</p>
Directory advertising expenses (beyond those paid by LAO)	
Hosting expenses for Member events such as a Stampede breakfast, community BBQ, town hall meetings, et cetera (e.g., food and nonalcoholic beverages, supplies, venue rental, entertainment)	Please see the MLA Constituency Event Checklist/Planning Guide on <a href="#">OurHouse</a> prior to planning a constituency event.

<sup>1</sup> See recommendation 3.4 of the February 2018 Interim Report of the Subcommittee to Review the Members’ Services Committee Orders, as approved by the Members’ Services Committee on February 1, 2018.

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
	<p>Expenses relating to hosting other Members or for hosting Government-, caucus- or political party-initiated events are not compliant (see the Caucus Expenditure Guidelines re caucus events).</p> <p>A Member may not claim hosting expenses relating to a third-party event (unless the Member contributes tangible items that qualify as a gift; see the Gifts and Promotional Items section above).</p> <p>All hosting-related expenses are publicly disclosed.</p>
<p>Hosting expenses for constituents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lunch/dinner meetings attended by both the Member/constituency assistant and constituent(s) (whether in the constituency or not)</li> <li>- Coffee and refreshments for constituents attending constituency office</li> </ul>	
<p>Reasonable expenses for registration, materials and tuition for a Member learning another language</p>	<p>Other than these expenses for learning another language, there is no provision for any professional development learning activities for Members.</p>

**4. EVENT TICKETS**

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<p>Cost of a ticket for a <u>Member</u> to attend an event in the Member’s role as a representative of the Member’s constituency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In the Member’s constituency,</li> <li>- In a municipality in which all or part of the Member’s constituency is located and</li> </ul>	<p>The following items are not compliant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A ticket to attend an NHL or CFL game;</li> <li>- Golf fees or costs pertaining to participation in a golf event (other than meal, reception or other social function);</li> </ul>



Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In any other location in Alberta <b>to a maximum of 10 events per fiscal year.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The portion of a ticket that (a) is a charitable donation eligible for a receipt for income tax purposes or (b) may be exchanged for alcohol at the event (e.g., a drink ticket)</li> </ul>
Cost of a ticket for <u>a constituency office employee</u> who is attending the event in the course of the employee's duties	It is the Member's responsibility to identify the amount of a ticket that relates to a charitable donation and/or alcohol and to deduct these amounts from the request for payment.
Cost of a ticket for <u>a Member's guest</u> (if Member is also in attendance) <b>to a maximum of 4 events per fiscal year</b>	PLEASE NOTE: A Member is required to disclose in the Member's quarterly expense reports the cost of tickets purchased from the Member's MSA that are \$100 or greater.

**5. RESIDENTIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS**

Examples of Acceptable Expenses	Notes
Installation and monitoring of a security system in a Member's permanent residence (to a maximum of \$1,500 per fiscal year)	"Permanent residence" is defined in section 5(2) of the <i>Members' Allowances Order</i> .
Installation and monitoring of a security system in a Member's temporary residence (to a maximum of \$1,500 per fiscal year)	See the section on Temporary Residence below for rules respecting temporary residences.
	Financial Management does not pay vendors directly for the installation or monitoring of security systems. Claims should be submitted through a personal expense claim.  Note: Residential security systems (including installation) paid for by the LAO are not considered Crown assets and do not need to be removed when the Member is no longer a Member.

## **MLA ADMIN**

(These expenses are not charged to the MSA unless otherwise noted.)

### **MEMBER TRAVEL AND PER DIEMS**

The *Transportation Order*, RMSC 1992, c. T-2, outlines the circumstances in which a Member may be reimbursed for transportation costs. For a detailed discussion of these expenses see Member Travel Information on [OurHouse](#).

Under section 6.1 of the *Transportation Order* a Member may transfer the reimbursable value of up to a total of 10 per cent of the kilometres for which the Member is eligible to be reimbursed for general travel under section 6 of the *Transportation Order* to the Member's constituency office employees for general travel within Alberta.

Meal per diems for Members are provided for under section 7(2) of the *Members' Allowances Order*, RMSC 1992, c. M-1, when a Member is required to travel to a location in Alberta that is 60 kilometres or more (by primary highway) from the Member's permanent residence, for the purpose of carrying out the Member's duties.

### **TEMPORARY RESIDENCE AND ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCES**

A Member is eligible to claim an allowance for accommodation in Edmonton if

- A. The Member's permanent residence is located 60 kilometres or more from the Legislature Building; or
- B. If the Member's permanent residence is less than 60 kilometres from the Legislature Building and the Member's constituency is outside Edmonton, if the Member works more than 12 hours in a day.

A Member who qualifies for an allowance may claim up to a maximum of

- A. \$193 per day for each day the Member is in Edmonton when the Assembly is sitting or the Member is in or near Edmonton on public or official business, or
- B. \$1,930 per month if the Member owns or leases in the Member's own name a temporary residence in or near Edmonton.

A Member may also claim up to \$193 per day for accommodation in connection with the Member serving on a committee if the Member is required to be absent from the Member's ordinary place of residence.

The accommodation allowances under section 6(1) of the *Members' Allowances Order* and section 3(1) of the *Members' Committee Allowances Order* for accommodation in or near Edmonton shall not exceed \$23,160 in a fiscal year.

A Member who claims an allowance for a temporary residence is prohibited from using a commercial service to rent out the residence for a fee or a vacation rental for any period of time the allowance is claimed.

An allowance claimed pursuant to section 6 of the *Members' Allowances Order* shall not exceed the actual costs of maintaining the residence.

A Member is also entitled to claim overnight accommodation costs to a maximum of 10 overnight stays in a fiscal year upon the production of receipts, provided that the Member has travelled 60 kilometres or more from both the Member's permanent residence and the Legislature Building and the Member is required to travel to that location for the purposes of carrying out their duties as a Member.

## **TRAVEL ALLOWANCES**

Under the *Transportation Order* Members may claim a per-kilometre allowance up to the following maximums:

- 52 round trips to the capital (no km cap)
- 5 round trips to any point in Alberta (1,500 km/trip max)
- General travel (35,000 km in urban electoral divisions; 80,000 km in rural electoral divisions)

The allowance will be reimbursed at the rate specified in the most current *Travel, Meal and Hospitality Expenses Directive* issued by Treasury Board, less 7 cents per kilometre. The 2019 public service rate is 50.5 cents per kilometre; Members will be reimbursed at 43.5 cents per kilometre.

In addition to the kilometre allowance, Members may claim reimbursement for fuel purchases, oil, lubrication, antifreeze, gas line antifreeze, transmission fluid, brake fluid, steering fluid, windshield washer fluid, washes and waxing, including labour, if they relate to the operation of a private automobile.

All other costs related to operation and maintenance of a private automobile are not eligible for reimbursement (e.g., air filters, rock chips, insurance, repairs and maintenance, et cetera) as these are considered to be covered by the per-kilometer allowance.

## Table of Travel and Accommodation Allowances

Transportation	Accommodation
<b>A</b> 52 round trips to the capital \$0.435/km; (public service rate less 7 cents)	Accommodation in the capital \$193/day when Assembly is sitting or on Member business; or \$1,930/month for leased, owned Annual maximum of \$23,160
<b>B</b> 5 return trips anywhere in Alberta By regularly scheduled air service By personal vehicle (1,500 km maximum per round trip) \$0.435/km; (public service rate less 7 cents)	10 Special Days anywhere in province
<b>C</b> General Travel  35,000 km – Urban constituencies 80,000 km – Rural constituencies \$0.435/km; (public service rate less 7 cents)	Accommodation within constituency (MSA expense) Greater than 60 km away from primary residence
<b>D</b> Parking Parking a vehicle at an airport; and parking expenses up to \$900 per fiscal year	Meal per diem Greater than 60 km away from primary residence for Member business
<b>E</b> Taxis and Vehicles for Hire Unlimited	
<b>F</b> Vehicle Rentals Unlimited within Edmonton or Calgary up to 5 days for the rest of Alberta  If a member exceeds 5 days anywhere in Alberta, a Member may claim mileage instead	
<b>G</b> Air Travel Regularly scheduled air service between the constituency and Edmonton	

Note: Travel expenses must be related to and reasonably necessary for the performance of a Member's duties.



## Financial Management

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