



General

Flag Raising, Proclamations and Pier Lighting Policy

Approved by Council on: April 16, 2024

Report Number: CL-09-24

Effective: April 16, 2024

Reviewed on: March 31, 2025

Amended: April 15, 2025

Next Review: March 2028

The City of Burlington offers the opportunity for the public to raise community and other nation flags to enhance public awareness of local activities, significant events, and multi-cultural occasions. The City also issues proclamations and offers pier lightings to recognize public awareness campaigns, charitable fundraising campaigns, arts, and cultural celebrations of significance to Burlington and its residents.

The City of Burlington recognizes flags are a symbol of honour and pride and must be treated in a respectful and consistent manner, while providing opportunities to bestow an honour, or express a collective sense of mourning and loss shared by the residents of Burlington through the process of half-masting.

The absence of a raised flag, proclamation, or pier lighting should in no way be construed as an indication of the City's position on any nation, organization, event, or day of significance.

Policy Statement:

The purpose of this policy is to provide a standard for which flag raising, proclamations, and pier lighting requests are received by the City of Burlington, processed, and issued in recognition of individuals, events, organizations or community groups of significance in Burlington, in a consistent, respectful, inclusive, and appropriate manner. Ceremonial protocol for the City of Burlington is developed, implemented and maintained by the City Clerk, documented in the City

Corporate Policy

of Burlington Protocol Guidelines, and adapted from best practices developed by the federal and provincial governments to be used alongside this policy.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- a) The requests and occasions for the raising, displaying, and half-masting of flags.
- b) The requests for proclamations from residents, organizations, and community groups to recognize, honour, and commemorate the importance of an event or an organization.
- c) The requests for lighting of the Brant Street Pier with multi-colour capable lighting to display the colours associated with a charitable or non-profit organization or a City event, in order to create awareness of and/or celebrate an organization, City event or day of significance.

Objectives:

The policy will ensure that:

- a) all flags at City facilities are flown, displayed, and retired or disposed of in a consistent and appropriate manner and are positioned in Order of Precedence in accordance with the National Flag of Canada etiquette.
- b) all requests for community flag raisings, proclamations and pier lightings honouring Burlington's significant events and organizations occur in a fair, inclusive and equitable manner.

Definitions:

For the purpose of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Term	Definition
City Clerk	means the Clerk appointed by the Council pursuant to requirements of section 228 of the <i>Municipal Act, 2001</i> , as amended, or their designate

Corporate Policy

Term	Definition
City Facilities	means facilities, properties, buildings, and parks managed or owned by the City of Burlington
Civic Square	area in front of City Hall at 426 Brant Street where six (6) flagpoles are located.
Community Flagpole	means the 6 th flagpole at Civic Square designated for flying community flags.
Flag(s)	means a piece of cloth (usually rectangular) of distinctive colour, design, emblem, or symbol to represent nations, provinces, states, or municipalities. “Flag” is also used to describe a banner, which looks like a flag bearing a symbol, logo, slogan to represent a charitable or non-profit organizations, but does not have a flag status.
Half-masting	means the position of a flag, approximately halfway up the post or pole. Flying flags at half-mast is a symbol of respect or mourning, or to commemorate significant dates.
Mayor	means the person who has been elected as Mayor (Head of Council) of the City of Burlington, or the person who is acting in that capacity in accordance with the City of Burlington’s Procedure By-law
Members of Council	means a person who has been elected or appointed to an Office on Council including the Mayor and City Councillors
Order of Precedence	means the positioning of Flags in priority of importance, order, or rank.
Proclamation	means a formal public statement designating a period of time (special day, week, or month) in recognition of a

Corporate Policy

Term	Definition
	significant individual, event, or organization.

Principles:

1. General principles:

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion – Ensure flag raisings, proclamations and pier lightings celebrate the City’s commitment to diversity and inclusion through fair and inclusive practices.

Consistency – Ensure flag raisings, proclamations and pier lighting procedures are clear and consistent, and not contrary to any other City of Burlington policy.

Respect and Dignity – Ensure flags flown at City facilities are treated with respect and dignity in accordance with the National Flag of Canada Etiquette.

Transparency – Ensure the public is aware of the City’s protocols and criteria for flag raising, proclamations and pier lighting.

The City of Burlington has authority to approve or deny requests for flag raisings, proclamations, and pier lightings. The Clerk or their designate has been delegated the authority to approve or deny requests following the established criteria for flag raisings, proclamations, and pier lightings. The Mayor, in consultation with the Clerk, may use discretion to approve or deny a request for a flag raising, proclamation, or pier lighting based on a reputational risk to the City.

2. Flag Etiquette

The manner in which flags may be displayed in Canada is not governed by any legislation but by established practice. The rules applied by the Government of Canada will serve as guidelines for the City of Burlington. The National Flag of Canada shall be displayed in a dignified manner, taking precedence over all other national flags when flown in Canada. The only flags that are given priority over the Canadian flag are the personal standards of members of the Royal Family and of His Majesty’s representatives in Canada. The National Flag of Canada should always be flown on its own flagpole, hoisted first, and lowered last.

Corporate Policy

3. Flags Flown at the City

The City of Burlington will fly the flags of:

- Canada (the National Flag)
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- United Nations
- Province of Ontario
- Halton Region
- City of Burlington

These flags are flown on the six (6) outdoor flagpoles at Civic Square. The United Nations flag may be removed to fly another country's flag. The sixth flagpole flies community flags as requested and approved.

Flags of Canada, Ontario, and Burlington should be flown at all official functions and in Council Chambers. If the flag of the United Nations is to be flown at Civic Square, it will follow the Canadian National Flag, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation flag, but precede the Province of Ontario flag.

3.1 Positioning of Flags

The location of the position of honour depends on the number of flags flown and the chosen configuration.

When there are two or more flags flown together, the Canadian flag is on the left, followed by order of importance based on precedence. When three flags are flown, the position of honour is in the centre. The Canadian flag should be placed in the centre, the Provincial flag on the left and the City flag on the right. Where only one flagpole exists at a City facility, the National flag will always be flown.

Where there is more than one flagpole and the personal standard of a visiting member of the Royal Family, the Governor General, or the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario is flown, every other flag in the hierarchy moves down one position. Flag poles should be of the same height where flags are flown together.

Corporate Policy

3.2 Flags of Other Nations

There are occasions, such as the visits of foreign dignitaries or delegations, or national commemorative dates, when flags from other nations may be flown, with the City following federal protocol. In these instances, the order of the flags is:

- The National Flag of Canada
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
- The flags of other sovereign nations in alphabetical order
- The flags of provinces, followed by the territories of Canada (in the order they joined the Confederation)
- The flags of municipalities/cities
- The flags and banners of organizations
- Historical Flags

3.3 Flags of Twinned Cities

The City of Burlington has twinning agreements with two cities outside of Canada: Apeldoorn, Netherlands and Itabashi, Japan. When officials from these cities are in attendance, the visitors' national flag is flown, not the flag of their City.

3.4 Foreign National Flags at City Recreation Facilities

The City of Burlington displays the flags of other nations alongside the Canadian National Flag at City-owned recreation facilities to promote collaboration, sportsmanship, and community engagement. The foreign national flags are displayed throughout the year on an on-going basis for teams playing in Burlington divisionally, and during sports events and tournaments with international teams. Only the flags of countries with active diplomatic relations with Canada and recognized by Global Affairs Canada may be displayed. City staff will follow federal flag protocols and league standards for guidance to determine whether a flag should be raised. Following federal guidelines, the City Clerk will exercise discretion in consultation with any other relevant staff, in determining whether a foreign national flag shall be removed.

Corporate Policy

4. Community Flag Raisings

Non-profit, charitable and community organizations may request the City of Burlington fly a community flag at Civic Square.

1. The Clerk has the authority to approve or deny a request to fly a community flag.
2. The City will only fly a community flag at a City facility of a non-profit or charitable organization or group whose principles and works are not contrary to the principles and policies of the City, and are generally important to Canada, Ontario, or the City of Burlington.
3. Requests will be granted in respect to activities that support the residents of the City of Burlington or are related to events taking place in Burlington, demonstrating respect for all Burlington residents, and fostering a sense of community.
4. Flag raisings support and promote the diversity and cultural heritage of the City's residents. While we are committed to acknowledge commemorative dates that are important to our residents, no political or religious flags will be raised. Requests pertaining to a flag of a sovereign nation are subject to approval by the City Clerk or their designate.
5. The request must be received at least 30 days in advance of the request date and will be confirmed on a first come first served basis.
6. The flag to be flown must be delivered to the Office of the City Clerk one week before the flag raising date. The flag must be picked up by the requestor from City Hall within 3 days from the day it is taken down.
7. Should multiple requests be received for the same date, it will be at the discretion of the City Clerk to decline, schedule or reschedule ceremonies to accommodate requests.
8. Flag raising ceremonies will be accommodated during normal City of Burlington office hours and must be concluded no later than 4:00 p.m. Should the requested date fall on a weekend and/or holiday date, the Clerk will provide the closest possible date.
9. While every effort will be made to have a Council member present at a flag raising, it is not always possible. In the event a member of Council is not present, another City representative will attend on their behalf.
10. The following information must be provided in the request for the flag raising:
 - a. Official letterhead, or an official website link, or the organization's social media account
 - b. Proposed date and time of flag raising ceremony
 - c. Purpose of the flag raising

Corporate Policy

- d. Ceremony details including a list of attendees (if a ceremony is required)
- e. Equipment required for the flag raising ceremony
- f. Name of flag to be raised
- g. Photo of the flag to be raised.

Only one flag raising ceremony will be accommodated per day, and any flag raised will be displayed for a maximum of one week, subject to availability, regardless of the requested duration period. Exceptions to the duration will be considered at the discretion of the City Clerk on a case-by-case basis.

Request for flag raisings **will not** be approved for:

- Political parties or organizations
- Religious organizations or in celebration of religious events
- Commercial entities or in celebration of corporate events
- Intent that is contrary to City policies or by-laws
- Organizations requesting flag raisings that espouse discrimination, hatred, violence, or racism
- Organizations that have already flown a flag on a courtesy flagpole within the same calendar year
- Flags of nations that have already flown on a courtesy flagpole within the same calendar year
- Flags of nations who do not have active diplomatic relations with Canada
- Flags of nations that are not recognized by the Department of Global Affairs Canada.

The City Clerk will exercise discretion, in consultation with the Mayor's Office or Council members, and any other relevant staff, in determining whether exceptions to any of the criteria in this section shall be considered. The City Clerk will advise the Mayor and Council of any denied requests.

5. Flags at Half-Mast

A flag at half-mast is one of the most universally recognizable symbols of collective sorrow and respect. Flags at all City facilities are flown at half-mast in recognition of the death of prominent public figures. In accordance with the protocol established by the Government of Canada, flags are flown at half-mast in the event of the death of:

Corporate Policy

- a) The reigning Monarch
- b) An immediate relative of the reigning Monarch
- c) The Governor General of Canada
- d) The Prime Minister of Canada
- e) A Former Prime Minister of Canada
- f) The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
- g) The Premier of Ontario
- h) A local Member of Parliament or Member of Provincial Parliament
- i) The Mayor of the City of Burlington, or
- j) A member of City of Burlington Council

In the cases of national or provincial official mourning period, flags will be flown at half-mast for the duration established by the appropriate federal or provincial protocols.

Additionally, the City will lower the flags to half-mast in the event of:

- k) The death of a current City of Burlington employee
- l) The death of an active City of Burlington Firefighter
- m) In recognition of line-of-duty deaths of police officers in Burlington and surrounding municipalities.
- n) At the additional call of the City Clerk according to specific circumstances that may warrant half-masting of the flags, or for an event determined by Council resolution.

When recognizing the death of an individual, the flags are lowered to half-mast position on the day of the death or as soon as practical after notification. Flags are raised to full mast the day following the funeral or as soon after as practical. Flags will normally be flown at half-mast for no more than five (5) days if arrangements for visitation or funeral have not been made or are unknown, except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Clerk.

Certain days also represent a mandatory half-masting of flags at Civic Square and/or flags flying at all City-owned facilities:

- Last Thursday of March, Burlington's Annual "In Memoriam" Day to recognize Burlington residents who have passed away in the previous year.

Corporate Policy

- April 28, National Day of Mourning, to recognize those who have been injured, killed, or suffered illness in the workplace.
- First Monday in June, in honour of former or retired City employees who have passed away in the last year.
- June 23, National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism.
- Second Sunday of September, Fallen Firefighters Memorial Day, to recognize all firefighters who died in the line of duty during the previous year.
- Last Sunday in September – Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day, to recognize those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the performance of their duties.
- November 11, from 11 a.m. until sunset, Remembrance Day, to honour the memory of all Canadians who served their country in times of war.
- December 6, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Flags are lowered to half-mast position at sunrise or at the opening of the facility and raised at sunset or at the closing of the facility, depending on which is most practical for the particular facility.

If the flag is half-masted, it must be flown at full-mast on the following legal holidays created under the *Holidays Act* (R.S.C. c. H-5): Victoria Day and Canada Day, except in the event of the death of the Sovereign, current Governor General or current Prime Minister, in which case the flags remain at half-mast until the day following the funeral.

6. War Memorials and Cenotaphs

Flag poles at War Memorials and Cenotaphs, including the two flagpoles at Veterans Square outside City Hall, follow federal guidelines and standards and are exempt from this policy.

7. Flag retirement/disposal

Flags should be retired and replaced when that flag's condition is such that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display and should be destroyed in a dignified manner.

Federal protocol dictates that a flag is considered to be worn when the colour has faded, it has developed a hole or the outermost seam (fly) of the flag has

Corporate Policy

become frayed. When a flag becomes tattered and is no longer in a suitable condition for use, it should be disposed of in a dignified manner.

It is recommended that outdoor flags be replaced every three to four months. Staff at City facilities should inspect all flags prior to National Flag of Canada Day (February 15), Canada Day (July 1st) and Remembrance Day (November 11th) each year to ensure that they are a fitting emblem for display.

The disposal of a flag may be handled in the following manner:

- Flags made of natural fibres (wool, cotton, linen) should be burned in a dignified manner, privately, without ceremony or public attention being drawn to the destruction of the material.
- Flags made of synthetic material (nylon or polyester) should not be burned due to environmental damage and potential fire hazard. They should be respectfully torn into strips, with each element of the flag reduced to a single colour, so that the remaining pieces do not resemble a flag. The individual pieces should then be placed in a bag for disposal – the shreds of fabric should not be reused or fashioned into anything.

8. Proclamations

Proclamations are issued by the Mayor to recognize commemorative dates, and to raise public awareness around issues that are meaningful to the Burlington community. City Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor, reviews requests for proclamations.

Proclamations will be considered if they meet all of the following criteria and will be included on the Council Agenda for informational purposes:

- a) Submitted by representatives of a recognized charity or not-for profit organization with ties to the Burlington community
- b) Will be issued only in respect of activities that support residents of the City of Burlington or related events taking place in Burlington
- c) Submitted with complete and updated wording for the proclamation, and confirmation that the wording has been approved by the relevant custodian organization
- d) Must demonstrate respect and tolerance for all Burlington residents
- e) Should foster a sense of community

Corporate Policy

- f) Should not be used as a vehicle to attempt to influence government policy
- g) Does not promote any social or political views that could be considered divisive
- h) Requests must be made at least 30 days in advance of the due date
- i) Requests must provide background information about the cause or event being proclaimed

Organizations do not have exclusive rights to the day, week or month being proclaimed. Repeat requests must be submitted on an annual basis. Submissions must be made at a minimum of 30 days prior for the proclamation to be prepared and included in the Council Agenda. All proclamations will be announced at the Council meeting before the proclaimed date. Should a proclamation be received after the Council meeting date preceding the proclamation date, it will be announced at the following Council meeting.

Individuals and organizations seeking proclamations to recognize regional, provincial, or national causes or events will be referred to the other appropriate order of government for recognition.

Proclamations **will not** be issued for:

- Matters of political controversy, or individual conviction
- Events or organizations with no direct connection to the City of Burlington
- Campaigns or events contrary to City policies or by-laws
- Campaigns intended for profit-making purposes

9. Pier Lighting

The beacon on the Brant Street Pier is lit each night with different colours based on nationally recognized events, City events and special requests. The Brant Street Pier lighting offers an opportunity for the recognition of non-profit and community events of municipal, regional, provincial, and national significance. Each approved commemorative lighting will be rotated into the colour sequence on the evening of its assigned date. All pier lighting requests are one-time events, and requests do not carry over into subsequent years. All lighting requests must adhere to the criteria set out below:

Corporate Policy

- be in support of a local, provincial, or national awareness issue that builds local community or is related to community health such as World Mental Health Day, International Childhood Cancer Day, World Alzheimer's Day, etc.).
- be in support of an event of local, provincial, or national significance
- be used to acknowledge and welcome visiting dignitaries hosted by the City
- must not be contrary to any City policy or by-law
- must be non-political
- must be non-commercial
- other than where specifically outlined in the criteria, the requests cannot be for individual personal occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.

One pier lighting request per evening is approved, on a first come first served basis. Staff will prepare an annual pier lighting calendar each fall for the following year with recurring pier lightings. The Mayor's Office can request pier lighting and its duration at the Mayor's discretion in consultation with the City Clerk. Safety protocols for weather events including heavy snow or fog will override any lighting request and change the pier colour to red. All scheduled and requested pier lightings and the reason for selected colours will be included in the pier lighting calendar or on the City of Burlington website.

Requests must be submitted four (4) months before the event date and must include:

- A formal request from the organization, including details of the nature, history and background of the event, occasion, or cause.
- The requested date for the lighting
- The requested colour(s)

Pier lighting requests **shall not** be approved for the following:

- Personal or private occasions (such as birthdays or anniversaries)
- Commercial purposes
- Political parties, organizations, or events
-
- Any purpose contrary to city policies or by-laws
- Any purpose that defames the integrity of the City.

Corporate Policy

The Mayor in consultation with the Clerk, may use discretion to deny a request for pier lighting based on a reputational risk to the City or a perception thereof.

References:

National Flag of Canada Etiquette

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/flag-canada-etiquette.html>

Roles:

Accountable:

The City Clerk is accountable for updating, implementing, and ensuring compliance with this policy and any relevant duties and procedures. Failure to follow this policy may result in reputational risk to the City.

Responsible:

City Council is responsible for approving this policy.

The City Clerk in consultation with the Mayor has discretion to direct the flag raising, half-masting or pier lighting for special or ceremonial occasions not identified in this policy.

The Mayor has discretion to approve or deny a request for a flag raising, proclamation or pier lighting that has reputational risk to the City or a perception thereof.

The City Clerk or their designate is responsible for interpreting and administering this Policy and associated Standard Operating Procedures and Protocols.

Corporate Policy

Revision History

Date	Description
2024/04/16	New – approved as a pilot for one year
2025/04/15	<p>Policy updated to include current process for displaying flags in recreation facilities.</p> <p>Policy updated to include the recognition of religious heritage commemorative dates through proclamations not flag raisings.</p> <p>Policy updated to clarify that former and retired City of Burlington employees who have passed are honoured during the In-Memoriam day on the first Monday in June.</p> <p>Minor administrative edits to correct grammar and formatting and to update policy as per program administration.</p>
2028/03/31	Next Scheduled Review