

# HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749  
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**Item No. 5**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**July 21, 2020**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Caroline Blair-Smith, Director, Human Resources/Office of Diversity & Inclusion

Original Signed by



\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 22, 2020

**SUBJECT:** Safe Workplace Update Q3-Q4 2019-20

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## **INFORMATION REPORT**

### **ORIGIN**

On December 3, 2019, Regional Council passed the following motion:

MOVED by Councillor Karsten, seconded by Councillor Nicoll

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Amend its June 19, 2018 resolution to require a semi-annual reporting schedule for Safe Workplace updates (Q1/Q2 and Q3/Q4) rather than quarterly reporting; and
2. That the semi-annual reports include the following information:
  - The type of harassment complaint made under the Policy
  - The method of conflict resolution employed
  - Number of active files

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, subsection 34(1), as follows:

#### **Council and Chief Administrative Officer Relationship**

**34 (1)** The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

## **BACKGROUND**

On June 19, 2018, Regional Council passed the following motion: MOVED by Deputy Mayor Mason, seconded by Councillor Mancini:

THAT Halifax Regional Council expresses support for the actions and response from the Chief Administrative Officer, June 11, 2018, regarding HRM's commitment to a safe workplace, responding to the Employment Systems Review and the Human Rights Commission report, and; That the Chief Administrative Officer be directed to provide quarterly public progress reports to Regional Council, subject to the appropriate redaction of personal information on the following:

1. The findings of the external HR consultant regarding HR processes, procedures and implementation;
2. A plan to implement the recommendations of the consultant;
3. Results to date and issues that may be identified during implementation of both the ESR review and the external HR consultant reports;
4. Open and completed harassment and discrimination complaints involving workplace bullying, sexual harassment and race both through regular HR processes and the newly established hotline, and;
5. Quarterly reports to begin no later than September 2018.

On December 3, 2019 Regional Council amended the June 19, 2018 motion to require a semi-annual reporting schedule and to require the reports to include the type of harassment complaint made under the Policy, the method of conflict resolution employed, and the number of active files (see origin section for wording of the motion).

## **DISCUSSION**

In accordance with Regional Council's direction, the following information provides a semi-annual update for the period from October 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 (Q3/4) on: the external service review (ESR) of HR processes, procedures, and plan to implement the recommendations of the consultant; results to date and issues that may be identified during implementation of both the ESR review and the external HR consultant reports; open and completed harassment and discrimination complaints involving workplace bullying, sexual harassment and race, both through regular HR processes and the CAO's hotline.

### **External Review**

HRM, through a request for proposals, secured an external consultant to undertake a comprehensive review of HR policies, programs and organizational practices that support a safe, healthy, diverse, inclusive and harassment-free environment. The review also included the mechanisms that support it, such as conflict resolution process and procedures, communications and messaging to employees, employees/managers' roles/accountability in maintaining a harassment, discrimination-free and respectful workplace, training to support the policy and program, as well as any information, technology, operational or structural changes that might be required.

The report was completed and presented to Regional Council on January 28, 2020. The recommendations arising out this report, as well as the ESR report, closely align with the operational plans of the Human Resources/Office of Diversity and Inclusion business unit. The following list highlights achievements since the last report to Regional Council regarding these recommendations:

- The *Make Yourself Count* self-identification survey is complete and HRM achieved a 48% completion rate. The next steps are to roll-out the results to the organization and to incorporate the findings into the development of HRM's Employment Equity Program. The Employment

Equity Program is a key component of the Employment Equity Policy that came into effect September 4, 2018.

- The *Fair Hiring Policy* is in final draft form and has incorporated five ESR recommendations and three KPMG recommendations. The policy formalizes our internal processes around ensuring fair selection processes that fully encompass our diversity and inclusion goals. The next step is for the policy to be reviewed internally and then rolled out to both the union groups and the organization. The expected timeline is Fall, 2020. It is important to note that the principles outlined in the Fair Hiring Policy are already being utilized in our hiring processes, even in the absence of an updated policy.
- The transition to our new online recruitment system is underway as part of HRM's overall business transformation project. This transition has given us the opportunity to complete another review of our job posting, screening and hiring processes, and will address many of the outstanding ESR and KPMG recommendations. It is critically important that community members and internal staff have full access to all posted positions, the opportunity to submit application for jobs of their choice, and that our hiring and selection processes are aligned with best practices and have a focus on diversity and inclusion.
- A comprehensive *Community Outreach Strategy* has been developed that contains specific activities related to (1) community outreach and engagement; (2) job fairs and employment partnerships; and (3) employer branding, communications and social media.
- All HR policies are currently under review. Each policy has been reviewed to ensure they are written in plain language, and that expectations of employees and managers are clearly articulated. The policy review project is a significant undertaking of the HR team with an expected completion date of Fall, 2020.
- The conflict resolution process is under review as part of the broader policy review project, however, immediate changes have already taken place to expedite the process for a timelier resolution to these serious matters. We have introduced an internal process to quickly refer conflicts for alternate dispute resolution inhouse, and we have sped up our intake process to have complaints go directly to the conflict resolution team in Human Resources for quicker review/resolution.

#### Open and completed harassment and discrimination complaints

As noted previously, the *Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy* supports Halifax Regional Municipality in its commitment to provide a harassment-free environment where all persons are treated with dignity and respect. The Policy addresses harassment based on prohibited grounds of discrimination specified under the *Nova Scotia Human Rights Act*. These grounds consist of age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, irrational fear of contracting an illness or disease, ethnic, national or aboriginal origin, family status, marital status, source of income, political belief, affiliation or activity, and an individual's association with another individual or class of individuals having the characteristics of any of the prohibited grounds. This Policy also extends to other forms of harassment not linked to a prohibited ground.

Between October 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, there were ten (10) new complaints filed under the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, as follows:

Personal Harassment - 4  
Interpersonal Conflict - 3  
Sexual Harassment - 3  
**Total - 10**

Between October 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, there were eight (8) complaints resolved, as follows:

Resolved by facilitated discussion - 6  
Referred back to the business unit for resolution (basic complaint) - 2

**Total - 8**

Total of active complaints as of March 31, 2020 - 8

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS**

N/A

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by:        Laura Nolan, Manager, Employee Relations, 902.490.3934

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