

HALIFAX

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Item No. 2
Halifax Regional Council
November 17, 2020

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Caroline Blair-Smith, Director, Human Resources

Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 17, 2020

SUBJECT: Safe Workplace Update Q1-Q2 2020-21

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. with 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 April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020 (Q1/2) on: the Employment Systems Review (ESR) and the external of HR consultant review of 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.

ESR

The ESR report is located on HRM's website as follows:

https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/accountability-transparency/2016_ESR_Report.pdf

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 processes 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 report is located on HRM's website as follows: <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/200128rc1512.pdf>

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 on July 21, 2020, regarding these recommendations:

- Human Resources in partnership with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, launched the **Diverse Hiring Panel Program**. Through this program, we aim to create an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming environment by having diverse hiring panels that reflect the candidates who are participating in the interviews, our workforce and the communities we serve. We recruited through an Expression of Interest and via targeted outreach to the Aspiring Leaders group. To date, we have 38 employees from underrepresented groups who have put their names forward to participate in the program, reflecting employees from most business units. To date, we have held two training sessions for participants in August 2020, resulting in 19 members fully trained to participate on interview panels and contribute to our hiring process. This initiative addresses recommendations from the ESR report.
- The **Employment Equity Committee** has been formed and has commenced work on an Employment Equity Program for HRM. The focus is to build on the current Employment Equity Policy and to initiate the implementation of programs and concrete action plans that achieve HRM's employment equity goals related to hiring, promotion, retention, employee development, and training. The development of the Employment Equity Program will take place over the next year and will address recommendations #2, 51 and 52 from the ESR report and recommendation #3 of the KPMG report
- Human Resources developed a new **Hiring and Community Engagement Strategy** to enhance our targeted outreach to employment equity groups and other underrepresented populations. The strategy will also create a more inclusive recruitment process and position HRM as an employer of choice within these underrepresented populations. Under this framework, we will engage communities who reflect our employment equity groups: racially visible people, women, Indigenous/Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community, with programming which focuses on the needs and experiences of the Mi'kmaq and Black/African Nova Scotians. The framework will also engage other communities, including our Acadian/Francophone community, newcomers and immigrants, youth, international students, and others. The Municipality will also partner with community organizations, educational institutions, government and employment agencies, career service organizations, and other partners. We will consult, partner and collaborate with members of the Diversity and Inclusion team as we deliver on these strategic initiatives. Under the Hiring and Community Engagement Strategy, we have outlined three strategic pillars including *Community Outreach and Engagement*, *Job Fairs and Employment Partnerships*, and *Employer Branding, Communications and Social Media* inclusive of a detailed action plan based on a 24-month delivery model. This strategy is currently being amended to reflect changing priorities as a result of the pandemic and to enhance the focus on anti-Black racism and gender parity. The development of this strategy addresses recommendations from the ESR and the KPMG reports.
- Engagement and inclusiveness are essential to be able to attract diverse candidate pools and to enhance the candidate experience. HRM's employment related **community outreach work** spans a range of activities and initiatives, from partnership meetings to networking events, and job fairs and information sessions. All these initiatives work to foster a more welcoming and inclusive environment members of our diverse communities, are proactively

engaged, acknowledged, and welcomed. This work also helps to share information around our hiring processes helping to enhance transparency and the candidate's success in screening, testing, and interviews. With the onset of the pandemic, our engagement work has been maintained and moved to more virtual formats. Below is a summary of the **community engagement work** completed between September 2019 and September 2020:

- In this period, Human Resources held **over 66 community partnership, networking and recruitment events** across our employment equity groups representing **over 112 hours of community engagement work** and **reaching over 1,800 community members**.
- **16 of these engagements were job fairs or virtual career events.**
- These engagements spanned a diversity of organizations and some of the events or partnerships of note include:
 - Human Resources was the recipient of the ISANS Employer Partner Award in February 2020, for their work facilitating over 12 internships within the Professional Practice Program and for work with their Immigrant Youth Career Exploration Project. Our HRBP of Recruitment currently serves on the Employer Advisory Council for ISANS. HR continues to support ISANS's Professional Practice program by offering several internships in 2019/2020.
 - Human Resources successfully secured two internships through the Aboriginal Peoples Training & Employment Commission (APTEC) to support female graduates of their Administrative Program.
 - Active membership in the African Nova Scotian Youth Employment Project and our Human Resources Business Partner – Recruitment currently serves as a member of the ANS Youth Employment Lab Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Committee.
 - Multiple events with the Welcome Home to Canada Program and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.
 - Established a successful monthly partnership with Ready, Willing, and Able to support the employment of people with intellectual disabilities and to enhance our approach to accommodations in the recruitment process.
 - Partnered with Lake City Works to develop their accommodations and employment rights workshop.
 - Established a new partnership with indigenous organizations, such as Nova Scotia Native Women's Association and Healing Our Nations.
 - Established a new partnership with the Halifax Regional Centre for Education to reach youth in junior high and high school to promote recreation jobs, youth leadership programs and careers in the public sector more broadly.
 - Established a productive employment partnership with the Francophone and Acadian community proactively addressing their employment and equity concerns. HRM participated in the first Francophone Youth Job Fair in February 2020.
 - The Client Services Manager, Human Resources, was a keynote speaker and provided insight into specific opportunities within HRM, as a participant in Dalhousie University's Annual Professional Mentors Networking Day, coordinated by the Black Students Advisory Centre, in October 2019.
 - Organized a successful Virtual Public Sector Job Fair in August 2020, in partnership with NS Works, Team Work Cooperative, Federal Government the NS Public Service Commission and the Commissionaires.
 - Participated in the ISANS IYCEP Employer Panel Event in partnership with various community employers.
- Human Resources has updated the **Hiring Manager Certification Training** with enhanced content including a diversity and inclusion lens. The revised training program includes an emphasis on human rights and employment equity, how to be more inclusive in the

recruitment process, an analysis of systemic barriers and more in-depth bias training. The new version of this training and enhanced tools is now available to hiring managers.

- Human Resources worked in partnership with Diversity and Inclusion to develop a suite of **Virtual Hiring tools** and templates to support the organization's recruitment transition due to the pandemic and to ensure that there are no barriers to participation and inclusivity in this virtual format.
- The **Diversity Champions** for Human Resources were pleased to report that Human Resources is on track to meet all of the established goals as outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework Annual Report 2019/2020, including completion of the external review by KPMG regarding policies and programs and has implemented these recommendations into the comprehensive Policy Renewal Project being led by the Organizational Development Team (in-progress) including a new Fair Hiring Policy. This policy addresses recommendations from the ESR and KPMG reports.
- Under the current **SAP Transformation Project**, Human Resources is reviewing and revising content within the online application process. These enhancements will include a revised employment equity and the duty to accommodation statements. It will also include a new job posting templates and other features to address accessibility considerations. Some of these updates will address specific recommendations from the ESR and KPMG reports.
- Human Resources has just hired a new **Conflict Resolution Specialist** who has an extensive background in human rights. The role of the Conflict Resolution team is to ensure that our policy and internal practices around harassment allegations align with legislation and best practices to ensure HRM meets its obligations to provide a safe, harassment free workplace.
- Human Resources has assigned a staff member to a 12-month project to **focus on diversity and equity work** including the ESR and KPMG recommendations, recommendations stemming from the Anti-Black Racism Working Group and the development and implementation of the Employment Equity program. This work is critical to the objectives of HRM and Human Resources and a dedicated resource was required in order to guide these important objectives.

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.

Complaints Filed:

Between April 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020, there were five (5) formal harassment complaints filed under the *Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy*, as follows:

Personal Harassment - 2
Poisoned Workplace - 2

Sexual Harassment - 1
Total – 5

Additional Incidents Involving Racial Discrimination:

In addition to the formal complaints filed under the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, there were three incidents of potential racial discrimination that were investigated and closed during the period of April 1, 2020 to September 30, 2020.

Complaints Resolved:

Between April 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020, there were nine (9) harassment complaints resolved, as follows:

Referred to the business unit for resolution (basic complaint) – 6
Investigation - 3
Total - 9

Current Active Complaints:

Total of active harassment complaints as of September 30, 2020 – **3**.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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