

# HALIFAX

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**Item No. 1**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**May 18, 2021**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Caroline Blair-Smith, Executive Director, Human Resources

Original Signed by   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** April 9, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Safe Workplace Update Q3-Q4 2020-21

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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. 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 October 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 (Q3/4) 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](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 from this report, as well as the ESR report, closely align with the operational plans of the Human Resources business unit. The following list highlights achievements since the last report to Regional Council on November 17, 2020, regarding these recommendations:

- **Diverse Hiring Panel Program** – The Fair Hiring Policy requires that all interview panels have at least one panel member from an underrepresented group. The Diverse Hiring Panel Program was developed in order to have a trained group of employees from underrepresented groups available for business units to draw from when they do not have someone from an unrepresented group within their own team to participate on the panel. Between September 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, the group of 39 volunteers selected to participate on hiring panels have participated in over 70 hours of interviews on various competitions.
- **Employment Equity Committee** – The committee has continued its work towards the three goals identified for year one of this program: (1) develop and implement an awareness campaign which focuses on communicating the foundational concepts of Employment Equity, including our position as an organization and dispelling myths and misconceptions re: Employment Equity; (2) finalize the details regarding HRM's organizational stance on designating and preferred positions and postings for those in underrepresented groups; and (3) create a fulsome plan that focuses on increasing diverse representation in leadership positions within HRM, with a focus on the 5 equity groups.. The development of the Employment Equity Program will continue over the next year and will address recommendations #2, 51 and 52 from the ESR report and recommendation #3 of the KPMG report.
- **Fair Hiring Policy** – The policy came into effect on February 1, 2021. Fair hiring standards ensure that recruitment and selection activities are conducted in a manner that is fair, objective, consistent, equitable, non-discriminatory, and compliant with all applicable policies and legislation. The policy provides tools, such as designated and preferred hiring mechanisms, to help business units achieve their diversity and inclusion goals. Hiring managers are presented with clearly defined roles and responsibilities to establish expectations and to provide clear guidance on how to effectively manage competitions. Policy regulations contained within outline specific actions such as diverse hiring panels, anonymous scoring for testing and assignments, consensus scoring, etc. to achieve their hiring objectives.
- **Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Form** - In December 2020, HR rolled out a new Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality form to ensure hiring panels are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the hiring process. This initiative links to recommendations contained within the Employment Systems Review.
- **Community Outreach & Engagement** - Engagement and inclusiveness are essential in order 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, job fairs and information sessions. All these initiatives work to foster a more welcoming and inclusive environment for members of our diverse communities, and community members feel 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 October 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021:

- In this period, Human Resources held **over 81 community partnership, networking and recruitment events** across our employment equity groups representing **over 124 hours of community engagement work** and **reaching over 677 community members**.
- **27 of these engagements were job fairs or virtual career events.**

#### 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 September 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, there were **six (6)** formal harassment complaints filed under the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, as follows:

Personal Harassment - 2  
Poisoned Workplace - 2  
Sexual Harassment – 1  
Racial Harassment- 1  
**Total – 6**

#### **Complaints Resolved:**

Between September 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, there was **one (1)** harassment complaint resolved, as follows:

Closed (policy not applicable) – 1  
**Total - 1**

#### **Current Active Complaints:**

Total of active harassment complaints as of March 31, 2021 – **6**

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None.

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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.

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