

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 2

Halifax Regional Council
November 8, 2022

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 

Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 17, 2022

SUBJECT: Safe Workplace Update Q1-Q2 2022-23

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

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

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, 2022 to September 30, 2022 on the Employment Systems Review (ESR) and the external HR consultant review of processes, procedures, and plans 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.

Employment Systems Review Report

The Employment Systems Review (ESR) Report is located on HRM's website as follows: [ESR Report](#).

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 Human Resources Processes and Practices Review report was presented to Regional Council on January 28, 2020 ([Item 15.1.2](#)). Specific recommendations were directed to be implemented and an update on the status was provided at the January 11, 2022 meeting. ([Information Item No. 2](#))

Implementation of the ESR and External Review Recommendations

In June 2022, the Auditor General published a report entitled Management of Respectful Workplaces Audit Report. This report contains fifteen (15) recommendations, including the following:

Recommendation 2: Human Resources and Corporate Communications should develop detailed plans, with timelines, to implement the remaining recommendations from the two consultant reports. If management does not plan to implement certain recommendations, this should be documented and communicated to Regional Council as appropriate.

An action plan to implement the recommendations of the Auditor General report is due at Regional Council in January 2023.

The ESR report outlines a total of 90 recommendations. As of September 30, 2022, seventy-four (74) of those recommendations are complete. As recommended by the Auditor General, the team is in the process of developing detailed plans to implement the remaining recommendations, with an estimated completion date for all accepted recommendations of March 31, 2023.

The external review/KPMG report outlines 31 recommendations, 27 of which were accepted by the organization. As of September 30, 2022, twenty-three (23) of the recommendations are complete. As recommended by the Auditor General, the team is in the process of developing detailed plans to implement the remaining recommendations, with an estimated completion date for all accepted recommendations of March 31, 2023.

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, 2022 and September 30, 2022, there were **six (6)** formal harassment complaints filed under the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, as follows:

Poisoned Workplace – 3
Personal Harassment – 2
Verbal Harassment - 1
Total – 6

Complaints Resolved:

Between April 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022, there were **eighteen (18)** harassment complaints were resolved, including those initiated in prior years. They are as follows:

Alternate dispute resolution - 11
Referred to business unit for resolution - 5
No further proceedings under the policy - 2
Total - 18

Current Active Complaints:

Total of active harassment complaints as of September 30, 2022 – **one (1)**.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments.

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.

Report Prepared by: Laura Nolan, Director, Employee Relations, HR&CC 902.225.6720
