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**Item No. 13.1.1**  
**Executive Standing Committee**  
**October 20, 2025**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Executive Standing Committee  
**FROM:** Brad Anguish, Acting Chief Administrative Officer  
**DATE:** July 11, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Gender-Based Analysis Plus Training for Regional Council

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**ORIGIN**

June 16, 2025, meeting of the Executive Standing Committee, Item 13.1.1 – Councillor White

THAT the Executive Standing Committee request a staff report to consider developing Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training for Regional Councillors.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report responds to a motion of the Executive Standing Committee (June 16, 2025, Item 13.1.1 – Councillor White) requesting consideration of [Gender-Based Analysis Plus](#) (GBA+) training for Regional Councillors. A similar directive was approved by Council in 2021 but has not yet been fully implemented. The federal government offers a free, self-paced GBA+ training course that issues completion certificates. Incorporating this existing resource into Councillor orientation would fulfill Council's prior motion and provide a consistent, evidence-based framework for equity and inclusion in governance.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Executive Standing Committee recommend that Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to:

1. Circulate the free federal GBA+ ([Gender Based Analysis Plus](#)) training information to all Councillors, and request that completion certificates be submitted to the staff member responsible for Council onboarding and training records, thereby fulfilling the intent of the 2021 Council motion.
2. Incorporate the federal GBA+ training into the Councillor orientation program.

**BACKGROUND**

On April 26, 2021 Executive Standing Committee passed a motion (Item 12.2.2) moved by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Deputy Mayor Outhit.

THAT the Executive Standing Committee request a staff report regarding the implementation of the Federal Government's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) program as part of the Councillor training and orientation for all current and future members of the Halifax Regional Council.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

On July 21, 2021, Halifax Regional Council passed a motion (ESC Item 12.1.4) that:

Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:

1. Incorporate the Federal Government's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) into future Councillor orientation programs; and
2. Circulate the Federal Government's (GBA+) training to all current members of Halifax Regional Council and provide any additional support required to those who complete the training program.

Five councillors completed the course in September 2021, with support from staff in the Diversity and Inclusion Office. Due to limited implementation of the directive, Council has not had the opportunity to fully review or assess the suitability of the existing federal training. Prior to allocating staff resources toward the development of a new program, it would be advisable to first evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the readily available, no-cost federal training to determine whether it meets Council's needs.

On April 26, 2021, the Executive Standing Committee considered a report from the Women's Advisory Committee (now the Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee) recommending that staff prepare a report on implementing the federal government's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training for all current and future members of Halifax Regional Council.

The GBA+ training is a free, self-paced online course<sup>1</sup> offered by the federal government. It typically takes between three to six hours to complete and includes several accessible features, such as the ability to pause and revisit content, as well as videos with text transcriptions to support a variety of learning styles and needs. Upon successful completion, participants receive a dated certificate issued by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The objectives of the course are:

- Recognize how various identity factors can influence the experience of government initiatives;
- Learn to identify how GBA+ can enhance the responsiveness, effectiveness and outcomes of government initiatives; and
- Apply some foundational GBA+ concepts and processes.

GBA+ is an evidence-based process used by multiple levels of government in order to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, services, programs and initiatives. The process involves examining disaggregated data and reflecting on social, economic and cultural norms and biases related to gender. The "plus" also acknowledges that this process goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences.

The Government of Canada began developing GBA in 1995. In 2011, the Federal Status of Women rebranded to "Gender Based Analysis Plus" (GBA+) in recognition of the need to include identities and social locations beyond sex and gender in the process. In 2016, the Government of Canada implemented the GBA+ process across all departments which included changes to the Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental Benefits program.

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<sup>1</sup> [Women and Gender Equality's Gender Based Analysis Plus Training Course](#)

## **DISCUSSION**

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities: “GBA+ is an analytical process that policymakers use to examine the potential impacts (both intended and unintended) and opportunities of a policy, plan, program or other initiative on diverse groups of people, taking into account and gender and other identity factors. The plus (+) indicates that gender-based analysis goes beyond considerations of sex and gender to include a range of intersectional identity characteristics, such as indigenous heritage, age, education, language, religion, culture, ethnicity, etc. GBA+ challenges assumptions and puts the lived experiences of diverse peoples at the forefront of a particular issue.”<sup>2</sup> For example, an Indigenous woman living in the Halifax region with a physical disability may experience physical and attitudinal barriers related not only to her gender but her status as an Indigenous person, as well as her ability that could contribute to marginalization and exclusion from municipal services such as public transit or recreation programs.

The use of GBA+ aligns with the Municipality’s commitment to evidence-based decision making and as the goal set out in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework to identify and addresses systemic barriers in our practices, policies, procedures and programs so that the Municipality can capitalize on the strengths and talents of our community.”<sup>3</sup> GBA+ offers a tool for members of Regional Council to expand their understanding and increase their ability to respond to the needs of residents with diverse identities beyond gender, including but not limited to: ability, age, ethnicity, geography, immigration status, income, language, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

Although it was developed by the Federal Government of Canada, the GBA+ training program is suitable for a wide range of public sector employees and members of all three levels of government.

In 2020, CBC announced that the City of Fredericton directed committee chairs to take GBA+ training and that all Councillors complete the same training after the next election which took place in May 2021.<sup>4</sup>

In March 2017, Edmonton’s City Council passed a motion to implement mandatory GBA+ e-learning training for senior leaders in the Administration and City Councillors by the end of 2018. Additionally, Edmonton City Council directed staff in role-specific positions, predominantly in the areas of research, policy and program development, human resources and communication to participate in additional training on GBA+ which is customized to the City of Edmonton.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the City of Edmonton’s participation in this training and other GBA+ learning initiatives, it has been reported that the City of Edmonton’s data collection has been improved.<sup>6</sup> For example, new gender identification options were added to the 2019 municipal census and questionnaires now provide Edmontonians with the opportunity self-identify under expanded gender options.

The most recent Councillor Orientation program for Halifax Regional Municipality took place following the 2024 municipal election. These programs are developed by the Councillor Support Office in collaboration with staff from various business units to ensure a comprehensive introduction to municipal roles and responsibilities.

The federal government’s Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) training is a free, self-paced online course that remains readily accessible through the Government of Canada’s website.

Looking ahead, it is recommended that the GBA+ training be formally integrated into future Councillor

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<sup>2</sup> [Considerations for developing a gender equity and inclusion municipal strategy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Halifax Regional Municipality’s [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#)

<sup>4</sup> [City of Fredericton’s progress on gender diversity slow and steady](#) by Lauren Bird, November 3, 2020, CBC News

<sup>5</sup> [City of Edmonton’s Report on GBA+ \(2017\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> City of Edmonton’s Report on the [Implementation and Impacts of Gender-based Analysis Plus – Update \(2021\)](#)

Orientation programs. This approach would help ensure consistent participation and reinforce the municipality's ongoing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in governance.

Key Considerations:

Resource Efficiency - Developing a new Council-specific GBA+ training course would require staff time and budget, while a proven, free federal alternative exists.

Evaluation First - Before investing in a custom program, Council should complete the existing training. Feedback can be collected once the free Federal training has been completed.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the free Federal GBA+ online training at this time.

HRM is currently in the process of establishing a new learning management system and therefore determining potential financial impacts would need to be investigated once system capabilities are known. The anticipated go live date for this new learning management system is 2026.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

The risks considered rate: Low.

The risks are related to the accessibility of online learning not being inclusive of all learners such as people with learning impairments, low vision or vision impairment without appropriate support (e.g. accommodation). This risk could be mitigated by communicating with Council Members that they can contact The Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO and the Councillor Support Office about individual accommodations to support accessibility.

The alternative of not implementing the training carries a moderate reputational risk. If Halifax Regional Council does not demonstrate a commitment to deepening its understanding of the diverse needs of residents, it may be perceived as lacking in its equity and inclusion efforts. This risk can be mitigated through clear and transparent communication explaining why the federal GBA+ training was not adopted, should Council determine it is not the most appropriate tool for its members.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

No environmental implications were identified.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

That the Executive Standing Committee recommend Halifax Regional Council:

1. Refuse to incorporate the Federal GBA+ training into the Councillor orientation program and direct the CAO to direct staff to develop a new tailored in-person or online program and return to Council with the proposed program for Council's consideration. This would require additional resources.
2. Direct the CAO to return to Council with a staff report exploring alternative training programs for intersectional gender-based training for future Council orientation programs for future members of Halifax Regional Council.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

34 (3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Administrative Order 2019-004-GOV, *the Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee Administrative Order* Section 6:

6. The Committee shall advise Council, through the Executive Standing Committee, on matters related to women as follows:

...

(d) provide information and resources about women's gender-based issues to Council, including the use of Gender-Based Analysis Plus and

(e) advise and make recommendations about strategies designed to achieve the objectives of the Committee.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

No attachments

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