

HALIFAX

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Item No. 1
Halifax Regional Council
November 9, 2021

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Caroline Blair-Smith, Executive Director, People, Communications & IT

Original Signed by



Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: October 5, 2021

SUBJECT: Safe Workplace Update Q1-Q2 2021-22

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 3, 2019, Regional Council (item 15.1.4):

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 UNANIMOUSLY.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008 c. 39 subsection 34(1) provides:

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, 2021 to September 30, 2021 (Q1/2) on: the [Employment Systems Review](#) (ESR) and the external 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.

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 presented to Regional Council on January 28, 2020 (item 15.1.2).

The ESR outlines a total of 90 items for review and implementation. Fifty three of those items are now at 100% completion and, of the 37 items remaining, 24 are at 75% completion or higher. The external review/KPMG report outlines 31 items for review and implementation. Twenty one of those items are now between 75% and 100% completed.

The recommendations arising from the KPMG and ESR reports closely align with the operational plans of

Human Resources. The following list highlights achievements since the last report to Regional Council on April 9, 2021 regarding the recommendations:

- **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 regarding 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 five equity groups. Updates to the development of the Employment Equity program include:
 - **Goal 1** - completed the launch of the Make Yourself Count self-identification survey data organization-wide; launch of the Employment Equity website, email and FAQ will take place in November 2021.
 - **Goal 2** - Designated and preferred options are in the Fair Hiring Policy. They are also default questions in our online recruitment system during all staffing plan discussions.
 - **Goal 3** - development of an internal career development portal, marketed specifically with equity groups, but available for the entire organization will be completed this quarter. Aspiring Leaders Program discussions are underway with respect to how the completion will factor into job competitions.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.
- **Duty to Accommodate Work** - Initial work on the various accommodation - related items recommended in the ESR and KPMG reports has commenced. A staff resource has been dedicated to consolidating the variety of accommodation related tasks and work is underway to develop templates and tools for the organization. Employment-related accommodation FAQs have been developed and will be added to our internal and external employment websites by November 2021.
- **Policy Enhancements** - An inclusive review of all HR policies, including the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, is underway. Many policies have been updated and are in the final stages of review. The bereavement leave policy, which addresses a recommendation in the ESR report, has been updated and implemented.
- **Process Improvements** - Several internal tools and processes relating to assessing 'bona fide' occupational requirement and managing attendance considerations in the recruitment process have been developed.
- **Community Outreach and Engagement** – HRM's employment-related outreach work continues. During this reporting period, the focus has been on women in underrepresented occupations and initiatives relating to African Nova Scotia employment-specific outreach events. Since January 2021, approximately 70 meetings or employment related events have taken place, representing over 100 hours of community engagement work reaching over 1,300 candidates across many diverse communities.

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, 2021 to September 30, 2021, there were **twelve (12)** formal harassment complaints filed under the Workplace Rights Harassment Prevention Policy, as follows:

Personal Harassment - 5
Sexual Harassment – 3
Racial Harassment - 1
Physical Harassment - 1
Verbal Harassment - 1
Poison Workplace - 1
Total – 12

Complaints Resolved

Between April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021, there were **five (5)** harassment complaint resolved, as follows:

Closed (policy not applicable) – 3
Investigation - 2
Total - 5

Current Active Complaints

Total of active harassment complaints as of September 30, 2021 – **13**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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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