



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

**Item No. 21.2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 10, 2024**

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

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** October 8, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Safe Workplace Update Q1-Q2 2024-25

---

### **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

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report summarizes the actions taken by Human Resources as it relates to recommendations from the Employment Systems Review (ESR), the external HR Consultant (KPMG) review of process and procedures as well as a status update on complaints received through the Respectful Workplace Policy.

Significant progress has been made regarding the ESR and KPMG recommendations, including:

- Implementation of the Respectful Workplace Policy
- Implementation of the Duty to Accommodate Policy
- Implementation of new Exit Survey process
- Revision and Implementation of the Workplace Violence Corporate Procedure
- Development and implementation of Interview Panel Training
- Development and implementation of a standard operating procedure for the Confidentiality and declaration of Conflict of Interest within the recruitment process.

**Respectful Workplace Inquiries and Complaints:**

The revised Respectful Workplace Policy was rolled-out to the organization on April 01, 2024. As a result of new resolution options, there have been eleven (11) inquiries to the Human Resources team for guidance on the policy. Additionally, there were thirteen (13) new complaints filed, and twelve (12) complaints resolved during this reporting period.

There are no significant risk or financial implications identified at this time related to the on-going completion of these priorities.

**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, 2024 to September 30, 2024 on the Employment Systems Review (ESR) and the external HR consultant (KPMG) 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.

Since the last Safe Workplaces Report in May 2024, the following initiatives have been completed, which has addressed outstanding ESR and KPMG recommendations:

- **Implementation of the Respectful Workplace Policy**- The Respectful Workplace Policy was implemented April 2, 2024. Employees (including leaders) are required to view a mandatory video outlining the Policy. As of September 30, 2024, the video has been viewed by 2,207 employees (including leaders). In addition to the video, 8 Respectful Workplace training sessions were delivered to small groups, teams or divisions. A total of 77 employees attended these small group training sessions. An updated version of Respectful Workplace training for Leaders and a new training course for Employees are in development and will be offered regularly in the Corporate Training Calendar.
- **Duty to Accommodate Policy**- A new Duty to Accommodate Policy that outlines roles and responsibilities and a general procedure for addressing accommodation requests of job applicants and employees was finalized. The policy has been approved and implemented as of October 1, 2024, with further tools, resources and training to be implemented in the coming months.
- **Exit Surveys**- Human Resources launched a revised Exit Survey process on July 12, 2024. The purpose of the Exit Survey is to identify workplace, organizational or other factors that have contributed to an employee's decision to resign, retire, transfer internally, or take a leave of absence for external employment, and to provide employees whose term or seasonal employment has come to an end the opportunity to provide feedback on the Municipality as an employer. Human Resources will report annually on the data obtained through the Exit Survey process, commencing in 2025.
- **Workplace Violence Corporate Procedure**- An updated Workplace Violence Corporate Procedure was implemented July 19, 2024, after consultation with internal business units, Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committees and unions.
- **Interview Panel Training**- An online, self-directed training course for interview panel members was launched in August 2024. This course was designed to equip employees with the tools and knowledge to effectively participate in the municipal hiring process as panel members. The content includes unconscious bias, how it impacts the hiring process, and how interview panel members can minimize the impact of their biases in the hiring process.
- **Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)**- A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed and implemented in June 2024 that outlines the requirement for all interview panel members to complete a form attesting that they do not have a conflict of interest regarding any candidate in a job competition and that they will maintain the confidentiality of the interview process. The form has been in place for three years, but this SOP will help ensure that the form is completed and saved in every job competition file.

### **Respectful Workplace Inquiries and Complaints**

#### **Employee or Leader Inquiries to Human Resources**

Between **April 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024**, there were **eleven (11)** employee or leader inquiries to the Human Resources team. This is an option under the Respectful Workplace Policy that allows employees and leaders to reach out to Human Resources at any time for guidance related to the Policy without filing a complaint.

### Complaints Filed

Between **April 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024**, there were **thirteen (13)** new complaints filed under the *Respectful Workplace Policy* as follows:

- Harassment – 1
- Violence – 1
- Poisoned Workplace Environment – 6
- Sexual Harassment – 1
- Verbal Harassment – 3
- Bullying – 1

### Complaints Resolved

Between **April 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024**, there were **twelve (12)** complaints resolved, as follows:

- No Further Proceedings under the *Policy* – 2
- Complaint Withdrawn – 1
- Referred to the Business Unit for Resolution – 3
- Referred to Labour Relations for Resolution – 1
- Alternative Dispute Resolution - Facilitated Discussion – 3
- Investigation – Complaint Substantiated – 2
  - Finding of Culturally Insensitive Behaviour – 1
  - Finding of Verbal Harassment – 1

### Current Active Complaints

Total number of active complaints under the *Respectful Workplace Policy* as of September 30, 2024 – **four (4)**.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this information report.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required.

### 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.

### ATTACHMENTS

None

Report Prepared by: Laura Nolan, Director, Human Resources, Employee Relations, 902.225.6720

---