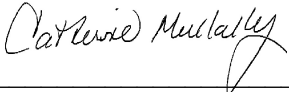




PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5, Canada

**Item No. 11**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**6 July 2010**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Catherine Mullally, Director of Human Resources

**DATE:** 14 June 2010

**SUBJECT:** Employee Engagement

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

At the December 15, 2009 meeting of Halifax Regional, a motion was passed to request a staff report on the implications of forming a Committee of Council to provide input from grass roots front line employees to determine how to make the employee's job better and for HRM to be a better place to work.

**BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Municipality has approximately 3800 full time staff, 1400 part time staff, and 740 volunteer firefighters. Approximately 82% of HRM's permanent positions are unionized. There are a diversity of occupations, employees, and a variety of work locations.

As with many employers, there are issues that arise in the workplace from time to time where employees feel they have been unjustly treated or negatively impacted. Occasionally these issues are escalated to members of Council by staff in an effort to have the circumstance addressed.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to building a corporate culture that enables us to attract and keep the best people to deliver on the priorities of Council and the community. To demonstrate this commitment, the Executive Management Team has defined “Employer of Choice” as a key administrative priority. To accomplish this goal, HRM has undertaken a number of initiatives that include the establishment of Workplace Ethics & People Values, a Workplace Rights Policy, Diversity Programs, Respect in the Workplace initiatives, a Municipal Leadership Development Program, a Mentorship Program, Flexible Work Options, a Healthy Workplace Guide, an Employee and Family Assistance Program, Wellness Programs, an Employee Rewards and Recognition Program, a Performance Development Program as well as a regular Employee Engagement Survey program to provide the employer with feedback. This year's plan (2010/11) includes the development of a long term strategic approach to improve employee engagement throughout the organization, further development of our leadership program, competencies and behaviors, as well as the implementation of an HRM People /Culture Plan.

To further support a positive workplace culture, there are several avenues that have been established for employees to have their concerns addressed which support fair and equitable treatment. If an employee believes that any situation affecting him/her is unjust, inequitable, or a hindrance to effective operations, the employee can use one of the following procedures for the solution of such problem(s) without fear of recrimination.

- Speaking directly with the supervisor/manager. If a problem arises which an employee feels cannot be presented to his/her supervisor because the supervisor is involved in the problem, they can go to the next level of supervision
- Grievance procedure as defined in various collective agreements or non-union complaint procedure
- Third party support through facilitation or mediation by Human Resources
- Workplace Rights Policy and complaint process
- Non union Complaints Procedure
- Human Rights Commission

Within the Municipal Government structure, the CAO has the responsibility for staff. To establish a Committee of Council to provide input from employees to determine how to make the employee's job better and for HRM to be a better place to work could have an adverse impact on the organization by weakening management's ability to manage its' business. With the establishment of

such a committee, employee expectations could then be raised, as it would be assumed that Council would take the issue and deal with it. Conflict may then occur between Council and Management as it is inferred that Council is taking the employee's interests only and Management is not. HRM is also largely unionized and we have legally binding collective agreements with established grievance procedures. Legal liabilities can result from the appropriate procedures not being adhered to causing financial and operational disruption.

Conflict and/ or disagreements in the workplace can be very challenging for all parties involved and, like Council, the administration takes them very seriously. It is important to also note that, in the absence of the full picture from all parties involved, situations may appear to be unjust. If Members of Council are concerned about any workplace issue or have feedback on improving the workplace and/ or morale, they can contact the CAO, Director of Human Resources or an appropriate member of administration.

#### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

n/a

#### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

n/a

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

n/a

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Catherine Mullally, Director, Human Resources 490-7239