



Staff Report

Administration – Human Resources

Report To: COW_Finance_Admin_Fire_Community_Services
Meeting Date: April 29, 2024
Report Number: FAF.24.064
Title: Updates to Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy
Prepared by: Sarah Traynor, Manager of Human Resources

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF.24.064, entitled “Updates to Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy”.

AND THAT Council repeal corporate policy “Workplace Violence and Harassment, POL.COR. 18.08” and replace with two (2) new Corporate Policies, “Respectful Workplace, POL.COR.24.XX and Workplace Violence, POL.COR.24.XX”;

AND THAT Council direct staff to undertake a further review of the “Respectful Workplace”, “Workplace Violence” and “Respectful Interactions with the Public” policies to provide clarity on the Town’s expectations regarding recording interactions with Town staff and bring back recommended revisions to the policies for Council consideration in 2025.

B. Overview

This report is a follow-up to staff report [FAF.23.176](#) and [FAF.24.010](#) and recommends that Council repeal the current Corporate Policy, Workplace Violence and Harassment, [POL.COR.18.08](#), and replace it with two (2) new Corporate Policies entitled “Respectful Workplace” and “Workplace Violence”.

C. Background

At the November 27, 2023, and February 5, 2024, Committee of the Whole meetings, Council provided input on the proposed "Respectful Workplace" and "Workplace Violence" policies. Council feedback has been integrated into the draft policies attached. Additionally, the draft policies were reviewed and endorsed by the Town's Joint Health and Safety Committee. Hicks Morley, the Town’s legal counsel regarding employment matters has also reviewed these policies and their input has been incorporated.

OHSA Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy and Program Requirements

Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) mandates that employers have a policy and program to address workplace violence and harassment. The policy and program prioritize the safety and well-being of employees by providing guidelines and procedures to prevent, address and respond to workplace incidents of violence and harassment.

The workplace violence program must include measures for controlling risks, summoning assistance during incidents, and facilitating incident reporting by workers. It also outlines investigation and resolution procedures.

The workplace harassment program must include procedures for reporting incidents, investigation methods ensuring confidentiality, and communicating investigation results to involved parties.

Through a review of the current Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy, [POL.COR.18.08](#), Staff recommend implementing two distinct policies, “Respectful Workplace” and “Workplace Violence”, while adhering to OHSA requirements, to provide greater clarity regarding the expectations and procedures associated with respectful workplace behaviour and violence prevention.

D. Analysis

Respectful Workplace and Workplace Violence Policies

Staff recommend breaking out the “Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy, [POL.COR.18.08](#)” into two separate policies, “Respectful Workplace” and “Workplace Violence” to provide clear guidelines tailored to different workplace issues, assisting employees in understanding and addressing concerns effectively.

The Respectful Workplace policy focuses on fostering a respectful environment through positive communication, diversity, equity, inclusion, fairness, and teamwork. It defines harassment under the OHSA, outlines unacceptable behaviour, and distinguishes between harassment and constructive disagreement or supervisory responsibilities.

Key additions to the Respectful Workplace policy include a commitment to maintaining a positive and inclusive workplace, examples of disrespectful behaviour, and updated definitions. The policy also clarifies complaint investigation procedures and emphasizes ongoing training.

The revised Workplace Violence policy prioritizes employee safety and security. Updates include expanded definitions, improved reporting procedures, and enhanced language promoting a supportive workplace culture. It also provides clarity on complaint investigation procedures and emphasizes ongoing training.

Separate policies facilitate focused training and awareness programs, ensuring employees receive specialized training on creating a respectful workplace and recognizing potential violence. Additionally, distinct policies streamline the reporting process, making it easier for

employees to report incidents or concerns through appropriate channels.

Additional Respectful Workplace Program Initiatives

Recently, Town employees have observed a significant increase in encounters with disrespectful behaviour from the public. This includes instances where individuals engage in discourteous, rude, or impolite interactions with employees while they are performing their duties.

This rise in disrespectful public interactions can have various implications, potentially affecting employee well-being, job satisfaction, and the overall workplace atmosphere. In response to these challenges and accompanying the rollout of the updated policies, staff will undertake the following initiatives to enhance the Respectful Workplace and Workplace Violence program:

1. **Review of the Respectful Public Interactions Policy [POL.COR.22.07](#) with Employees:** This policy is intended to guide staff in identifying situations that meet the criteria of inappropriate behaviour by members of the public, and the associated actions that may be taken in such circumstances. The policy aims to promote a positive, safe, and supportive environment for interactions between members of the public and Town staff that encourage respect, commitment, and considerate relationships.
2. **Respectful Workplace Posters:** Staff will be adding new Respectful Workplace posters in all Town-owned facilities open to the public. This poster was designed by Human Resources and Communications staff in consultation with the Joint Health and Safety Committee. The poster wording was based on resources from the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS). A sample poster is included in this report as Attachment 3.
3. **Activating the Town's Phone System Recording:** All inbound and outbound phone calls from Town Hall will be recorded for quality assurance and training purposes. The phone system will not record calls when on hold. Call records will be retained for 6-months at which point they will be permanently deleted. Communication with staff and the public will be provided in advance of activating the phone system.
4. **Additional Training:** Utilizing an external consultant, training will be provided for all staff on respectful workplace practices, dealing with difficult customers, and communicating effectively with the public. This training is scheduled for 2024. The training will focus on building collaborative communication, de-escalation skills and fostering a psychologically safe environment for all.
5. **Further Policy Enhancements:** Staff will undertake a further review of the Respectful Workplace, Workplace Violence and Respectful Interactions with the Public policies to ensure clarity on the Town's expectations regarding recording interactions with Town staff and bring back recommended revisions to the policies for Council consideration in 2025.

Conclusion

In summary, it is recommended that the Council repeal the existing corporate policy, Workplace Violence and Harassment, and replace it with the two new “Respectful Workplace” and “Workplace Violence” policies. This transition to two separate policies is an important step towards creating a more inclusive, respectful, and safe workplace.

E. Strategic Priorities

1. Communication and Engagement

We will enhance communications and engagement between Town Staff, Town residents and stakeholders.

2. Organizational Excellence

We will continually seek out ways to improve the internal organization of Town Staff and the management of Town assets.

F. Environmental Impacts

None.

G. Financial Impacts

Additional Training: \$40,000 was included in the 2024 Human Resources operating budget under corporate training for an external training provider to facilitate training for all staff on respectful workplace practices, dealing with difficult customers, and communicating effectively with the public. \$40,000 is an estimate based on staff research for instructor-led in-person sessions. The cost is approx. \$220/per employee.

Activating the Town’s Phone System Recording: The cost for activating the Town’s phone systems is \$4/per user/per month. For all users, this will result in an annual cost of \$8,700.

H. In Consultation With

Jen Patton, HR/Health and Safety Advisor

Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development

Will Wray, Manager of IT

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been the subject of a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required.

However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Sarah Traynor, Manager of Human Resources hr@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. Draft Respectful Workplace Policy
2. Draft Workplace Violence Policy
3. TBM Respectful Workplace Poster

Respectfully submitted,

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Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:
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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	FAF.24.064 Updates to Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy.docx
Attachments:	- Attachment-1-Draft-Respectful-Workplace-Policy.pdf - Attachment-2-Draft-Workplace-Violence-Policy.pdf - Attachment-3-TBM-Respectful-Workplace-Poster.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Apr 20, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Sarah Traynor - Apr 18, 2024 - 9:57 AM

Shawn Everitt - Apr 20, 2024 - 8:08 AM