Minute No. 105
Report – Executive Policy Committee – January 22, 2019

Item No. 1 Scent Free Workplace

COUNCIL DECISION:

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and adopted the following:

1. That the matter be filed.

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by His Worship Mayor Bowman,
That the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee be adopted by consent.

Carried

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 22, 2019, the Executive Policy Committee submitted to Council that the matter be filed.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On July 19, 2018, Council concurred in the July 11, 2018, recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and granted a further extension of time of 90 days for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back with a policy on establishing a scent free workplace prohibiting the use of scented products in City of Winnipeg workplaces.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On April 26, 2018, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council.

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE:

On April 11, 2018, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council and submitted the matter to Council.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On April 4, 2018, the Governance Committee of Council passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS the City of Winnipeg Administrative Standard on Safety, Health and Organizational Wellness recognizes that “every employee can expect to work in a safe, healthy work environment that supports well-being.”;

AND WHEREAS the current City of Winnipeg practice / guideline, as attached, only provides methodologies for dealing with incidents involving scents rather than establishing a workplace policy;

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DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

AND WHEREAS environmental sensitivities can occur when individuals are exposed to scented products such air fresheners, cleaning products, perfumes, hairsprays, cosmetics, lotions and body sprays, which may contain respiratory irritants that can trigger sensitivities or aggravate asthma and allergies in certain individuals such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, and skin irritation;

AND WHERESAS the Canadian Human Rights Commission Policy on Environmental Sensitivities identifies environmental sensitivities as a "disability and those living with environmental sensitivities are entitled to the protection of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.";

AND WHEREAS the Canadian Safety Council lists that "chemicals used in fragrances can cause health problems such as shortness of breath, headaches and migraines, nausea, muscle pain, and cold-like symptoms. Asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, and allergies can all be adversely affected by the chemicals found in scented products. According to the Lung Association, one study found that 72 per cent of people with asthma had adverse reactions to perfumes."

AND WHEREAS large organizations including Universities and Health Organizations in Manitoba have implemented scent free / clean air policies to deal with this issue;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Chief Administrative Officer and the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to Council within 90 days with a policy on establishing a scent free workplace prohibiting the use of scented products in City of Winnipeg workplaces.

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

Further, On April 4, 2018, the following persons submitted communications in support of the matter:

Nancy Boni, Manitoba Anaphylaxis Information Network (MAIN)
Neil Johnston, The Lung Association, Manitoba

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Scent Sensitive Workplace

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee – Council

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Winnipeg is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment. Working in consultation with all departments, the Public Service will implement the following actions:

1. Formalize the requirement to reduce the use of personal scented products in the workplace through the creation of an Administrative Standard.

2. Coach and educate leaders on how to manage concerns as they arise.

3. Continue to promote awareness of our Duty to Accommodate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

At the April 26, 2018 meeting, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council and adopted that the Chief Administrative Officer and the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to report back to Council with a policy on establishing a scent free workplace prohibiting the use of scented products in the City of Winnipeg workplaces.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

A Scent Sensitive Administrative Standard will identify a City-wide procedure to deal with issues that may arise when employees show adverse symptoms from exposure to scented or fragrant personal products in the workplace, thereby meeting the intent of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act* and *Human Rights legislation – Duty to Accommodate*.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

Prior to the creation of the Administrative Standard, the City provided information and education on the impacts of using scented products in the workplace, identified symptomology, and described the employer's duty to accommodate.

Upon receiving the recommendation of the Governance Committee of Council, Human Resources reached out to several HR industry counterparts to get their feedback regarding the implementation of scent policies. Those findings were as follows:

- The success of scent policies was directly linked to the ability to control the environment. For example, workplaces which service the public had on-going exposure to scented products versus an environment which was limited to internal staff.
- Scent-free policies often result in the internal "policing" of scents and odours. It was observed that the absence of scent results in a hyper-awareness of smells in the workplace and control measures impacted on morale/relationships.
- It was observed that the discussion of scents, invariably led to other related topics:
    - The smell of food in the office
    - Personal hygiene issues
    - Cleaning product use
- Scent-sensitive policy writers experienced positive communication and engagement in situations which required accommodation. For example, employees minimized scented product use with the understanding that, in the event an accommodation need arise, they would be required to restrict their scent use.
- Because only some employees are sensitive to scents, and the causes and reactions are different to pin down, some employers have tended to think of scent sensitivities as an issue that can be worked out with informal agreements among employees in an individualized manner.
- Rather than policy, some environments encourage avoiding or reducing the use of fragranced products or replacing them with unscented alternatives. In this case there is no outright ban on scented products. To support this message posters are placed in customer service/office areas, orientation brochures are given to new employees and general information awareness sessions are run.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement Date: December 21, 2018

Project Name:

Scent Sensitive Workplace

COMMENTS:

There are no financial implications to this report.

original signed by
Tanis Yanchishyn
Manager of Finance (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

Labour Relations

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

"OurWinnipeg considers social and environmental wellbeing in the decisions we make today."

Why some fragrances impact on some and not on others remains a mystery. What is, however, well understood, is the fact that the accommodation process needs to be tailored to the needs of the individual. This Administrative Standard acknowledges the duty to take every reasonable step required in the protection of the worker.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Corporate Support Services
Division: Human Resources
Prepared by: Stephanie Mages, Manager, Safety, Health and Occupational Wellness
Date: December 6, 2018
File No: