



Office of the CAO

Prepared for	Council-in-Committee	Report No.	CAO-12-2023
Agenda Date	June 12, 2023	File No.	210101

Subject

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Recommendations

THAT Council receives and endorses the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Relation to Council's 2018-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan

Priority: 1. Optimizing Health, Housing & Social Well-Being through Service Access and Healthy Lifestyles

Strategic Objective: Provide policy directions, support community investments and advocacy that improves access to housing mix, housing options, health services, social, recreation, education and healthy living infrastructure

List of Stakeholders

- 1) Mayor and Council of the Town of Fort Erie
- 2) Town of Fort Erie Residents

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Approved by:

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement to adopt an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy for Town Staff and Council.

Analysis

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed in police custody in Minneapolis, Minnesota which ignited protests all over the United States and Canada and the "Black Lives Matter" movement. This sparked many businesses and government agencies in Canada to review their policies or lack thereof for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Many local municipalities, including the Niagara Region made statements that they were committed to implementing strategies and policies to ensure that fair and equitable employment practices were in place in their work environments. At that time, Mayor Redekop, re-initiated an EDI Community Coalition made up of members of the public and leaders from interested community groups to come together to review Equity, Diversity and Inclusion issues within Fort Erie. The current group was formed in the Fall of 2020 with the Director of the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, Riley Zimak co-chairing the committee with another strong leader in the community, Kathryn Rogers, and the Fort Erie Coalition on Diversity and Inclusion was formed. This is a community lead initiative that advises the Mayor and Council on EDI issues. The mandate set out in the terms of reference is as follows:

"Using the lens of Anti-Racism, Anti-Discrimination, Anti-prejudice, and this coalition will work with the community and the Mayor and Council of Fort Erie to build a better Fort Erie where Diversity and Inclusion exist for everyone. Using the Indigenous principles of the original agreement of the Two Row Wampum treaty between Indigenous people and Settlers, there will be peace, friendship and mutual respect between the members of the coalition and the community of Fort Erie, through consultation, collaboration and education."

The Coalition surveyed the public to get a sense of how residents and people employed in Fort Erie feel about EDI and their experience with it. Questions raised included demographic information along with personal accounts of their experiences in the community. As a result of this survey, the co-chairs presented a report to Council of the findings of the survey and made some recommendations to Council moving forward.

The following recommendations were made and accepted by Council at the Regular Council Meeting held on February 28, 2022:

1. That Council commits to hiring a new CAO with EDI skills and experience to continue the work started in this area for the benefit of TOFE workplace;
2. That Council includes equity, diversity and inclusion as a pillar in TOFE's next strategic plan;
3. That Council directs the new CAO to develop and implement an EDI work plan for the TOFE by the end of 2023;

4. That TOFE provides professional development training for Town Council and TOFE employees along with the members of the FE Diversity and Inclusion Coalition to further their knowledge of EDI by the end of 2023; and
5. That the TOFE partners with other community groups to sponsor EDI educational workshops to demonstrate leadership in the area of EDI and to increase awareness of the importance of such initiatives for all organizations public and private in Fort Erie.

Town staff have developed an EDI policy which has been reviewed and endorsed by the Coalition and is attached to this report as Appendix '1'. This policy partially fulfills the third recommendation to develop an EDI policy for Town Staff and Council.

Following the approval of this policy by Council, staff will proceed to develop a workplan and training to be rolled out to staff by the end of 2023. Staff have been working with students from Niagara College to develop a survey and rollout workplan to introduce the policy to staff with a plan to rollout training as well.

Financial/Staffing and AODA Implications

At this time there is no direct financial impact. Training roll out costs are yet to be determined.

AODA best practices will be considered as part of the roll out of this policy and training.

Policies Affecting Proposal

By-law No. 124-2018 adopted Council's 2018-2022 Corporate Strategic Plan. Optimizing Health, Housing & Social Well-Being through Service Access and Healthy Lifestyles, by providing policy directions, support community investments and advocacy that improves access to housing mix, housing options, health services, social, recreation, education and healthy living infrastructure.

Comments from Relevant Departments/Community and Corporate Partners

Relevant departments and the Fort Erie Coalition on Diversity and Inclusion were consulted throughout the establishment of this policy.

Communicating Results

The policy will be sent to staff via email and communication boards at Town facilities. Once training is developed staff will have the opportunity to sign up for various sessions to fit into their work schedules.

Alternatives

Council can choose not to accept the policy as written and recommend adjustments as needed.

Conclusion

Staff recommends that Council endorses the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. This type of initiative is important for the Town to be a leader in the community, which supports the Town's Vision to be a welcoming, prosperous, connected community of choice. It also speaks to the Mission to lead and serve Fort Erie by pursuing opportunities, leveraging partnerships and managing our resources to achieve growth. The Town will honour both the Vision and Mission by adopting a policy of inclusiveness and welcome all who want to live, work and play in Fort Erie.

Attachments

Appendix '1' – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

	Title:	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		
	Number:			
	Revision Date:		Approved by:	
	Revision Number:	0	Area:	Corporate
	Document Type:	Policy	Department:	Human Resources

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY

1. OVERVIEW

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at The Town of Fort Erie is committed to developing a healthy workplace environment that fosters a climate of openness and allows every employee to be treated fairly, and have the opportunity to contribute to the success of the Town and the community. This is expressed through the Town's commitment to equality and the treatment of all individuals with dignity and respect. The Town will continue to develop a rich culture, a diverse workforce, and ensuring that each person will be supported to achieve their full potential as individuals.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at The Town of Fort Erie refers to all the characteristics that make individuals different from each other. All humans have been created equal, and they all require equal opportunities and treatment. All people have the same basic capacities, and that the physical differences, are superficial and do not make one ethnic group superior to another. This includes characteristics or factors such as religion, race, ethnic origin, language, gender identification, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any other potential factor of difference.

The Town of Fort Erie understands that the wide range of experiences and perspectives resulting from such diversity promotes innovation and business success. EDI contributes to a productive, responsive, competitive workplace which creates value for our community.

2. SCOPE

This Council-endorsed policy applies to all employees of The Town of Fort Erie, regardless of their employment status. This includes but is not limited to, full-time and part-time, permanent, and temporary employees, and further applies to job applicants, committee members and volunteers.

3. PURPOSE: Town of Fort Erie's Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Principles

This EDI commitment builds on the core values and framework already in place to foster an environment of openness, and unity in diversity that allows free and open dialogue to

	Title:	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		
	Number:			
	Revision Date:		Approved by:	
	Revision Number:	0	Area:	Corporate
	Document Type:	Policy	Department:	Human Resources

discuss and address issues of inequity, diversity, inclusiveness, harassment and bullying in the workplace. We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair treatment in any form. This policy strives to preserve and honour diversity without making differences a cause for conflict and requires a new way of thinking, based on respect for the rights of every individual. All employees, whether they are part-time, full-time, or temporary, will be treated fairly, equitably and with respect. When the Town of Fort Erie selects candidates for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit, it will be based on their aptitude, skills and ability.

This policy complements other existing policies by providing the foundation, intent and principles for developing, revising, evaluating and auditing other policies, practices and processes to remove systemic barriers and ensure alignment with the Town's core value of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Town of Fort Erie's EDI commitment is to:

- a) **Foster an environment of openness regarding equity, diversity and inclusion**, where anyone who witnesses or experiences inequitable treatment are encouraged to speak freely and openly so that inequities can be heard, addressed and/or appropriate action can be taken.
- b) **Create an environment** in which the individual differences and contributions of all team members are recognized and valued, while promoting dignity and respect for everyone. The Town will promote opportunities to learn and educate employees about EDI principles, and issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion, in an effort to promote this core value, increase awareness and understanding.
- c) **Ensure proper selection criteria** based on diverse skills, experience and perspectives are used when hiring new staff. Job specifications, advertisements, application forms and contracts will not hold any direct or inferred discrimination or systemic barriers.
- d) **Ensure that applicants and employees of all backgrounds** are encouraged to apply for and have fair opportunity to be considered for all available roles.
- e) **Provide**, to the greatest extent possible, **universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible premises** that allow everyone to take part and work to their full potential.

	Title: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	
	Number:	
	Revision Date:	Approved by:
	Revision Number: 0	Area: Corporate
	Document Type: Policy	Department: Human Resources

- f) **Follow all enacted legislation** intended to support EDI principles, but further, ensure that the Town aim to achieve a higher standard by adopting EDI leading principles and best practices.
- g) **Increase learning, awareness and understanding** of EDI principles to eliminate any form of intimidation, bullying, victimisation, vilification, or harassment and to take appropriate action to address issues that arise.
- h) **Regularly review** all our employment practices and procedures with an EDI lens to ensure leading EDI principles & practices are in place to remove any systemic barriers.
- i) **Develop an Action Plan with measurable goals for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** which can be monitored and reviewed annually against the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures.
- j) **Provide training and orientation** for all Town employees to increase awareness and understanding the importance of EDI core values, this policy, and the importance of openness and equality in the workplace. The Town of Fort Erie 's equity, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by Town Council and senior management. The policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure equity and diversity are continually promoted in the workplace.

Values and Code of Conduct

- a) It is a **shared responsibility** of all Town employees, as outlined above, to role model the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- b) **Value equity, diversity and inclusion** and the benefits that it brings the people and the organization to create a diverse, open workplace.
- c) **All efforts of EDI will be made in good faith and not tokenism**, and that they will be properly resourced and reviewed to continue a path of progress and staying current with best practices.
- d) The Town of Fort Erie is committed to ensuring an open, **inclusive and safe environment**.

	Title:	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		
	Number:			
	Revision Date:		Approved by:	
	Revision Number:	0	Area:	Corporate
	Document Type:	Policy	Department:	Human Resources

e) All **inappropriate behaviour** such as harassment, discriminatory and offensive comments **will not be tolerated**.

f) Treat each other with **dignity** and **respect** and be open to others' thoughts and opinions.

Recruitment:

The Town of Fort Erie will ensure job postings directly focus on the abilities needed to fill the position balanced with the importance of experience. This policy is to mitigate historical and systemic barriers, as well as unconscious biases, that have adversely affected minorities who have been prevented from gaining experience, which may include:

Advertisements for open positions placed on a variety of digital platforms of public places to maximize the applicant pool. This can include discipline and industry specific associations, conferences of underrepresented groups, and relevant research organizations.

Encouraging the Town's agencies and stakeholder groups to approach job seekers of underrepresented groups to consider applying for positions.

Extending the application deadline, or review the job posting for potential barriers where the applicant pool is not large and/or does not represent a sufficiently diverse list of candidates for consideration.

Ensure that job postings use language that promotes openness for all candidates to apply, including language that is unbiased, neutral and adheres to EDI principles.

Selecting a diverse search committee, including a member with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) expertise, whose role is to ensure EDI is considered in all aspects of job development and recruitment.

Offer translation services, for those with first languages other than English, to be used throughout the online application process. This will minimize language barriers and will help foster an inclusive environment.

Allow for application forms online to have the possibility to be read aloud by an automated voice for those who may be visually impaired.

	Title:	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		
	Number:			
	Revision Date:		Approved by:	
	Revision Number:	0	Area:	Corporate
	Document Type:	Policy	Department:	Human Resources

Ensure that language in job postings and advertisements informs applicants that the Town of Fort Erie is an equal opportunity employer, that reasonable accommodations are available during the interview process and that the organization is actively committed to a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Selection:

The Town of Fort Erie will refrain from requiring unnecessary work simulations that may create barriers for candidates. If or when simulations must be completed, accommodations will be provided.

The Town of Fort Erie is open to electronic means of communication for interviewing and reference checks to allow contact to be made with candidates and their references who are located outside the area and outside of Canada. This will provide non-local candidates and contacts with the ability to properly share candidate's strengths, skills, abilities and work history so they are fully considered. Electronic contact allows for those completing the reference checks to use a translator to ensure communication can be completed.

The Town of Fort Erie will use a predetermined rating tool during the interview and assessment process. This is to mitigate issues surrounding the employment of personnel who reflect personal biases of committee members. Standardized questions related to skills, abilities and organizational needs will be used as the basis for the selection process.

The Town of Fort Erie will not view the need for an accommodation during employment as a negative during the assessment and selection process in alignment with the duty to accommodate policy.

4. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees at The Town of Fort Erie, commit to learning, understanding and demonstrating respect, fairness, caring, equity, and self-esteem. The EDI core values and principles of mutual respect and acceptance of others will be discussed openly, promoted and supported without biases based on differences of any kind. The Town acknowledges and honors the fundamental value and dignity of all individuals and is committed to creating and supporting an environment of openness that respects diverse traditions, heritages, and experiences. The Town of Fort Erie strives to model diversity throughout the organization and encourages community awareness toward Equity,

	Title: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	
	Number:	
	Revision Date:	Approved by:
	Revision Number: 0	Area: Corporate
	Document Type: Policy	Department: Human Resources

Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

All employees at The Town of Fort Erie are expected to exhibit conduct that reflects inclusion during work, at work functions on or off the work site, and at all other company-sponsored and participatory events.

All employees must also attend and complete annual training to enhance their awareness, understanding and knowledge of equity, diversity and inclusion principles and values.

5. MANAGER AND SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and supervisors are responsible for understanding their role in promoting openness to discuss and address Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), communicating, and implementing policies and procedures effectively and working with staff to integrate the values of EDI into employment practices. They are also expected to lead a work environment that encourages openness to discuss issues that arise, and also supports opportunities for skills development and career advancement, and further EDI learning and development. Executive management and Human Resources will lead and approve policy review and revision as necessary and ensure the implementation of an EDI Action Plan.

6. COMPLIANCE, TRAINING, REVIEW & BREACH

All directors, managers, supervisors, and employees are responsible for following this Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) policy and for ensuring that any reported or alleged violations are properly reported. Managers and staff will receive the resources, training, and support necessary to promote and implement this policy. This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect changing legislation, best practices, demographics, and organizational priorities. Any breach of this EDI policy must be reported directly to their manager/supervisor or Human Resources, if required.

Training Guidelines

Training and development opportunities will be made available equally to all employees of the Town. Training evaluations and environmental scans will be done regularly to identify and address any barriers that may prevent members from accessing training opportunities or reaching their full employment potential.

	Title:	Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion		
	Number:			
	Revision Date:		Approved by:	
	Revision Number:	0	Area:	Corporate
	Document Type:	Policy	Department:	Human Resources

The Town of Fort Erie will make a long-term commitment to continue its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training and research even after the first training that is provided. The organization is committed to its members staying up-to-date with the continued changes and best practices that are involved with EDI.

Keeping track of an employee's progress and promotions to refer to for future promotional opportunities should be fair and should help to ensure underrepresented groups are progressing at the same rate as their fellow employees.

7. EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT ON EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) POLICY

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the Town of Fort Erie Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy. I am committed to support an environment of openness to discuss and address issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion. I will participate in training and learning opportunities to increase awareness and understanding to ensure that EDI principles and practices are supported. I further understand that I will contact my manager/supervisor if I have any questions about any aspect of the policy.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Revision History

Date	Description of Change	Initials
	• Policy Updates	