



Administrative Report

Office of the Director of Human Resources

To: Warden Tom Bain and Members of County Council

**From: Greg Schlosser
Director of Human Resources**

Date: September 5, 2018

Subject: Early and Safe Return to Work Policy 08-001

Report #: 2018-0905-HR-R3-GS

Purpose

To request County Council's approval of the proposed revisions to the Early and Safe Return to Work Policy 08-001.

Background

The current policy was first established in 2008. A Return to Work (RTW) policy is considered a corner stone policy for employer's Occupational Health and Safety systems (OH&S) systems. It guides employers and employees on the increasingly complicated processes and obligations to return employees to work, from both work related and non-work related absences due to illness or injury, as safely and as soon as possible. The Corporation has had 3 Workwell audits since 2011. These audits are conducted through the WSIB. It is only during the last audit in the fall of 2017 that the audit noted some deficiencies in our existing RTW policy.

One of the consistent themes, particularly in the last audit, is that our OH&S systems, processes, and policies are not consistent across the various departments of the Corporation. There are also gaps in our processes. Another key observation is a deficiency in the amount of senior management oversight. For this oversight to be effective, there needs to be a consistent way in which OH&S systems run and are communicated.

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The April 2018 approval by Council of the Internal Leadership Responsibility Policy OH&S 2018-2 and this policy revision to the Early and Safe Return to Work policy are examples of some of these more comprehensive corporate wide initiatives.

The introduction of such a fully compliant OH&S system in our diverse departmentalized organization is not achievable with our current resources. The 2019 budget will include the proposal for funds for the addition of a full time position to address these compliance issues. This position is intended to provide oversight and be an expert resources for leadership in all departments as they fulfill their legislated OH&S accountabilities.

A corporate task team has been established with management representatives from each of the County's departments, plus representative from EWSWA and the Essex County Library Board. Within each of the departments, there is not a manager whose prime accountability is OH&S. These team members have been assigned OH&S accountabilities in addition to other functional accountabilities. This team has been working with a representative from the Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA) to do a gap analysis and resulting action plan. The intention is to use the services of PSHSA as a resource until this new position is filled. Having this in-house expertise is essential to maintain the momentum and ensure the Corporation's OH&S systems continue to be effective and compliant.

More details will be presented as part of the 2019 budget deliberations and subsequent hiring approval requests.

Discussion

Appendix A (attached) was provided by the Workwell auditor and provided recommendation on what elements of the RTW policy needed to be revised. Appendix B (attached) is the resulting draft revised RTW policy reflecting these recommendations. Input from the task team noted above and the Corporation's senior management team is reflected in this document as well.

While the main driver for these proposed revisions are a result of a work related (WSIB) initiative, the vast majority of the processes contained within will continue to also apply to non-work related return to work efforts.

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Financial Implications

It is anticipated that the Early and Safe Return to Work Policy in isolation will not increase the 2018 budget. However, as noted above, the introduction of a more comprehensive Corporate OH&S system, with increased management oversight will require more resources to administer. These additional resources will come primarily in the proposed OH&S Consultant position. The Corporation's 2018 WSIB budget is approximately \$2,700,000. A conservative estimate of a 10% reduction of these costs would significantly more than offset the anticipated increase in payroll costs.

Recommendation

That County Council approve the revisions to the Early and Safe Return to Work Policy 08-001.

Respectfully Submitted

Greg Schlosser

Originally Signed by

Greg Schlosser Director Human Resources

Concurred With,

Robert Maisonville

Originally Signed by

Robert Maisonville, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix No.	Title of Appendix
A	Workwell Return to Work Implementation Plan
B	Proposed Revised Early and Safe Return to Work Policy