

Subject: Professional Training and Education Financial Assistance Policy

Recommendation:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2023-0123, for information;

AND THAT Council approve the Professional Training and Education Financial Assistance Policy S600-18, as amended.

Background:

The Town's current Training and Development Policy S600-18 has not been revised since 2013. At present the policy allows for permanent full-time and part-time employees working a minimum of 21 hours per week to enroll in courses that directly enrich either their present or future job responsibilities and be reimbursed up to \$300. The cost for courses that the Town requires an employee to take are covered 100% by the Town.

The policy is quite dated and needs revision. \$300 is no longer a significant contribution towards most courses as costs have increased since 2013. The policy does not contemplate completing a formal degree or diploma program and also does not require staff who are reimbursed for completing these courses to remain employed by the Town for any length of time following completion. Amending both the quantum of funds involved and the terms to include a contractual obligation to repay educational monies if someone departs shortly after completion (duration of time to vary with quantum of money expended) would both provide more realistic financial supports to staff, but also better value to taxpayers.

Analysis:

The policy has been renamed to Professional Training and Education Financial Assistance and has been amended to include a consistent approach for dealing with these requests. Employees wanting to enroll in a course will now have to submit a written request to their director and enrollment in any accredited university or college program must be approved by the CAO. The annual reimbursement amounts have been updated to more accurately reflect course costs. The amended

policy defines what is and is not covered by the Town, includes two funding options for staff, ensures those who are reimbursed for tuition costs remain employed for either one or two years following completion (depending upon the type of educational program they complete), as well as a diminishing reimbursement schedule in the event they opt to leave their employment prior to the agreed upon timeframe. The Town Solicitor has also prepared a contract that will be required for all those who seek reimbursement for a college or university diploma or degree.

Financial Considerations:

Approving this policy will not require additional budget dollars. Tuition or other course fees will be paid either with the existing departmental training budgets or the Human Resources Capacity Reserve.

Alternatives Reviewed:

The Town could continue without these policy amendments in place. However, a standard set of rules allows for consistency and fairness and also ensures that the Town benefits from these arrangements, either with continued employment after the course is completed or by being reimbursed if the employee chooses to resign.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Enhancing Capacity and Future Readiness

Having such a policy in place can be a valuable attraction and retention tool. By investing in the continued professional development of existing employees, the Town demonstrates its commitment to enhancing the capacity of those it employs. This in turn benefits the Town, as it will end up with a more knowledgeable staff who are better prepared for advancement opportunities which will foster a sense of loyalty and commitment, increasing overall job satisfaction and reducing turnover.

Consultation:

The Senior Leadership Team was consulted regarding the policy revisions.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

Appendix "A" – Professional Training and Education Financial Assistance Policy
S600-18

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