

Fire Fighter Recruitment; Attendance Management; Wellness/Fitness Program

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, amended this Clause by deleting from the recommendation of the Administration Committee the word “with”, and inserting in lieu thereof the words “and set”; and inserting after the word “people”, the words “from the target groups”, so that such recommendation shall now read as follows:

“The Administration Committee recommends that the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services, be requested to submit a report to the Administration Committee on a bursary amount of \$300,000.00 to be utilized by community groups in assisting people to obtain qualifications for entry into the Toronto Fire Services, and set a target of 100 young people from the target groups participating in the mentorship program in the operating year 2000.”)

The Administration Committee recommends that the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services be requested to submit a report to the Administration Committee on a bursary amount of \$300,000.00 to be utilized by community groups in assisting people to obtain qualifications for entry into the Toronto Fire Services, with a target of 100 young people participating in the mentorship program in the operating year 2000.

The Administration Committee reports, for the information of Council, having requested the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services, to submit a report to the Administration Committee by March, 2000, respecting Fire Services attendance figures.

The Administration Committee submits the following joint report (November 17, 1999) from the Executive Director of Human Resources, the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services and the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services:

Purpose:

- (1) To provide Council with an update on the status of the Firefighter recruitment drive commenced in February 1999 particularly as it applies to outreach and representation among designated groups.
- (2) To provide Council with an update on TFS' initiatives with respect to attendance management, and related programs prior to the end of 1999, as Council requested in July of 1999.

Funding Sources, Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no additional funding implications associated with this report.

The funding implications of the proposed hiring of an additional 117 firefighters have been dealt with extensively in the reports of Works and Emergency Services dated 13, 19 and 26 respectively.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report be received for information.

Council Reference/Background/History:

At its meeting of July 27, 28, 29 and 30 July 1999 City Council adopted the following recommendations from Report No. 4 of the Policy and Finance Committee:

the Executive Director of Human Resources requested to submit a report for the Administration Committee providing:

- (i) a detailed strategy for increasing representation from the target groups in the staffing of the Toronto Fire Services;
- (ii) a breakdown of the target groups as it relates to new recruits and the incumbent firefighters with specific reference to the amendment of Councillor Davis to provide, wherever possible, a minimum of 50 percent of all fire suppression vacancies be filled from equity target groups.”
- (iii) report on the timetable for collective bargaining; and
- (iv) common attendance management program;

the Fire Chief be requested to:

- (i) investigate the possibility of implementing the International Fire Services Fitness and Wellness Initiative in the Toronto Fire Service, as is currently being practiced in Calgary, Alberta, and many American Cities; and the Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services, in consultation with the Fire Chief, be requested to submit a joint report thereon to the Community Services Committee; and
- (ii) enquire and investigate with the City of Toronto’s Twin City, Phoenix, the organization of the First ‘Relationships by Objective’ Conference for Union and Management staff, which has proven successful in Phoenix and other Fire Services, and report thereon to the Community Services Committee.

Comments:

Early in 1999, on behalf of the former City, the City of Toronto entered into a Memorandum of Settlement with the Human Rights Commission which, in resolving the complaint between them, set out certain requirements for the hiring practices related to fire-fighter recruits from among the target groups. Since that time, the entire recruitment and selection process has been reviewed and evaluated against the standards of both modern and effective hiring practices and the practical and philosophical requirements of the Memorandum. In particular, the scoring to ensure an acceptable

level of fitness has been reviewed with Drs. Gledhill (York University) and Forman (Chief Medical Officer - TFS) and adjusted so as to be more inclusive without compromising standards or safety. It was revealed that the previous standard was not only unnecessarily high but significantly disadvantaged female applicants. This has been remedied without compromising true fitness requirements. Both the aptitude test and the interview questions have been assessed for both cultural and gender bias and, in some cases, revised to better identify the competencies being sought.

It should be noted that during the term of the previous provincial government, equity surveys were legislated and conducted to provide an overview of the racial and gender make-up of all provincial and municipal work forces upon which certain goals and timetables were to be developed. These surveys sought to identify the degree to which racial minorities, aboriginal people, women and persons with disabilities were represented in the workforce. Surveys relied exclusively on self-report data to determine target group membership status and, consequently, the information cannot be treated as wholly accurate.

With the repeal of that legislation by the current government, all survey information collected for the purpose of complying with the legislation had to be destroyed. Some former municipalities (Toronto in particular) had equity programs which preceded the legislation and were, therefore, able to continue to collect and retain such data. Unfortunately, this is not typical of the six former Fire Departments, making accurate comparisons and analysis difficult.

Equity data is currently collected on a voluntary basis for all new applicants to the amalgamated Toronto Fire Service. With the assistance of the Human Rights Commission, the Human Resources Division, will be undertaking a work force survey in order to provide a baseline against which to measure future hiring and the extent to which the composition of the Fire Service does and should represent the community it serves. In addition to Commission representatives, an external equity consulting firm will provide advice on the construction and administration of the required survey.

With the assistance of human resources staff, in its report to the Policy and Finance Committee dated 19 July 1999, Works and Emergency Services has outlined at some length the hiring process and the additional outreach strategies undertaken for the current recruitment drive.

There are many reasons why individuals do not become firefighters. The Fire Service, through its Recruitment and Outreach office has redoubled its efforts to get the message out to under-represented groups that a career in Firefighting is both desirable and attainable. That office estimates that during 1999, they have made positive contacts with over 250,000 members of the designated groups. The Fire Service itself currently provides a career preparation program for interested candidates and is exploring both an expansion of this program as well as a Bursary Program with certain community groups in answer to the concern that the process is too expensive for some financially disadvantaged individuals or groups. Human Resources staff are exploring with representatives of the Human Rights Commission the feasibility of developing a Mentorship program which would attempt to provide assistance to designated employment equity group members to develop the skills that would encourage them to succeed.

The following represents an explanation and analysis of the "flow through" of applicants, both in total and by designated group. It must be reiterated that all information related to membership in

one, and in some cases more than one, of the designated groups is self-reported and submitted on a purely voluntary basis. Failure to complete the survey or to complete it accurately does not affect an individual's ability to proceed in the process. Consequently, the data must be accepted as somewhat flawed and conclusions drawn from it should be viewed more as rough indicators than as scientific fact.

In the recruitment commenced in February of this year, job advertisements were placed not only in the large Toronto dailies but also in nearly 60 community and ethnic newspapers. In excess of 10,000 Career Guides/Information Packages were distributed to interested individuals, either at the four (4) open information sessions or the dozens presented to schools, agencies and community groups by trained Fire outreach staff.

In order to progress through the recruitment and selection process, an applicant had to successfully complete each of a number of prescribed stages. Each applicant was required to pass an aptitude test that essentially evaluates the candidates "potential" to be a fire fighter on the basis of a number of pre-determined criteria and indicators. Successful candidates were then asked to submit a detailed application form that was scored on the basis of the extent to which candidates demonstrated the established skills, abilities and personal qualities deemed essential to the position. Although it is normally not required until the time a conditional job offer is made, during this particular drive for expediency sake the Occupation Specific Vision, Hearing and Fitness Assessment conducted by York University was used to screen applicants and had to be successfully completed in order to proceed to the first of two interviews which, through a series of prescribed questions, ultimately determined those to whom conditional offers would be made. At this point, candidates must provide their employment references, undergo and pass a medical examination by the Division's physician and provide a driver's licence and evidence of a driving record which meets the Division's standard. This is also the stage when the York test will in future normally be required.

From a general expression of interest of more than 10,000 prospective applicants, 2,562 registered and 2,049 wrote the aptitude test. Of that number, 873 were successful and were invited to complete an application form. Of the 759 who completed the application form, 340 were deemed to meet the minimum qualifications and were invited to a first interview. Of that group, 180 were deemed qualified and therefore eligible to attend a second interview of which 49 received conditional offers of employment. Nine (9) applicants were unsuccessful in complying with all of the necessary conditions and offers were withdrawn resulting in a total of 40 applicants accepted as probationary firefighters commencing their training in August 1999. They will have completed their mandatory 14-week in-service training on 12 November 1999. Pursuant to Council's direction, 62 additional probationary fire fighters, consisting of 40 fire suppression personnel, 12 training personnel and 10 fire prevention staff are to be hired effective 22 November 1999 and conditional offers have been made on that basis. Further, we have now completed the testing phase of the current recruitment process and application review is underway with first interviews scheduled to commence early in December. Based on our current schedule, this group of recruits should be ready to commence training by mid-April 2000.

The following table indicates the flow-through at each stage of the selection process by the three (3) broad categories of candidates:

Table 1

Selection Process	Total All Applicants		Designated Group Member		Non-Designated Group Member		Unknown Membership	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Aptitude Test	2049	100	354	17.3	1494	72.9	201	9.8
Application (including Fitness)	759	37.0	81	10.7	595	78.4	83	10.9
1 st interview	340	16.6	34	10.0	265	77.9	41	12.1
2 nd Interview	180	8.8	21	11.7	138	76.7	21	11.7

Note: The percentages of “Total - All Applicants” represent a percentage of the total pool i.e., 2049. All others are a percentage of the pool available at each stage of the selection process and should be read horizontally.

The following table indicates the flow-through at each stage of the selection process by each of the designated employment equity groups as compared to the designated group as a whole:

Table 2

Selection Process	Total All Applicants	Designated Group Members		Female		Visible Minorities		Aboriginal		Persons with Disabilities	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Aptitude Test	2049	354	17.3	104	5.1	225	11.0	34	1.7	16	0.8
Application (including Fitness)	759	81	10.7	20	2.6	52	6.9	13	1.7	2	0.3
1 st interview	340	34	10.0	8	2.4	25	7.4	3	0.9	0	0.0
2 nd Interview	180	21	11.7	6	3.3	8	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: all percentages should be read across as they represent a percentage of the Total Applicants at each stage of the selection process

The final two (2) tables represent the successful applicants who have or are about to be made probationary fire fighters, broken down by designated group:

Table 3

August '99	White	Visible Minority	Aboriginal	Disability	Undeclared	Total
Male	11	2	0	0	16	29
Female	2	0	0	0	3	6
Unknown	0	0	0	0	6	6
Totals	13	2	0	0	25	40

November '99	White	Visible Minority	Aboriginal	Disability	Undeclared	Total
Male	43	6	0	0	0	49
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	0	0	3	3
Totals	43	6	0	0	3	52

The totals appearing in the “Unknown” columns of these tables represent responses to the survey that either could not be interpreted, or were incomplete. As explained above, completion of the survey was necessarily completely voluntary on the part of applicants.

Attendance Management:

While not directly related to the recruitment process itself, Council wanted assurance that additional fire fighters were not being requested because of the Division’s inability to effectively manage attendance. This is an issue that is not unique to this Division, but has corporate-wide application and importance. Also, it continues to be a discussion item between the parties during the collective bargaining process.

TFS is creating an attendance management program that accords with the policy underlying the proposed City of Toronto Attendance Management Program (still in draft), as cited below.

“Every employee of the City of Toronto has an obligation to perform with regularity the functions for which they were hired. It is the policy of the City of Toronto to manage employee absenteeism in a fair and consistent manner, with the following objectives:

- To assist employees in minimizing absences from work by making every reasonable effort to provide accommodation, assistance and rehabilitation.
- To provide guidance and training to management staff who are responsible for dealing with attendance issues.
- To maximize service delivery to the public.”

TFS senior staff has met with the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters Association and representatives of Human Resources to discuss attendance management. To date, two (2) exploratory meetings have been held among these parties. While no program decisions have been reached, agreement in principle has been concluded on the fundamental principles of the proposed corporate program. Discussions will continue to the extent that they are productive and do not interfere with the collective bargaining process.

TFS has secured a commitment from the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association to continue with discussions toward developing a program that appropriately addresses attendance management issues. This will entail addressing the specific needs of Toronto Fire Services, such as the high physical demands of the occupation.

Implementation plans are proceeding on a joint wellness/health/return to work group, addressing all absence and attendance management issues. All matters related to absence, attendance management and return to duty will be correlated out of the centrally located medical office, and all administrative functions will be located there. To enable statistical data gathering for attendance management related issues, a database must be created and maintained, with a TFS staffperson assigned to this role. Human Resources will also assign a person on a half-time basis to process and manage Workers' Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) claims, and to structure and assign modified duties. An Occupational Health and Safety nurse will also be assigned for 15-20 hours per week to determine timing for return to work and to assess functional abilities. Dr. Forman, the TFS Medical Advisor, will continue to perform his current roles.

A policy on attendance management will be adopted and implemented which preserves management rights and takes account of any applicable collective agreement implications. Steps will also be taken to implement a long range absence/attendance management model.

The corporate Attendance Management Program is scheduled to appear before Council early in 2000.

Senior Fire officials have been monitoring absenteeism closely. Recently, there have been several instances of disciplinary action, as well as specific direction to some individuals to secure the appropriate support to enable their continuation of employment. More extensive information cannot be included in this regard, due to sensitivities surrounding these actions, and the requirement to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

TFS is also fundamentally committed to an equitable and operationally sound model of vacation scheduling, which is also the subject of current negotiations and subject to constraints similar to surrounding the attendance management discussions.

Wellness / Fitness Program:

The purpose of a fire fighter wellness / fitness program is to keep fire fighters healthy, fit and better able to perform their duties. An effective program should realize significant cost savings in lost work time, worker's compensation and disability. To that end, TFS has been exploring such programs with the goal of identifying an appropriate model for adoption, which would be positive in tone, rather than punitive.

In particular, TFS has been examining the International Association of Fire Fighters / International Association of Fire Chiefs Joint Labour Management Wellness Fitness Initiative, created by a task force of Fire Chiefs, union presidents, physicians, exercise physiologists, and behavioral health and other professionals. This initiative has four components:

- Medical, consisting of testing of the health of fire fighters on an annual basis to tailor the program to individual needs. The focus is on identifying both individual and fire service-wide health problems, and making recommendations to personnel for lowering risk;
- Fitness, consisting of the provision of an appropriate framework of exercise and physical development. Duty time in each shift is dedicated to exercise, with individual exercise programs formulated for each fire fighter to improve overall fitness level;
- Rehabilitation, consisting of access to a physician familiar with the fire fighting role and fit-for-duty requirements, and appropriate resources for physical therapy; and,
- Behaviour, consisting of support and counselling services to assist in dealing with emotional issues arising from psychological trauma endured in the course of fire fighting, provided by a behavioral health specialist familiar with fire services related issues, who would offer periodic voluntary behavioral health evaluations.

An essential component of such programs would be the creation of a departmental database suitable for comparison with other fire services.

TFS is giving careful consideration to a Wellness / Fitness initiative, as a program demonstrating a high level of care for individual fire fighters and their well-being and also showing the desire to maintain an efficient and quality-oriented organization.

Collective Bargaining:

The Firefighters' Association filed for arbitration and an arbitrator has been identified. In spite of this, both parties continue to meet with the assistance of a mediator in an attempt to resolve those issues in which both believe some progress has been made. It is the sensitivity of these negotiations which has delayed or otherwise limited the Division's ability to effectively address some of the issues raised by Council. For example, in addition to the attendance management and vacation scheduling issues mentioned above, ongoing bargaining has also affected the Division's ability to explore and introduce the concept of mandatory physical fitness testing. Similarly, the status of the Chief Medical Advisor and the requirement on employees to provide certain medical information is

uncertain at this time in that his role and position are currently only recognized under the former City of Toronto agreement with Local 113. This too is an item on the bargaining table.

Conclusion:

Significant strides have been made to ensure greater representation of the designated target groups within Toronto Fire Services. Business Unit Human Resources staff are working closely with those of the Staffing, Workforce Transition, Equity and Human Rights Unit and those of the Human Rights Commission to ensure this. While the hiring, development and promotion of qualified applicants from the designated groups is critical to the long-range viability of Toronto Fire Services. Initially this will be achieved through the promotion of fire fighting as a viable and valuable career among designated employment equity group members and through the initiation of special programs to ensure their participation and success. In spite of our best efforts to date, there are currently insufficient qualified applicants to achieve the goal of 50 percent of all new-hires contained in the Council recommendation. We will, however, continue to direct our efforts to maximize representation from among the designated groups and to make the Toronto Fire Service both accessible and representative of the community it serves.

Contact Names:

W. Scott Gray, 394-2554
Brian W. Collinson, 397-4365
Brenda Glover, 397-9802

Councillor Rob Davis, York – Eglinton, appeared before the Administration Committee in connection with the foregoing matter.

(City Council on December 14, 15 and 16, 1999, had before it, during consideration of the foregoing Clause, the following report (December 1, 1999) from the City Clerk:

Recommendations:

The Community Services Committee on December 1, 1999, reports having:

- (1) concurred in the recommendations of the Administration Committee with respect to Fire Fighter Recruitment, Attendance Management and the Wellness/Fitness Program; and*
- (2) deferred consideration of the following motion by Councillor Walker (moved on behalf of Councillor Pitfield) pending resolution of the Fire Services' arbitration process:*

“That the Fire Chief and the Executive Director of Human Resources be requested to create a position, as soon as possible, to record the absenteeism in the Fire Services' 80 halls on a daily basis, in order that these statistics can be reported to the Budget Advisory Committee during the 2000 Operating Budget process.”

Background:

The Community Services Committee had before it the following joint report and communication:

- *(November 17, 1999) from the Executive Director of Human Resources, Commissioner of Works and Emergency Services and the Fire Chief providing, for information, an update on:*
 - (1) *the status of the Fire Fighter recruitment drive, which commenced in February 1999, particularly as it applies to outreach and representation among designated groups; and*
 - (2) *the Toronto Fire Services' initiatives with respect to attendance management and related programs prior to the end of 1999, as adopted by Council in July 1999; and*
- *(November 30, 1999) from the City Clerk advising that the Administration Committee on November 30, 1999:*
 - (1) *recommended to Council that the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services be requested to submit a report to the Administration Committee on a bursary amount of \$300,000.00 to be utilized by community groups in assisting people to obtain qualifications for entry into the Toronto Fire Services with a target of 100 young people participating in the mentorship program in the operating year 2000; and*
 - (2) *requested the Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services to submit a report to the Administration Committee by March, 2000, respecting Fire Services attendance figures.*

The following Members of Council appeared before the Community Services Committee in connection with the foregoing matter:

- *Councillor Jane Pitfield, East York; and*
- *Councillor Rob Davis, York-Eglinton.)*

(City Council also had before it, during consideration of the foregoing Clause, a communication (November 30, 1999) from Mr. Ashton J. Hall, Barrister and Solicitor, in support of the implementation of a Bursary and Mentoring Program to aid non-traditional candidates in developing the skills necessary to qualify for employment within Toronto Fire Services.)