

**CITY OF FORT ST. JOHN HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY**  
**Council Policy No. 147/21**

**Section 1 – Accountability**

- 1.1 The City of Fort St. John is committed to providing an environment which is free from any form of Discrimination based on any of the prohibited grounds of discrimination under the B.C. Human Rights Code. In alignment with its values of integrity, innovation, service, teamwork and community, the City is responsible for providing an environment that supports the dignity and self-esteem of all.
- 1.2 This Policy reflects the City's responsibility under the B.C. Human Rights Code to prevent Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace.
- 1.3 The City is committed to providing education and training to all Employees and Elected Officials about the Policy and ensuring that procedures for complaint investigation and resolution are implemented and followed.
- 1.4 All individuals are accountable for supporting an environment free from Discrimination and Harassment for Employees, Member of City Council, Volunteers, Customers, Contractors and Visitors.
- 1.5 Management Employees and Supervisors have additional accountability for ensuring a working environment where Discrimination and Harassment are not tolerated.
- 1.6 The City of Fort St. John communicates the commitment set out in this Policy.

**Section 2 – Purpose**

- 2.1 To formalize the City of Fort St. John's responsibility and commitment to ensure that all Employees, Member of City Council, Volunteers, Customers, Contractors and Visitors enjoy a workplace and service environment that is free from Discrimination or Harassment as defined by the Policy.
- 2.2 To establish that the City of Fort St. John promotes a work and service environment for Employees, Members of City Council, Volunteers, Customers, Contractors and Visitors free from Discrimination and Harassment.
- 2.3 To ensure that Employees, Members of City Council and Volunteers understand what is meant by an environment that is supportive of the dignity and self-esteem for all and free from

Discrimination or Harassment and know their responsibilities to ensure that such an environment is provided and sustained at the City of Fort St. John. Under this Policy, it is understood that employees who witness Discrimination or Harassment in the Workplace should report it.

- 2.4 To provide appropriate processes and procedures to deal with complaints effectively and timely and remedy situations when a violation of the Policy occurs.
- 2.5 Nothing in this Policy should be construed as depriving Union Employees covered under the collective agreement(s) of BCGEU and IAFF Local 2143 of their rights under those collective agreement(s). This Policy works in conjunction with any language on Discrimination or Harassment contained in the collective agreement(s).

### **Section 3 – Definitions of Discrimination and Harassment**

- 3.1 Discrimination refers to adverse differential treatment of individuals or groups that is related to a prohibited ground of discrimination under the B.C. Human Rights Code. It may be intentional or unintentional and often stems from prejudice and/or stereotypes of others. It can result in one individual or group having an advantage over another individual or group. Discrimination can cause an individual or group to be excluded from activities that they have the right to be included in.
- 3.2 The prohibited grounds of Discrimination as set out in the B.C. Human Rights Code are race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age and conviction of a criminal or summary conviction offence that is unrelated to employment or intended employment. Discrimination, as defined by this Policy, is specific to conduct, which is prohibited by the B.C. Human Rights Code. Other types of conflict which do not fall within the definition of Discrimination are provided for in other City of Fort St. John policies such as; Respectful Workplace Policy. Harassment is a type of Discrimination.
- 3.3 Harassment:
  - a) Unwelcome conduct, or conduct that is of such a nature that it would be reasonable to assume that it is unwelcome;
  - b) That is based on, or related to, one of the prohibited grounds set out in Section 3.1 of this Policy; and
  - c) That detrimentally affects the work environment or how workplace accommodation, services or facilities are provided or leads to adverse job-related consequences for the victim.
  - d) Sexual Harassment is a type of Discrimination on the prohibited ground of sex.

3.4 Examples of Harassment include but are not limited to:

- a) Remarks, jokes, innuendos, or other comments or gestures regarding someone's body, appearance, physical or sexual characteristics or clothing;
- b) Display, distribution or storage of offensive or derogatory pictures, cartoons or other material (including material on computers, social media or email);
- c) Unwelcome questions or sharing of information regarding a person's sexuality or sexual activity, religious activities or disability status;
- d) Sexual solicitation or advance that is unwelcome;
- e) Unwanted physical touching; and
- f) Favours, or appearing to other employees to be favouring, a subordinate employee in exchange for sexual favours.

3.5 Harassment does not include legitimate job-related actions performed in good faith by Supervisors and Management Employees such as work direction or assignment, performance appraisal, attendance monitoring and implementation of disciplinary or other corrective actions.

3.6 This Policy prohibits retaliation for reporting or bringing forward a complaint of Discrimination or Harassment, or participating in the investigation of a complaint, in good faith. A separate complaint of Discrimination or Harassment can be made if an individual has been the subject of retaliatory behaviour for reporting or bringing forward a complaint of Discrimination or Harassment or participating in the investigation of a complaint. Retaliation may include, but is not limited to, penalizing an individual or subjecting them to adverse job consequences.

#### **Section 4 – Application of Policy**

4.1 This Policy applies to all Employees, Members of City Council, Volunteers, Customers, Contractors and Visitors and covers conduct occurring where activities related to the enterprise of the City of Fort St. John occur, including:

- a) At any facilities owned or operated by the City of Fort St. John;
- b) At City-related social functions;
- c) At work-related conferences or training sessions; and
- d) During work-related travel.

#### **Section 5 – Confidentiality**

5.1 All processes under this Policy are conducted confidentially. This means that no one who is in any way involved with any process under this Policy, including Complainants and Respondents, is to disclose any information to anyone except as required for the conduct of Informal Complaint Resolution Processes under Section 7 or Formal Complaint Resolution Processes under Section 8 or for the purpose of making a decision respecting a complaint or as required by law.

5.2 The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act governs rights to privacy and access to information with respect to any complaint.

5.3 If any individual knowingly discloses confidential information collected under this Policy contrary to the Policy and without proper authorization, that individual could be subject to disciplinary consequences up to, and including, termination of employment.

### **Section 6 – Serious Misconduct**

6.1 Discrimination and Harassment are serious misconduct. An Employee who is found to be responsible for Discrimination or Harassment may be disciplined up to, and including, termination of employment for cause.

6.2 A Customer, Visitor, Volunteer or Contractor who breaches this Policy may be temporarily or permanently denied access to the City of Fort St. John's facilities and/or services.

6.3 An allegation of Discrimination or Harassment is an extremely serious matter. Complaints, including reports, which are investigated and determined to be false and malicious, may lead to discipline or other negative consequences for the individual who files the complaint. A false and malicious complaint is a complaint brought forward in bad faith and for improper reasons. A good faith complaint brought forward for proper reasons, which is found not to have merit, is not a false and malicious complaint.

### **Section 7 – Informal Complaint Resolution Process**

7.1 In developing its informal complaint resolution process, the City emphasizes personal responsibility, the long-term nature of workplace relationships, and the concept that all individuals make mistakes. It must be understood that the City will not tolerate Discrimination or Harassment.

7.2 If you believe that your comments or actions may have amounted to Discrimination or Harassment, seek clarity from the other party and apologize.

7.3 If you feel you have been the subject of Discrimination or Harassment and are comfortable discussing the issue directly with the other person, clearly tell the person that their behaviour is unwelcome and request that they stop immediately. If the complaint is dealt with to your satisfaction, the issue is considered to be resolved.

7.4 Employee Complaints

- a) If the complaint is not resolved, or if you feel that you are unable to talk to the person about the behaviour, inform your immediate Manager about your complaint. Your Manager will assist you in resolving the complaint and, if the complaint is dealt with to your satisfaction,

- the issue is considered to be resolved. The Manager will record the resolution in writing and provide a copy of it to the Human Resources department.
- b) If you do not feel comfortable approaching your Manager directly, or the Manager is part of the complaint, you should report your complaint to the Human Resources Department.
  - c) The Human Resources representative assigned to deal with the complaint will set up a confidential meeting with you to discuss your complaint. You should be prepared to disclose all of the pertinent details relating to the complaint in the meeting. If you have kept written notes or documentation, these should be presented in the meeting. The Human Resources representative will outline the options available to you for resolution of the complaint. You may have a shop steward or a Supervisor accompany you to the meeting or to any other step in the process where it is appropriate.
  - d) The Human Resources representative will assist you with the informal resolution of the complaint. Any resolution will be recorded in writing and placed in a confidential file kept by Human Resources.

#### 7.5 Customer, Visitor, Contractor, or Volunteer Complaints:

- a) If you are a Customer, Visitor, Contractor, or Volunteer and you believe that you have been the subject of Discrimination or Harassment, you should contact the Chief Administrative Officer's Office to access the process for resolution of your complaint. The complaint will be referred by the Chief Administrative Officer to the Chief Human Resources Officer.
- b) If the complaint is not received in written form, the City will require the complainant to provide and confirm the complaint in writing to the Chief Human Resources Officer. Such confirmation will include a statement detailing the specifics of the complaint. The Complainant will be provided with reasonable time to respond to the requirement of a written complaint to be received by the Chief Human Resources Officer, the written confirmation of the complaint will serve as the basis for the complaint resolution process.
- c) With the objective of effective resolution of complaints from Customers, Visitors, Contractors, or Volunteers, all such complaints will be initially processed through an informal investigation. An informal investigation will include a confidential meeting with an Exempt Management Employee with accountability for the identified respondent(s) to discuss the complaint and appropriate fact-finding actions, including the Complainant and a representative from Human Resources). In appropriate circumstances, the City may require the Complainant and Respondent to participate in a mediation meeting with the Chief Administrative Officer or other City personnel. If the Complainant declines to fully participate in a required mediation, the City shall be under no obligation to progress to the formal complaint phase provided for in Section 8 of this Policy.

#### 7.6 Complaints against Chief Human Resources Officer and the Chief Administrative Officer:

- a) Complaints against the Chief Administrative Officer must be directed to the Chief Human Resources Officer who in consultation with the City's external legal counsel, will be responsible for implementing an appropriate resolution process.
- b) Complaints against the Chief Human Resources Officer must be directed to the Chief Administrative Officer, who in consultation with the City's external legal counsel, will be responsible for implementing an appropriate resolution process.

### **Section 8 – Formal Complaint Resolution Process**

- 8.1 If the informal complaint resolution process does not resolve the complaint in the City's view, the complaint will be referred to the Chief Human Resources Officer for formal resolution through an investigation. The investigation may be handled directly by the Chief Human Resources Officer, or designated Investigator.
- 8.2 The Complainant will be required to describe the incidents, identify witnesses and name the Respondent(s). The Respondent(s) will be provided with sufficient information to be able to respond to the allegations. The Investigator will give the parties the opportunity to respond to the allegations and present evidence necessary in support of their positions.
- 8.3 The Investigator may prepare a confidential fact-finding report that, at a minimum, describes the allegations and evidence of the parties and the witnesses, determines whether the Policy has been violated, and may provide recommendations with respect to potential outcome. The Investigator may provide the final report to the Chief Human Resources Officer or his/her designate.
- 8.4 Although there are no firm deadlines, the Investigator will be required to conduct the investigation as expeditiously as possible. In the normal case, it would be expected to make a determination within 60 days of being retained to conduct the investigation.
- 8.5 The Investigator may be an internal or external person who will have experience in the conduct of human rights investigations. The Investigator will conduct a thorough, fair and confidential investigation of the complaint. The Investigator will interview the Complainant, the Respondent and any Witnesses that may have relevant information.
- 8.6 The City reserves the right to retain external legal counsel to conduct the investigation and provide a privileged and confidential report to the Chief Human Resources Officer.
- 8.7 If the Complainant withdraws the complaint, the City may continue with the formal investigation of the complaint.

- 8.8 Upon receipt of the confidential investigation report from the Investigator, the Chief Human Resources Officer will determine the appropriate corrective action in consultation with appropriate City personnel.
- 8.9 All conduct that is found to constitute a breach of this Policy will be addressed by attempting to remedy the harm caused and to prevent further harm. The City of Fort St. John's decision in this process is final and not subject to internal appeal.
- 8.10 A Union Employee retains the right to file a grievance under the Collective Labour Agreement at any time respecting a complaint brought under this Policy.
- 8.11 A decision made by the City of Fort St. John in this process does not affect the right of an individual to seek recourse under the B.C. Human Rights Code.

### **Section 9 - Members of City Council**

In the event that a member of City Council is alleged to be in breach of this Policy, the Chief Administrative Officer will be responsible for conducting an initial review of the complaint to determine whether the investigation will occur internally with the Chief Human Resources Officer assisting the Chief Administrative Officer or if the complaint will be referred to a third-party to investigate.

- 9.1 If warranted, the complaint will be referred by the Chief Administrative Officer to an independent external Investigator who is experienced in human rights matters to investigate the matter and prepare a report. The Investigator will be retained as the City's legal counsel. The Investigator's report will be submitted directly to the Chief Administrative Officer, Mayor and Council. If a finding of a breach of the Policy has been made by the Investigator, the matter will then be referred to a third-party facilitator experienced in mediating and facilitating human rights matters, who will review the situation and make appropriate recommendations.
- 9.2 If you are a member of City Council and you believe that you have been the subject of Discrimination or Harassment, you should contact the Chief Administrative Officer's Office to access the process for resolution of your complaint. The Chief Administrative Officer will refer the complaint to the Chief Human Resources Officer to determine if it is a matter to be resolved through informal complaint process or if it will be referred to an independent external investigator. The Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Human Resources Officer will bring a recommendation of the matter to be referred to an independent external investigator and any subsequent investigation reports to the Council for their review and direction.

The following terms are used in this Policy and are defined as follows:

- (a) **Complainant** is any individual who seeks recourse pursuant to this Policy as someone who believes they have experienced Discrimination or Harassment (including sexual harassment). The City of Fort St. John may also be a Complainant.
- (b) **Contractor** includes all individuals who access the Workplace, as defined in this Policy, to provide services or supplies to the City of Fort St. John.
- (c) **Customer** includes all individuals who access the Workplace as defined in this Policy to obtain City services or information and may include residents, taxpayers, business agents and contractors.
- (d) **Discrimination** is defined in Section 3.1 and Section 3.2 of this Policy.
- (e) **Employee** includes all employees (exempt, unionized, full-time, part-time, auxiliary, and probationary), applicants, students, volunteers, contractors and consultants working for the City of Fort St. John.
- (f) **Harassment** is defined in Section 3.3 and Section 3.4 of this Policy.
- (g) **Investigator** is an internal or external individual who will investigate a complaint brought under this Policy.
- (h) **Management Employee** means an Employee of the City of Fort St. John, who is exempt from Union membership for the City of Fort St. John's collective agreement(s).
- (i) **Member of City Council** means those individuals elected to Council and includes the Mayor and Councillors of the City of Fort St. John.
- (j) **Respondent** is a person or group of persons against whom allegation(s) of Discrimination or Harassment have been made according to the terms of this Policy.
- (k) **Supervisor** means any Employee of the City of Fort St. John responsible for the directing and supervision of other Employees and may include both Union Employees and Management Employees.
- (l) **Union Employee** means a member of BCGEU or IAFF Local 2143.

- (m) **Visitor** includes all individuals who access the Workplace, as defined in this Policy, who are not Employees, Elected Officials, Volunteers, Contractors or Customers.
- (n) **Volunteer** means a person serving the City of Fort St. John, who is not an Employee, as defined in this Policy, and includes those individuals serving on any commission(s) or committee(s) established by the City of Fort St. John.
- (o) **Witness** is any individual(s) determined to have pertinent information related to a complaint filed under this Policy.
- (p) **Workplace** is considered to be anywhere where activities directly related to the business of the City of Fort St. John occur.