



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> October 3, 2012	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Employee Suggestion Program (CM12014) (City Wide)	
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## Council Direction:

On April 25, 2012, Council approved the 2012 - 2015 Strategic Plan. This included:

Strategic Priority #2 – Valued & Sustainable Service (WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.)

Strategic Objective 2.1 – Implement processes to improve services, leverage technology and validate cost effectiveness and efficiencies across the Corporation

Strategic Action (v) – Review the feasibility regarding the implementation of an Employee Suggestion Program for the City of Hamilton.

This Information Report provides an update on progress made in regards to Strategic Action (v).

## Information:

Although versions of Employee Suggestion Programs (ESP) are popular in the private sector, the City of Windsor is the only Ontario municipality that has a current program in place. Their “Simply Brilliant” program was established prior to 1970. It is managed out of the CAO’s office, is self sustaining and includes recognition and reward. The mechanics of the program were reviewed and updated in 2005. With the exception of the CAO and the Corporate Leadership Team, all City employees, both union and non-union, are eligible to submit suggestions and receive an award, should their idea be implemented.

Many other municipalities, including the City of Hamilton as recently as 2004, have attempted to implement their own version of an Employee Suggestion Program. These

programs however have not been as sustainable as the Windsor Program and were not in place for very long. The length of time other programs were in place ranged from short term programs that lasted only a few months as part of a particular budget period to programs that were only in place for a year or two. Either appropriate resources were not put in place to sustain the program or adequate support did not exist.

Based on research, staff responsible for the investigation into the feasibility of implementing an Employee Suggestion Program for the City of Hamilton had determined that the most appropriate model to follow would be the City of Windsor's "Simply Brilliant" Program. Appendix A to Report CM12014 summarizes the results of Windsor's "Simply Brilliant" since its review in 2005 and Appendix B to Report CM12014 is an excerpt from City of Windsor Report CR555/2005 which documents Employee Suggestion Program Best Practices.

### **Feasibility of a City of Hamilton Employee Suggestion Program**

One of the critical factors for the success of an Employee Suggestion Program (ESP) is that there must be Council, Management and Union support for the program. As such, following a review of what types of programs exist in other municipalities and lessons learned, initial individual union meetings that included union representatives, the Director of Labour Relations and a representative from the City Manager's Office, were held to engage the unions. The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the concept of an ESP, discuss why the City was reviewing the implementation of such a program as well as garner union support deemed necessary to ensure program success.

Unions were invited to attend these meetings through a letter from the City Manager. Meetings were held with ATU, HOWEA, ONA Local 50 (Lodges), ONA Local 50 (Health), CUPE Local 1041 and OPSEU (EMS). An individual meeting was not held with CUPE Local 5167, as they submitted a response letter to the City Manager, indicating that they respectfully declined any participation in this process based on their previous experience with City of Hamilton attempts at ESP's. The decision to not participate was made after extensive discussion with their membership and their position was confirmed in a subsequent meeting between the City Manager and the President of CUPE Local 5167.

Overall, staff's perception following the individual meetings was that despite support for the theoretical concept of an ESP, there was significant apprehension by all unions regarding the process and the ultimate success of an ESP.

The next step involved inviting all unions to a meeting that allowed staff and union representatives to sit together to discuss their respective objectives for such a program. This meeting was held on June 26, 2012. The staff team established to work directly with union leaders was comprised primarily of Director level staff from across the organization. Unfortunately, only 2 of the unions participated in this meeting (HOWEA

and ONA Local 50 – Health Unit). Staff believe that the lack of attendance at the meeting is a reflection of the lack of interest, engagement and ultimately lack of support for an ESP. Therefore, a suspension of the investigation into the feasibility of the ESP is deemed appropriate at this time.

### **The Way Forward**

Senior Management recognizes that organizational culture and employee engagement have a significant impact on the City's ability to achieve its service objectives. High performing cultures have high employee engagement, i.e. their employees are committed to the success of the organization.

Research in the private and public sectors has demonstrated that the higher the employee engagement in an organization, the better the business or service outcomes. In the public sector, research has seen a direct link established between employee engagement scores and citizens' trust and satisfaction with public service.

For this reason, with Council's support, the City has a strategic objective to improve employee engagement contained within its 2012 – 2015 Strategic Plan. While financial incentives (component of a successful Employee Suggestion Program) and pay satisfaction can contribute to employee engagement, it is most important for an organization to focus on those drivers that enhance employees' job satisfaction, their satisfaction with the organization and their organizational commitment overall. In this regard, the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan has highlighted some key effort areas that will foster employee engagement and support a high performing organizational culture including:

- the development of an internal communication strategy
- enhancing the corporate employee recognition program
- creating a healthy workplace strategy
- revising the performance management system; and
- developing our leaders to become great people managers who have the ability to achieve business results by engaging and motivating their employees.

With the progression of these strategic actions, we are prepared to revisit the creation of an employee suggestion program in the future.

/LZ

Attach. (2)

Appendix A – City of Windsor's "Simply Brilliant" program results (since its review in 2005)

Appendix B – Excerpt from City of Windsor Report CR555/2005, Employee Suggestion Programs Best Practices