



CITY OF HAMILTON
CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Information Technology Division

TO:	Chair and Members Audit, Finance and Administration Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 23, 2021
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Employee Computer Purchase Plan (FCS21065) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Sean Betts (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4895
SUBMITTED BY:	Maria McChesney Director, Information Technology Corporate Services
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

That the New Employee Personal Computer Purchase Plan, attached as Appendix "A" to Report FCS21065, be approved.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through Report FSC01132 approved by Council December 11, 2001, a plan was established to allow staff to receive an interest free loan from the City of Hamilton to purchase computer equipment for home use.

The minimum loan available is \$1,000 and the maximum available is \$2,000. Council approved that the loan had to be paid back over a maximum of 36 months. The employee may not request that the payment schedule be altered once it has been established, except to pay the full balance of the loan.

Council approved that employees could take advantage of this program every 3 years. Any loan made by the City for this program will be considered an employee taxable benefit with regards to the savings from being interest free.

Staff review the plan every 2 years and are proposing the following changes, which are reflected in Appendix "A", Employee Personal Computer Purchase Plan:

- A \$25 administration fee charged to the employee for each loan processed to cover staff costs.
- The Information Technology Division of the Corporate Services Department has legislative authority to change the list of eligible products (Hardware and Software) as needed.

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: Since this is an interest free loan, the City is losing the associated loan interest.

Staffing: Staff from the Information Technology and Finance Division's of the Corporate Services Department are involved in the administration of this plan.

Legal: NA

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This program, when originally approved by Council in 2001 through Report FCS01132, was intended to offer full-time employees the ability to purchase a complete computer system or the necessary components to upgrade an existing system for home use. The primary goal of the plan as outlined in Report FCS01132, was to facilitate the purchase of a home computer to provide:

- Increased knowledge and confidence of the employee using personal computers;
- Reduced internal demand for training and support;
- Broader base of skilled employees to participate more fully and to be more open and accepting of the changes in workplace automation;
- Facilitate telecommuting where and when appropriate;
- Improved employee morale;
- An extension of the office computer to allow for increased productivity; and
- Employee access to the City's website from home could facilitate better employee communication.

Employees are able to purchase the equipment from a retail vendor of their choice and allows the employee to shop, where convenient, comparing prices as necessary. Only the equipment and software that support the purpose and intent of this program is eligible. Information Technology Division, Corporate Services Department staff provide an acceptable computer specification, based on the City's own Corporate Standards for computer equipment.

Providing access to a computer, at home, for employees promotes continuous learning

and that learning is then brought back to the workplace. Employee stress levels could be reduced, by allowing them to further develop their skills at home, at their own pace.

This program is a good benefit for recruitment and retention of staff.

Based on our recent experience with the COVID-19 pandemic, employees are becoming increasingly more reliant on technology to conduct essential everyday functions ranging from grocery shopping to medical appointments to job interviews. The ability to have an affordable technology solution will allow our employees to safely engage in necessary activities while having a reliable computer to facilitate their full participation.

The added employer benefit is that the more technologically savvy our staff become, the greater the ease in successfully operating in a virtual work environment.

This program was made available to all permanent full time and part-staff as previously approved by Council, through Report FCS01132(b).

All loans are conditional upon the employee agreeing to the following, in writing:

- To the payroll deductions;
- To repay the loans in full in the event of a leave of absence except in the case of a maternity leave (which may be paid by the provision of post-dated cheques); and
- To full payment in the event of termination of employment.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

N/A

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

In preparation of Report FCS21065, staff from Human Resource Division of the City Manager's Office and Finance and the Information Technology Divisions of the Corporate Services Department were involved and the recommendations have been reviewed by the Service Excellence Subcommittee of Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff review this plan every 2 years to ensure it is meeting the needs of the employees and the City. A recent review resulted in the recommendations with report FCS21065.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

One alternative to the Recommendations of Report FCS21065 is to simply cancel this program. This is not being recommended as this program is considered a benefit to the employee retention process and is also considered valuable to the staff recruitment process. Other municipalities promote this benefit on their recruitment web site to attract new hires.

A second alternative to the Recommendations of Report FCS201065 would be to expand the list of eligible equipment while increasing the availability of the plan to once every 4 years. It was agreed to expand the list of eligible equipment given the changes in the technology landscape, however, given this is an attractive benefit for the recruitment and retention of staff, the eligibility period will remain once every 3 years.

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Our People and Performance

Hamiltonians have a high level of trust and confidence in their City government.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A: City of Hamilton Employee Computer Purchase Plan

SB/sn