



City of Hamilton Report for Information

To: Mayor and Members
General Issues Committee

Date: April 9, 2025

Report No: HUR25002

Subject/Title: Labour Relations Activity Report & Analysis - 2020-2024

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- 1) That Report HUR25002 respecting Labour Relations Activity Report & Analysis (2020-2024) **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- This Report is to provide Council and other City stakeholders with an overview of the City of Hamilton's labour relations activities for the period of January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2024.
- This Report focuses on a five-year historical review of the general labour relations activities across the City of Hamilton's bargaining units and departments from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2024.
- In addition, this Report provides a summary of the City's collective agreement status with the eleven bargaining units and an overview of collective bargaining activity in 2024.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable.

Background

In 2008, Council requested an analytical account of the City's labour relations activities. As part of this objective, the Employee & Labour Relations Information System was introduced and implemented in 2009. This effort was primarily driven by Council's direction for greater labour and employee relations accountability as well as a means to providing a more strategic approach to labour relations service delivery. Since 2010, Human Resources has provided analytical accounts of the City's labour relations activities on an annual basis. This year's information Report focuses on a five (5) year historical review of the labour relations activities and data for the period January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2024.

Analysis

CITY UNIONIZATION OVERVIEW

The City of Hamilton has a highly unionized workforce with unionized employees representing approximately 76.9% of the City's overall workforce. Chart 1 below provides an overview of the unionized head count by department at the end of 2024. The largest number of unionized employees are in the City's largest departments: Healthy & Safe Communities (includes *Healthy and Safe Communities and Community Services departments*) and Public Works. The Public Works department has the highest percentage of unionized employees within the department compared to others.

Chart 1 – Unionized Head Count by Department

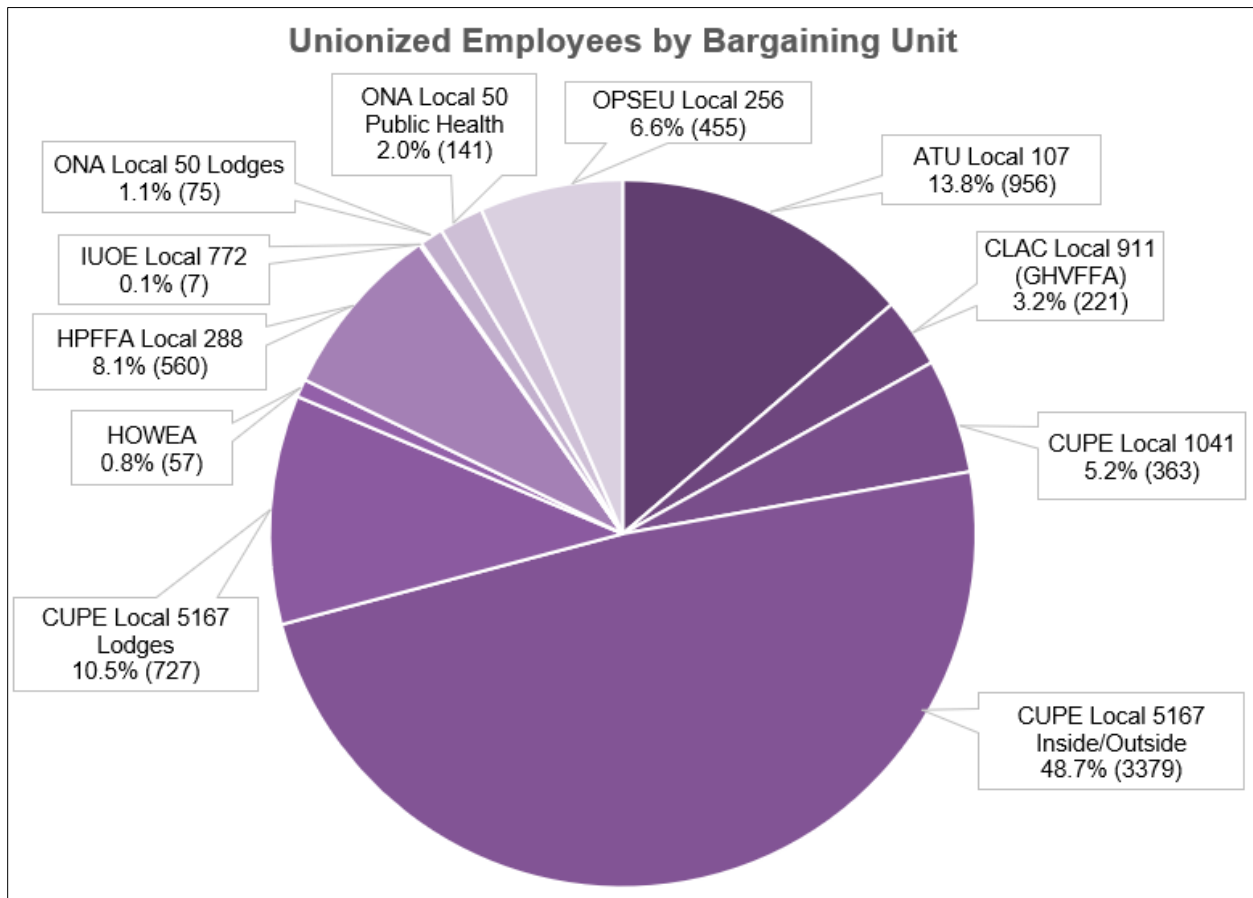
Department	Total Head Count	Unionized Head Count	% of Unionized Head Count within Department	% of Unionized Head Count within City
City Manager's Office	139	0	0.0%	0.0%
CityHousing Hamilton	216	116	53.7%	1.3%
Corporate Services	610	293	48.0%	3.2%
Healthy & Safe Communities*	4597	3741	81.4%	41.4%
Planning & Economic Development	922	498	54.0%	5.5%
Public Works	2543	2293	90.2%	25.4%
Total**	9027	6941	N/A	76.9%

*Includes Healthy and Safe Communities and Community Services departments.

**City Council department and employees are not included in total.

Graph 1 below shows the percentage breakdown of the City’s unionized workforce across the eleven bargaining units at the end of 2024. CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside is the largest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 48.7% of the City’s overall unionized employees. In contrast, IUOE 772 is the smallest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 0.1% of unionized employees at the City.

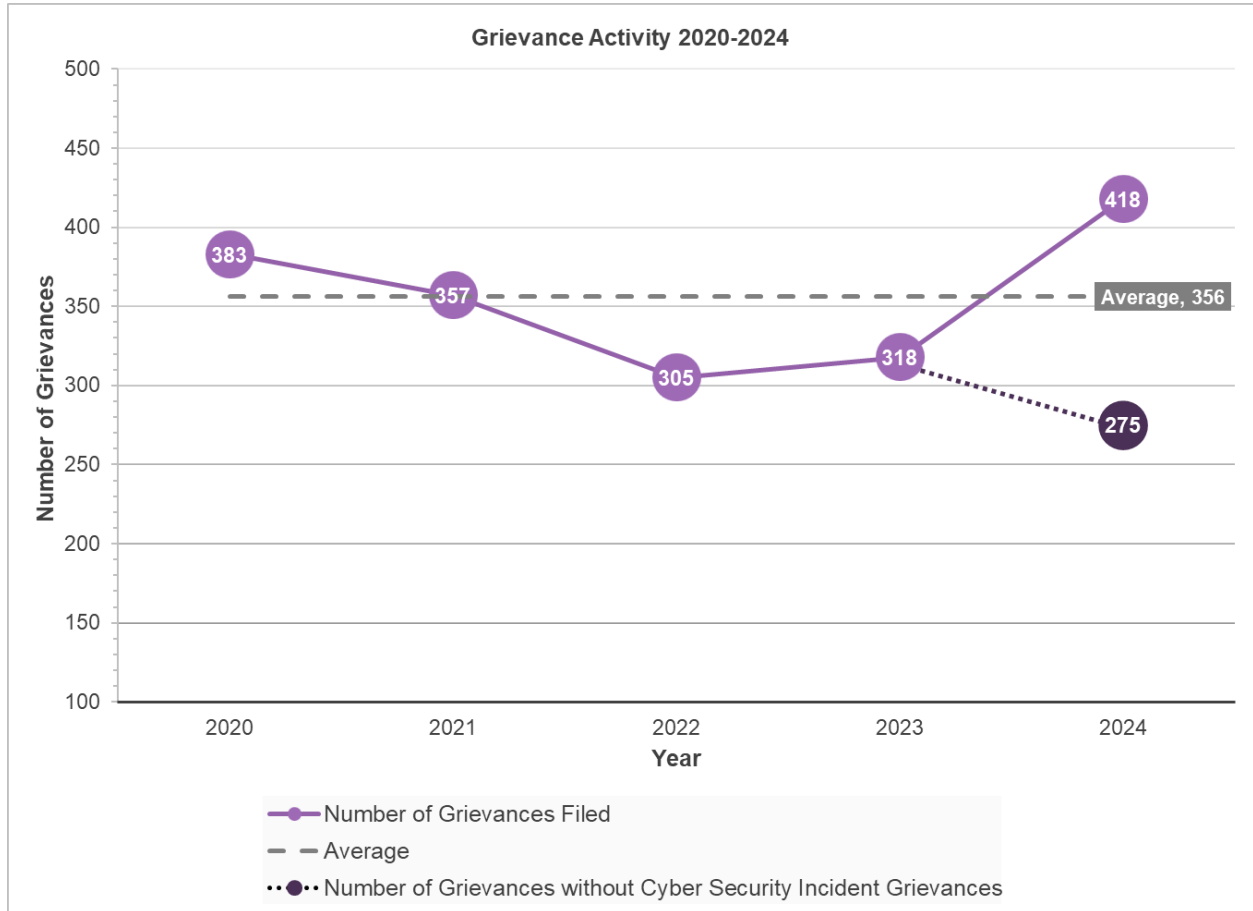
Graph 1 – Unionized Employees by Bargaining Unit



OVERALL GRIEVANCE ACTIVITY

The Report presents an analysis of grievance activity throughout the years from 2020 through 2024. Grievances are an important communication tool which offer insights into potential areas of concern or opportunities for improvement within the organization. Over the five-year period, there have been fluctuations in the number of grievances filed. As shown in Graph 2 below, the lowest level of grievance submissions over the five-year period was 305 grievances in 2022. The number of grievances filed in 2024 was the highest with 418 grievances.

Graph 2 – Total Grievance Activity 2020-2024



While the number of grievances filed in any given year can be one general indicator of the state of labour relations, it is not the sole indicator of the labour-management relationship. Often, a collective bargaining year with contentious negotiations, unprecedented and high-profile events, may have an impact on statistics and cause grievances to fluctuate in any given year. As an example, Grievances filed in 2020 and 2021 were impacted by external influences such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the City’s navigation through that unprecedented time. Grievances in 2023 reflects a period of active negotiations with lower grievance submission. Grievances in 2024 were greatly impacted by the cyber security incident and the City’s navigation through the significant event. In 2024, a total of 143 grievances related to the cyber security incident were filed representing approximately 34.2% of the total grievances filed that year. If the event did not occur in 2024, it could be speculated that the total grievance submission for the year would have been closer to 275 and the lowest grievance submission year over the five-year period.

The time to resolve a grievance can vary significantly depending on the complexity of the issue and whether the grievance proceeds through multiple steps of the grievance

procedure. Grievance resolutions include those achieved in the grievance process, mediations, arbitrations, and grievances withdrawn by the bargaining unit. Chart 2 below shows the number of resolved grievances for those filed in 2020 through 2024. Out of all the grievances filed in the five-year period, approximately 68% of the grievances were resolved by the end of 2024. A total of 235 grievances from the five-year period were resolved in the 2024 calendar year.

Chart 2 – Grievances Filed, Resolved, and Outstanding from 2020-2024

Year	Number of Grievances Filed	Number of Outstanding Grievances	Number of Resolved Grievances	Percent of Grievances Resolved	Number of Grievances Resolved in 2024
2020	383	37	346	90.3%	3
2021	357	55	302	84.6%	9
2022	305	75	230	75.4%	34
2023	318	97	221	69.5%	78
2024	418	307	111	26.6%	111
Total	1781	571	1210	67.9%	235

Grievances that remain unresolved or outstanding are generally either held in abeyance for a variety of reasons or awaiting a future hearing date. Often it is advantageous to temporarily pause a grievance instead of proceeding to formal arbitration if the parties are unable to come to an agreement. This allows the parties to research and gather additional information on the grievance prior to committing to next steps in the grievance procedure. If the Cyber Security incident had not occurred, it is likely the grievance resolution rate for 2024 would have been higher.

The grievance process is one of the methods to resolve disputes regarding the terms and conditions of employment and workplace policies and processes. It also provides individual employees as well as union leaders, an opportunity to communicate concerns in a formal and structured manner outlined in their collective agreement. Analysis beyond a direct count of grievances is always necessary, and caution should be given to drawing too many conclusions.

GRIEVANCE ACTIVITY BY BARGAINING UNIT

The data on grievances filed by bargaining unit from 2020 to 2024 in Chart 3 below shows notable fluctuations in grievance activity. While the overall total number of grievances filed in 2024 increased to 418, surpassing the five-year average of 356, a

large portion of grievances filed were due to the unprecedented cyber security incident. Both CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside and ATU Local 107 had a significant rise in grievance submissions in 2024. The cyber security incident resulted in a number of grievances due to the unavailability of pay stubs, incorrect or missing pay, no access to lieu banks and delay in retroactive payments. These issues were corrected in June 2024.

Other unions such as OPSEU Local 256 and HOWEA show a decline in grievances over the period, suggesting potential improvements in the workplace or fewer issues arising to a formal grievance. Overall, the grievance activity highlights both an increase in grievances submission for some bargaining units and stability for others. The stability of grievance submissions often reflects the effectiveness of the City's grievance handling process, the level of communication between parties, and the concerted efforts of management working proactively to resolve issues prior to a grievance being filed.

Chart 3 – Grievances Filed by Bargaining Unit in 2020-2024

Bargaining Unit	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Five-Year Average
ATU Local 107	28	45	44	42	74	47
CLAC Local 911 (GHVFFA)	0	1	1	0	0	0
CUPE Local 1041	41	33	21	23	25	29
CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside	228	173	132	168	225	185
CUPE Local 5167 Lodges	36	38	44	28	40	37
HOWEA	5	8	12	8	3	7
HPFFA Local 288 Fire	16	15	11	11	13	13
IUOE Local 772	0	0	0	0	0	0
ONA Local 50 Lodges	6	19	13	6	10	11
ONA Local 50 Public Health	6	4	3	1	4	4
OPSEU Local 256	17	21	24	31	24	23
Total	383	357	305	318	418	356

GRIEVANCE ACTIVITY BY DEPARTMENT

Further analysis of the state of labour-management relations is done through a review of grievance activity in the various City departments. Chart 4 below provides an overview of unionized head count by department and 2024 grievance submissions. As expected, the largest number of grievances filed in 2024 occurred in the two of the

City's largest departments: Public Works and Healthy and Safe Communities. Public Works has the largest grievance submission rate. The higher submission rate is due to higher levels of overtime, standby, callout and discipline grievances.

Chart 4 – Grievance Submission by Department in 2024

Department	Unionized Head Count	Number of Grievances Filed in 2024	% of Overall Grievances Submitted	Grievance Rate per 100 Unionized Employees
City Manager's Office	0	0	0.0%	0.0
CityHousing Hamilton	116	3	0.7%	2.6
Corporate Services	293	8	1.9%	2.7
Healthy & Safe Communities*	3741	114	27.3%	3.0
Planning & Economic Development	498	13	3.1%	2.6
Public Works	2293	254	60.8%	11.1
City Wide**	N/A	26	6.2%	N/A
Total	6941	418	N/A	6.0

*Includes Healthy and Safe Communities and Community Services departments.

**City Wide grievances are not tied to a single department.

City Wide grievances are those that are not tied to a single department. For clarity, policy grievances that affect employees across multiple departments would be categorized as a City Wide grievance. Chart 5 provides an overview of grievances filed by department over the five-year reporting period. When comparing 2023 and 2024, there was an increase in City Wide grievances filed in 2024. This change is largely due to the unprecedented cyber security incident causing more City Wide grievances related to compensation and wage statements (ie. pay stubs) to be filed.

Overall, the grievance activity across the City's departments provides a favourable outlook on the state of labour-management relations showing relatively stable grievance submissions over time by department.

Chart 5 – Grievance Activity by Department in 2020-2024

Department	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Five-Year Average
City Manager's Office	0	0	0	0	0	0
CityHousing Hamilton	4	4	2	3	3	3
Corporate Services	11	11	13	6	8	10
Healthy & Safe Communities*	152	148	124	123	114	132
Planning & Economic Development	28	31	25	24	13	24
Public Works	182	156	131	161	254	177
City Wide**	6	7	10	1	26	10
Total	383	357	305	318	418	356

*Includes Healthy and Safe Communities and Community Services departments.

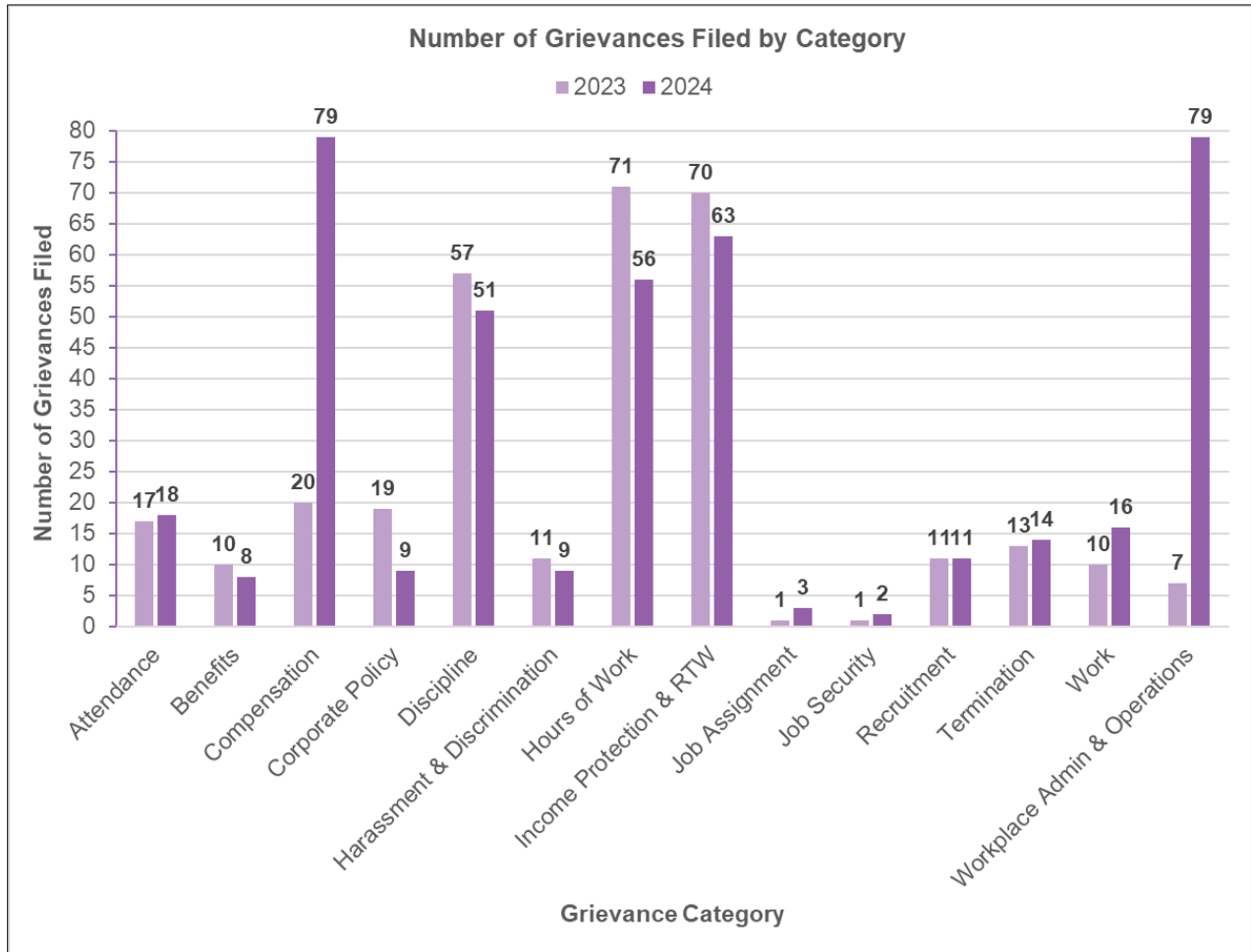
**City Wide grievances are not tied to a single department.

GRIEVANCE ACTIVITY BY CATEGORY

When grievances are filed, they are categorized into grievance categories by the issue being grieved. A description of all grievance categories can be found in Appendix “A” of this Report. The data is presented in a bar chart (Graph 3) comparing the volume of grievances filed in 2023 and 2024 across the various grievance categories. The total number of grievances filed across most categories remained relatively consistent between the two years, with some categories showing notable increases.

The highest number of grievances filed in 2024 were in the Compensation and Workplace Administration and Operations categories. The increase in grievances in these categories was due to the unprecedented cyber security incident that caused issues with the payment of wages and delayed issuing of wage statements (pay stubs). Over 80% of the grievances filed in these categories were a direct result of the cyber security incident. Hours of Work, Income Protection Plan and Return to Work (RTW), and Discipline categories showed a relatively high volume of grievances, although there was a slight decrease in 2024 compared to 2023 in these categories.

Graph 3 – Grievances Filed by Category 2023 and 2024



The overall top five grievance categories in 2024 were Compensation, Workplace Administration and Operations, Income Protection Plan and Return to Work (RTW), Hours of Work, and Discipline. Appendix “B” to this Report provides further overview of the number of grievances filed by grievance category for the five-year period from 2020 to 2024 in the top five grievance categories.

LABOUR RELATIONS LEGAL COSTS

In 2024, the total labour relations legal costs increased by approximately 76.3% from the previous year. Graph 4 illustrates the total labour relations costs by year from 2020 to 2024, highlighting a significant increase in 2024. Over previous years, costs remained relatively stable; however, in 2024 the total costs exceeded both the budgeted amount and the five-year average. The increase from historical trends reflects factors such as higher litigation cases, increased dispute resolution processes, and rising professional fees. There was also a higher number of arbitrations scheduled in 2024 which is

attributable to delays from the COVID-19 pandemic. Arbitrations for 2024 would have been booked one to three years ago and 2024 was a considered a catch-up year.

Graph 4 – Total Labour Relations Legal Costs (2020-2024)



A breakdown of the 2024 legal costs by category in Chart 6 highlights that grievance matters accounted for the largest share of the total labour relation costs at 54.4%. Non-grievance matters, including non-union proceedings, followed comprising of 23.6% of total costs. Collective bargaining costs, including arbitrator fees, represented 16.0% of the overall costs. Human Rights related fees were the lowest contributing to 6.0% of the overall costs in 2024.

Chart 6 – Summary of Total Labour Relations Costs in 2024

Category	Mediator Fees	Arbitrator Fees	Legal Fees	Total	Percent of Total
Collective Bargaining	\$5,452	\$28,484	\$156,370	\$190,307	16.0%
Grievance Matters	\$36,786	\$72,496	\$536,932	\$646,214	54.4%
Human Rights Claims	\$0	\$0	\$70,914	\$70,914	6.0%
Non-Grievance Matters	\$0	\$0	\$279,542	\$279,542	23.6%
Total Fees (2024)	\$42,239	\$100,980	\$1,043,758	\$1,186,977	

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACTIVITY

The City began negotiations in 2023 with several bargaining units to renew expiring collective agreements. Out of the eleven collective agreements that the City has with

various unions/associations, eight were up for renewal in 2023. In addition, the OPSEU Local 256 collective bargaining process that had commenced in 2020 proceeded to interest arbitration in 2023. The Labour Relations team, with the assistance of representatives from other operational and administration departments, engaged in a total of 80 collective bargaining days with union representatives and one interest arbitration hearing in 2023. By the end of 2023, three collective agreements were renewed at various settlement stages (Chart 7). Collective bargaining continued into 2024, with a total of 27 collective bargaining days, one mediation hearing, and two interest arbitration hearings. At this time, six collective agreements were renewed in 2024 (Chart 8) leaving three collective agreements outstanding for renewal (Chart 9). OPSEU 256 is reflected twice as their interest arbitration was for a preceding period, with a 2024 expiration necessitating a renewal negotiation.

Chart 7 - Collective Agreements Renewed in 2023

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
ATU Local 107	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2023
CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2023
OPSEU Local 256	April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024	Interest Arbitration Award - 2023 & 2024

Chart 8 - Collective Agreements Renewed in 2024

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
CLAC Local 911 (GHVFFA)	January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027	Ratified - 2024
CUPE Local 1041	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024
CUPE Local 5167 Lodges	April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2027	Ratified - 2024
HPFFA Local 288 Fire	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Interest Arbitration Award - 2024
IUOE Local 772	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024
ONA Local 50 Public Health	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024

Chart 9 - Collective Agreements Outstanding

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
HOWEA	January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2024	Expired - Negotiations Underway
ONA Local 50 Lodges	April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2023	Expired - Negotiations Underway
OPSEU Local 256	April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024	Expired - Negotiations Underway

CONCLUSION

The Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis of the five-year period spanning from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2024 provides an overview of the City of Hamilton's interactions with its eleven bargaining units. This period has seen concerted efforts in fair negotiation and grievance resolution to address challenges in a productive manner with consideration for cost efficiency and fairness to taxpayers. Like other City departments, the Labour Relations team experienced great challenges over the Cyber Incident with a loss of access to systems and documents that drive important processes. Despite those challenges, the team continued negotiations and important grievance proceedings as it is legally obligated to do. The City has demonstrated a commitment to maintaining effective labour relations by working collaboratively with its bargaining units and stakeholders, which is important for operational continuity and overall employee satisfaction on a City Wide basis.

Alternatives

No alternatives.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Labour Relations activities align with Council's strategic priorities by assisting to resolve issues and clarify terms and conditions of employment to support leaders and employees in completing their work. These efforts assist in reducing the burden on residential taxpayers (Priority 1: Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development) and assist in building a high performing public service (Priority 3: Responsiveness & Transparency).

Previous Reports Submitted

- [Labour Relations Activity Report & Analysis \(2019-2023\) \(HUR24006\) \(City Wide\)](#), (Item 9.1), September 4, 2024, General Issues Committee
- [Appendix “A” to Report HUR24006](#), (Item 9.1), September 4, 2024, General Issues Committee
- [Appendix “B” to Report HUR24006](#), (Item 9.1), September 4, 2024, General Issues Committee

Consultation

In preparation of the information highlighted herein, the following internal division was consulted:

- City Manager’s Office, Human Resources, Employee Health and Labour Relations Division

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: Definitions Respecting Grievance Categories

Appendix B: Top Five Grievance Categories in 2024

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