



City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To: Chair and Members
General Issues Committee

Date: April 15, 2026

Report No: HUR26006

Subject/Title: Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis – 2021-2025

Ward(s) Affected: (City Wide)

Recommendations

- 1) That Report HUR26006 respecting Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis - 2021-2025 **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 state of labour relations and related activities for the period of January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025.
- This Report focuses on a five-year historical review of the general labour relations activities and related costs across the City of Hamilton's bargaining units and departments from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025.

- 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 2025.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable.

Background

In 2008, Council requested an analytical account of the City's labour relations grievance 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 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, 2021 through December 31, 2025.

Analysis

City Unionization Overview

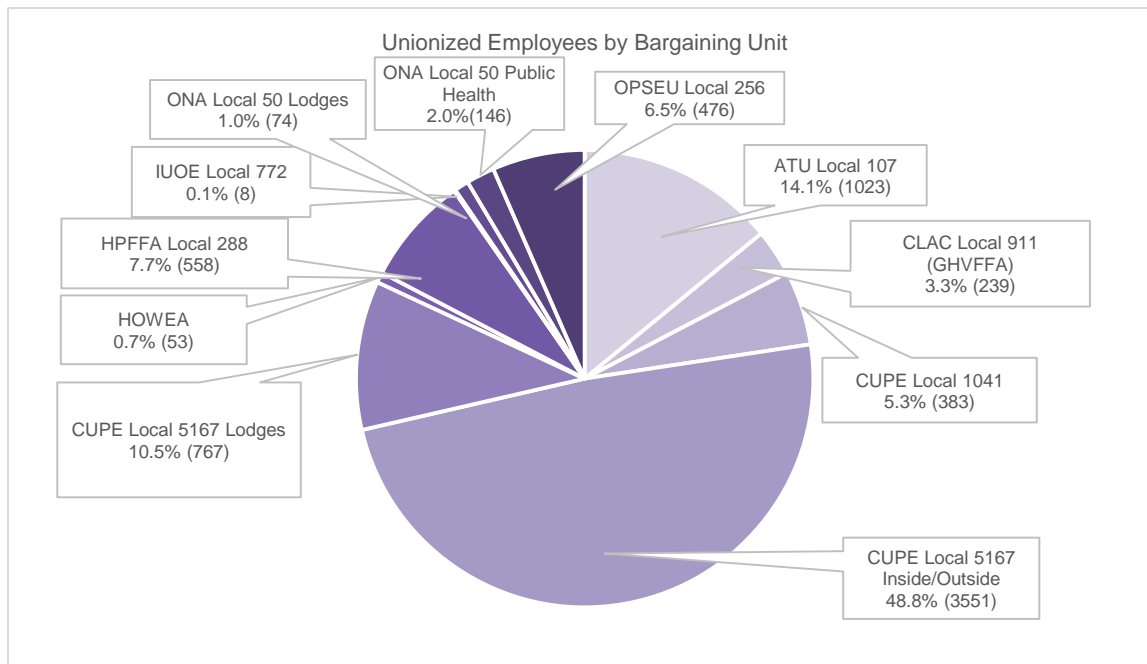
The City of Hamilton has a highly unionized workforce with unionized employees representing approximately 76.4% of the City's overall workforce. Chart 1 below provides an overview of the unionized head count by department at the end of 2025. The largest number of unionized employees are in the City's largest departments: Healthy & Safe Communities 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 | 153 | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| CityHousing Hamilton | 257 | 151 | 58.8% | 1.6% |
| Corporate Services | 636 | 300 | 47.2% | 3.1% |
| Healthy & Safe Communities | 4864 | 3918 | 80.6% | 41.1% |
| Planning & Economic Development | 980 | 532 | 54.3% | 5.6% |
| Public Works | 2634 | 2377 | 90.2% | 25.0% |
| Total** | 9524 | 7278 | N/A | 76.4% |

Graph 1 below shows the percentage breakdown of the City’s unionized workforce across the eleven bargaining units at the end of 2025. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 5167 Inside/Outside is the largest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 48.8% of the City’s overall unionized employees. In contrast, the Internation Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 772 is the smallest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 0.1% of unionized employees at the City.

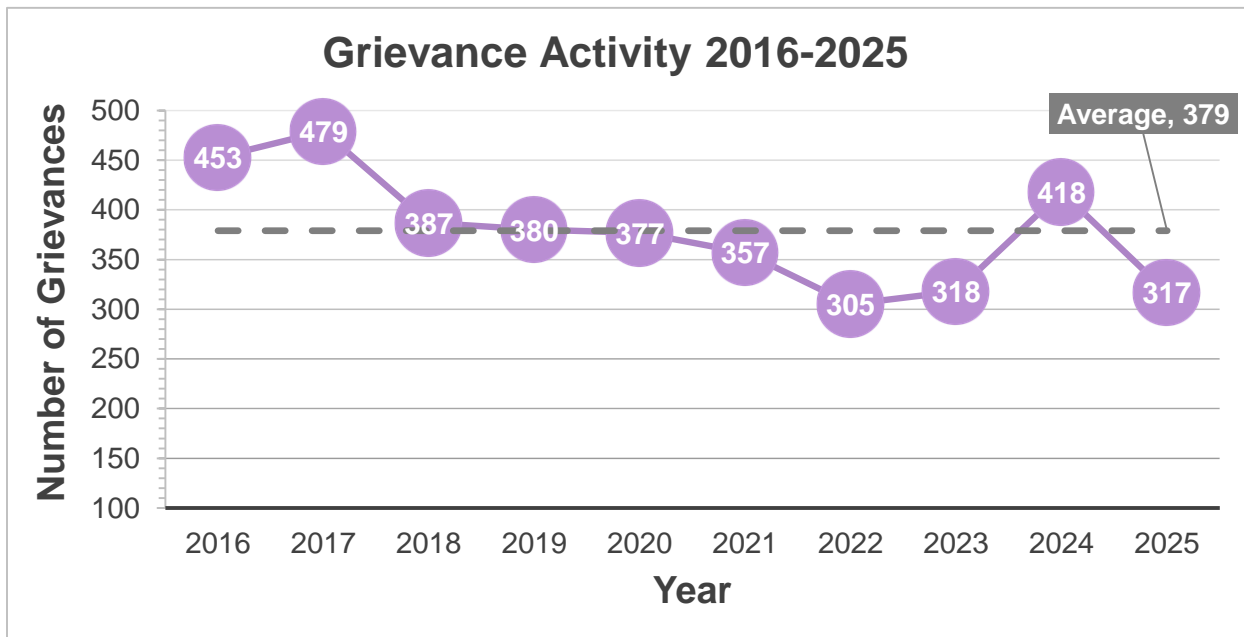
Graph 1 – Unionized Employees by Bargaining Unit



Overall Grievance Activity

The Report presents an analysis of grievance activity throughout the years from 2021 through 2025. The grievance process is an important communication mechanism between the employer, employees, and union. Grievances provide valuable insight into potential areas of concern or opportunities for improvement within the organization. When addressed effectively, grievances contribute to transparency, accountability, and a more stable and productive work environment. An analysis of the five-year period trend shows some fluctuation in the number of grievances filed each year. Grievance submissions reached their lowest level in 2022, while 2024 reflected the highest volume with 418 grievances. At 317 submissions, 2025 has remained relatively consistent and close to the overall average, suggesting alignment with typical annual volumes. Even though this report is intended to review five years of data, a broader picture of historical activity is provided in Graph 2. When examined over a ten-year period, the data reveals an overall downward trend. This can be attributed to, in part, the strong labour management relations enjoyed across the organization.

Graph 2 – Total Grievance Activity 2016-2025



While the number of grievances filed in any given year can serve as a general indicator of the state of labour relations, it should not be viewed as the sole measure of the labour-management relationship. Grievance volumes can be influenced by a range of contextual factors including collective bargaining cycles, contentious negotiations, unprecedented workplace events, or other high-profile matters. These dynamics may result in temporary fluctuations that do not necessarily reflect the overall strength or stability of the relationship. As an example, grievances in 2024 were greatly impacted by the cyber security incident. 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 cyber security event did not occur in 2024, the total number of grievances in 2024 would have been 275 and the lowest grievance submission year over the five-year period. As of 2025, 93% of those cyber security incident related grievances have been resolved, reflecting substantial progress in resolving outstanding grievances from 2024 cases and significantly reducing carryover volume.

The time required to resolve a grievance varies depending on the complexity of the issue and whether it progresses through multiple stages of the grievance procedure. Resolutions may occur at various points, including during the grievance process itself, through mediation, arbitration, or by being withdrawn by the bargaining unit. Chart 2 below illustrates the number of grievances filed between 2021 and 2025 that have been resolved.

By the end of 2025, approximately 77.3% of all grievances filed during this five-year period had been resolved, representing a 9% increase in overall resolution rate compared to the previous five-year period reported last year. In 2025 alone, 459 grievances originating from the 2021-2025 period were resolved. An additional 61 grievances filed prior to 2021 were also closed, bringing the total number of grievances resolved in the 2025 calendar year to 520.

Chart 2 – Grievances Filed, Resolved, and Outstanding from 2021-2025

| Year | Number of Grievances Filed | Number of Outstanding Grievances | Number of Resolved Grievances | Percent of Grievances Resolved | Number of Grievances Resolved in 2025 |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2021 | 357 | 27 | 330 | 92.4% | 27 |
| 2022 | 305 | 44 | 261 | 85.6% | 31 |
| 2023 | 318 | 54 | 264 | 83.0% | 43 |
| 2024 | 418 | 90 | 328 | 78.5% | 215 |
| 2025 | 317 | 174 | 143 | 45.1% | 143 |
| Total | 1715 | 389 | 1326 | 77.3% | 459 |

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.

The grievance process is a formal mechanism for resolving disputes regarding terms and conditions of employment, workplace policies and organizational processes. It provides both individual employees and union leaders with a structured and transparent forum to raise and address concerns in accordance with the provisions of the 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 2021 to 2025 in Chart 3 below shows notable fluctuations in grievance activity.

In 2025, the total number of CUPE 5167 Inside/Outside grievances decreased substantially, falling below levels observed in previous years within the five-year period.

CUPE 5167 Inside/Outside experienced a 53% decline in grievances from 2024 to 2025. As noted, a significant portion of grievances filed in 2024 were linked to the unprecedented cyber security incident. However, the decline in grievances over the period could also suggest potential improvements in the workplace, or fewer issues arising to a formal grievance. Other unions such as the Hamilton Professional Firefighters Association (HPFFA) Local 288 Fire and the Hamilton Ontario Water Employees Association (HOWEA) show an increase in grievance activity in 2025. An increase in the HPFFA local 288 Fire data can be attributed to the increase of grievances regarding work performed by Volunteer Firefighters. The increase in HOWEA grievances were mostly attributed to issues arising during and out of the labour disruption as well as the implementation of the new collective agreement. Overall data suggests stability in grievance activity for majority of the bargaining units in 2025.

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. Labour Relations training for people leaders can also play a role in contributing to the stability of grievance submissions. Since 2021, Labour Relations has ensured training sessions are available to leaders that manage employees. In 2025, Labour Relations delivered nine (9) structured training sessions which focussed on the essentials of managing in a unionized environment, with 203 participants in attendance. Enhancing supervisory knowledge and promoting consistent decision-making reduces the misapplication of collective agreements and policies, minimizes procedural errors, and supports a more stable and predictable work environment year over year.

Chart 3 – Grievances Filed by Bargaining Unit in 2021-2025

| Bargaining Unit | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Five-Year Average |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| ATU Local 107 | 45 | 44 | 42 | 74 | 71 | 55 |
| CLAC Local 911 (GHVFFA) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CUPE Local 1041 | 33 | 21 | 23 | 25 | 20 | 24 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside | 173 | 132 | 168 | 225 | 119 | 163 |
| CUPE Local 5167 Lodges | 38 | 44 | 28 | 40 | 40 | 38 |
| HOWEA | 8 | 12 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 8 |
| HPFFA Local 288 Fire | 15 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 21 | 14 |
| IUOE Local 772 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ONA Local 50 Lodges | 19 | 13 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 11 |
| ONA Local 50 Public Health | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| OPSEU Local 256 | 21 | 24 | 31 | 24 | 30 | 26 |
| Total | 357 | 305 | 318 | 418 | 317 | 343 |

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 2025 grievance submissions. As expected, the largest number of grievances filed in 2025 occurred in the City’s two 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. For Public Works, there is a few reasons why these types of grievances are higher than the other departments. The work includes weather-dependent work such as snow removal and emergency infrastructure repairs such as watermain breaks and road failures as well as seasonal peaks. These conditions increase overtime, standby and callout and schedule changes. The more unpredictable and urgent the work, the more opportunities for disputes to arise over how employees are assigned, distribution of hours and whether procedures were followed. This activity further highlights the need for HR related technology to assist with the allocation of overtime hours, etc.

When the collective agreement provisions are used more frequently, grievances naturally rise. For Healthy and Safe Communities, the largest operational department, the grievance rate per 100 employees is below the average compared to the other departments.

Chart 4 – Grievance Submission by Department in 2025

| Department | Unionized Head Count | Number of Grievances Filed in 2025 | % of Overall Grievances Submitted | Grievance Rate per 100 Unionized Employees |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| City Manager's Office | 0 | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0 |
| CityHousing Hamilton | 151 | 7 | 2.2% | 4.6 |
| Corporate Services | 300 | 6 | 1.9% | 2.0 |
| Healthy & Safe Communities | 3918 | 133 | 42.0% | 3.4 |
| Planning & Economic Development | 532 | 19 | 6.0% | 3.6 |
| Public Works | 2377 | 150 | 47.3% | 6.3 |
| City Wide** | N/A | 2 | 0.6% | N/A |
| Total | 7278 | 317 | N/A | 4.4 |

City Wide grievances are those that are not tied to a single department. For clarity, policy grievances that affect employees across multiple departments are more corporate in nature and 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 2024 and 2025, there was a decrease in City Wide grievances filed in 2025. This decrease is largely due to the unprecedented cyber security incident causing more City-Wide grievances related to compensation and wage statements (i.e. pay stubs) filed in 2024.

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 departments.

Chart 5 – Grievance Activity by Department in 2021-2025

| Department | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Five-Year Average |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| City Manager's Office | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| CityHousing Hamilton | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Corporate Services | 11 | 13 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 9 |
| Healthy & Safe Communities | 148 | 124 | 123 | 114 | 133 | 128 |
| Planning & Economic Development | 31 | 25 | 24 | 13 | 19 | 22 |
| Public Works | 156 | 131 | 161 | 254 | 150 | 170 |
| City Wide** | 7 | 10 | 1 | 26 | 2 | 9 |
| Total | 357 | 305 | 318 | 418 | 317 | 343 |

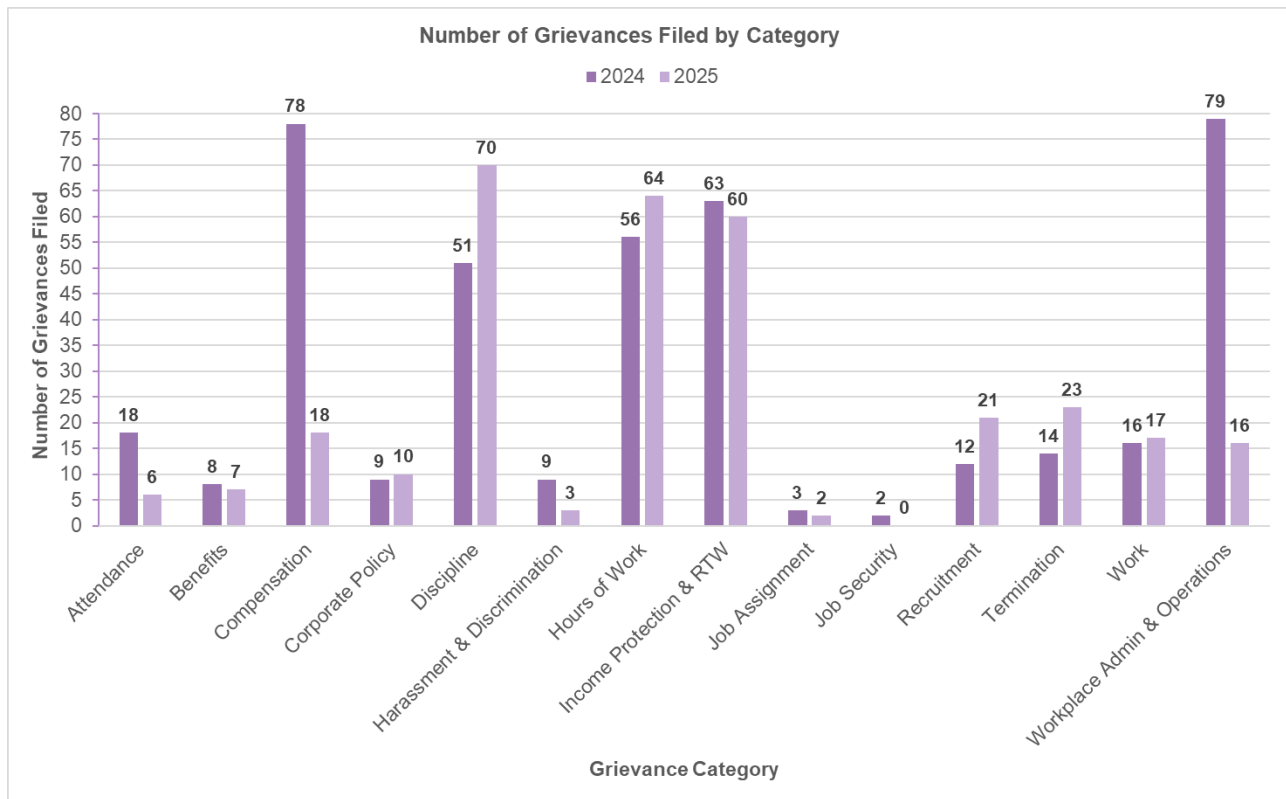
Grievance Activity by Category

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 2024 and 2025 across the various grievance categories. The total number of grievances filed across most categories remained relatively consistent between the two years, with some categories in 2025 showing notable deviations from 2024.

The overall top five grievance categories in 2025 were Discipline, Hours of Work, Income Protection (IPP) & Return to Work (RTW), Termination and Recruitment. An analysis of grievance activity over the five-year period indicates that Discipline, Hours of Work and IPP & RTW have consistently ranked among the top five grievance categories. Discipline grievances are typically filed when a bargaining unit disputes either the justification for discipline or the fairness of how it was imposed. Grievances related to hours of work are typically filed around the scheduling of shifts, overtime, call-out/in or standby. IPP and RTW grievances generally relate to compensation continuity when an employee is off sick or on short term disability or long-term disability and misinterpretations of the income protection policy and return to work requirements.

As shown in Graph 3, there was a significant decrease in 2025 Workplace Admin & Operations and Compensation categories which were the highest number of grievances filed in 2024. Over 80% of the grievances filed in these categories were a direct result of the cyber security incident causing issues with the payment of wages and delayed issuing of wage statements (pay stubs). The other categories show a relatively stable volume of grievances, although there was a slight increase in 2025 compared to 2024 in Recruitment and Termination grievances.

Graph 3 – Grievances Filed by Category 2024 and 2025

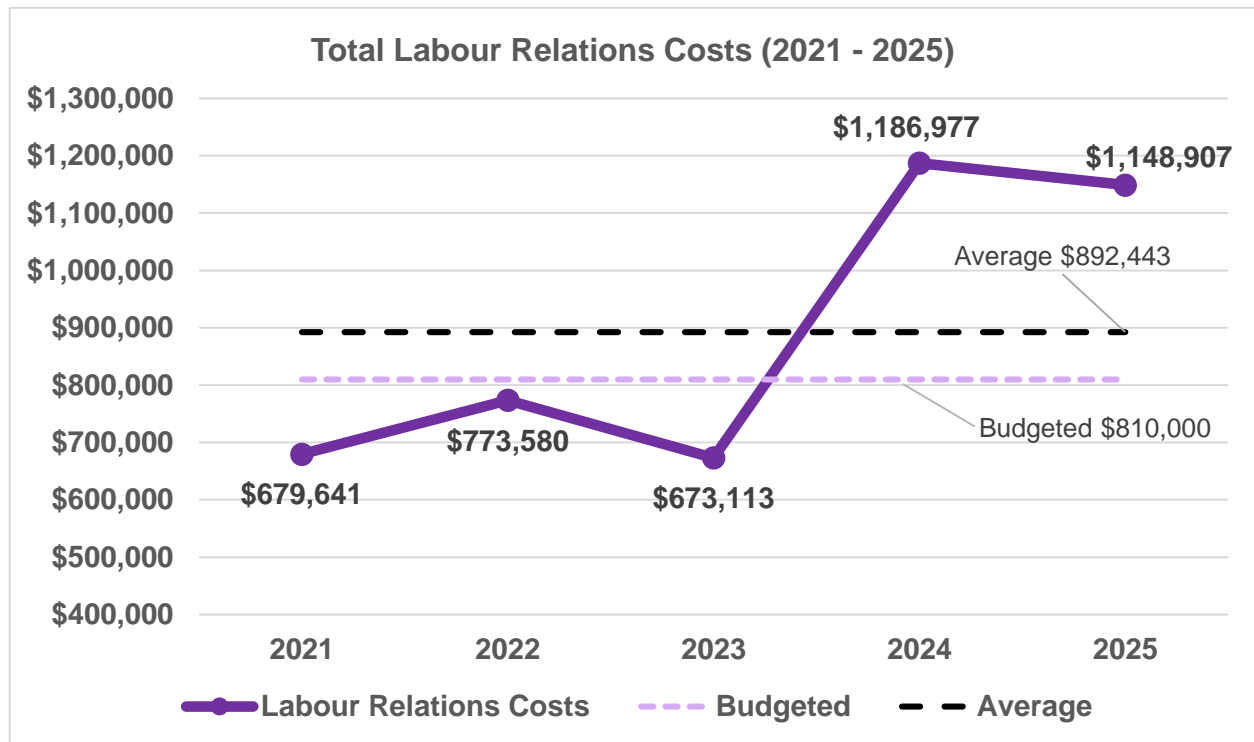


Labour Relations Legal Costs

Graph 4 illustrates the total labour relations costs by year from 2021 to 2025, highlighting a significant increase in 2024 and 2025 in the total labour relations legal costs. Over previous years, costs remained relatively stable; however, in 2024 and 2025 the total costs exceeded both the budgeted amount and the five-year average. The

increase from historical trends reflects factors such as cases requiring longer arbitrations with increased complexity and rising professional fees. In 2025, there was a 1.4% decrease in legal fees and 24% decrease in arbitration fees from 2024. This decrease can be attributed to higher collective bargaining activity in 2024 which includes interest arbitration costs.

Graph 4 – Total Labour Relations Legal Costs (2021-2025)



A breakdown of the 2025 legal costs by category in Chart 6 highlights that grievance matters accounted for the largest share of the total labour relations costs at 54.6%. Non-grievance matters, including non-union proceedings, followed comprising of 35.6% of total costs. This includes a variety of matters including but not limited to representing the City in wrongful dismissal claims, legal challenges on entitlements to Workplace Safety insurance Board (WSIB), Short Term Disability (STD) and Long-Term Disability (LTD) as well as matters at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB). Human Rights related fees represented 9.7% of the overall costs. Collective bargaining costs were the

lowest contributing to 0.1% of the overall costs. The reason for this was there was little activity related to interest arbitrations in 2025.

Chart 6 – Summary of Total Labour Relations Costs in 2025

| Category | Mediator Fees | Arbitrator Fees | Legal Fees | Total | Percent of Total |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Collective Bargaining | \$0 | \$0 | \$650 | \$650 | 0.1% |
| Grievance Matters | \$39,346 | \$76,786 | \$511,286 | \$627,419 | 54.6% |
| Human Rights Claims | \$0 | \$0 | \$111,823 | \$111,823 | 9.7% |
| Non-Grievance Matters | \$4,070 | \$0 | \$404,945 | \$409,015 | 35.6% |
| Total Fees (2025) | \$43,417 | \$76,786 | \$1,028,704 | \$1,148,907 | |

Collective Bargaining Activity

Out of the eleven collective agreements that the City has with various unions/associations, two currently remain outstanding, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 256 (paramedics) and Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) Lodges. Charts 7 and 8 below display the nine collective agreements that were renewed in 2023 & 2024.

In 2025 the HOWEA collective agreement expired. The Labour Relations Team participated in a total of 16 bargaining meetings between the HOWEA and OPSEU bargaining units. The HOWEA bargaining timeline spanned a total of 197 Days, with 3 bargaining meetings, 5 mediation meetings, 1 conciliation date and a 57-day labour disruption period. Thanks to the efforts of Hamilton Water Management, Hamilton Water employees, Human Resources/Labour Relations and Corporate Security, a contingency plan was put in place allowing for Water Services to remain uninterrupted to the City during the labour disruption. The labour disruption demanded significant resources and focus from the Labour Relations team. The parties reached a tentative agreement on July 7, 2025, and the ratification of the new agreement on July 16, 2025.

With the ratification of the new HOWEA collective agreement, only 2 of the city’s agreements remain outstanding (Chart 10). In 2026 OPSEU proceeded to conciliation and subsequently filed a “no board” notice. The request for “no board” signals an impasse in negotiations and will lead to the matter advancing to interest arbitration. ONA Lodges are at this stage as well and are scheduled for interest arbitration in 2026.

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 Renewed in 2025

| Bargaining Unit | Collective Agreement Term | Status |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| HOWEA | January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2028 | Ratified - 2025 |

Chart 10 - Collective Agreements Outstanding

| Bargaining Unit | Collective Agreement Term | Status |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ONA Local 50 Lodges | April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2023 | Expired – Interest Arbitration 2026 |
| OPSEU Local 256 | April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024 | Expired – Interest Arbitration 2026 |

Conclusion

The Labour Relations Activity Report and five-year analysis (January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2025) provides an overview of the City of Hamilton’s engagement with its eleven bargaining units. This period reflects a consistent commitment to effective grievance resolution, principled negotiation, and the strengthening of constructive labour-management and union/association relationships.

The Labour Relations team has faced challenges in managing the increasing volume of work and complexity of labour relations matters – particularly during peak workload periods. The team is committed to continuing to enhance internal processes and reinforce the consistent application of policies and collective agreement provisions to the fullest extent feasible.

Throughout the five-year period, the City has continued to demonstrate its dedication to maintaining productive labour relations through ongoing collaboration with bargaining units. Even during challenging periods, the City showed resilience, safeguarding operational continuity, principled negotiations, and supporting a positive work environment across the organization.

Alternatives

Not applicable; as this is an information report, no alternatives are presented to this report.

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 (2020-2024) (HUR25002) (City Wide), (Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee
- Appendix "A" to Report HUR25002, (Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee
- Appendix "B" to Report HUR25002(Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee

Consultation

Not Applicable

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: Definitions Respecting Grievance Categories

Prepared by:

Vanessa Di Pietro, Labour Relations Analyst, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Colton Nutley, Labour Relations Analyst, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Julie Shott, Manager, Labour Relations, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Yakov Sluchenkov, Director, Employee Health and Labour Relations, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Submitted and Recommended by:

Lora Fontana, Executive Director, Human Resources, City Manager's Office, Human Resources