

City Council Employee and Family Assistance Program

ISSUE

Currently, Members of City Council do not have access to Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) resources as part of their benefits package.

An EFAP provides professional, confidential support services and programs, including counselling for employees and members of their immediate families to help with common life issues. It can also offer the information, tools, and insights an employee needs to deal with minor issues in the present, so they don't grow into more serious problems in the future.

Although members of City Council are not employees of the City of Saskatoon it is also important that access to an EFAP be considered for them.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business meeting held on March 22, 2021, considered a report of its Governance and Priorities Committee and resolved, in part:

1. That the Administration report back on options for an Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for members of City Council; and
2. That the Administration report back on options and implementation dates for additional benefits.

CURRENT STATUS

Currently members of City Council have access to the following SUMA benefit programs:

- Dental – Plan C #335477
- Extended Health Care - Plan B #335477
- Basic Life - Plan #336150

SUMA/MoS also offers an EFAP through its provider Morneau Shepell; however, members of City Council do not currently participate in this program. It should be noted that the SUMA extended health care plan of which members of City Council are already members does offer some counselling benefits i.e. psychologist fees up to a maximum of \$300 per calendar year.

As Councillors currently have extended health care, dental and basic life benefits through SUMA, and the EFAP benefits available through their provider are cost competitive and cover a broad range of services, it is the Administration's perspective that the SUMA/MoS solution would provide a robust EFAP service to City Council.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

City Council Employee and Family Assistance Program

The City of Saskatoon participated in a survey of 11 major cities across Canada on Councillor benefits in 2020. That survey indicated that nine out of 11 total participants had EFAP program coverage as part of the members of City Council benefits package.

Enrollment in EFAP programs are mandatory for all eligible participants. This means that if you are insured under the benefit program you will automatically participate in the EFAP coverage as the benefit cannot be waived i.e. there is no opting in or opting out. If City Council decides to enter into an EFAP program, all Councillors will be required to enroll. There will be no option to decline the premium. Members of City Council would have access to the program approximately 4 weeks after application.

The cost for the SUMA/MoS EFAP is \$2.88 semi-monthly. Cost does not differ by single, couple or family status. The premiums can be paid as a deduction from current council remuneration or council can increase current remuneration levels to cover the additional cost of the program (\$69.12 per member of City Council, annually).

Implementing the Program

If City Council chooses to implement access to the SUMA EFAP resources, there are a number of different options available to City Council including:

- City Council could choose to pay for the program through payroll deductions which would result in no increase to the remuneration of members of City Council;
- City Council could choose to increase their remuneration by adding the cost of this benefit to their remuneration.
- City Council could choose to pay for the program through payroll deductions for the remainder of this term of City Council and then choose to increase the remuneration of future members of City Council by adding the cost of this benefit to their remuneration for the next term of City Council; or
- City Council could choose to pay for the program through payroll deductions which would result in no increase to the remuneration of members of City Council for now and refer future consideration of this benefit to the Saskatoon Municipal Review Commission for consideration.

If City Council chooses to implement access to the SUMA EFAP resources a motion regarding how to implement the program will be required.

When the Benefit should be implemented?

Following City Council approval to add the EFAP program to their benefit plan the Administration will notify the benefit provider and payroll deductions and program access will begin in the following month.

Many Canadian municipalities have adopted a practice of approving remuneration increases that apply only to the next term of City Council.

Regina recently adopted a practice of reviewing Councillor remuneration every other election with any changes to take effect on January 1 following the next election. Moose Jaw, Edmonton, Calgary, Guelph, and Ottawa are examples of other cities that have adopted a practice of having increases in salary take effect after upcoming elections.

In addition, most municipalities have an independent or third party to review and make recommendations respecting Councillor salaries.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of purchasing the EFAP benefit for City Council is \$2.88 semi-monthly, per elected member which is equivalent to \$69.12 per year, per elected member. This is approximately \$760.32/year for all of City Council.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice is required for consideration of this matter, pursuant to Section 3(e) of Council Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice.

The Public Notice will appear as an insertion in the StarPhoenix City Pages (May 8, 2021) and will also be posted to saskatoon.ca.

NEXT STEPS

Once approved, implementing the benefit will take approximately four weeks to become available to members of City Council.

APPENDIX

1. Copy of Public Notice – Remuneration and Benefits for Members of City Council

Report Approval

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