

Supplementary Budget – Briefing Note

2021 Budget

Return to Work Specialist

Briefing Note required for:

- items +/- \$50,000 or more
- changes in FTE
- Council Priority requests

Dept	Division	Business Unit	Item	Base Supp	Amount	FTE Impact
CS	HROD	Occupational Safety	Return to Work Specialist 2 year pilot, Grade 7.6 FTNU	S	\$183,753	2.0
CS	HROD	Occupational Safety	Funding from Corporate Sick Leave Provision Reserve #17191	S	(\$183,753)	
			Total		<u>\$0.00</u>	2.0

Background:

-Briefly provide why this is a request
(eg. Based on 3 year history)

The Health, Safety, and Wellness (HSW) Team currently comprises of a Manager, Health, Safety, and Wellness, a Return-to-Work Specialist, a Safety Compliance Officer, and a 0.5 FTE Labour Relations/Occupational Safety Analyst. The Return-to-Work Specialist helps to support the management and coordination of tasks to facilitate timely and effective return to work for staff who experience both an occupational (WSIB) and non-occupational injuries/illness (who are not eligible for TRAC Group Services [TRAC]).

From February 1, 2019 to present, the Municipality had retained TRAC, a Disability Management Service provider, to support the Corporation's Injury/Illness Management Program. Through its services, TRAC provides support in the areas of adjudication, case management, and health care navigation services for permanent full-time employees who have been absent for 10 or more consecutive shifts. The Municipality's intent of retaining TRAC on a pilot basis was to reduce the use of sick time and sick time costs, facilitate better access for staff with respect to health care specialists, and provide overall disability management services that could not be fulfilled internally with the existing staff complement.

Comment:

- provide any further details if required, impact to user fees, etc
(eg. Gross expenses, any revenues, subsidies, etc.)

In 2019, the average sick days used per employee (without Police) was 12.2, which equated to \$3,242,807. Since 2017, the average sick days used has decreased while the sick time costs have remained stable and align with annual cost of living adjustments and progression increases for both non-union and unionized staff.

Comment:

In the summer of 2020, an evaluation was conducted on TRAC, which included an overall review of the program's delivery and satisfaction levels from employees and supervisors who participated in the program as well as consultation with Police Services who had originally retained TRAC for the same purposes. Based on the evaluation, key findings included:

- TRAC has been an asset in delivering case management support for the full-time permanent staff specifically who have a non-occupational injury/illness that exceeded 10 consecutive shifts.
- Internal municipal staffing resources from Health, Safety and Wellness were still being utilized to support TRAC in the delivery of their disability management services, which was beyond what was originally planned for.
- Employees and supervisors stated that the current system in place caused role confusion, communication gaps, and process inefficiencies. They also noted that they preferred disability management services be delivered either only internally or only externally with majority preference being on municipal staff delivering the service especially if the cost was the same or lower.
- Employees reported that they did not see the value of TRAC when it came to health care navigation as their health care providers had good awareness and understanding of relevant and local health care services in Chatham-Kent. Therefore, their family doctor or nurse practitioner could refer them to the most appropriate resources. Employees stated that TRAC did not provide services that went beyond what internal resources could provide.
- Police Services also conducted a program evaluation on their use of TRAC and concluded many of the same points and concluded their contract with them after 3 years of using them
- Lastly, it was noted that due to the scope of the program, TRAC provided limited support to employees at Seniors Services where a majority of staff would not be eligible for TRAC and for where a significant portion of our injury/illness management takes place.

Based on the evaluation findings, it is recommended that a two-year pilot project be implemented for a 1.0 FTE Return to Work Specialist be approved for the following reasons:

1. The addition of resources to the overall Injury/Illness management strategy proved economically effective in returning employees to work more quickly and reducing overall sick time costs.
2. With the service being delivered internally, processes would be more streamlined and employees would have a single point of contact regardless of their employment status. This enables the HSW team to provide a more effective case management approach.
3. The additional Return to Work Specialist would provide priority support to Seniors Services in their efforts to support staff with occupational and non-occupational injuries/illnesses, which will in turn positively impact the ability for Riverview Gardens to operate effectively and to continue to deliver excellent resident care services.

An evaluation of this pilot project will be assessed during the 2023 budget process.