

Joint Statement on Workplace Cultural Assessment

The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS) is a people-driven organization, both in terms of the residents we serve, and the people that deliver those services directly or indirectly to Winnipeggers.

As WFPS management and representatives of CUPE Local 500, UFFW Local 867, MGEU Local 911, WFPSOA and WAPSO, we recognize the need to work together to promote a culture of respect for all WFPS employees and the residents we support every day.

Over the last few years, respectful workplace concerns have crossed many of our desks, bringing to light the need to find ways to address concerns collaboratively, whether dealing with interpersonal conflicts, or systemic issues around inclusion.

As a result of these concerns, WFPS management initiated a Workplace Cultural Assessment to identify a better path forward.

All five unions have been consulted as this process has unfolded, and today CUPE Local 500, UFFW Local 867, MGEU Local 911, WFPSOA and WAPSO executives are pleased to share with all staff the results of a workplace survey, which assessed how staff feel about their current workplace, and what they would like to see in the future.

RESULTS: CURRENT STATE VERSUS FUTURE STATE

Over five hundred staff members from all unions and branches weighed in on WFPS's organizational workplace culture, which describes the formal and informal workplace environment, including how employees feel at work, and how they communicate with each other, engage in teamwork, and solve problems. Simply put, it's how the workplace feels to employees when they are there, and how they work together as a team.

The results indicate that staff across all union affiliations, branches, genders and race, currently operate within a **passive/defensive workplace culture** dominated by avoiding conflict (Avoidance – being non-committal, never being blamed for mistakes, and staying out of trouble) and trying to fit in (Conventional – expectations for conforming, following the rules, and making a good impression). As the report outlines, this type of culture causes staff to interact with each other in cautious and tentative ways to protect their own security.

The report indicates that the outcomes of this current culture is reflected in role conflict and role clarity concerns, though employee satisfaction is above average – meaning that employees intend to stick with the Department and would recommend it to others as a good place to work.

As the report makes clear, the current passive/defensive workplace culture state is not reflective of what staff members would like to see in their ideal workplace. Once again, across all union affiliations, branches, genders and race, staff prefer a **constructive workplace culture** that is supportive (Humanistic-Encouraging – being supportive, constructive, and open to influence when dealing with one another), and friendly (Affiliative – being friendly, open, cooperative, and sensitive to the needs of the work group).

A BETTER PATH FORWARD

All five unions and management recognize that these results indicate that we all want the same things from our workplace. We want to work in a constructive, supportive work environment free from

discrimination, harassment and bullying.

We jointly encourage all employees, from WFPS leaders to frontline staff, to reflect on how they can reach across job classifications, uniforms and roles to connect with each other and contribute to a more constructive workplace. Small changes like taking a few minutes to speak to someone (whether they are part of your work unit or not; whether it's work related or not), can help break down barriers, promote mutual understanding, and add up to big changes in workplace culture. The good news is that this is already occurring in some areas throughout the organization, so it's not impossible and this is something we can collectively work on replicating throughout our organization.

We also recognize that the current workplace culture of avoiding conflict, and playing it safe in order to fit in, doesn't help union representatives or management identify or bring forward respectful workplace issues, let alone work through day-to-day concerns.

Staff members simply cannot be at their best in supporting the work of the department and the life safety needs of residents if they don't feel secure, valued and respected regardless of their rank, job classification or position within our organization.

Mutual respect in a constructive workplace is something we all support, and is the best path forward as work to improve our culture continues.

NEXT STEPS

Going forward, union representatives and management will continue to meet to discuss ways to facilitate a constructive and respectful workplace. This will include work to identify the values, beliefs and behaviours staff need to feel supported in the workplace, and what steps can be taken to help us get there. A number of steps have already been taken to support this shift:

- 200 WFPS members in leadership positions have completed anti-racism and anti-oppression and cultural competency training sessions in 2021.
- Senior leaders and supervisors are completing respectful workplace and conflict resolution training that has been uniquely tailored for WFPS, and we expect to roll this out to all staff throughout 2022.
- Unions and management are working to incorporate equity, diversity and inclusion commitments into collective agreements.
- The first class of diverse candidates are working their way through the Diversity & Equity Firefighter Training (DEFT) program.
- WFPS is taking part in a City initiative to explore and report on issues of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion across all departments.

Inclusive renovations are incorporated into capital planning at the station level. We know there is more work to do. As we move forward, WFPS management and your union executive leadership are committed to:

- Working collaboratively together to achieve a better work environment for all staff.
- Keeping all members informed as our culture work continues.
- Maintaining open channels of communications so staff can ask questions, provide feedback and raise workplace concerns in a safe and confidential manner.

Regardless of the badge we may wear, job we do, shift we work, or uniform or clothes we put on every morning or night as we report for duty, we are one team. As the motto states in the coat of arms of Winnipeg – *Unum Cum Virtute Multorum* (one with the strength of many).

Thank you for your commitment to serving the life safety needs of the residents of Winnipeg, and for being a part of ongoing efforts to improve your workplace, now and as we move forward. How you feel on the job matters, and is our priority.

We welcome any feedback or comments regarding this work, which can be directed to WFPS or your union representative.

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