

Report

Date May 17, 2023
Subject Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy

File: 0340-20

PURPOSE

To consider the Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy to promote gender equality by communicating in a gender-neutral way.

BACKGROUND

On September 21, 2021, Council directed staff to draft a policy regarding the use of gender-neutral language and pronouns for all bylaws, policies, reports, website and social media content, and other written communications. That project was included in the Legislative Services business plan for 2022; however, it was carried over to 2023 due to staff resources.

DISCUSSION

The 'Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy' (Attachment 1) is intended to promote gender equality by compelling members of Council, staff and volunteer committee members to communicate in a gender-neutral way. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity in all of its forms, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences and promotes equitable opportunities.

The Communications and Public Engagement department created a tip sheet (Attachment 2) on how to make North Cowichan a gender-inclusive work environment.

While researching this policy, staff discovered the term 'visible minority,' is a term that is becoming outdated and inaccurate and that the correct way to describe such persons or groups would be as "racialized person," "member of a racialized group," or "racialized group." The [Homeless Hub](#) (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness) had the following to say about racialized communities:

"Frequently referred to as 'visible minorities' the term 'racialized communities' encompasses all people that are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Aboriginal peoples in Canada are sometimes excluded from this definition but should not be. Increasingly the term racialized communities is replacing visible minorities because in many municipalities that population of people who are non-white make up the majority, not a minority of the overall population".

Staff are proposing that Council amend the Council Advisory Body Policy, replace 'visible minority' with 'racialized group,' and strike out "other than Indigenous peoples" from the definition. The changes proposed to the policy are shown in redline in Attachment 3.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council:
 - (1) Approve the Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy as presented, and,
 - (2) Amend the Council Advisory Body Policy by:
 - (a) Striking out "other than Indigenous peoples" from the definition of "Visible Minority,"
 - (b) Striking out "Visible Minority" for the term defined in section 3 and replacing it with "Racialized Group" and,
 - (c) Striking out "Visible Minority" in section 5.12 and replacing it with "Racialized Group."
 - *This option is consistent with the direction given by Council in 2021.*
2. THAT Council approve the Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy, subject to the following changes:
 - (1) *(Council to identify the changes they would like made to the policy)*
 - *Under this option, Council would need to identify the section and how the wording is to be amended (e.g., strike out and insert, delete, add).*

IMPLICATIONS

Although Council has identified having safe, inclusive and inspiring neighbourhoods as a strategic priority in their [2019-2022 Council Strategic Plan](#), it does not identify diversity and inclusion as a goal. The recently adopted Official Community Plan does include Council's vision to foster resilient, welcoming and inclusive communities.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

- (1) Approve the Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy as presented, and,
- (2) Amend the Council Advisory Body Policy by:
 - (a) Striking out "other than Indigenous peoples" from the definition of "Visible Minority,"
 - (b) Striking out "Visible Minority" for the term defined in section 3 and replacing it with "Racialized Group" and,
 - (c) Striking out "Visible Minority" in section 5.12 and replacing it with "Racialized Group."

Report prepared by:



Michelle Martineau
Manager, Legislative Services

Report reviewed by:



Talitha Soldera
General Manager, Corporate Services

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

- (1) Use of Gender-Neutral Language and Pronouns Policy
- (2) Inclusive Language Tip Sheet
- (3) Council Advisory Body Policy (Redline Version)