

# HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

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## COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 2, 2005

### MINUTES

**PRESENT:** Ms. Betty Thomas, Chair  
Mr. Wilf McEachern  
Ms. May Lui  
Ms. Susanne Wise  
Mr. Shawn Lehey  
Mr. Juan Carlos Canales Leyton

**ABSENT:** Mr. Thomas Risseco (regrets)  
Mr. Larry Guptil (regrets)  
Councillor Hendsbee (regrets)  
Councillor Hum (regrets)  
Ms. Sylvia Parris (regrets)  
Ms. Gail Wilson

**STAFF AND OTHERS:** Ms. Sheilagh Edmonds, Legislative Assistant  
Mr. Andy Cutten, Halifax Global Consultants  
Ms. Charla Williams, Coordinator, Diversity Program

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## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:55 p.m. in the Media Room, City Hall without a quorum present.

## 5. NEW BUSINESS

### 5.1 **Presentation by Andy Cutten (Halifax Global) - Interim Report on Immigration for the Halifax Region**

The Chair introduced Mr. Andy Cutten, advising that he was a management consultant with Halifax Global, and he was working with Greater Halifax Partnership in regard to their Immigration Strategy. She explained that Mr. Cutten had contacted her looking for feedback, and during their discussion she suggested he address the entire Committee.

Mr. Cutten explained that Greater Halifax Partnership issued a request for proposals to work with them on an immigration strategy. He noted that the Steering Committee on this project includes representatives from HRM, the Province, the Federal Government, and Halifax Regional Development Authority. Mr. Cutten advised that the request is to build a strategy, linking into the Nova Scotia immigration strategy, with a goal of attracting 3,600 immigrants a year to Nova Scotia with a 70% retention rate. The goal of the Halifax region is 80% retention rate of that number. He added that, the question then becomes, "how can we attract 2,800 immigrants to the HRM"?.

Mr. Cutten noted that they have consulted with all levels of government, employers, MISA, MANS, groups of immigrants, and international students, asking the question: what are the issues in attracting immigrants to Nova Scotia. He pointed out that Nova Scotia attracts less than 1% of new immigrants to Canada. Mr. Cutten explained that he would like to get the Committee member's feedback on whether they believe this community is a welcoming community for immigrants.

Mr. Cutten then put forward a number of questions and asked for feedback from the Committee members, as follows:

What do we need to do better and what do we do well, already?

- S the Province needs to do more to ensure other countries have the correct perception of the Province - e.g. people in Hong Kong view Nova Scotia as a cold fishing village.
- S services are needed to help people upgrade their knowledge and credentials, and help in terms of settlement.
- S immigrants face difficulty in obtaining credit - there is no financial recognition of their situation in their country. An immigrant can be wealthy when they come to Canada, but will have a difficult time obtaining a credit card.
- S recommend an Office of Immigration be established within HRM.

- S permitting extended families to immigrate is a very important step - it was noted that, once established in the country, many family members send their money back to their relatives in their home country; and that enabling extended families to immigrate would result not only in more immigrants, but their money would remain in the Province.
- S Federal Government puts too much money into one organization—MISA, with very little going to other organizations which provide support to immigrants.
- S Nova Scotia is very segregated.
- S it is very hard to compete with a city like Toronto - as far as large cities go, it is not a violent city, it has plenty of jobs, it is a nice city in which to live; we need to look at what we have that will enable us to compete with Toronto.
- S we should try and attract back to the Province some of the immigrants who started out here, but then moved on to Toronto.
- S immigrants tend to gravitate to the larger cities because that is where they feel they will be successful; and, as well, they tend to go to cities that have a large population of their ethnic background.
- S immigrants want a job - that is the 'welcome' to immigrants - governments and business community need to target workers and once their economic needs are met, this will keep them settled and they will become entrenched in the community.
- S has been told that if she were looking for work in Halifax, it's a "closed shop" - i.e. to get a job in Halifax, the high school you graduate from and the university you attend appears to play a role in whether you are successful at getting a job; an example put forward was of a recent case of an Ethiopian who graduated from University in Halifax but ended up going to the United States for a job - pointed out that it goes back to the economic aspect again, i.e. if people do not have a fair chance at a job, that is not welcoming.

What role is played by religious communities?

- S sometimes the church is pivotal for communities and it is probably where people will be more welcoming, moreso than a business.
- S contact the churches who seem to be ethno-cultural based and see what their issues are - a point was noted that local newspapers are Sunday-based.
- S the idea of getting together with people who speak the same language as well as attend church would be really powerful

Are there different issues between the urban core and suburban area?

- S people in urban areas are used to dealing with diversity. The school system has to come on board and be more effective.
- S moved to Hammonds Plains a couple of years ago and had neighbours come by not to welcome them to the community but to "check them out".
- S 'Tea with the Mayor' was very successful program. At one time, once a week a different ethno-cultural group would host the Tea. This was very well received and a way for people to get acquainted with different cultures.

If you had a wish list, what would it be?

- S immigrants on the team that is studying immigration issues.
- S would like to see an HRM Immigration office (coordination and money in HRM budget dedicated to immigration).
- S get a firm commitment of the groups involved.
- S be brutally honest - if Nova Scotia has no advantages, particular economic, then say so.

What should the money be spent on?

- S support services, e.g. ESL programs
- S maybe funding an anti-racism effort.
- S there are people who have been dealing with immigrants but aren't necessarily the best people - utilize other groups/ people for reaching out to immigrants. Perhaps, use someone from the same background.
- S have an economic base to the whole idea - if employers say they need immigrants, then question what they need to do to get them. If people are economically satisfied when they come to this area, that is an equation that will stick. After that, then you ensure they have the appropriate services and support.
- S the larger organizations in our community need to be onside (e.g. Sobeys) and have people of colour in management areas.

Are there issues in the workplace with immigrant hires?

- S diversity plan for the employees first.
- S provide the immigrants briefings before they come to the country.

Other Comments:

- S lifestyle is an issue for people immigrating; however, it is a secondary issue—people will not bypass a job opportunity in another Province for the nice, quiet lifestyle of Nova Scotia
- S a colony within a country is not the way to go. (e.g. Toronto has stores which advertise in only a foreign language such as Arabic or Sanskrit and carry products with the labelling in different languages - would not enter the store because would not be able to buy anything)
- S many immigrants believe the best schools, hospitals etc are in the major cities. They do not realize it is not like this in Canada—the wealth is distributed in this country.
- S many students come to Halifax because of the number of universities -they believe any place with that number of universities must be good place; however, often they will say, "it's a good place to start".

Mr. Cutten expressed his appreciation to the Committee for providing their comments.

## 2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** (April 7, 2005; May 5, 2005)

Deferred.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS**

Deferred.

**4. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES:**

**4.1 Review of Community & Race Relations Policy**

Deferred

**4.2 Future Work Plans**

Deferred.

**4.3 Committee Members Biography on the Web**

Deferred.

**5. ADDED ITEMS**

None.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

July 7, 2005

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Sheilagh Edmonds  
Legislative Assistant