

HALIFAX REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES
MAY 13, 1997

PRESENT:

Mayor Walter Fitzgerald
Deputy Mayor Jack Greenough
Councillors Gordon R. Snow
David Hendsbee
Ron Cooper
Harry McInroy
Condo Sarto
Bruce Hetherington
Clint Schofield
John Cunningham
Jerry Blumenthal
Graham L. Downey
Larry Uteck
Howard Epstein
Bill Stone
Ron Hanson
Stephen Adams
Barry Barnet
Robert Harvey
Peter Kelly
Reg Rankin
Jack Mitchell

Regrets:

Councillors Russell Walker
Bill Dooks

STAFF MEMBERS:

Mr. Ken Meech, Acting Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Wayne Anstey, Municipal Solicitor
Ms. Vi Carmichael, Municipal Clerk
Ms. Jane Nauss, Assistant Municipal Clerk

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Mayor Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** - March 24, April 1, 2, 8 - Regional Council; April 14, 16, 23, 24, 29 - Capital Budget, and May 5, 6, 1997 - Capital Budget.

MOVED by Councillor Blumenthal and Deputy Mayor Greenough to approve the following minutes:

March 24, April 1, 2, 8 - Regional Council; April 14, 16, 23, 24, 29 - Capital Budget, and May 5, 6, 1997 - Capital Budget. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mayor Fitzgerald introduced Councillors Joan Roberts and Joe Mihevc, York, Ontario, to the meeting.

2. **UNSM REGIONAL MEETING - Mr. Steven Stoddard, President, UNSM**

Mayor Fitzgerald introduced Warden Steven Stoddard, District of Barrington, President, UNSM; Mayor Ernie Bolivar, Secretary-Treasurer, Town of Bridgewater, and Mr. Ken Simpson, Executive Director.

Mr. Stoddard reviewed UNSM activities over the past seven months noting the following:

- ! Purpose of the UNSM is to advise government on the impact its policy choices and regulations have on local communities;
- ! Local government is the closest level of government to the people;
- ! **HST / BST** - When it was announced by the Province to harmonize the 7% GST with the Provincial 11% PST at a new rate of 15%, municipalities were to initially pay the new combined tax. Municipalities were subsequently offered a rebate of 57.14% on the 15% tax. The UNSM advised government this policy was unacceptable and determined what the cost would be to municipalities (between \$10 - 12 million annually). Following meetings with the Province, the UNSM was offered an offset package of dollars from Nova Scotia Power (totalling \$6 million) to be distributed on a formula established by the UNSM. This offer was accepted and the Union was successful in negotiating a commitment in the legislation to have this issue reviewed in three years.

Further, the UNSM has been successful in requesting the Province not to impose a 2% surcharge on vehicles purchased by municipalities (\$3 million for HRM).

- ! **Community Services Funding** - Last November, the UNSM was invited to participate in a process to establish fixed municipal contributions for community services. It was announced that effective April 1, 1998, a Province wide single tier system will be implemented. All municipal costs will be fixed at the 1996 or 1997 costs (whichever is lower). The UNSM sought a three-year phase out of all municipal costs, however, a capping of current municipal contributions for a four year period was offered. This commits the government to review the overall system of provincial/municipal funding for community services within four years. The UNSM is still to make a case for the phasing down of municipal contributions to community services.

- ! **Mandatory Municipal Contributions to Education** - It is the opinion of the UNSM that this is a people service which should be totally funded by the Province. The Provincial Funding Formula Review Committee recommended approximately \$4 million in additional contributions from municipalities. This recommendation was not accepted by Cabinet, however, a \$.39/\$100 rate was approved. This means municipalities will contribute approximately \$1 million in additional funding for 1997 over 1996. The UNSM has urged the Minister of Education to freeze municipal contributions at last year's rates. This request has been denied.

Councillor Hanson arrived at this point in the meeting (2:20 p.m.)

- ! **Scholarship Program** - The UNSM provided a scholarship program for the Local Government Program at the Banff School of Management. Three members of the UNSM have participated (Councillor Barry Barnet from Halifax Regional Municipality).

- ! **Seminars/Programs** - Two seminars were held on the impact of the HST. Also, programs pertaining to employee benefits and municipal insurance continue to grow.

- ! **Municipal Elections Act** - The Act was amended to permit the use of the Federal Election List for municipal elections.

Councillor McInroy arrived at this point in the meeting (2:35 p.m.)

In closing, Warden Stoddard advised of the following:

- ! the UNSM has an accumulated surplus and that dues may be reduced next year.
- ! the UNSM Conference for 1997 takes place September 17 - 19 in Sydney, Centre 200.

Mayor Fitzgerald thanked Warden Stoddard for his presentation.

A brief question and answer period took place with various Members of Council enquiring of the benefit for the municipality to retain its membership with the UNSM. In response, Warden Stoddard advised there was strength in numbers and that the municipality should reconsider its desire to perhaps withdraw from the UNSM. Council was advised that their concerns would be brought forward to the Executive of the UNSM.

3. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councillors Blumenthal and Sarto to adjourn at 2:40 p.m. MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Vi Carmichael
MUNICIPAL CLERK

