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PO Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council
March 1, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Betty MacDonald
Betty MacDonald, Director of Governance and Strategic Initiatives

DATE: February 25, 2005

SUBJECT: HRM Roundtables on the Economy

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At a Committee of the Whole Session January 27th, 2004 staff recommended the preparation of an economic strategy for all of HRM be undertaken. As part of this process an Economic Potential Study was undertaken and presented to Committee of the Whole on May 18th, 2004. This study was seen as the backbone in the preparation of a strategy, and feed back was sought from the community, and in particular the business community. It was for this reason HRM approached the Halifax Chamber of Commerce in the summer of 2004 to organize an economic summit, and to provide recommendations from the business community as to what an economic development strategy for HRM should include.

BACKGROUND

Following the Economic Summit of November 2004 HRM staff had committed to prepare a formal response to the Summit recommendations and to move forward with the preparation of an economic development strategy for the region.

DISCUSSION

In order to engage other community stakeholders in the process, and to seek further input and feedback on the recommendations of the summit, HRM will be hosting a series of roundtable workshops sessions. The workshops are being facilitated and participants include representatives from other levels of government, community and service delivery organizations and associations.

There will be 6 separate workshops - based on the 6 categories of recommendations of the Economic Summit. The appropriate Economic Summit Committee Chair or representative will begin each session with background on the work of their committee, who was involved, how the recommendations were developed and provide context around each recommendation.

The intent of the workshops is to review, confirm, discuss and modify the specific recommendations of the Summit. The primary audience for these discussions include the organizations who have a mandate to support economic development in the specific areas. These more broadly discussed recommendations will be considered in the development of an economic development strategy for HRM and the information gathered during the sessions will be used to formulate a response to the Halifax Chamber of Commerce.

All sessions are being held at the Alderney Library from 8:30 - 12:30. Council is welcome to attend

Monday, March 7	Post Secondary Institutions	Maxine Tynes room
Tuesday, March 8	Jobs Growth	STARR room
Wednesday, March 9	Attract and Retain	STARR room
Thursday, March 10	How and Where	STARR room
Friday, March 11	Harbour and Airport	Maxine Tynes room
Monday, March 14	Commute	Maxine Tynes room

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None. Any costs associated with strategy development are within the current operating budget of the Governance and Strategic Initiatives Business Unit.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

ALTERNATIVES

none proposed.

ATTACHMENTS

Economic Summit Halifax 2004 Committee Recommendations

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Jennifer Church, Coordinator Intergovernmental Affairs 490-3677

Economic Summit Halifax 2004 Committee Recommendations

Role & Impact of Post Secondary Institution

1. *Increase the number of students entering post secondary institutions by:*

- Increasing NSCC's participation rate:
 - Implement applied education stream in high schools
- Increasing the number of international students:
 - Allow work **during** post secondary education
 - Extend work visas for **after** graduation
- Promoting learning development

2. *Improve commercialization of research by:*

- Mandating metro universities to pool resources (students, facilities, researchers, etc.) to create critical mass within programs for centres of excellence
 - Will lead to the attraction of venture capital, researchers and research dollars.
 - Suggestion: Consolidate resources into "functionally integrated" units within areas of specialty (e.g. bio-tech, engineering, computer science)
- Improving business acumen:
 - Leverage business faculties within metro universities.
 - Build entrepreneurship component into university curricula, learning from NSCC's experience.
 - Chamber of Commerce to facilitate interactions between inventors and venture capitalists.

3. *Unleash knowledge, expertise and infrastructure by:*

- Having FIRM develop formal relationship with metro post secondary institutions.
 - Turn to PSI for analyses and recommendations on various issues within FIRM.
 - Support use of HRM services and infrastructure by PSI.
 - Share cultural and sports facilities.
 - Build community involvement requirements into employment contracts with faculty and instructors.
 - Link funding of post secondary institutions to their contribution to FIRM issues.

Sources of Future Jobs Growth

- Make military welcome
- Industry "Customer" understanding and transfer
- Focus on clearly defined value proposition
- Cooperative land-use planning
- Development of a skilled labour pool

- Ambassadors in the downtown - cleaning up litter and providing tourism info
 - “Scrub” our streets and buildings to create an attractive, safe environment
 - Support investment in cultural infrastructure and attractions
 - Challenge the tourism and cultural industries to export their products
6. Umbrella approach to address industry fragmentation and create and promote an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) growth cluster
- Develop Halifax as a key ICT Service Centre to major North American organizations
- Five key elements:
- Umbrella organization to foster collaboration
 - ICT firm attraction
 - Clear outsourcing value proposition – offshore partner
 - R&D and incubation of new local firms
 - Promotion - creating a buzz

Attracting & Retaining Talented People

7. Create a “Quality of Place Council” comprised of diverse stakeholders and funding sources with the mandate to:
- Recommend and define the required investment in amenities to support talent attraction to HRM;
 - Stimulate the creation of an arts and culture policy for HRM;
 - Ensure that the needs of future residents are met within both the Capital District and HRM Regional Plans;
 - Develop a **unified** brand strategy for HRM as a progressive, prosperous and tolerant community.
- Greater Halifax Partnership to lead this initiative.
8. Establish NS Department of Immigration responsible for:
- Expediting immigrant accreditation and equivalency;
 - Establishing a public and business education program building on the public awareness momentum;
 - Assessing skill needs and existing substructure;
 - Targeting specific regions for immigrant recruitment.
9. Provide five-year funding to settlement agencies and add business community orientation program to mandate.

How & Where Should HRM Grow?

10. **HRM should become a model community for healthy living and urban design**
- There should be more specific measures introduced to encourage conservation practices
 - There should be increased emphasis on making our communities more people-friendly
 - There should be an investment in cultural infrastructure and support

11. *The development policy should be streamlined to be clear, transparent, consistent and timely*

- HRM should benchmark itself against “best practice” municipalities to establish performance criteria for its planning department and council
- Community councils should not have final approval of developments
- Developers should expect clearly defined regulations and guidelines regarding the approval process, along with appropriate time frames for approvals
- All development should be in keeping with the character and style of their communities and subject to reasonable urban design criteria

12. *There should be distinct development strategies for the urban core and other areas of HRM*

- The urban core should have higher density and continue to be the focus for major public infrastructure serving all of HRM and NS
- Growth elsewhere should be concentrated in more complete and sustainable centres with their own economic base of activities
- HRM should consider the use of economic growth corridors to link these community centres and other parts of Nova Scotia to the urban core

13. *The tax system should support the regional plan*

- Those who benefit from municipal services should pay for them to effect market driven development
- HRM should use variable tax rates (or special assessments) to capture service cost differences rather than rely on property assessments alone
- Specific incentives should be used to encourage development (or in some cases, the re-development) in specific locations within HRM

Harbour & Airport

14. Use the existing Gateway Council to position and actively market HRM as a test market for integrated transportation management systems.
15. Keep HIA focused on the inter-modal movement of people and cargo —more direct flights, more transshipments.
A common-use cargo storage & handling facility would facilitate cargo shipment transfers from carriers to ground & rail transportation.
16. Optimize and integrate the Port with other forms of transportation.
This may require redevelopment of the existing infrastructure to one multi purpose, secure, terminal facility to handle the largest ships in the world and link them efficiently to the transportation chain.
17. Fast-track seawall redevelopment to improve public use of the waterfront with the cultural industries sector as its centre-piece.
Build an icon facility on the waterfront.
Make Halifax a home port for the cruise industry
Develop a national park and an eco park within the Harbour

Improving the Commuting Experience

3. **Dedicated Bus Lane on CN right of way to Dockyard**

Starting at Windsor Junction proposed RTC stretches along Rocky Lake Rd through Bedford Basin and through Rockingham yard.
At south end of Rockingham yard (Fairview) right of way branches past Ceres Container Pier, Seaview Park and Pier 9 to exit south of HMC Halifax Dockyard.
Permits an exit from right of way at site of new sewage treatment plant and access to Cogswell exchange.

9. **Dedicated Bus Lane on CN right of way to Via Station**

- In CN rail cut, build a two-lane rubber-tired roadway with rails embedded in one lane
- HRM's 2003 study indicates cost of approx. \$51 million
- Single direction express bus service during peak periods without train interference
- Could permit two-way truck access, co-coordinating rail and traffic compatibility with CN

20. **Undertake number of relatively non-capital intensive changes to public transit in Halifax including:**

- a public information campaign that incorporates health and environmental messages and delivers clear route and fare information, markets transit ridership to a broad audience
- building on the success of the u-pass program and expanding it to other audiences; universities, community colleges and possibly employers
- implement bus rapid transit and create dedicated bus lanes
- improve/build bus shelters so that they adequately protect from poor weather, are well lighted for safety and provide relevant route and schedule information
- dedicate more resources to public transit and reduce cost-recovery expectations of Metro Transit

- 21. Build a toll road, with a dedicated bus lane, connecting Burnside Drive and Highway 102.