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**Item No. 3**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 30, 2010**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by Director  
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Phil Townsend, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management

**DATE:** November 9, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Climate SMART Community Action Guide to Climate Change and  
Emergency Preparedness Update and the Provincial Climate Change  
Adaptation Fund

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

This report originates from Staff.

#### **BACKGROUND**

In 2003, the Climate SMART (Sustainable Mitigation and Adaptation Risk Toolkit) program was initiated in response to community concerns regarding global climate change and the impacts being felt in the Region. The goal of the Climate SMART initiative was to develop management and planning tools to prepare for climate change impacts, and to develop strategies to reduce practices that contribute to climate change in the first place. A number of tools were created and completed by 2007, including the *Climate SMART Community Action Guide to Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness* (Community Action Guide). Climate SMART is an ongoing initiative that requires regular updating and review to reflect the current state of global climate change and emerging technologies. It also requires regular communication and education opportunities within the Region to get the message out to the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Community Action Guide Update*

The *Climate SMART Community Action Guide to Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness* was finalized in 2006 as a tool to help Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) address climate change at an individual and/or community level. Responding to climate change is a shared responsibility between governments, businesses and residents. This guide not only provides residents with the simple steps to reduce their environmental impact, but to adapt, prepare for and respond to the potential impacts of climate change on their community. It also serves as an important resource for all residents and communities within HRM.

The Environmental Performance Officer, hired by the Sustainable Environment Management Office (SEMO) in January of 2010 to work on initiatives relating to Climate Change (and other duties), has reviewed and updated the Community Action Guide. SEMO was being approached regularly to provide presentations on the content of the Community Action Guide; therefore, it was realized that it was vital to ensure that the information being presented to the public was up-to-date and accurate.

The Community Action Guide was reviewed in consultation with HRM Emergency Management Organization (EMO) staff. The review included:

- updating Climate Change information based on the latest data available;
- updates on relevant studies to help with adaptation and emergency preparedness in HRM (including the Halifax Harbour Sea Level Rise Study, 2009);
- updates on references, tools, and contact information; and
- updates on more recent suggestions on how to mitigate and adapt to climate change based on current technologies.

The review also involved ensuring that the guide was consistent with EMOs approach to Emergency Planning. The updated Guide is attached as Attachment 1.

### *Provincial Climate Change Adaptation Funding*

As part of communicating the contents of the updated Community Action Guide and working with the Community to prepare them for Climate Change emergencies, SEMO and EMO staff submitted a joint funding application to the Province of Nova Scotia Climate Change Directorate's, Climate Change Adaptation Fund. HRM was awarded \$5000 from the fund to host Community Engagement sessions within select rural communities in HRM, to go through a

Vulnerability and Risk Mapping Exercise outlined in the Community Action Guide. The project is titled the *Public Participation GIS Vulnerability Mapping Initiative for Rural Areas in HRM*. The project serves to create climate change capacity in rural communities within HRM. It will provide assistance to HRM's EMO in gaining valuable information on vulnerabilities and risks that only community knowledge could provide. A series of consultations will be held by SEMO staff, EMO staff, and the local Joint Emergency Management (JEM) team in the chosen communities, to engage citizens to prepare for a climate change emergency.

These sessions will be creative and collaborative, serving to create public "mental maps" identifying community specific risks and vulnerabilities. This information will later be placed into EMOs GIS Mapping program to help EMO staff and the JEMs team in updating Emergency Preparedness and Response plans for these particular areas. The initiative would help to identify the following:

- specific areas (buildings, activities) where damage/impacts from past emergencies with natural weather events have occurred;
- specific residents that are especially vulnerable to weather emergencies;
- specific residents/buildings/facilities which are particularly exposed to hazards; and
- any sensitive natural environments in the community that are vulnerable to climate change emergencies.

Other:

- where the potentially safe places exist, in or near the community;
- evacuation routes; and
- location of equipment for sharing.

To get this process started, SEMO and EMO staff met with the JEM teams in HRM (including Eastern Shore, Musquodoboit Valley, Sheet Harbour and Tantallon). These meetings provided:

- a presentation on the contents of the Community Action Guide;
- a description of the adaptation funding project; and
- help determine, in consultation with the JEM teams, which community within their area could be used for the project.

This exercise has been a great opportunity with lots of valuable discussion on impacts being experienced in these communities, particularly related to extreme events.

Staff will identify 4-5 communities for the initiative.

We will be looking for local councillor's help in communicating this project to the chosen communities (perhaps via newsletters, webpages, bulletins, etc.).

It is our intent that by going through this exercise with select communities, we will develop a methodology that will be simple to use in any other community within HRM. EMO and SEMO staff intends to continue to take this process out to interested communities in HRM, after the Provincial Funding opportunity has ended. This information will be extremely valuable to HRM in terms of adapting and planning for climate changes.

### **Next Steps**

- To post the Updated Community Action Guide on the SEMO Climate Change Website;
- To develop Communications Plans for each community chosen for the Public Participation GIS Project, and get the word out; and
- To work with HRM's Community Engagement Team to plan sessions. The sessions will be held in February 2011.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not create any new operations or capital budget commitments.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

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

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

This work is all about engaging communities on Climate Change Adaptation. To date, staff have performed community presentations and met with local JEM teams.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 - Community Action Guide

**Climate SMART Community Action  
Guide to Climate Change and Emergency  
Preparedness Update and the Provincial  
Climate Change Adaptation Fund  
Council Report**

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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