


**Item No. 11.1.7**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**January 28, 2014**

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

Original signed by 

**SUBMITTED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by 

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** December 10, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Higher Education Memorandum of Understanding

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**ORIGIN**

October 2005 signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between HRM and Metro Universities.

October 2006 signing of the MOU between HRM and Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC).

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

HRM Charter, section 79 (1) (m): The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for promotion and attraction of institutions, industries and businesses, the stabilization and expansion of employment opportunities and the economic development of the Municipality.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve the attached MOU between HRM, Metro Universities and the NSCC; endorse the Mayor signing the MOU on Council's behalf, and direct implementation of its initiatives to begin.

## **BACKGROUND**

HRM's Corporate MOUs articulate a desire to work more closely together, share information and mutually support initiatives that contribute to the quality of life in HRM. They form a connection at the higher levels of each organization. Corporate MOUs are not legally binding documents, nor do they set out specific services, deliverables or funding that each party commits to deliver, as is the case with service agreements. The overall aim is to increase communication and collaboration, inform each other on issues which might affect the other partner, and develop a good working relationship.

HRM's first Corporate MOU was signed in October 2005 with Metro Universities. It was followed in October 2006 with an MOU between HRM and the NSCC. Both MOUs listed a number of areas for possible collaboration. For universities, the focus was on initiatives that would allow HRM to leverage available expertise when developing policies (e.g., cultural policy, immigration action plan, urban planning, sustainability), as well as working together to build attractive neighbourhoods and transportation options for students and residents alike. The NSCC MOU focused on initiatives around HRM workforce needs, employee training and talent retention.

There were some joint successes as a result of the MOUs, such as the implementation of the UPass program, a series of recruitment videos targeted at NSCC students, and consultation with academic experts on a variety of issues. However there is no formal monitoring for work done under the MOU auspices, which makes the broad range of joint activities difficult to track. In August 2013 the Mayor's Office and Metro University Presidents met to discuss ways to update the MOU and focus efforts on specific, measurable goals.

## **DISCUSSION**

The universities and community college campuses in HRM are key contributors to the economic, cultural and social development of the municipality. The number of people employed in educational services represents 8% of HRM's workforce. HRM has one of the highest percentages of employees with a post-secondary degree/diploma in Canada, at 67%. There are almost 30,000 students enrolled in university in HRM – 6000 of them international students – and 4,500 students enrolled at the community college.

Given the importance of post-secondary institutions to HRM's economy and brand, there has been interest in revisiting the MOUs signed with universities and the NSCC in 2005 and 2006. The principles in the original MOUs remain the same; that is, a commitment to collaboration, information-sharing and identification of issues of mutual interest. In considering what an updated MOU would look like, HRM staff worked with the Association of Atlantic Universities to develop a draft that includes similar statements of intent and recognition of the role of each party in making HRM a vibrant and economically strong city.

As noted in the Background section above, tracking work and outcomes on initiatives under the MOU could be more effective. To that end, the new MOU will include a section on a specific focus area for a set time period, and list operational initiatives that will help realize it. The focus

area will be a strategic priority for all parties, in order to align with current work and supplement it. While the MOU itself will stay constant, the focus area section will be updated and changed as progress is made and new priorities emerge.

The focus area proposed for 2014-16 is Talent Attraction and Retention. Ensuring employers have access to a skilled and educated talent pool is a top priority for all public and private sector stakeholders, and an area where post-secondary institutions play a vital role. HRM's Economic Strategy recognizes the contribution our post-secondary institutions make to the region. In the knowledge economy, a talented and skilled workforce is a key advantage for any municipality. The Economic Strategy acknowledges this, making talent retention a priority goal: "Create a welcoming community where the world's talent can find great opportunities, engaged employers and resources for career advancement."

Post-secondary institutions are uniquely positioned to help achieve this goal both by attracting more people and providing an educated labour force. This comes at a time when universities and community colleges are seeing enrollments increase. HRM can work with these institutions to create an attractive city for students of all ages and locations, and to partner on measures that will make them want to stay after graduation. A list of some potential initiatives is included in the focus area section of the MOU.

The MOU proposes regular meetings between HRM (represented by the Mayor's Office or designate) and University & NSCC Presidents to discuss progress. A staff-level working group may be established to implement initiatives and report back. This updated MOU with both universities and the NSCC would replace the previous MOUs signed separately in 2005 and 2006.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Consultation has taken place over the past five months with representatives from Metro universities and the NSCC.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Council could retain the original MOUs with universities and the NSCC. As described above, these presented tracking issues and potential loss of progress.

**ATTACHMENTS**

**Higher Education Memorandum of Understanding (draft)**

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.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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**Higher Education Memorandum of Understanding  
HRM and Metro Post-Secondary Institutions  
January 2014  
DRAFT #6**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is home to seven universities and three Nova Scotia Community College campuses, including the largest in the province. These eight institutions are centres of excellence in learning, innovation and research. They are major contributors to the arts, cultural and social life of the municipality. They are also major employers and economic drivers for the region and provide extensive opportunities for HRM residents to acquire skills and knowledge to prepare them for the workforce and the global economy.

HRM's Economic Strategy recognizes the contribution these post-secondary institutions bring to the region. The city has one of the most highly-educated populations in Canada because of access to these institutions of higher learning. In the knowledge economy, a talented and skilled workforce is a city's main competitive advantage.

Halifax aspires to become internationally recognized (like Boston, Massachusetts) as a vibrant, thriving city especially known for world-renowned post-secondary education institutions.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and the Atlantic School of Theology, Dalhousie, Mount Saint Vincent, NSCAD, Saint Mary's university, the University of King's College, Université Sainte-Anne and the Nova Scotia Community College comprise the Halifax Higher Education Partnership (HHEP), making our city the education capital of Canada. The HHEP will build on the collaborative relationship established with HRM in the original Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) adopted in 2005 and 2006 with the universities and community college. The MOU will focus on specific, measureable objectives subject to annual progress review.

## **PRINCIPLES**

This MOU will build on the principles articulated in the original MOU.

On matters of mutual interest, the signatories agree to take actions that develop, enhance and mutually support the links that tie them to each other and to the region.

The signatories will strive for greater operational alignment on issues and opportunities on matters of mutual impact and overlap.

The parties to this MOU will identify specific annual goals in areas of mutual interest, and report back on progress on a yearly basis.

## **SIGNATORIES**

Halifax Regional Municipality	Nova Scotia Community College
Atlantic School of Theology	Dalhousie University
Mount Saint Vincent University	NSCAD University
Saint Mary's University	University of King's College
Université Sainte-Anne	

## **FOCUS 2013-16: TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION**

The opportunity to attract and retain talent to build a highly educated and skilled workforce is a paramount priority for HHEP. To achieve this, there is a collective will to attract and retain students, faculty and staff (locally, nationally and internationally) to our community by providing high quality educational opportunities and outstanding living, learning, teaching, research and work experience.

HRM's Economic Strategy has a priority goal of "creating a welcoming community where the world's talent can find great opportunities, engaged employers and resources for career development." Halifax's universities have enjoyed great success to date in attracting out-of-province and international students to their campuses. These two cohorts alone represent more than 14,000 students or nearly 50% of total enrolment (30,772). These students make a significant economic, social and cultural contribution to our region, making our community more diverse, prosperous and vibrant. The NSCC's unique 'English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program for 'new Canadians' and 'Landed Immigrants' and a variety of university-led programs play a critical role in helping new immigrants to HRM upgrade their English language, academic skills and readiness for the labour market.

The specific focus of this MOU does not preclude collaborative work in other areas.

### **Potential Initiatives:**

The overarching goal of this MOU for 2013-16 is to successfully position Halifax as Canada's education capital and as a global leader in higher education.

HHEP will undertake to attract and retain students, faculty and staff from all sources, making Halifax a national and international educational centre of excellence.

Initiatives to accomplish this may include:

- Post-secondary institution consultation for HRM's international branding efforts
- Making HRM services/website available in other languages
- Consideration of municipal services & adjustments needed by international students to participate more fully in the community by establishing a small advisory group of international student leaders to articulate key needs
- Measurably increase the total number of university and NSCC articulation agreements; internships and co-op placements
- Consideration of infrastructure needed to attract students, such as buildings, residences, settlement and career centres
- A city-hosted welcome reception/celebration for international students in tandem with orientations and/or special occasions
- HRM's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Coordinator will work directly with Metro post-secondary institutions to help create a welcoming community
- HRM will be invited to participate in an upcoming university recruitment summit
- Set mutually agreed upon, measurable annual targets for increased out-of-province and international student enrolments

The eight organizations party to this MOU commit to regular and ongoing communication, collaboration, cooperation and agree to the principle of 'no surprises'.

The partners will establish working group(s) to strategize and implement the priority initiatives as identified and agreed upon by HHEP.

HHEP will meet quarterly and as required. Meeting agendas will be prepared and approved in advance of each HHEP meeting. HHEP will also serve as a forum in which emerging issues potentially impacting the parties can be considered and discussed (e.g. the Canada European Trade Agreement).