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PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

Halifax Regional Council  
October 11, 2005  
*October 18, 2005*

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dan English, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

  
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Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** October 5, 2005

**SUBJECT:** Halifax Region Immigration Strategy

### **ORIGIN**

At the May 10, 2005 Regional Council Meeting, Council adopted an immigration vision for HRM. HRM's own immigration strategy was provided to Council September 20, 2005. Concurrently, over the last few months, the Greater Halifax Partnership led an advisory group drawn from the community to develop a community based strategy. This report deals with this community based strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council endorse the Halifax Region Immigration Strategy. The endorsement will support the Greater Halifax Partnership taking the lead in implementing early actions related to the strategy. These early actions include:

- The formation of the Halifax Region Immigration Leadership Council, which will be co-chaired by the Greater Halifax Partnership and Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA). The Leadership Council will determine the scope and timing of various elements of the implementation plan and the budget associated with such activities. Halifax Regional Council may appoint a representative from HRM to sit on the Leadership Council.
- The development of a business outreach program and print-based awareness campaign that will be delivered in 2005.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Greater Halifax Partnership has led the development of the attached community based Halifax Region Immigration Strategy.

As the largest city and economic hub of Atlantic Canada, Halifax Regional Municipality accounts for 15 per cent of the region's population and gross domestic product. The 370,000 people living in Halifax make up 40 per cent of Nova Scotia's population and 45 per cent of goods and services produced in the province.

Since their peak in 1995 at 3,589 people, immigration levels in the province have fallen by more than half. That number has continued to drop to 1,476 in 2003. About 80 per cent of immigrants arriving in Nova Scotia settle in HRM. Approximately 40 per cent of the immigrants who arrive in the province stay; the rest eventually move on to larger centres (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver).

In addition to these stats on immigration, census data indicates Halifax's population is ageing. The percentage of adults over 45 in the workforce has nearly doubled – from 18 per cent in 1987 to 34 percent in 2002.

From 1991 to 2001, the number of preschool-aged children in Halifax has declined by almost 16 per cent, the number of people aged 15-34 dropped by 16.6 per cent, and the number of seniors aged 65 and older increased by 30 per cent. Additionally, only seven per cent of Nova Scotians are foreign-born, a low figure compared to other provinces.

Immigration is one of the means to increase population, grow the labour force and alleviate skill shortages. It will increase levels of entrepreneurship, develop a source of investment capital, and increase diversity in our community. In short, immigration is crucial to the future growth and development of the Halifax Regional Municipality.

## **DISCUSSION**

In May 2005, Halifax Regional Council adopted the following vision: "Halifax Regional Municipality is a welcoming community where immigration is supported and encouraged. Halifax Regional Municipality will work with other levels of government and community partners to increase our collective cultural, social and economic diversity by welcoming immigrants to our community."

Recognizing the importance of immigration, HRM has also undertaken the development of an HRM Immigration Action Plan focussing on specific actions HRM can take to improve immigration in the region.

HRM is committed to providing the best possible service to its residents. The Immigration Action

Plan is another manifestation of that commitment, with representatives from business, government, not-for-profit organizations, immigrant settlement organizations and immigrants themselves all contributing to help build this plan.

Several HRM initiatives, including the Regional Plan, Economic Strategy and Cultural Plan, identify immigration as playing a significant role in addressing our region's economic, social and cultural realities in years to come.

In partnership with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, Metropolitan Immigration Settlement Association (MISA) and other community stakeholders, the Greater Halifax Partnership and private sector investors have been working to make immigration a priority for our community.

Over the past several months, the Partnership and community stakeholders have worked to develop a practical, workable action plan to attract, integrate and retain immigrants in the Halifax region. Following extensive research and consultation with more than seventy organizations currently working on immigration, a community strategy, Halifax Region Immigration Strategy (Immigration Strategy) was built.

The three key foundation elements of the strategy are:

- First - to build on the foundation elements of Federal legislation and Nova Scotia's Immigration Strategy;
- Second – To more fully integrate immigrants already living in HRM, so they remain and provide opportunities for future growth;
- Third - to attract immigrants likely to stay in HRM because they have the ability to build sustainable employment, business, professional, cultural, and community relationships.

By the fourth year of full implementation, the Immigration Strategy has targeted the attraction of 2,800 new immigrants per year (with a 70 percent retention rate). If achieved, it is estimated that the cumulative direct economic growth over five years will be more than \$366-million. Incremental increases in direct economic activity will amount to more than \$122-million a year.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **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**

Council could choose not to endorse the Halifax Region Immigration Strategy, however, doing so would suggest that Halifax Regional Municipality is not supportive of the community efforts to increase immigration and make Halifax a more welcoming community. This alternative is not recommended.

**ATTACHMENTS**

Halifax Region Immigration Strategy, Volume 1

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.

Report Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ruth Cunningham/Greater Halifax Partnership  
Jennifer Church/Coordinator Intergovernmental Affairs

Financial Review: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Name/Financial Consultant & Phone #]

Report Approved by: Betty MacDonald  
Betty MacDonald/Director Governance and Strategic Initiatives/490-4769