

Halifax Regional Council
December 13, 2005

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:


Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: December 2, 2005

SUBJECT: Staff Attendance - Committee of the Whole and In Camera
INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the In Camera meeting of November 29, 2005, Council passed a motion requesting the Acting Deputy CAO to consider the matter of reducing the number of staff attending Committee of the Whole and In Camera Council meetings.

BACKGROUND

Staff are required to attend Committee of the Whole or In camera meetings to present their item and respond to questions before Council renders a decision. This has resulted in agenda items proceeding in a timely manner and allows staff to minimize the need for staff reports on issues raised.

Staff attendance at both meetings is usually limited to those staff members directly involved with an item and the associated director (depending on the nature of the item). In certain cases, staff members from other business units are required to attend based upon the scope, complexity, or sensitivity of an item. Due to Council's ability to amend the agenda at the start of each meeting (items can be moved up, down, or be removed from the agenda), staff need to be in attendance when the meetings begin regardless of the order of their item.

At recent Committee of the Whole meetings, staff have been seeking direction on Council Focus Areas. Due to the broad nature of the discussions (i.e., capital budget, infrastructure projects), a larger staff presence has been essential as most issues effect or impact upon more than one business unit. A similar situation occurs during the budget process. Due to the larger staff presence at Committee of the Whole, more staff have been available to attend In Camera items.

DISCUSSION

Due to the higher than normal attendance at recent Committee of the Whole and In-Camera meetings, Council is justified in questioning the effective use of staff time. To address this concern, directors have been advised to limit the amount of staff attending these meetings and that staff should leave the chambers upon their item being addressed. However, in unique situations (such as Council Focus Areas initiative or the budget process) Council needs to be aware that a larger staff presence may be required to ensure Council is adequately informed of the issues and concerns with an agenda item.

To address the issue of the amount of time staff are waiting for an agenda item to be discussed, if at all, directors have been requested to develop a protocol to address this issue. However, staff has limited impact on when items are actually discussed at Council. Therefore, Councillors should be advised that this issue will not be eliminated.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this report.

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.

REGIONAL PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

None

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy 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: Kurt Pyle, Coordinator, Deputy Chief Administrative Office

Report Approved by: _____
Wayne Anstey, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer