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Halifax Regional Council
September 5, 2006

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Bauld", written over a horizontal line.

Jim Bauld, Acting Director, Environmental Management Services

DATE: August 21, 2006

SUBJECT: Systems Approach to Sustainability - The Natural Step

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This report coincides with a presentation to Regional Council planned for September 5, 2006, regarding the upcoming (September 22, 2006) visit and presentation at Halifax Hall by the founder of The Natural Step, Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt from Sweden.

BACKGROUND

Information about The Natural Step (TNS)

The Natural Step Framework is a science and systems-based approach to organizational planning for sustainability. It provides a practical set of design criteria that can be used to direct social, environmental, and economic actions. The Natural Step Framework is now being used internationally by hundreds of organizations, including companies such as Ikea and Interface Inc., government departments, universities, municipalities, and small and medium-sized businesses in their respective journeys to sustainability.

HRM and The Natural Step

HRM was introduced to the concept through the FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) and in 2004 completed a high level corporate wide Sustainability Analysis through The Natural Step lens. Three of the corporate recommendations, green corporate culture, green procurement and green

buildings were selected as immediate priorities to focus. TNS has become a key planning tool in HRM's Sustainability (State of the Environment) Reporting and HRM has recently signed a Licence Agreement with TNS for on-line Sustainability Training for staff, elected officials and others.

In December 2005, HRM along with its partners hosted a Sustainability Workshop that included participants from several municipalities belonging to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM); Provincial and Federal Government staff and the private sector.

Cities (i.e. Calgary, Hamilton, Region of Niagara, etc.) from across Canada also presented information on their approaches to sustainability. HRM presented on The Natural Step, others presented on The Triple Bottom Line, Melbourne Principles, etc.

DISCUSSION

The Visit

On September 22, 2006, HRM will be hosting a breakfast and presentation with Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt.

Dr Robèrt is one of Sweden's leading cancer scientists. In 1989, Dr. Robèrt began the development of a framework called The Natural Step (TNS). In 1999 Dr. Robèrt received the Green Cross Millennium Award for International Environmental Leadership. In 2000 he won the Blue Planet Prize for scientifically describing a systems perspective for sustainability and for increasing environmental awareness. Most recently, in 2005, Dr. Robèrt was awarded the first Laureate Medal for Social Responsibility issued by the new Global Centre for Leadership and Business Ethics in New York. Dr. Robèrt has written many books and articles on the environment and sustainability that advance an understanding of the linkage between ecology and economy.

Corporate and Community Links (The Fit)

Sustainability is one of the greatest challenges facing every Canadian municipality and definitely on the Provincial and Federal Government radar screens, i.e. the new Federal commitment to a results and measured approach to environmental improvements and the principles in the Provincial Green Plan. HRM has committed itself to a healthy, sustainable, vibrant community.

This is reflected in one of the four corporate themes, "a healthy, sustainable, vibrant community" and in the guiding principles of the 25 Year Regional Plan.

The 2006/07 CAO Goals and Priorities make reference to a long term Sustainability Plan for HRM and The Sustainable Environment Strategy (integrated approach to clean air, land, water and energy).

Sustainability is a fundamentally important issue for the entire community and includes social, cultural, fiscal and environmental components. In the simplest terms, decisions and development that meets the needs of the present must not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Related Activities

In 2005, HRM became a member of the International Sustainable Cities Network and has partnered with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities and others towards the establishment of a Municipal Sustainability Office in 2006.

Sustainability Recognitions

Regional Council's leadership towards a sustainable community has received a number of recent recognitions. Some examples include:

Provincial

- In 2005, HRM received the Provincial InNOVAward for its sustainable environment strategy.

National

- In 2005, HRM received two national FCM Sustainable Community Awards, one for "Climate SMART", the other for "Water Accountability - The New Way".
- In June 2006, HRM provided an overview of its sustainable environment initiatives at the FCM national conference in Montréal.

International

- HRM was invited to present on behalf of Canada at the December 2005 World Summit on Climate Change in Montréal.
- HRM was invited to present at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver in June 2006.
- The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada recognized 12 cities from around the world in its 2006 booklet, "Shaping Livable Cities" which was released at the World Urban Forum earlier this summer. Halifax Regional Municipality, because of its sustainability efforts was one of the cities profiled in this international publication.

Summary

The citizens of HRM have clearly indicated that a healthy community with clean air, land, water and energy is very important.

Everything in the environment is interconnected. Thus, an integrated systems approach to sustainability (i.e. The Natural Step) makes sense.

In the bigger picture, the four cornerstones of sustainability (social, cultural, fiscal and environment) must also be integrated and The Natural Step methodology is a planning tool that can help.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the September 22nd breakfast and strategy session is estimated to be about \$1,400.00 and will be funded from a specific sustainability project in the Sustainable Community (Green) Reserve.

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 Plan

The Natural Step systems approach to sustainability fully supports the principles of the Regional Plan.

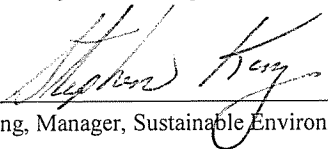
ALTERNATIVES

N/A


ATTACHMENTS

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.

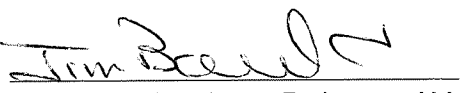
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