
Halifax Regional Council
August 20, 2002

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Robert A. Barss, Deputy Chief of Police

DATE: July 10, 2002

SUBJECT: Special Events

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN/BACKGROUND

In a June 17, 2002 memorandum to Mr. McLellan, CAO, Councillor Dawn Sloane requested a report outlining current communication protocols for special events, such as the recent G-7 Finance Ministers Meeting.

DISCUSSION

On June 13, 2002 to June 15, 2002 the G-7 Finance Ministers meeting was held in Halifax as part of a series of meetings proceeding the G-8 Economic Summit held in Kananaskis, Alberta on June 26th and June 27th, 2002.

The event was marked by peaceful protest on Friday night, June 14th, 2002, but eventually ended with an unlawful violent protest on Saturday, June 15th, 2002. The protest of June 15th has caused much public debate both in favour and criticizing the actions of both the protestors and police.

As a result of this debate, Councillor Sloane requested a report outlining current protocol for such events. She asked five specific questions:

- What is our communications policy- media releases, mailouts
- Do we/should we communicate with stakeholders in immediate vicinity of event
- How will we handle complaints, such as reduced business revenues due to closure of streets, barricades, etc.
- Who assumes the risk for specific events
- Who measures the risks associated with such events

It must be noted at the outset, the decision to bring events such as G-7 to our community does not rest with the Municipality. The Federal Government determines the site of such meetings. As in other meetings, once Halifax was chosen as a meeting place, the Municipality responded to ensure appropriate security was in place. It is the responsibility of the Municipality to determine the level of risk and to put the appropriate measures in place to ensure public order.

In cooperation with the RCMP, security measures were put in place to ensure the protection of delegates and public order. The area bounded by Brunswick/Duke, east on Duke to Barrington, south on Barrington to the entrance to the Grand Parade, across the Grand Parade to Argyle, then west up Carmichael Street to Brunswick, and north on Brunswick back to Duke was designated as a secure area for protection of the Ministers. The secure area was small by normal standards but was designed specifically to have minimal impact on other activities in the area.

Planning for G-7 Finance included the development of a communications strategy designed to ensure accurate, consistent, and timely communication to police personnel, internal HRM partners, and the public during and prior to the event. We were guided in the preparation of that plan by both the RCMP and HRP Media policies.

The scope of communication to the public in such events depends upon the extent of the security in place and the risks associated to the event. In this particular case, the risk remained relatively low and only those businesses who were in the immediate vicinity of the security zone were contacted due to the size of the security zone.

Halifax Regional Municipality is very fortunate to have a very effective Special Events Committee. Police were able to link with the Special Events Committee, in particular Andrew Cox, to establish a meeting with area businesses who could have been affected by the restricted area.

On May 1st, 2002 a meeting was held with local businesses to advise them of the intended street closures, and to answer any question. A subsequent meeting of this group was held on June 5th, 2002 to give a final briefing on security measures and the potential for civil disobedience during the event. As part of this consultation an e-mail grouping was established whereby any questions or information for businesses could be directed to the appropriate people.

Over one hundred area buildings were contacted regarding the potential use of tear gas. The purpose of this communication was to contact building owners to take precautions to prevent contamination in the event tear gas had to be used. In an effort to facilitate this, all buildings contacted were loaded in to the City Watch broadcast system and a message was broadcasted prior to tear gas being used so the necessary precautions could be taken. It proved so successful that in the future, City Watch could prove to be an even greater asset in communicating messages to an identified group of citizens or businesses in such circumstances.

In addition, on June 7th, 2002 a series of briefings were held for Council and the Board of Police Commissioners to update the status of planning for G-7 and the potential for civil disobedience. Further, on June 7th a media briefing was held to advise the public of street closures and other events that could impact the wider community.

The question of who assumes the risk for such events is a mixed one. The simple answer is the level of government that host the event which in this case is the Federal Government. Unfortunately the municipality is responsible for public security and therefore must take measures to ensure that this obligation is met. In most cases, as in this one, the Municipalities negotiate with the Federal Department responsible for recovery of the cost to provide security.

The broader issue of such claims as reduce business falls to the Federal Department responsible. In For this event, as in others, individuals advancing such claims have been directed to the Federal Department responsible so that their claims can be considered.

As can be seen, a specific protocol has not been referenced, since the planning measures required to ensure a successful event will depend on individual circumstances of each event. Having said that the Special Events Task Force terms of reference (Approved by Council on July 16, 1996) and the experience of that committee would serve as a guide for any major event.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None.

MULTI-YEAR FINANCIAL STRATEGY

None

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

Additional copies 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.

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