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Item No.
Community Planning & Economic Development
July 24, 2014

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development

SUBMITTED BY: Original signed by:
Maggie MacDonald, Acting Managing Director Government Relations
& External Affairs

DATE: August 14, 2014

SUBJECT: Welcoming Newcomers and Local Immigration Partnership Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

May 10, 2005 Halifax Regional Council adopted a vision for immigration.

October 18, 2005 Halifax Regional Council was provided an Information Report and accompanying HRM Immigration Action Plan.

April 30, 2013 Halifax Regional Council directed staff to provide a report outlining the benefits and costs of having HRM negotiate a funding agreement with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) for 3-year funding, to house the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Coordinator.

June 25, 2013 Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approved the updated Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan
2. Authorized staff to seek funding in the amount of \$160,473 from Citizenship and Immigration Canada for 3 year funding, to administer the part time Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

79 (1) 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.

BACKGROUND

Halifax Regional Municipality's first Immigration Action Plan was endorsed by Regional Council in 2005 along with a vision which states:

"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".

The plan was updated in June of 2013, and initiatives were identified which continue to move the Municipality towards being a more welcoming community to newcomers and residents alike. This Council approved updated plan was renamed "HRM's Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan", to better reflect what HRM is trying to achieve. It was developed with input from business, government, non-profit organizations, immigrant settlement organizations and newcomers themselves. Various Business Units including Community and Recreation Services, Halifax Regional Police, Human Resources, Planning and Infrastructure, Transportation and Public Works, and Corporate Communications, were consulted while drafting the updated plan.

During the time the HRM Welcoming Communities Action Plan was being reviewed, an opportunity to consider a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) for Halifax, with funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada came up. Each LIP across Canada has developed independently, responding directly to local needs and context. They are collective impact initiatives where committed and influential partners work to positively change settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers. Regional Council authorized staff to seek funding from CIC for 3 years, to administer a part time Local Immigration Partnership Coordinator.

The LIP Coordinator is a part time position funded by CIC to work on the following initiatives over the next 3 years:

- Develop a multi-sectorial partnership at the local community level, ensuring newcomer needs are integrated into the community planning process, identify community-specific strategic priorities, and implement action plans to improve newcomer outcomes;
- Provide coordination to the partnership;
- Develop indicators and report back on progress;
- Research best practices;
- Leverage partnerships within the community;
- Facilitate HRM staff meetings and organize community forum(s); and
- Take lead on education & promotion around the welcoming community initiative.

Local Immigration Partnership funding is meant to complement existing activities and assist to integrate and optimize programs and services to newcomers. In addition, the LIP initiative focusses on current successes in the community, working with what is already in place, rather than supplanting other efforts or working in parallel.

DISCUSSION

Welcoming Newcomer Plan

At the time the plan was written, Nova Scotia was home to 55% of Atlantic Canadian immigrants and HRM welcomed 75% of immigrants to Nova Scotia, and therefore continues to have a significant vested interest in providing a welcoming environment for newcomers. HRM's ability to maintain and build upon the immigrant population is fundamental to our region's economic, social and cultural success. The purpose of the Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan is to identify the outcomes and measures needed to

achieve success in integrating and retaining newcomers and creating a welcoming and friendly community for all. The plan identifies five key outcomes and provides a mechanism for Business Units to track and report back on the Municipality's ability to deliver on the outcomes over a five year period.

HRM's Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee Terms of Reference, section 3.2.3 states the purpose of the Committee includes the oversight of the progress of HRM's Immigration Action Plan and related initiatives. Therefore, staff committed to providing regular information updates to the committee on progress while implementing the updated five year plan. This information report serves as a one year update on the above mentioned initiatives from June 2013 to June 2014.

Welcoming Newcomers Outcome 1: HRM communications tools are developed to serve and represent diverse groups:

Welcoming Newcomers Guide

A focus group was held with newcomers and service providers to consult on HRM's On-line Newcomer Guide content. Individuals who could not attend the focus group session provided feedback via email. The consultation included representatives from Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), community members, Halifax Regional Library, immigrants, YMCA, Immigrant Francophone, African Canadian Women's Association, RCMP, IWK Diversity & Inclusion, HRM Community Recreation Services, Immigrant Women Association, Capital Health Continuing Care, NS Interpretation Services and various ethnic leaders. Changes to the Newcomer Guide will occur based on the feedback received, with particular emphasis on plain language. The updated Guide is expected to be completed by September 2014.

Rack Cards:

Welcoming Newcomer rack cards will be printed to supplement the Guide and provide quick reference information for newcomers, to assist with their settlement needs. Content for the rack card was developed through consultation with different organizations and individuals to ensure relevant information was included. Cards will be made available at the airport, ISIS, Libraries and community centers and other locations where newcomers have easy access.

HRM Web Re-Design:

The Web Transformation team held a consultation session with immigrant groups at ISIS. The LIP Coordinator also participated in a teleconference meeting with the team to share information about newcomer perspectives and provided input on the newcomers' section of the website.

HRM Brand Strategy Consultation:

Stakeholders from a number of groups representative of diversity, were engaged in the branding process, either by invitation to a focus group; one-on-one interview; or a specific focus group Corporate Research Associates session. The LIP Coordinator also attended a focus group session with Corporate Research Associates.

Welcoming Newcomers Outcome 2: HRM programs and services support a welcoming community

311 & Customer Service Centres:

The LIP coordinator is working with Halifax customer service providers to identify ways to better serve newcomers by simplifying the automated message and promoting the service to newcomers and support agencies.

HRM Updated Regional Plan:

The Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan is referenced in Chapter 5 on Economy, specifically Policy EC-2: The *Immigration Action Plan* shall provide guidance to identify the outcomes and measures to achieve success in integrating and retaining newcomers and creating a welcoming and friendly community for all.

Community Grants Program:

The Community Grants program currently includes a 1) Diversity category where the majority of awards assist ethno-cultural and sociocultural communities of interest; 2) The Community History category which includes ethno-cultural settlement and 3) a Community Arts & Crafts category, where the upcoming development/launch of professional arts funding will provide an opportunity to increase non-professional community arts and crafts sector and cultural diversity expressed through contemporary and traditional forms including music, dance, and visual arts.

Tax Relief:

HRM provides partial tax relief to assorted non-profit property owners includes ethno-cultural centres (social heritage), built heritage, and advocacy groups.

Welcoming Newcomers Outcome 3: HRM celebrates and enables a variety of cultural and creative opportunities

Event Funding:

HRM continues to fund; in the amount of approximately \$ 55,000, festivals and events that support diverse cultures such as AfricFest 2014, Flamenco Festival, Northern Lights Lantern Festival, Gottingen Street Community BBQ, Arts & Cultural Freedom Festival, and Festival des Cultures Francophone.

Hallmark events have also seen an increase in diverse volunteers from agencies such as the YWCA Immigration Centre. This interaction provides an opportunity for newcomers to meet other residents that share a common arts and culture or sporting interest, and helps establish a sense of belonging in the community.

Events play an important role in the development of some ethno-cultural groups – this year alone HRM saw applications for grant funding from German, Jamaican, and Latin American non-profit groups whose revenues are sustained and whose profile is enhanced through their hosting or participation in a local festival. Examples include the Gala Latina, Oktober Fest, Multicultural Festival, and Canada Day parade. Although these groups may be small in size, and the level of funding modest, these events appear to have a significant impact on the participant group and are transitioning from events grants into the Community Grants Program.

HRM increased its funding contribution to the Multicultural Festival, and funded for the first time the Magnetic North Theatre Festival showcasing plays written, directed and performed by artists of ethnicity. In addition, HRM committed \$300,000 for the development and implementation of a professional arts grant program to increase support for creative opportunities across all communities to begin in the fall of 2014.

Welcoming Barbeque:

HRM provides financial support and facilitation services to the Welcome Barbeque for Newcomers. In 2013 the event committee established themselves as a not for profit society and will now be eligible to apply to the event funding program in 2015. In some cases, events become the rationale for communities to form a non-profit organization, fostering ancillary programs and services which evolve over time to serve the community. In addition, this event promotes awareness within the newcomer community to the corporate sponsorship network.

Welcoming Newcomers Outcome 4: HRM maximizes opportunities for increased stakeholder alignment, awareness, engagement and newcomer retention through partner organizations

Mayor's Welcome Reception:

Planning is underway for a Mayor's Welcome Reception in September of 2014, for first year international students in September as part of the Memorandum of Understanding with Metro Universities and the Community Colleges.

Local Immigration Partnership:

- The part time LIP Coordinator was hired and began in November of 2013.
- The LIP Advisory Committee was formalized and includes representatives from ISIS, YMCA, Halifax Regional School Board, Greater Halifax Partnership, NS Department of Health & Wellness and the NS Office of Immigration.
- The following themes were agreed upon by the Advisory Committee and sub-committees have been created for each: 1) Social & Cultural Inclusion; 2) Economic Integration & Growth; 3) Health & Well Being; and 4) Education
- The LIP vision, terms of reference and action plans have all been completed
- Sub-committees have begun to meet and finalize their action plans

Event Participation/Coordination

The LIP Coordinator has participated in the planning and/or delivery of the following events:

- Career Path Planning for African Nova Scotian and Visible Minority Women
- Positive Aging Conference
- ISIS Multicultural Health Fair
- IWK Diversity & Inclusion Session
- ISIS Book Launch
- Newcomer Community Wellness Project: Community Consultation & Partnership Building Session
- RCMP Diversity & Inclusion Week
- Halifax's Newcomers' Welcome BBQ
- The Atlantic Immigration Research Fund Annual Symposium: Immigration & Opportunities in Atlantic Canada held by the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Culture
- Immigration Stakeholder Forum held by Nova Scotia Office of Immigration
- Health Equity Forum held by the Diversity Committee of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness

Welcoming Newcomers Outcome 5: HRM staff value diversity and are provided with the appropriate tools to serve diverse client groups

- LIP staff partnered with the HRM African Nova Scotia Affairs team to provide career path planning for African Nova Scotian and visible minority women employed with HRM in June of 2014.

Cultural Competency Training for Staff:

- The LIP Coordinator is working with community & recreation services to develop customized training for front line recreation staff to further develop cultural competency skills.
- Halifax Regional Police continue to provide training for customer service and front-line public facing employees in cultural competencies and valuing diversity.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications at this time.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Individual projects described within the body of the report have included public consultation of various degrees, including the Brand Strategy Consultations; HRM Web Redesign; Newcomers Welcome Guide and Rack Card; Regional Plan Update; and Local Immigration Partnership initiatives.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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