



P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No.
Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee
November 19, 2015

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by

Maggie MacDonald, Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs

DATE: November 9, 2015

SUBJECT: **Canada's Diversity Advantage Project – United Nations Association in Canada**

ORIGIN

The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada) is requesting the support of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), specifically through the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) and Parks and Recreation, as a Regional Partner in the development of its Canada's Diversity Advantage project in Halifax.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter; Section 79 1: the Council may expend money required by the Municipality for (k), recreational programs.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Mayor Savage send a letter of support to Sarah Kambites, Director of Education and Community Initiatives of the UNA-Canada, indicating the municipality's willingness to serve as a Regional Partner for **Canada's Diversity Advantage** in Halifax.

BACKGROUND

The UNA-Canada has developed a youth-engagement initiative that uses interactive multi-generational knowledge-sharing of lived experiences with students in five Canadian cities. This initiative aims to cultivate a deeper understanding and appreciation of Canada's peoples and 150- year historic journey of migration that built and shaped one nation with remarkable diversity and shared heritage. **Canada's Diversity Advantage** project will be implemented April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 engaging approximately 750 10-14 year old students in grades 6, 7 and 8 as well as their peers participating in non-formal learning settings in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver.

The main goal of **Canada's Diversity Advantage** is to increase understanding and appreciation among Canadian youth of the historic journey traveled by individuals who have contributed to building Canada as a nation and shaping the shared Canadian heritage of today.

Project Objectives:

Specifically the project will:

- Raise awareness on the immigration of Canadians over the 150 years of Canada's Confederation;
- Increase youth appreciation of their country's diverse population and the contribution of this diversity to Canada's shared heritage;
- Enhance readiness and resilience among youth to take local action that gives back to their communities in a positive way and continue to build a Canada stronger and more compassionate than the one they inherited; and
- Heighten youth pride in the values that have distinctively shaped our identity as Canadians and define our society.

Project Activities:

The UNA-Canada will carry out a number of activities to achieve project objectives, including:

- **Youth research and community mapping exercises**, gaining understanding of generations of Canadians who migrated to this country from different parts of the globe at varying intervals over the past 150 years of nation building.
- **Self-assessment portrait** by youth on the question: "How Canadian are you?" drawing on a provided list of value-based works that define a shared Canadian heritage.
- **Youth-painted Murals** depicting one or all the three themes that are part of Canadians' shared heritage: Community Building, Civic Engagement, and Healthy-Active Living. Drawing on their research findings and mapping exercises, youth will be able to use art to demonstrate Canadians' history over time and the process of creating a shared heritage by peoples of Canada.
- **A Shared Heritage Festival** that will convene participating youth from various schools to share in a full-day of learning about, and celebrating Canada's history and the shared heritage of its citizens. The festival will be led by youth for youth with the support of their teachers, community leaders and cultural groups.

HRM has worked with the UNA-Canada by assisting with the engagement of youth of African descent in Halifax for their August 2015 simulation of the Pan-Am/Parapan-Am Games called **Sport Unites**. Like **Canada's Diversity Advantage**, **Sport Unites** took place in six regional Canadian cities and aimed to bring together youth of various backgrounds to celebrate diversity. Over 150 youth of Halifax participated in this sport-based diversity initiative. Parks and Recreation provided space for the main **Sport Unites** event at the Sackville Sports Stadium.

DISCUSSION

Canada's Diversity Advantage aligns with Regional Council's Healthy Communities priority and HRM activities in this area. Specifically there is alignment to the priority outcome that Halifax be a leader in building an inclusive and accessible community as well as Halifax's economic strategy which speaks to Halifax building a welcoming and inclusive environment for underrepresented groups. The project also aligns with ANSAIO's mandate to strengthen the municipality's engagement of communities of African descent in Halifax.

HRM staff in the ANSAIO and Parks and Recreation have collaborated on ways in which the municipality can support **Canada's Diversity Advantage**. Although this initiative is focused on bringing together people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, the ANSAIO has specifically been contacted by the UNA-Canada for support in engaging communities of African descent in Halifax. Requests for Parks and Recreation involvement in this initiative would involve a wider diversity of communities.

HRM can support the **Canada's Diversity Advantage** project through Parks and Recreation providing space for events, assisting with recruiting by using youth in current programs, and integrating some of this project's initiatives into the Parks and Recreation's Youth Leadership Program during the summer of 2016. Through the ANSAIO, HRM can engage a cross-section of multi-generational African Nova Scotian community adults to participate in sharing oral history and life experiences with the youth participants to inform their *Shared Heritage Festival*. The ANSAIO can also promote and publicize the project activities through Office networks and offer volunteer support where needed to elevate the *Shared Heritage Festival* in Halifax.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The municipality would be providing in-kind support through the provision of event space at recreation facilities and staff resources for community engagement. No additional budgetary considerations are required as ANSAIO's contributions to the project are provided for within the Government Relations and External Affairs (GREA) budget and Parks and Recreation's contributions through its budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Through established community networks, the ANSAIO will engage the African Nova Scotian Community and communities of African descent as well as the Diversity and Inclusion Office as a whole to encourage the participation of diverse African-descendant communities in this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications from this report.

ALTERNATIVES

None

ATTACHMENTS

None

