

Appeals – Feb 9, 2012
Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee – Feb 9, 2012
Audit & Finance Standing Committee – Feb 15, 2012
Transportation Standing Committee – Feb 23, 2012
Executive Standing Committee – Feb 27, 2012
Environment & Sustainability Standing Committee – March 1, 2012

TO: Chairs and Members of HRM Standing Committees

Jennifer Church

SUBMITTED BY: Jennifer Church, Managing Director, Government Relations & External Affairs

DATE: January 30, 2012

SUBJECT: HRM Legislative Requests Strategy

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

- October 25, 2011 Council Information Report “2011-12 Government Relations Priority Areas”

BACKGROUND

HRM has a backlog of approximately 30 outstanding legislative amendment requests before the Provincial government, dating back as far as 2006. In an effort to increase the number of requests passed by the Legislature, HRM has been altering the way it advocates for legislative amendments by taking a more pro-active approach. In keeping with the coordinated approach to government relations outlined in the October 2011 report referenced above, HRM is focusing on amendments that achieve key strategic priorities with long-term impact – in particular, the Regional Centre and economic development, which represent two of HRM’s top government relations priorities. HRM has developed a package of related amendments, which address economic development objectives of both the HRM and Provincial governments. This will help focus attention on some of HRM’s key requests rather than pursuing a number of unrelated issues, and have a greater overall impact on municipal functions.

DISCUSSION

A comprehensive legislation package has been developed which brings together ten amendment requests that would strengthen the Regional Centre and support the objectives of both the HRM Economic Strategy and Provincial JobsHere strategy. With 42% of the population and 46% of the provincial economy, HRM has the ability to help the Province achieve its economic goals to a significant degree. Our 2011-16 Economic Strategy was developed in close consultation with the NS Department of Economic & Rural Development and Tourism and is intended to be implemented in conjunction with JobsHere in order to achieve maximum outcomes.

There have been several reports in the last two years that confirm the importance of urban centres to regional economies as a whole. This is particularly true for HRM and Nova Scotia. Both Donald Savoie and Elizabeth Beale in their 2010 and 2009 reports to the Provincial government state that Nova Scotia's economic success depends in large part on Halifax, due to its influence over the provincial economy. Furthermore, in Halifax 70% of jobs are within a 5 km radius of City Hall. Every one of our key economic sectors have a presence in the urban core: universities, finance, government, shipbuilding, medical and ocean sciences, the Port, culture, entertainment and tourism. Downtown is the very heart of our economic engine. Strengthening the downtown and Regional Centre is the focus of HRM's Economic Strategy, the Corporate Plan's Economic Prosperity outcome area, the Capital Ideas approach to development, and the Regional Plan.

The Regional Centre and economic development themes were chosen because of their alignment with HRM's 2011-12 Government Relations priorities and with provincial priority focus areas – particularly economic development. It is also an area where there were a significant number of outstanding legislative requests.

The Regional Centre and economic development are two of Council's four government relations priority areas for 2011-12. To maximize economic opportunities, HRM needs the ability to strengthen the Regional Centre. The legislative request package being put forward for the upcoming Spring session focuses on tools HRM needs to attract people, business and investment, encourage densification and sustainability, and strengthen local governance. Some of them, such as density bonusing and Capital Cost Contributions, are a key part of the Regional Plan Review currently underway. A complete list of the ten amendments is attached to this report.

In addition to taking a more strategic approach with regards to the amendments put forward at the Spring session, HRM is also developing an advocacy strategy that will raise the profile of its legislative requests with Provincial representatives and with community stakeholders. It includes opportunities for HRM to engage partners and advocate for HRM's amendment requests. Standing Committee chairs may want to review the package of amendment requests attached and engage their provincial counterparts to encourage their support. Briefing materials will be available to support Mayor and members of Council in supporting these efforts. Key facts that support HRM's requests for its legislative amendments that support economic development and the Regional Centre include:

- Strengthening the economy and growing the population are key priorities for both HRM and the Province.
- HRM is 42% of Nova Scotia's population and generates 46% of its economy
- HRM has a vital role to play in Nova Scotia's economic objectives and outcomes
- 70% of the jobs in HRM are within a 5 km radius of City Hall. The Regional Centre is the economic engine of our municipality and province, and measures that strengthen it will create benefits for all.
- HRM is committed to enhancing the attractiveness of the Regional Centre to both people and business through densification, sustainable growth and quality community design.
- To do this, HRM needs the tools to encourage affordable housing, beautification, utilization of existing infrastructure, diverse communities and strengthened local governance.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

None

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

An engagement strategy is being undertaken as described in this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Spring 2012 HRM Legislative Amendment Requests

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490-3677
