

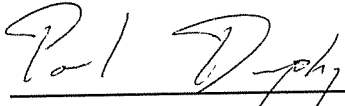
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**Halifax Regional Council**  
**June 12, 2007**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

**DATE:** May 4, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Physical Activity Strategy

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Staff.

## **BACKGROUND**

Physical activity and participation in recreation are key to the overall well being of youth and adults in HRM. Citizens who incorporate physical activity into their daily lives experience many personal wellness and social benefits. Involvement in physical activity can introduce youth to important life skills such as teamwork, self discipline, confidence and improved self esteem.

“Physical inactivity is the leading cause of preventable death in Canada. The total economic burden of physical inactivity in HRM is estimated at over \$68 million per year.”<sup>1</sup> This amounts to \$180 per person. In addition, self reported data from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) for ages 12 and over indicate that nearly half of HRM residents are inactive. The provincial Physical Activity Levels of Children and Youth (PACY) study also show low rates of activity, especially for adolescents.

The magnitude of this problem makes the formation of strategic alliances throughout HRM a matter of practical necessity to address this issue. To this end, representatives from key stakeholder organizations who are pursuing various initiatives in the area of physical activity met to discuss the formation of a physical activity strategy for HRM. These agencies included:

- HRM Community Recreation Services
- Capital District Health Authority
- Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion & Protection
- Heart & Stroke Foundation

As the concept of developing a HRM Physical Activity Strategy evolved, other partners have joined the team including:

- IWK Health Centre
- Dalhousie University: Community Health & Epidemiology
- Halifax Regional School Board
- Sport Nova Scotia

### **Goal of the Committee:**

The partners committed to developing a comprehensive community wide physical activity strategy to increase the number of HRM residents incorporating active living into their daily lives. It will be cooperative and collaborative effort between multiple organizations that have an interest and the mandate to encourage healthy, vibrant and physically active residents in HRM.

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<sup>1</sup>Walker S., Coleman R., (2004). The Cost of Physical Inactivity in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

Evidence indicates that the most effective interventions to increase physical activity at the community level are those that are comprehensive, integrated, multi disciplinary, and multi level targeting individuals, communities, physical and social environments and policies<sup>2</sup>. This requires key stakeholders such as education, health, municipal and provincial governments and others to work in partnership toward this common goal.

## **DISCUSSION**

HRM can influence the development of Active Healthy Communities on many fronts including:

- a) supporting programming that promotes active living
- b) fostering collaboration and information sharing
- c) supporting pedestrian oriented transportation facilities and services
- d) supporting active living land use planning and development
- e) encouraging healthy school sites, facilities, joint use policies
- f) supporting recreation facilities, park and trail development
- g) enabling safety, security and crime prevention (to encourage citizens to be outside and active)
- h) identifying and creating active living funding sources
- i) supporting youth development
- j) supporting employee wellness

Urban planning offers excellent opportunities to increase chances for the physical activity of residents by making walking or cycling viable alternatives to motorized transportation and by providing access to sports and recreation facilities. A recent study conducted in Atlanta, Georgia found that availability and connectedness of neighbourhoods are strongly associated with a decrease in the risk of obesity while increased time spent in a car is associated with increasing risk of obesity.

Everyday, Recreation, Planning and Development, Parks, Economic and Community Development staff make decisions that affect opportunities for active living. For example, how neighbourhoods are designed and how new streets and sidewalks are built all affect HRM resident's ability to engage in routine active living. Municipal staff are also well positioned to develop alliances with the many other organizations and service providers to develop this comprehensive strategy.

## **Focus of the Plan**

The plan will include such broad categories as:

- a) education and awareness

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<sup>2</sup> Raine, K. (2004) Overweight & Obesity in Canada: A population Perspective. Canadian Institute for Health Information.

- b) communication and social marketing
- c) supporting programming and facilities that promotes active living
- d) fostering collaboration and partnerships
- e) policy development
- f) measurement and evaluation

The role of HRM will include encouraging and promoting active living and to focus initiatives on youth. It is important to engage youth and to work towards reversing the trend of youth inactivity and obesity in HRM.

### **Benefits of a Comprehensive Physical Activity Strategy**

Communities that support active living gain health and wellness benefits, economic advantages and improved quality of life. There is growing demand across the nation for active living communities. People want to live in places where they are able to be active.

Regular physical activity improves behavioural development in children and adolescents and helps maintain function and preserve independence in older adults. It builds character, adds vitality and creates increased social opportunities for individuals, families and communities. The investment for HRM youth includes engaging youth in decision making and promoting positive youth experiences. Active living opportunities will help to cultivate active, productive and contributing youth throughout HRM.

The project is in the infancy stages with the seven partner organizations signing the Memorandum of Understanding on April 30, 2007 to work together and contribute staff resources. It is an outstanding example of collaboration among several agencies working towards a common vision. The primary source of funding is through a Fellowship Grant through Capital Health. HRM is committing a portion of a grant position, in conjunction with Department of Health Promotion and Prevention.

Staff will keep Regional Council apprised of the advancements of this strategy.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None at this time.

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

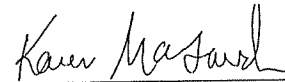
This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared and Approved by :



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