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

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Sharon Bond  
Sharon Bond, Acting Director, Community Development

**DATE:** June 4, 2007

**SUBJECT:** **HRM's Youth Advocate Program**

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### **INFORMATION REPORT**

#### **ORIGIN**

This report originates from staff.

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

Council has identified youth as one of its primary areas of focus. Over the last year HRM has launched a number of new initiatives aimed at empowering, engaging and improving youth related services. These initiatives include the Youth Governance Model, the Youth Community Art Project, Youth Web Page and the Youth Engagement Tool Kit. Additionally, HRM continues to collaborate with youth organizations and service providers, such as Heartwood, to build on these efforts and to partner on new initiatives that promote and support community-based youth development.

### **A) Proposed Intervention Strategy for At-Risk-Youth in HRM**

The issue of youth-at-risk is complex and poses unique challenges requiring a much more specialised strategy than the type of initiatives outlined above. Specifically, research suggests that in order to be successful in preventing youth-at-risk from engaging in criminal and gang related activities, intervention must begin at grade 4-9. Furthermore, research confirms that the existence of certain risk factors will increase the chances of youth developing behaviour problems that may lead to delinquency, crime, and violence. It is these very risk factors that HRM must begin to tackle. Such factors can be generally categorised into the following four themes:

- (1) **community** (e.g., availability of drugs, firearms, media portrayals of violence, transitions and mobility, community disorganization, extreme economic deprivation);
- (2) **family** (e.g., family history of problem behaviours, family management problems, favourable parental attitudes toward and involvement in criminal behaviour);
- (3) **school** (e.g., early and persistent antisocial behaviour, academic failure in elementary school, lack of commitment to school); and
- (4) **individual and peer risk factors** (e.g., alienation, rebelliousness, lack of bonding to society, friends who engage in problem behaviours, and factors that have a biological or physiological foundation).

### **B) HRM's Proposal**

Recognizing these challenges, HRM is proposing to launch an intervention strategy targeting youth at the Elementary school age (grades 4-9). The strategy aims to identify risk factors and design program strategies to address them. Because the family is a key factor, the primary area of work of this project will build on the youth and families strengths. Additionally, the program design will be

- targeted for the specific population;
- individualized as much as possible;
- incorporate support for the youth and family;
- focus on life skills development; and
- involve multiple agencies and resources.

### **C) Youth Gang Prevention Fund (YGPF)**

In support of the intervention strategy, HRM has made application to the Youth Gang Prevention Fund (YGPF). This is a new program managed by the National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC), that focuses on preventing youth from engaging in gang related activities, anti-social and criminal

behaviours in the target age groups. It supports the development and implementation of tailored interventions aimed at youth who are at risk of joining gangs.

HRM is expecting a decision in the very near future.

**D) HRM's Role**

If successful, HRM's Community Relations division will oversee the management and implementation of HRM's Youth Advocacy Program. Recognizing the importance of working collaboratively, Community Relations staff will facilitate a steering committee and local community advisory committees to support and oversee the program. These groups will include representatives of all youth serving agencies in HRM.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None

**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/agenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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