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Item No. 3

Halifax Regional Council
October 7, 2008

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Church

Jennifer Church, Managing Director, External & Corporate Affairs

DATE: October 1, 2008

SUBJECT: HRM Legislative Requests Strategy

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

August 5, 2008 report to Regional Council on the “2008-09 Government Relations & Strategic Partnership Development Priority Action Areas” indicated that staff would give a presentation to Committee of the Whole on the legislative amendments HRM is requesting for Fall 2008.

The September 9, 2008, Committee of the Whole presentation on “Legislative Requests Strategy” was deferred. This information report will replace the presentation.

The Nova Scotia House of Assembly is scheduled to open on October 30, 2008.

BACKGROUND

In October 2006, Council approved HRM's first "*Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy*," designed to increase the effectiveness of the municipality's relations with other levels of government and community partners. Its' three aims are relationship and partnership building, advancement of HRM's priority issues, and collaborative issue resolution. Using this, HRM has built a strong foundation with our partners. Our successes over the past two years have laid the groundwork for achieving more targeted goals.

An increased focus on HRM's legislation needs is a specific goal that has been identified. The number of amendments HRM requests each year has been growing, with 34 requested amendments currently outstanding. It is evident that with the increasing number of requests going forward, priorities need to be set that target efforts towards getting specific amendments through the Legislature. A concentrated strategy based on the Government Relations Plan principles has been developed to ensure passage of some key requests this Fall.

This legislative amendment strategy is a part of broader government relations work that HRM staff undertakes. As issues and opportunities arise staff is always considering ways to further enhance HRM's advocacy work.

DISCUSSION

Although HRM has many outstanding requests, there are two key pieces that if passed will enable us to proceed on a number of points. The Charter and HRMbyDesign will have significant effect on HRM's current priorities and HRMbyDesign legislation is the most pressing in terms of enabling us to proceed with our Regional Plan. The need for a Charter is demonstrated by the sheer number and breadth of topics for which HRM is requesting amendments . The capacity to deal with these issues would greatly improve HRM's ability to effectively oversee its own affairs and responsibilities.

Our approach focuses on reaching our key audiences, including political leaders and government officials, affected stakeholders and community leaders, and any other interested parties and influencers.

HRM staff and elected officials are undertaking meetings, briefings, presentations and letters with their counterparts. These measures give those in the target audiences opportunities to raise any concerns and allows HRM to ensure its message is clearly disseminated and understood. The intent is to ensure all parties involved have a solid understanding of what HRM is requesting and benefits of the legislation. We are also seeking public support for the legislative amendments as appropriate.

In addition to these activities, there is ongoing monitoring of items which might impact the legislation, such as the status of the minority government, trends in government thinking and approaches to issues, and monitoring of ministerial statements and media coverage. Having timely knowledge of these issues allows the strategy to be adjusted to reflect any emerging trends or statements.

Actions to date include:

- Creation of a corporate briefing package;
- Meetings with key stakeholders;
- Caucus briefings with both the opposition parties;
- Meetings between elected officials; and
- Media pieces in the Chronicle Herald and Business Voice magazine.

The Legislature is scheduled to open on October 30. At that time HRM staff will schedule a presentation to the Law Amendments Committee. We continue to encourage other interested agencies to participate as well. The Urban Design Task Force also plans to meet with key heritage advocates in HRM to discuss the HRMbyDesign process.

In addition to the concentrated efforts around HRMbyDesign and the Charter, every opportunity is being optimized to advocate for all of HRM's outstanding requests. A booklet has been put together with information on amendments requested to date, and has been distributed at meetings with provincial colleagues.

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

N/a

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.

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