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Item No. 1

**Halifax Regional Council
March 31, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Dunphy", written over a horizontal line.

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Dunphy, Director, Community Development

DATE: March 9, 2009

SUBJECT: HRM Newcomers Guide Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

Release of HRM Newcomers Guide in January 2009.

BACKGROUND

In 2005 HRM adopted an Immigration Action Plan. In that Plan, a number of actions were set out as short-term and long-term goals that aimed to increase the participation and involvement of newcomers in the community. One of these goals was the development of a "Newcomer's Guide to HRM." This Guide was developed in conjunction with the Greater Halifax Partnership (GHP) using funding from the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration.

DISCUSSION

The Newcomer's Guide is an information tool designed to welcome newcomers, specifically new permanent residents, to HRM. Information on programs, services, resources as well as general information about HRM is organized around three key themes of Live, Work and Play. The Guide seeks to inform newcomers about some of the key settlement services available, and focus on opportunities for full participation in the life of HRM and its many communities. GHP will also use the guide to promote HRM as a destination for new immigrants.

The Guide was printed in January 2009. Councillors were informed of its release in the January 30, 2009 CAO Weekly Update email, and copies were sent to settlement agencies throughout HRM. The distribution strategy for the guide includes a mail-out to all of the key agencies and organizations working with new immigrants, universities and colleges, distribution through HRM libraries, customer service centres and the HRM call centre. The guide will be promoted at community events for newcomers and it is also available online at <http://www.halifax.ca/newcomers/NewcomersGuide.html>. Rack cards and posters have been printed that provide a link to the www.halifax.ca/newcomers website and key municipal services.

In order to raise the profile of the Newcomer's Guide and HRM's interest in building community partnerships, a small launch event is being organized for April 8 in Halifax Hall, to which all Councillors have been invited. Community stakeholders involved with immigration and settlement services have been invited, including the Provincial Office of Immigration, GHP, the Chamber of Commerce, Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, federal government representatives and community service providers such as MISA, HILC, YMCA, and MILS among others. The goal is to raise the profile of immigration-related services HRM offers (detailed in Appendix A: HRM Immigration Initiatives Inventory), and to engage with other service providers on an informal level to discuss ways in which we can assist each other. Staff also wish to pursue ways in which immigration-related initiatives can tie into the Chamber's Economic Strategy Scorecard benchmarks.

A recommendation report on Immigration in general will come to Council in the near future, regarding the implementation of the Immigration Action Plan Phase 2 deliverables.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Costs for the production of the guide and the reception have been accommodated within existing budgets.

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

Appendix A: HRM Immigration Initiatives Inventory

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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Report Approved by: Andrew Whittemore, Manager, Community Relations & Cultural Affairs, 490-1585

APPENDIX A

HRM Immigration Initiatives Inventory January 2009

HRM has two roles in regards to immigration-related initiatives: one is as an employer of choice, and the other is as a community leader and provider of settlement services.

Employer of Choice Initiatives (HR lead)

- HR and HRM Diversity Consultant arrange six-week work terms within HRM business units for immigrants. Applicants are referred to the program through MISA.
- Participation in career fairs
- Conducting mock interviews at MISA
- Cultural competency training for BUs when requested
- Organizing the annual Diversity Fair - this invited outside cultural groups to present to HRM employees for the first time in 2008, and was the largest event yet

Settlement Service Provider Initiatives (Community Development lead)

- Oversight of the HRM Newcomer's Guide
- The "Step Up to Leadership Program", meant to develop new leaders in the community and increase volunteerism
- Board and volunteer training to individual organizations representing or serving newcomers.
- Neighbourhood bus tours for newcomers to the community - this is a service that could be expanded (currently happens twice each year)
- Joint presentation with MISA at HRM's recent Volunteer Conference
- Welcoming events in partnership with MISA and Welcoming Community Committee (4 supperNOVAs per year and the International BBQ and Potluck)
- Development of a "How to be a Welcoming Neighbour" insert in the GNGN tool-kit
- Development of an MOU with MISA and HILC to solidify the current partnership
- Support to the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women of Canada pilot project in Halifax, including a graduation ceremony held at Halifax Hall

Education (Halifax Public Libraries Lead)

- Volunteer ESL for Adults offered at six different branches
- Variety of educational and cultural programs as advertised through the Library Catalogue (e.g. computer classes pilot, African Heritage Month).

Employment Initiatives (GHP lead)

In addition to the above programs and services directly overseen by HRM, GHP is a partner that implements programs related to employment for newcomers. Its primary role is to increase awareness among employers, and change the perception among employers that may be unaware or resistant to hiring immigrants. It offers the following programs and services:

- SMART Business - meeting one-on-one with employers to let them know about existing services available to employers interested in hiring immigrants
- "Hire an Immigrant" ad campaign - includes a call to action website which will be populated over the next 2-3 months
- Working on career fairs for employers - one held in conjunction with the Province in October 2008 which was very successful
- Information sessions for different sectors on hiring immigrants, particularly aimed at those interested in selling their business and/or succession planning
- Work on the annual Welcoming Communities picnic/BBQ
- GHP is an Office of Immigration mandated organization to provide screening for Community Identified Stream applicants under the Nova Scotia Nominee Program.

GHP is also developing the Immigrant Connector Program, which connects newcomers to one person for an initial introduction. That person then introduces the newcomer to three other people, each of whom do the same, and so forth. This is aimed at building a network for individual newcomers.