


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

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
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Wayne Anstey, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** July 23, 2009

**SUBJECT:** 2009-10 Government Relation Priority Areas

**ORIGIN**

- On October 10, 2006, Regional Council approved HRM's Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy, along with a set of priority action areas (moved by Councillor Mosher and seconded by Councillor Younger).
- On August 5, 2008, Regional Council approved an updated set of government relations priority action areas for 2008-09 (August 5, 2008, moved by Councillor Sloane and seconded by Councillor McCluskey)
- In January 2009, Regional Council approved a new set of Council Focus Areas, which set the priorities and work for HRM (January 20, 2009, moved by Councillor Walker and seconded by Councillor Wile).
- On June 30, 2009, Regional Council received an information report on the 2008-09 Government Relations Priority Areas and progress made under each. The report also indicated new priority areas reflecting the new Council Focus Areas and taking into account the new Provincial government, would come before Council this summer for approval.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council approve the 2009-10 Government Relations priority action areas.

## **BACKGROUND**

On October 10, 2006, Council approved HRM's first "Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy"(Appendix A), designed to increase the effectiveness of the municipality's relations with other levels of government and community partners. Its' three aims were relationship and partnership building; advancing HRM's priority issues, and collaborative issue resolution. Since implementing the Government Relations Policy, HRM has seen a growing number of collaborative projects and improved communication between its officials, the provincial and federal governments, and community stakeholders. Some examples of the benefits to HRM include:

- A number of requested legislative amendments - the Charter and HRMbyDesign legislation passed in Fall 2008 are of particular note
- Increased funding for public safety and police officers under the Boots on the Street program
- Cost-shared funding for several road construction projects
- A greater voice in infrastructure and environmental consultations
- Regular meetings between municipal and provincial representatives at both the political and staff level that assist in planning and issue resolution.

The Policy Statement does not change from year to year. However, specific action areas are periodically updated to reflect progress made and shifting Council priorities. This year's priority areas also take into consideration the new issues and opportunities HRM may encounter due to the new Provincial government. As such, some priority action areas listed under a CFA may not be specifically related to its deliverables, but rather its general theme.

## **DISCUSSION**

An update on progress made on the 2008-09 Government Relations (GR) priority action areas went to Council on June 30, 2009. Those priority areas were based around the former Council Focus Areas (CFAs) and issues that were related to the Provincial government's situation at the time. In order to focus GR efforts on areas that will bring the greatest benefit to HRM, the priority action areas have been updated to reflect the new CFAs adopted in January 2009.

These priority areas are not all-inclusive, as activities may change depending on actions & priorities of other levels of government. Rather they are a guide as to what HRM would like to accomplish during the coming year in its discussions with external partners, and are informed by unit business plans. It is also important to note that these areas are not prioritized. Attention to each area is added as required, and new areas may arise depending on external factors and the actions of the Provincial and Federal governments.

When approved, the final version of the attached document will be included as part of the "HRM Corporate Initiatives" booklet which articulates HRM's priorities and goals for external stakeholders.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

No budget implications at this time. Any future budget needs would be articulated through the 2010-11 business planning and budget process.

**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.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Council could revise the priority action areas to include other key areas. This would result in the addition of priorities outside of the existing Council Focus Areas and HRM Strategic Initiatives.

Council could choose not to approve the updated priority action areas. Staff would then continue to use the existing action areas; however these are based around the former Council Focus Areas, and so might lessen the priority given to current CFAs during intergovernmental discussions.


**ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A: HRM's Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy  
Appendix B: HRM Government Relations Priority Areas 2009-10

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:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Church, Managing Director, External & Corporate Affairs, 490-3677

**HRM Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development**

**Background**

Cooperation and partnerships with provincial and federal governments and community partners will enable HRM to better achieve community goals.

Today more than ever there is a strong linkage required and developing between municipal, provincial and federal governments. Intergovernmental and partner cooperation and relationship building is key to ensuring success at meeting citizen needs and providing effective and efficient public service.

There is only one citizen, one tax payer, and governments have a shared accountability for public service to the citizen. However, each level of government maintains a different responsibility and mandate for specific services and methods of provision. As well, nongovernmental organizations have an important role to play.

Understanding the authority and responsibility of each level of government is key to understanding how to effectively implement government relations and to developing effective intergovernmental relationships. The level of authority and jurisdiction sets the parameters under which each partner can participate. Maximizing the benefits of the different responsibility areas and coordinating the activities around each will enhance service to the public.

Municipal governments are at the closest point of intersection to the community and the citizen. In Nova Scotia, the municipal mandate, roles and responsibilities are set out in the provincial Municipal Government Act (MGA). Municipalities have no legislative or legal authority beyond the MGA. However, the growing significance of local governments in an urbanized country is slowly being recognized.

The Provincial and Federal governments are adapting to the growing significance of municipalities as is evidenced by various recent programs and initiatives. Municipalities need to capitalize on the opportunity and work together with our government (and non-government) partners to further common objectives.

There will continue to be interdependence between the three levels of government, as such; the final form of the relationship between the levels and the amount of focus on municipal interest will continue to be fluid. Much depends on the senior governments, but local governments must also make every effort to articulate their views in a respectful, consistent and assertive fashion.

Strong intergovernmental relationships provide an opportunity to develop mutually-beneficial partnerships and to shape public policy for the benefit of the citizen. Flexible and cooperative partnerships, based on trust, are required. Accountability and jurisdiction are a reality, but do not have to be a barrier to effective relationships and arrangements.

## **Introduction**

HRM's *Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy* is intended to advance relationship building and outcome achievement. The policy sets out guiding principles for interaction with key partners. The policy focuses on other government and non-government partners who all have a role in achieving results for the benefit of HRM's citizens. Actions are identified and forwarded based on Council direction and corporate strategies

Effective government relations requires understanding the process of how government decisions are made, being proactive, participating, educating, and building relationships with individuals who will impact the outcome. To achieve a goal, it is important to deliver the right message, to the right person, at the right time.

HRM's *Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development Policy* articulates the roles and responsibilities of Mayor, Council and staff in intergovernmental affairs and strategic partnership development. The outcomes are toward: relationship and partnership building, advancing key priority issues and issue resolution.

## **Policy Statement**

In developing government and partner relationships, HRM is committed to a series of principles that will guide all actions and activity undertaken with respect to achieving results.

In HRM, Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development will:

- be consistent with Vision and Goals of HRM
- be consistent with corporate strategies
- support integration and facilitate communication
- foster consistent messaging throughout HRM
- understand and respect jurisdictional boundaries

In undertaking actions related to government and partner relations, HRM will:

- be open, honest, and transparent

- provide credible, reliable, factual information
- be proactive
- seek collaborative solutions and approaches
- utilize media opportunities effectively and appropriately
- agree to shared goals with partners

## **Outcomes**

There are three key long-term outcomes of government and partner relationship development. These outcomes are maintained cross issue or initiative, and are not focused towards any one specific area. Over time, the following outcomes should be realized and maintained through ongoing commitment:

- Relationship and partnership building
- Advancement of HRM's priority issues
- Collaborative issue resolution

On a more regular basis, specific issue driven goals will be developed. These goals will be more specific and have a shortened time frame for realization. Such goals will relate more to specific actions to be carried out on an annual basis. Goals such as increased access to infrastructure funding, or legislative changes to meet HRM's needs may be articulated. Items such as these are articulated in the annual *Priority Action Areas*.

## **Governance**

Government Relations and Strategic Partnership Development will be administered across the organization. Mayor, Council and all staff have a role to play in ensuring its success.

The focus is on matters of public policy, corporate strategy and/or Council direction. Implementation will be representative of HRM's organizational priorities and needs.

A fundamental role of Halifax Regional Council is to discuss and approve key areas of focus requiring attention. Coordinated and consistent political influence will be required to effectively achieve desired results in areas such as relationship building, new program development, accessing funding and seeking legislative change.

Political participation will focus on arising issues; on issues that have potential to impact on HRM and the citizens of the region. New items requiring action will be brought forward through Council. Emerging issues or areas with significant media and political attention may be identified for action. In such cases, staff

support will be provided to initiatives as directed by Council to ensure continuity and resolution.

Halifax Regional Council has ultimate authority in approving any agreements with other agencies that involves sharing the authority and resources of the organization.

Administration and support is provided through the Chief Administrative Office. Responsibility and corporate coordination is within the Chief Administrative Office. As well, strategic and corporate relations will remain with the Chief Administrative Office and Senior Staff as directed by the CAO. Relationship building and partnership development will be carried out by all staff, on an on-going basis. The principles and goals will guide all interaction with other government and community partners.

This administration role is based on two key areas of need: strategic and operational.

The strategic focus is based on the direction provided by Council, and encompasses areas of common interest, goals and objectives between HRM and the partner organizations. The strategic focus is led by the CAO.

The operational focus is based on key issues or needs from an operational or day to day functioning perspective. The operational focus is led by the business units, in conjunction with the Chief Administrative Office.

### **Priority Action Areas**

Yearly priority action areas, for government and partnership relations are developed for Council review and approval. Areas identified will be based on Council direction, business plan priorities and CAO goals and objectives. Other specific activities will be incorporated as required for the implementation of Corporate Strategies or Plans (such as the Regional Plan, Economic Strategy or Cultural Plan).

### **Work Plan**

A work plan will be developed and monitored yearly to assist with implementation and monitoring of Council directions. The work plan will consist of key to enable the achievement of outcomes and priority areas noted. A yearly review will be completed to comment on activity undertaken and success of implementation.

Approved by Regional Council October 2006

For more information contact HRM Intergovernmental Affairs, 490-3677

## HRM Strategic Initiatives

### Introduction

The Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to realizing a vision that fosters a community where people love to live, work, learn, play and do business. HRM's 20/20 Visioning exercise created a statement to this effect, which provides the basis for our Goals and Corporate Direction.

*"HRM is a vibrant, caring, and connected community. Our community is built upon diverse cultures, respects the environment and our heritage, supports economic prosperity, and celebrates active citizenship. This vision is based on citizen values that speak to communities working together, economic prosperity as the backbone of a successful community, responsible active citizenship, social justice for all, protecting our natural environment, preserving our heritage strength through diversity, and dedication to a learning culture."*

(Council endorsed October 3, 2000)

HRM came into existence in 1996 as the result of the amalgamation of the former cities of Halifax, Dartmouth, the Town of Bedford and the former County of Halifax. Ours was one of the first of the many municipal amalgamations that took place across the country in the 1990s.

As a regional municipality, we have a rich history and culture. We are unique in many respects. We are Canada's largest municipality, covering more than 5,600 square kilometres, an area larger than the Province of Prince Edward Island. Unlike many other urbanized municipalities, we have a very large rural area.

Halifax continues to serve as the capital city of the Atlantic Provinces. It has a strong and diverse economy. It has one of the largest deepwater, ice-free ports in the world and is one of the top three ports in Canada in terms of traffic, which it handles through its inter-modal facilities. It is the regional centre for government, post-secondary education, research and development, medical and health services and the financial and business community. The Conference Board of Canada has recognized HRM's economy as one of the most stable in the country during the current global financial unrest. As HRM's economy expands and reaches its potential, the benefits are felt across all of Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada



## **Government Relations Priority Areas 2009-10**

Following HRM's Government Relations & Strategic Partnership Development Policy, priority action areas are developed and reviewed regularly based on Council direction, Corporate Strategies or Plans, CAO goals and objectives, and business plan priorities.

The areas below describe HRM's Council Focus Areas and Strategic Initiatives, and include government relations priority areas for 2009-10. The following does not prioritize actions, initiatives or requirements; rather it provides a sense of the areas that are being or need to be coordinated with other levels of government. The priority action areas are not an all-inclusive account of necessary activities. Focus will be added in different areas as required. In addition, some priority action areas listed under a CFA may not be specifically related to its deliverables, but rather its general theme.

### **I) Council Focus Areas**

Council Focus Areas are the result of a regional strategic priority-setting exercise and an articulation of the areas Council believe require specific and focused attention during its term. The purpose of the Council Focus Areas (CFAs) is to provide direction during HRM's annual budget and business-planning process, and ensuring investments achieve desired outcomes for citizens. The CFAs guide resource allocation and consensus-building, facilitate performance reporting and measurement, and are supported by corporate strategies.

Regional Council approved the current five CFAs in January 2009. The areas represent multi-year issues, with priority projects reflected annually in budget and business plans. Council also directed that environmental sustainability and physical accessibility be considerations in all initiatives.

a) Transportation

The outcome sought for the Transportation CFA is the development of a wide range of well-planned, affordable, accessible and efficient multi-modal transportation options for citizens, and transportation networks that allow the easy flow of people, goods and services throughout the Municipality.

A growing municipality requires a strong vision to manage traffic movements, strategically improve and expand roadways and transit service, and encourage alternate modes of transportation such as walking and car-pooling. An effective regional transportation system links people and communities with each other and the goods, services and employment opportunities they seek. It does this in an environmentally sensitive and fiscally responsible manner. It offers a choice of interconnected travel modes and forms a powerful tool for shaping future development. New investments in infrastructure and services should be strategically planned in conjunction with land use, coordinated between all levels of government and in consultation with the community. To this end, Council has set out goals in three key areas: Transit Enhancements, Active Transportation, and Transportation Planning.

This issue has been a focus for Council for several years and is a key consideration in the Regional Plan. There has been much work done in the past several years on improving Transportation; however its approval as a stand-alone CFA indicates the high level of importance Council places on enhancing the transportation system across the Municipality.

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Pursue increased funding opportunities for transportation, transit projects and public transit
  - Advocate specifically for renewed commitment to existing federal public transit funding programs and expansion of current programs
  - Advocate for additional operating transit funding in various forms (e.g., new Provincial grants or programs, elimination of bridge tolls for transit, etc)
- Extend the Harbour Ferry network
- Continue work with the Strategic Joint Regional Transportation Planning Committee to coordinate the development and implementation of strategic transportation projects
- Advocate for the establishment of a Capital Transportation Authority (CTA)
- Work to align both the Provincial Sustainable Transportation Strategy and HRM Regional Plan goals
- Continue to develop and foster partnerships with external groups that will assist HRM in leveraging its services to enhance delivery to the general public
- Work with the Province to secure necessary legislative amendments to plan and construct the Dartmouth Bridge Terminal

## b) Infrastructure

The outcome sought for the Infrastructure CFA is to build on the work underway since Infrastructure was first designated a Council Focus Area in 2006, and develop a plan to meet HRM's capital planning, asset management and infrastructure needs. There are four areas in particular with goals for the next four years:

- Community Facilities
- Improved streets, roads and sidewalk conditions
- Community Beautification
- Playground, parkland and garden improvements

HRM has made substantial progress in infrastructure planning over the past three years. A database of all HRM-owned assets has been developed – a significant accomplishment as we are now able to state precisely what we own. It includes 1740 km of roads, 59 bridges, 815 km of sidewalks, 654 parks and 340 playgrounds, 240 occupied buildings, 270 buses, and more. HRM also has a complete and up-to-date “infrastructure list” – a list outlining all HRM's outstanding infrastructure projects and their estimated costs, which is updated regularly. This list has been reconciled against the 5 year capital plan, the Regional Plan, and outcomes of Community Visioning processes. The list allows HRM to communicate its needs to other levels of government, track requests for new capability projects and shape long-range capability plans.

Council intends to continue its focus on recapitalization as the priority investment under Infrastructure, allowing HRM to improve the current condition of its assets. Maintaining aging infrastructure and expanding to meet the needs of a growing population is an ongoing challenge; however there are also more opportunities with new and increased federal funding. HRM now has the tools and information to better manage and enable more strategic decisions around infrastructure development, and is hopeful that some major projects will come to fruition in the near future.

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

*A significant issue facing HRM is accessing infrastructure funding. Protecting and leveraging infrastructure funds are our top priorities.*

- Secure federal economic stimulus funding for street and road improvements
- Secure Provincial funding for the four-pad rink complex planned to open in Bedford in 2010
- Secure funding for the new Central Library, scheduled to open in 2013, under the Building Canada Funds which represent a unique opportunity to support cultural infrastructure
- Secure Building Canada Funds for an additional Woodside Ferry
- Develop partnerships with Federal and Provincial governments to leverage funding for energy efficiency buildings and assets
- Monitor existing agreements and look for opportunities to advocate for agreement extensions that best meet the needs of HRM (e.g., the Gas Tax agreement)
- Identify funding and partnership opportunities for the redevelopment of the Cogswell Interchange

- Continue working with potential funding partners to achieve a fitting memorial for Africville
- Collaborate on the renewal of the Provincial Trunked Mobile Radio System

c) Public Safety

The outcome sought for the Public Safety CFA is to ensure citizens and visitors benefit from a safe, welcoming and resilient community.

In November 2006, Mayor Peter Kelly initiated the Mayor's Roundtable on Violence and Public Safety in HRM. While reports indicate that violent crime has been trending downwards in HRM for the past three years, residents had growing concerns that crime was escalating. An exhaustive study and report was undertaken by Don Clairmont and presented to Council. An action plan was developed by Halifax Regional Police, and supported by the RCMP, based on the recommendations in that report, and was endorsed by Council in February 2009.

Citizens depend on police and fire services to use enforcement and education to build a safe and welcoming community. However HRM recognizes there are other strategies required to be successful as well. The Municipality needs to actively engage residents, build lasting partnerships with local organizations and work cooperatively with other levels of government to address core safety and social issues.

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Continue to collaborate with Provincial Department of Justice on the further development of HRM's public safety office
- Advocate for a Municipal Court run by HRM, while continuing efforts to improve access and efficiency and reduce costs of existing court system
- Continue to build the Safe & Strong Communities initiative, a partnership between HRM, HRP, RCMP, and Provincial Departments of Community Services and Justice that works directly with neighbourhoods to address root causes of crime
  - Focus on increased collaboration with Provincial service providers a wrap-around model through the Youth Advocate Program
- Seek legislative and regulatory changes to enable Electronic Summary Offence Ticketing (ESOT)
- Continue work with Province on pilot project enabling photo radar for speeding tickets and red light camera at high-risk intersections
- Continue to build on existing partnerships with the Departments of Health and Education, Halifax Regional School Board, and private industry to expand or create opportunities to improve youth and pre-teen health & safety programs around fire and public safety
- Develop Service Level Agreement around fire service provision with Halifax International Airport Authority
- Advocate for an enhanced/enlarged firefighting training facility
- Work collaboratively in assessing the need for establishing a provincial or regional "211" human resource network

#### d) Community Planning

The outcome sought under Community Planning is to have HRM become a well-planned and engaged community characterized by a cohesive and well-communicated vision of what it needs to sustain a high quality of life. This is the overarching goal of the Regional Plan, and involves an integrated approach to service delivery from HRM, its public and private sector partners, residents and businesses. There are two main goals under the Community Planning CFA: implementation of HRMbyDesign; and ongoing implementation of the Regional Plan, which encompasses a broad range of vital initiatives such as:

- Urban planning – Communities within HRM share the benefits of region-wide growth strategies, responsive service delivery systems and recognition of distinct urban, suburban and rural identities
- Sustainability – HRM values and protects its natural resources and reduces its ecological footprint through environmental sustainability strategies that promote clean air, land and water
- Culture, recreation and leisure

The smart growth approach introduced in the Regional Plan called for centre-based development, with focused residential, employment and recreational use in the urban/community cores where infrastructure already exists. This idea of dense living capitalizes on existing infrastructure and is a pillar of HRM's approach to sustainability. The Community Visioning process, which engages residents of local neighbourhoods in outlining their vision and hopes for their community's future, is an integral part of the achieving Regional Plan goals and is already complete or underway in seven areas of HRM. Council's approval of HRMbyDesign's Downtown Plan has established clear and predictable standards and procedures for developers and members of the community, and will improve planning application processing times and the overall quality of development.

HRM's environmental sustainability is dependent on the efforts of all residents and businesses to protect the quality of the air, land and water that makes our community a clean and healthy place to live. Over the past several years, HRM has undertaken a number of projects aimed at mitigating the impact of our community on our surroundings and protecting the natural environment, such as the solid waste resource management system, energy-efficient retrofits on facilities, harbour clean-up and anti-idling bylaws.

An important characteristic for cities reporting a high quality of life is the level of recreational, cultural and lifelong learning opportunities available to the community. HRM provides accessible and affordable community-based recreation programs and services through means ranging from direct provision to partnerships with community organizations. Under the Regional Plan HRM is committed to enhancing public access to lakes, rivers and coastlines. It is also actively working with the Province to strengthen heritage conservation.

## Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Advocate for an Independent Administrator for electrical energy efficiency, a change requiring legislative amendments and broad support from customers, all the Provincial parties, and Nova Scotia Power.
- Pursue a land-use agreement with Department of National Defence regarding Shearwater
- Investigate sources of funding for streetscape programs
- Advocate for an adequate supply of affordable market housing and a mix of housing types in various development areas
- Continue to liaise with Nova Scotia Department of Environment to seek pragmatic solutions around implementation of new federal wastewater legislation (municipal effluent wastewater strategy)
- Work with the Province to maintain effective legislation and regulations currently in place around biosolids
- Enter into a joint pilot program with Nova Scotia Power to explore energy efficient street lighting options
- Implement the Community Engagement Strategy approved by Council in December 2008, which aims to improve our practices to involve residents in the development of HRM policy, programs and services
- Ensure HRM's voice continues to be heard on the Strategy Review Committee developing an implementation plan around the increased waste disposal amount legislated in the 2007 Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act
  - Advocate that the new target be revenue-neutral for HRM and other municipalities, with any financial burden being borne by industry
- Work with the Province to establish parameters around the new Compost Facility Regulations
  - Advocate for the Province to undertake a financial impact assessment of the new regulations, and work to ensure any costs for implementing the new regulations are funding by Provincial agencies

e) Governance & Communications

The outcome for this CFA is two-fold:

- Governance – to create a council and committee structure that is efficient, effective, scaled appropriately and have decisions made at the appropriate level
- Communications – enhance HRM's role as the source of information about the region's plans, priorities and growth

Legislation requires that HRM undertake a District Boundary Review every eight years. The next scheduled review is in 2010 and will include a recommendation on a Council governance structure and district boundaries. Aligned with the District Boundary Review HRM is undertaking on its own initiative looking at role of Community Councils and Committees of Council reform. The goal is to create a governance model that will allow for appropriate Council representation, efficient and effective decision making, and meaningful participation from citizens.

To support this process, and keep citizens better informed and involved, Council has directed that communications be strengthened, both internally and externally. HRM recognizes there is a need for its communications practices to grow and change along with the community. As such, a focused communications strategy has been created with emphasis on: promoting a proactive approach to positive communications while balancing the need to react to urgent and time sensitive matters, and promoting operational effectiveness in the areas of marketing, communications and public affairs. The overall goal is to establish Halifax Regional Municipality as a main source of information about the region's plans, priorities, growth and progress.

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Regular communications with Provincial and Federal colleagues about HRM priorities
- Undertake discussions with Provincial colleagues to advance HRM's legislative amendment requests through the Provincial Legislature
- Develop and implement a government relations strategy around the Provincial Pension Review Panel recommendations, specifically:
  - Eliminate the requirement to fund solvency valuation deficits for municipal pension plans
  - Discard the Panel's recommendations around funding rules and adopt the same rules in place in all other Canadian jurisdictions
- Prepare research and participate in recommendations around District Boundary Review
- Advocate for a Charter legislative amendment to allow Community Councils to resolve Community Plan amendments instead of Regional Council, a change which will support local decision making and further streamline development approvals.



## **II) Corporate Strategies**

### a) Economic Strategy

HRM is the economic hub of Atlantic Canada. It accounts for 40% of Nova Scotia's GDP and one-fifth of all economic activity in Atlantic Canada. HRM's citizens benefit from an attractive business climate and a stable, diversified economy. With its excellent location, infrastructure, business climate and quality of life, HRM is poised to expand its role as a key hub in the Atlantic Gateway, and to grow an already substantial service and knowledge-based economy. Continued emphasis on fiscal responsibility and strong partnerships with other levels of government and community partners help contribute to the economic development of the Municipality.

In 2005 HRM released the region's first economic strategy, "Strategies for Success." It identifies ways in which HRM can grow into a city that is prosperous, dynamic, creative and globally competitive, and sets out five goals to achieve this:

- HRM's bustling job market will stop our young and ambitious from leaving and make our community a magnet for highly trained immigrants and expatriates.
- HRM's investments in social and cultural infrastructure will enhance the city's persona as one of the most vibrant and unique communities on the continent.
- HRM will possess the best business climate in Canada, one able to kick-start and grow ambitious new enterprises and attract exciting companies from anywhere on the globe.
- HRM's renown as one of the continent's great cities — a beautiful, immensely liveable place that teems with history and creativity —will draw top-drawer companies and people to our community.
- Each partner in HRM's future will work in sync to propel our economy forward in a way that improves the quality of life for every citizen.

The Strategy recognizes that HRM is one of many stakeholders who must work collaboratively to promote economic growth. HRM and the regional economic development agency Greater Halifax Partnership have worked to oversee priority setting and integration of all aspects of strategy implementation. HRM acknowledges the important role of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce in ensuring ongoing commitment to the Strategy by all stakeholders, through its annual Economic Strategy Scorecard Report.

More information on the Economic Strategy is available on the web at:

<http://www.halifax.ca/economicstrategy/index.html>

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Advocate with federal and provincial governments to ensure HRM is recognized as the Hub City for Atlantic Canada, as per the Conference Board of Canada's analysis
- Assess and act on opportunities presented as part of the Atlantic Gateway initiative
- Replace both the above with: - Review governance model with the province respecting tourism, events, conventions, marketing and service delivery

- Implementation of the Convention Centre partnership agreement signed with the Province in which both parties agreed to work together to undertake all necessary due diligence and obtain all approvals and consents necessary to have a new facility constructed in downtown Halifax by January 1, 2013.
- Continue supporting the joint business relationship with Greater Halifax Partnership with respect to marketing and developing regional business parks
- Work with Business Parks groups to bring to market serviced industrial lots in line with projected demand

b) Cultural Plan

Halifax Regional Municipality has a wealth of cultural and historical resources. There are municipal and community owned cultural facilities, municipal and community cultural programs, and hundreds of arts, culture and heritage organizations whose mandates range from recreational pursuits to professional careers. The activities generated by these organizations create community vitality, enhance the local economy, and provide a rich environment for residents and visitors.

In April 2006, HRM Council approved the Municipality's first Cultural Plan, a comprehensive policy and action plan to guide investment and set priorities for Culture over ten years. The Cultural Plan serves to outline our efforts to develop workable partnerships to help incubate, develop and promote our creative community and culture, and contributes to Halifax's economy by making the Municipality an attractive, vibrant place for businesses to locate and people to visit.

Notable achievements under the Cultural Plan include HRM's first Public Art Policy; a Public Art inventory with condition assessment and restoration of several pieces; murals created under the Youth Community Art Program; implementation of the Graffiti Management Plan; and a new emphasis on developing cultural spaces in HRM's new community recreation facilities.

More information on the Cultural Plan is available on the web at:

[www.halifax.ca/culturalplan](http://www.halifax.ca/culturalplan)

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Explore opportunities with the province for new funding sources for municipal cultural development
- Access federal funding for cultural infrastructure and heritage preservation
- Explore opportunities with the province for joint collection storage and conservation facilities.

c) Immigration Action Plan

HRM plays an active role in promoting and celebrating the diverse communities and cultures within our municipality. In 2005 Halifax Regional Council adopted a vision for immigration in our region, and developed the Immigration Action Plan to set out initiatives HRM would undertake to maintain a welcoming community. As the recipient of approximately 75% of new immigrant landings to the Province, HRM's Action Plan is intended to complement the Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy while recognizing the separate municipal mandate in regards to immigration.

In 2009 HRM published its first edition of the "Newcomer's Guide to HRM," a valuable resource introducing immigrants to the municipality and outlining services available. HRM works with community partners to welcome newcomers in a number of ways, such as providing neighbourhood bus tours, participating in the annual Welcoming Communities barbeque each August, and encouraging voluntarism. The Public Library is a central point of information for newcomers, providing services such as English as a Second Language programs, computer access and training, and literacy upgrading.

More information on the Immigration Action Plan is available on the web at:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/newcomers/index.html>

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Implement service agreement with MISA outlining HRM support for Neighbourhood Bus Tours and SupperNova events and committing to ongoing collaboration and communication
- Assist with Metropolis/Dalhousie evaluation of Immigration Action Plan
- Identify partnership opportunities with Provincial Office of Immigration

#### d) Memorandums of Understanding

Over the past several years HRM has been looking to strengthen and formalize its partnerships with leading organizations in the community, with whom it works on a regular basis. One approach that has been taken is the development of corporate Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with individual organizations. The goal of HRM's corporate MOUs is to further an effective working relationship and culture of co-operation and open communication. They are a high level expression of the importance of each partner to the municipality and acknowledge the contribution each makes to HRM.

HRM now has seven corporate Memorandums of Understanding with community partners:

- Metro Universities
- Capital District Health Authority
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Halifax International Airport
- Halifax Port Authority
- Halifax Regional School Board
- Department of National Defence

Each MOU identifies mutual areas of interest between HRM and the partner organization. These are areas where collaborative work is intended to take place that could further corporate goals of both parties or improve on programs and services. Together we are able to align priorities and work together for the overall benefit of HRM citizens.

Corporate MOUs are meant to articulate a desire to work more closely together, share information and mutually support initiatives that contribute to the quality of life in HRM. Implementation for each MOU is ongoing.

### **III) Good Neighbours Great Neighbourhoods:**

This HRM-wide initiative seeks to build healthy and strong communities. By drawing on old-fashioned values central to being a good neighbour, the Good Neighbours Great Neighbourhoods (GNGN) social marketing campaign aims to:

- Increase civic pride;
- Improve the local environment; and
- Encourage residents to participate in community life.

GNGN highlights the need for a personal commitment in creating welcoming, safe, vibrant neighbourhoods where we live, work and play. Focus areas include reducing graffiti, pollution and litter, and increasing voluntarism, stewardship, participation, civic pride, acceptance of newcomers, youth engagement, and awareness of HRM/councils works.

GNGN integrates many of the valuable programs happening within HRM under a single "umbrella" so that they provide consistency in messaging, collaborative efforts, and an integrated approach to support Council's focus areas. The initiative will also seek key external partners and provide resources for neighbourhoods to mobilize from within.

More information on Good Neighbours Great Neighbourhoods is available on the web at: <http://myhrm.ca/>

Government Relations Priority Focus Areas for 2009-10:

- Continue efforts through the GNGN initiative to connect residents with each other in their communities, in an effort to create capacity for positive change.
- Continue to partner with the United Way, Metro Universities, Capital Health, HRM, RCMP and libraries on volunteer initiatives
- Provide tools, resources, internal processes and messaging that supports community building

## **Conclusion**

As a municipal government, it is our responsibility to maintain and expand the municipal services and infrastructure within our boundaries. However, we also have broader responsibilities towards the environment, the economy and the nation, as a whole. We have made considerable progress towards achieving many of our goals. Along with our Federal and Provincial partners, we hope to continue to move forward and look for new tools and funding where our issues converge, such as in sustainable planning, environmental management, economic growth, culture and green infrastructure.