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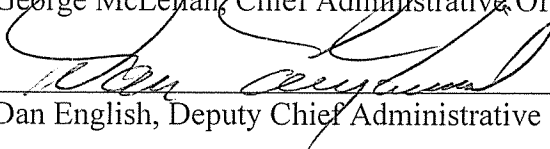
PO Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 7, 2004**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 George McLellan, Chief Administrative Officer

  
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 Dan English, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** December 3, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Preferred Alternative for Regional Plan

**ORIGIN**

The Regional Planning Committee has concluded its review of options for a Regional Plan and submitted a recommended concept to Council. This staff report has been initiated so that Council has the benefit of staff's thoughts while reviewing the proposed plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Regional Council endorse the Regional Planning Committee's proposed Regional Plan, course of action and work plan as recommended in the Committee's report of December 7, 2004.

## BACKGROUND

In February 2004, Regional Council established a Regional Planning Committee to make recommendations for a proposed Regional Plan. A Regional Planning Project team was also established to provide full time professional and administrative staff to support the Committee's work. In addition to supporting the Committee, the Project Team maintained close contact and communication with the business units who will be most responsible for implementing the plan. As a result, key business unit staff have been aware of the direction the proposed Regional Plan is taking and have been able to provide advice as required. This has ensured that upon reaching this point in the process, staff is able to endorse the Committee's recommendations for the proposed regional plan.

## DISCUSSION

### Proposed Regional Plan

Staff support the Regional Planning Committee's recommendation that Council endorse the proposed Regional Plan. Staff also supports the Committee's recommendation that work begin on developing the Regional Plan's implementation strategy. This will include, but not be limited to preparing policies, regulations, standards and phasing with respect to land use, infrastructure, transportation, financial investment and environmental protection.

Most of the Region's planning strategies were developed many years ago and therefore have not kept pace with changing public expectations and current planning practice. In addition, they are inconsistent in their approach to fundamental issues throughout the Region. Environmental protection and the level of design review are two prime examples. The proposed Plan is an opportunity to update the Municipality's approach to such issues and achieve consistency where it is justified.

The former municipalities developed their planning strategies largely, although not entirely, in isolation from their adjacent neighbours. As a result it was common for one community plan to encourage growth without taking into account the traffic impacts incurred in the adjacent municipality. In some cases, the adjacent municipality had to invest in upgrading roads. The benefits of growth (e.g. tax revenue) and the associated costs (e.g. service decline and infrastructure costs) were not considered together. This allowed one community to gain the benefits while an adjacent one experienced the costs. Of course, this situation is no longer tolerable. There is now one Council responsible for the Region's planning regime, service provision and financial well being. In addition, there is one tax payer to fund the consequences of these decisions.

Post amalgamation Council is still obliged to administer the existing planning strategies. The disconnect between the various planning strategies therefore continues to be perpetuated because Council's decisions have to be "reasonably consistent" with the applicable planning strategy. The proposed Regional Plan creates a consistent vision for the Region's growth pattern and the manner in which development will be managed. This vision provides direction for amending the various community strategies to ensure that they "talk" to each and are in *support* of each other rather than in *conflict*.

It is imperative that all major elements of managing growth in the Region are integrated. These include crucial elements such as the development pattern, roads, public transit, sanitary sewers, sewage treatment, storm water management, water service/treatment, and recreation/park facilities. Given the diversity of services and potential demands, the proposed Regional Plan provides an opportunity to prioritize long range strategic capital works investments in light of our always limited financial capacity and competing demands. This will improve the Municipality's ability to anticipate future financial needs and manage its finances. Currently, land use planning and basic services such as transportation capacity and sewage treatment capacity are not coordinated as well as they should be. The proposed Regional Plan is a significant step forward with respect to integrated planning.

### Council's Role

Development of the implementation strategy for the proposed Regional Plan during the next phase of the project requires significant effort and is critical to the Plan's success. The implementation strategy will fill in crucial details regarding the fundamental direction and basic concepts put forward in the proposed Plan. A timely decision on the Committee's proposed Regional Plan will ensure that the Committee, Project Team and business unit staff have adequate time to develop an effective strategy to implement the Regional Plan.

Endorsement of the Committee's proposed Regional Plan is a significant milestone in the process of completing the Regional Plan project, but it is also much more than that. It becomes Council's collective vision for the Region's future. As such, it will be Council's vision which the public will provide feedback on during the next round of consultation. To date the *Committee* has provided information and options to the public on Council's behalf. The Committee will continue this role. However, this current step is the beginning of *Council* making distinct choices about what the Region *will* become and what it will *not* become.

From this point forward, the proposed Regional Plan will provoke increasingly strong reactions as it moves from the general to the specific. Council has the obligation and opportunity to listen to public feedback before adopting the Plan into law. Consultation will continue to occur and culminate at the public hearing when people speak directly to the whole Council. Based upon this feedback, Council will have the opportunity to respond and make changes. However, at this stage Council should not endorse the proposed Plan lightly, based upon the expectation that it can be easily changed later in the process. If Council requires additional clarification regarding any elements of the proposed Plan, now is the time to ask questions and discuss the fundamentals.

### Future Governance of the Regional Plan

The Regional Planning Committee will continue to lead the regional planning process and preparation of the Regional Plan. While the Committee's work is not yet complete, it is not too early for Council to begin thinking about the subsequent governance structure for the multi year implementation of the Plan. This work might include prioritization of additional detailed land use planning and infrastructure construction investment. It could also include monitoring the Plan's effectiveness and recommendations for subsequent amendments. Council steering committees for the Harbour Solutions project and Solid Waste Strategy have proven to be successful models. A similar structure may prove useful for the ongoing implementation of the Regional Plan.

Scope of Regional Plan

It should be noted that the Regional Plan does not attempt to address all of the issues which are critical to the Region's welfare. The Plan primarily focuses upon those things for which the Municipality is accountable either as a service provider (e.g. transportation, sewage) or as a regulator (e.g. land use). This is not to lose sight of the fact that there is a great number of other issues which are important to the Region. These include, but not limited to, economic development, education, public health, immigration and affordable housing. Some of these are addressed in the Regional Plan to a limited extent. In order to significantly advance these and other issues however, the Municipality will have to advocate on behalf of its citizens with other levels of government. In other cases it will require the Municipality to form partnerships with or provide support to private sector and non governmental organizations.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

When the complete proposed Regional Plan is brought to Council in April of 2005, detailed financial analysis will be provided. As always, budgets will be decided by Council on a yearly basis. Endorsement of the proposed plan for purposes of detailed policy development and public feedback doesn't represent a budget commitment.

**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**

- Regional Council may endorse the Regional Planning Committee's draft Regional Plan and direct the Committee to proceed to develop implementation policy and continued public consultation. This is the recommended course of action.
- Regional Council may direct the Regional Planning Committee to produce a different plan. This alternative isn't recommended. If Council chooses this course of action, they should provide direction to the Committee as to what changes they wish made. This may also include changes to the Plan's Principles and Goals.

**ATTACHMENTS**

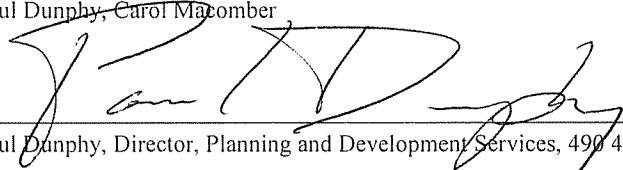
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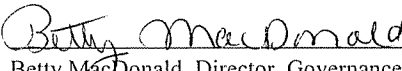
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

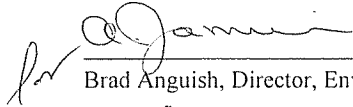
Report Prepared by:


Paul Dunphy, Carol Macomber

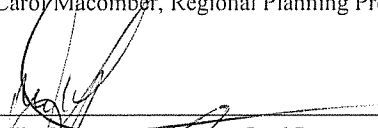
Report Approved by:

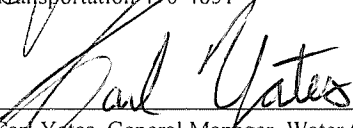
  
Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning and Development Services, 490 4933

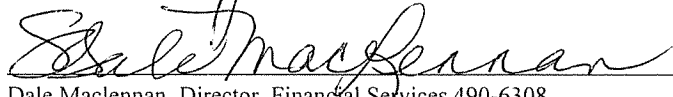
  
Betty MacDonald, Director, Governance and Strategic Initiatives, 490 4769

  
Brad Anguish, Director, Environmental Services, 490-4825

  
Carol Macomber, Regional Planning Project Manager, 490-5908

  
Mike Labreque, Director, Real Property Asset Management/Acting Director of Public Works and Transportation 490-4851

  
Carl Yates, General Manager, Water Commission 490-4840

  
Dale MacLennan, Director, Financial Services 490-6308