


**Item No. 11.1.2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 6, 2012**

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original signed by   
Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** February 21, 2012

**SUBJECT:** Withdrawal from Municipal Election Reserve Q313

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**ORIGIN**

Regional Council is required to approve all withdrawals from the Municipal Election Reserve Account Q313.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council

1) Approve the withdrawal of \$25,000 from the Municipal Election Reserve Account Q313 to Election Operating Account A125 in fiscal 2011/2012 to cover expenses to be incurred in regard to the 2012 Municipal Election during this fiscal year.

**BACKGROUND**

Municipal elections occur every four (4) years. The next municipal election is in October 2012. HRM budgets for the cost of conducting the election through annual contributions to the Municipal Election Reserve Account Q313. The reserve policy requires that Regional Council approve all withdrawals from the Election Reserve to HRM's Operating budget.

**DISCUSSION**

Since 2004 HRM's election costs, including e-voting options, have averaged approximately \$5.00 per eligible voter. HRM's election costs compare very favorably with similar sized Canadian municipalities and are significantly lower than either provincial or federal election costs.

In a staff report dated September 12, 2011 Election staff provided Regional Council with the applicable budget to conduct the 2012 Municipal and School Board Elections and was considered by Regional Council at the meeting of September 27, 2011. Based on the direction provided by Regional Council the Election office is undertaking the planning and preparation to deliver the 2012 Municipal Elections on time and on budget.

Currently activities related to the 2012 Election are being coordinated out of the Office of the Municipal Clerk in City Hall. The Election Working Office is scheduled to open in early May and will be in the Eric Spicer building at 21 Mount Hope Avenue, Dartmouth. An HRM owned facility is being used to contain costs. There are a number of items required prior to opening including; an additional security system to protect election computers and materials (including ballots once produced), phone installation and office equipment rental. The estimated cost for these items is \$10,000. In order to have the office available early in May these expenses need to occur in the 2011/2012 fiscal year.

The NEW District boundaries, under which the 2012 Municipal and School Board Elections will be conducted, are a significant change for voters. The HRM Elections office will be undertaking a media campaign in March to inform residents of HRM of the NEW District boundaries to begin to prepare voters for the changes for the 2012 Elections. The campaign will include ads in HRM wide and community papers, radio ads and an insert in the HRM tax bill mail out in March. The estimated cost for the campaign is \$15,000. These expenditures will occur in the 2011/2012 fiscal year and will be part of the advertising budget for conducting the 2012 Municipal and School Board elections.

In order to begin to expend election funds Regional Council is required to approve a withdrawal of up to \$25,000 from the Municipal Election Reserve Account Q313 to fund the Election Operating Account # A125 in fiscal 2011/2012.

When Regional Council receives the budget for 2012/2013, Election Expenses will be shown in Operating Account A125 along with the applicable offsetting withdrawals from the Election Reserve Q313.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

Projected Available Balance Q313 March 31, 2012 <sup>1</sup>	\$ 853,468
Less: Pending Withdrawal (as per this report)	<u>(\$ 25,000)</u>
Revised Projected Available Balance March 31, 2012	\$ 828,468

<sup>1</sup> \$553,007 commitment for Integrated Telephone and Internet Voting approved January 10, 2012 has been subtracted from current available balance of approximately \$1.3M to arrive at projected balance of \$853,468

The Election Office will continue to plan for the 2012 Municipal and School Board Elections based on projected costs of \$1.6 M. The estimate is based on costs of \$5/eligible voter and HRM's experience in conducting Municipal and School Board elections. The current rate of contribution to the Reserve will provide sufficient funding to conduct the election.

Assuming the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB) and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) provide the same level of funding (or in kind services) as in 2008 there may be recoveries of approximately \$350,000 to offset HRM's expenses. However, offsetting revenue is not assured at this time. In addition, cost savings and efficiencies are being considered and planned for in the decision making regarding the Election and any unexpended funds will remain in the Reserve at the close of the Election

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation. If approved, it will increase 2011/12 Operating expenditures by \$25,000, with a corresponding decrease to the projected Q313 Municipal Election Reserve balance.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Not applicable

**ALTERNATIVES**

No alternatives recommended

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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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.

Report Prepared and Approved by:

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Financial Approval by:

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Greg Keefe, A/Director of Finance/CFO, 490-6308

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