HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

Item No. 10.3.1
Halifax Regional Council
July 30, 2013

TO: Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original signed by

SUBMITTED BY: _____

Mayor Mike Savage, Chair, Executive Standing Committee

DATE: July 22, 2013

SUBJECT: Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) Caucus Structure

ORIGIN

The Executive Standing Committee meeting of July 22, 2013.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Executive Standing Committee Terms of Reference clause 3.6.1 Governance
"The Committee shall act as a review committee for matters related to the general self-governance and administration of Council as directed by Council."

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Standing Committee recommends to Halifax Regional Council that they support UNSM retaining the population-based caucus structure which groups Nova Scotian municipalities into three categories: Regional, Towns and Rural.

BACKGROUND

At its July 22, 2013 meeting, the Executive Standing Committee received a report, dated July 16, 2013, the origin of which was a decision from the June 24, 2013 Executive Standing Committee that a sub-committee review and make recommendation pertaining to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) structure.

DISCUSSION

The committee moved the above recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None outlined in the staff report, dated July 16, 2013.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Executive Standing Committee is open to the public and agenda, minutes and reports are posted online in advance of meetings.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None outlined in the report, dated July 16, 2013.

ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives are as outlined in the staff report dated July 16, 2013.

ATTACHMENTS

1. **UNSM Caucus Structure, staff report, dated July 16, 2013.**

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 by: Matt Godwin, Legislative Assistant, 490-6521

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P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3A5 Canada

TO: Chair and Members of Executive Standing Committee

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY: _____

Councillor Russell Walker on behalf of the Sub-Committee on UNSM
Structure

DATE: July 16, 2013

SUBJECT: **UNSM Caucus Structure**

ORIGIN

Request from the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) for Councils throughout the
province to formally respond to a proposed revised caucus structure of UNSM by end of July
2013 for consideration by the Board of UNSM at the Board meeting of August 8, 2013.

At the Executive Standing Committee of June 24, 2013 the Committee moved to defer the item
to the meeting of July 22, 2013 in order to enable a review of the proposal by a sub-committee
supported by staff of Government Relations and External Affairs.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Executive Standing Committee Terms of Reference – clause 3.6.1 – Governance
The Committee shall act as a review committee for matters related to the general self-governance
and administration of Council as directed by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Executive Committee recommend to Halifax Regional Council that they
support UNSM retaining the population-based caucus structure which groups Nova Scotian
municipalities into three categories: Regional, Towns and Rural.

BACKGROUND

UNSM is undertaking a review of its existing caucus structure. It is asking municipalities for input on how effective the former population-based caucus structure is, and whether a move towards new geographically-based caucuses may be preferable.

UNSM developed the population-based caucus structure in 2004. It divided UNSM's 54 member municipalities into three groups: Regional, Towns and Rural. There are two members in the Regional Caucus (HRM and CBRM), 30 members in the Towns Caucus, and 22 members in the Rural Caucus. These groups meet at least twice annually to discuss issues of mutual interest and bring them forward to the UNSM board for action.

Prior to the caucus structure based on municipal population size, UNSM had a structure based on geographic regions. There were nine regions that included communities of all sizes within a specific area. The regions were:

- Antigonish-Guysborough-Pictou
- Cape Breton
- Colchester-East Hants
- Cumberland
- Metro (included Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax County)
- Inverness-Richmond-Victoria
- South Shore
- South Western
- Valley

While these caucuses had common interests based on their geographic proximity, they did not always have similar issues because of the difference in their size. The system was changed to the three-caucus structure to bring together common interests of different types of municipal units (regional municipalities, towns and rural communities). However concerns remain that geographically-related communities should have an opportunity to share information, and in 2011 UNSM membership passed a resolution requesting that UNSM conduct a review of the caucus structure. A regional-based structure was developed in 2012 in time for the fall Annual Conference.

DISCUSSION

UNSM acts as a collaborative body for all Nova Scotian municipalities, bringing them together for information-sharing and advocacy work. It is a best practice model within Canada, as many provinces have several provincial-municipal associations which must come together to develop consensus positions before approaching the Provincial government. The caucus structure of UNSM is an attempt to address the varying priorities of municipalities of different sizes and areas, without breaking apart into multiple associations as other provinces have done.

UNSM has developed a geographic-based structure to replace the population-based structure. This new structure was in place last year for the 2012 Annual Conference. It groups municipalities into five regions:

- South Shore-HRM
- South-Western Shore
- Valley
- Colchester-Cumberland-Pictou-East Hants
- Cape Breton-Strait

Under this model, HRM joins six significantly smaller municipalities in caucus discussions (Bridgewater, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg, District of Chester, District of Lunenburg, Region of Queens Municipality).

Since 2004 the disparity in population distribution across Nova Scotia has only increased. Urban centres have increased in size while rural areas are shrinking. This presents communities with quite different issues and priorities. The population-based caucus structure enabled municipalities of similar size to share information and strategies on issues of mutual interest. Recently HRM and CBRM, as the two regional municipalities in Nova Scotia, have been strengthening their relationship and looking for areas in which they can collaborate (eg, development of municipal charters, intergovernmental capital funding plans). In addition, the HRM Mayor addressed CBRM Regional Council in Spring 2013, marking the first time the Regional Municipalities have made formal presentations to each other.

The population-based caucus structure also benefitted HRM in terms of its presence on the UNSM Board and input into UNSM initiatives. The UNSM Presidency rotated amongst the three caucuses, meaning the Regional Caucus with HRM and CBRM acted as President every three years. An unwritten agreement exists between HRM and CBRM that alternates the Presidency between the two regional municipalities, thus ensuring HRM is UNSM President once every 6 years. This agreement is not in the UNSM bylaws however, and UNSM has suggested that one of the outcomes of the caucus review should be a formalizing of this arrangement.

There are benefits to having geographically similar municipalities meet as a caucus group as they share industries and economic development initiatives. The Provincial Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) are based on a geographic grouping similar to the five regions proposed by UNSM for a new caucus structure (although HRM is not included in the REN structure). However, some geographically close municipalities already meet informally outside of the UNSM structure (e.g., Strait region). This practice could be encouraged while maintaining the population-based caucus structure. If a regional structure is preferred by the majority of UNSM members, it may be worth considering some form of Regional Municipality caucus to ensure a voice for the province's two largest municipal units and give profile to their unique challenges. Such a forum would allow the HRM and CBRM to continue and formalize their collaborative relationship.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ALTERNATIVES

Executive Committee could endorse the geographic-based structure which UNSM proposes. This is not recommended because of the lack of similar issues facing municipalities of different size, regardless of their geographic proximity.

Executive Committee could choose not to submit a response to UNSM's request for feedback. This is not recommended as HRM holds the UNSM Presidency and is taking an active role in its activities.

ATTACHMENTS

None

A copy of this report can be obtained online at http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.