

TO: Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed
Mike Savage, Mayor

DATE: October 18, 2013

SUBJECT: United Way Partnership on Affordable Housing

ORIGIN

In June 2013, the United Way began informally convening various housing stakeholders, including private sector developers, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia (AHANS), Shelter Nova Scotia, the Province, and HRM, to explore ways to leverage resources, with the goal of making a measurable change on housing and homelessness in HRM.

In September, Mayor Savage received a letter from the President and CEO of United Way Halifax, inviting HRM to formally join the partnership, and working within the mandate of HRM, to commit to the goal of ending homelessness and creating affordable housing.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter - Section 2 - Purpose of Act:

The purpose of this Act is to:

- (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it;
- (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- (c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to:
 - (i) provide good government,
 - (ii) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
 - (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

Part I Powers of Council

11 (1) The powers of the Municipality are exercised by the Council.

Part VIII Planning and Development Section 209 Interpretation

(p) “statement of provincial interest” means a statement of provincial interest under the Municipal Government Act

Municipal Government Act of 1998 SCHEDULE B – Existing Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing:

Goal

To provide housing opportunities to meet the needs of all Nova Scotians.

Provisions

Planning documents must include housing policies addressing affordable housing, special-needs housing and rental accommodation. This includes assessing the need and supply of these housing types and developing solutions appropriate to the planning area. The definition of the terms affordable housing, special-needs housing and rental housing is left to the individual municipality to define in the context of its individual situation.

The Statement of Provincial Interest Regarding Housing is also referenced and quoted within section 3.6 of the Municipal Planning Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council formally endorse HRM’s participation in the United Way’s partnership on housing affordability so as to explore ways in which HRM can, within the municipal mandate, promote initiatives that could support affordable housing.

BACKGROUND

The role of the provincial government with respect to housing is to manage public, co-operative and non-profit housing units, to administer and license programs related to child and foster care and to deliver special needs housing. In addition, the province’s new long-term housing strategy commits \$500 million over 10 years towards new and enhanced affordable housing projects and programs.

Housing is a core driver of economic growth. A healthy housing sector, able to meet a range of needs, across income levels, is a vital part of the economic and social wellbeing of any community. The needs and challenges facing Canada’s housing sector extend beyond the funding capacity of any single order of government. As a result, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Big City Mayor’s Caucus, of which HRM is a member, have adopted housing as a top priority, and will soon be launching a national housing campaign, calling on all levels of government to working together to address imbalances in the housing market.

DISCUSSION

While HRM is not responsible for the delivery of social services and subsidized housing, as outlined in the Provincial Statement of Interest regarding housing, all local governments in Nova Scotia are responsible for ensuring that their planning processes and regulations provide for a suitable supply of housing in a range of types and locations to meet current and future community needs. The United Way's invitation to join its housing partnership is an acknowledgement of this role and is further outlined in the Municipal Planning Strategy, which "recognizes a continuum of housing affordability and the different but complementary roles that the market and different levels of government can play in ensuring that housing options exist for a range of needs and income levels."

As outlined in the MPS, HRM can support housing affordability and social inclusion by ensuring that municipal policies, regulations and processes encourage efficient development and open up opportunities for diverse, innovative and well-designed housing. The Municipality can also support non-profit housing providers and developers by considering, where feasible, requests for land priced at below market value, offering tax reduction and tax deferral programs and awarding community grants for initiatives that advance the goals of this Plan.

Participation in the Partnership would allow HRM to uncover strategies, within the municipal mandate, to continue to support the MPS and the Provincial Statement of Interest regarding housing. As such, participation would require a time commitment on the part of Planning staff, in addition to the Mayor's Office and interested members of Regional Council, to attend meetings and do follow-up work, as appropriate. Given HRM's narrow mandate in the area of housing, the Municipality's participation would focus more heavily in the area of affordable housing. Any proposed change in policy direction that may come out of the Partnership would go before Regional Council before implementation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

While there are no direct financial implications associated with participating in this Partnership, participation would require some time commitment on the part of HRM staff. Support from the CAO in regard to staff commitments has been confirmed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of the partnership is to engage community stakeholders, including the United Way, Shelter Nova Scotia, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, and private sector developers.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications identified.

ATTACHMENTS

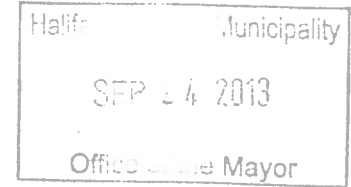
Letter of invitation from the President and CEO of United Way Halifax.

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: Joshua Bates – Policy Advisor (Mayor’s Office) 490-2454



United Way
Halifax
Change starts here.



September 20, 2013

Mayor Mike Savage
Halifax Regional Municipality
1841 Argyle Street
Halifax, NS B3J 3A5

Dear Mayor Savage:

Thank you for your interest and support for United Way's work in recent months to convene stakeholders to address the issues of homelessness and affordable housing in Halifax Regional Municipality.

We have gained momentum quickly and have successfully engaged key departments of the provincial government, the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia, the private sector, and staff and counsellors from HRM. All participants have agreed, in principle, to form a partnership. Over the next few months, we will move to formalize that partnership through the signing of a letter of intent and eventually a memorandum of understanding. We are writing now to formally ask HRM to formally join the partnership and, working within the mandate of HRM, commit to the goal of ending homelessness and creating affordable housing.

It is important to note that some stakeholders have a key focus on homelessness; others are more focused on affordable housing and others are equally focused on both. While the work to address each of these is different, the impact of addressing one without the other is counterproductive. To that end, two working groups have formed. HRM's participation to address affordable housing will be vitally important to create change in our city.

We look forward to a long and impactful relationship with HRM and hope you find formal participation in this partnership beneficial.

Sincerely,

Original Signed

Catherine J. Woodman
President and CEO, United Way Halifax