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Item No. 11.1.8
Halifax Regional Council
August 5, 2014

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by
Mike Labrecque, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by Director
Maggie MacDonald, A/Managing Director, Gov. Relations & External Affairs

DATE: June 25, 2014

SUBJECT: UNSM Conference Resolutions 2014

ORIGIN

UNSM's call for resolutions to be considered at the annual UNSM conference in November 2014.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter s. 79 (1) (v) authority to spend subscription funds on UNSM membership, as well as broader ability to participate in UNSM activities.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council forward the following three resolutions described in this report to the UNSM Annual Conference in November 2014:

- HRM Charter Review
- Federal Funding for Affordable Housing
- Provincial-Municipal Solid Waste Working Group

BACKGROUND

Each year at its annual conference, UNSM debates a number of resolutions submitted by its 54 member municipalities. Those that are passed are forwarded to the Provincial government as requests for changes in policy, legislation, financing, etc. These resolutions have the benefit of UNSM's collective voice, and may be considered to have the support of all municipalities in Nova Scotia. A formal resolution passed by UNSM in support of the initiative(s) may assist the municipality in securing support for those items, and garners additional public profile for the issue. Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has used UNSM resolutions to bring attention to priority issues and to develop collaborative positions on initiatives with other Nova Scotian municipalities.

HRM is represented in the Regional Caucus of UNSM. The role of the Caucus is to elect members to serve on the Board and to make recommendations to the Board on matters of interest and concern to the caucus. In advance of each annual conference, Municipalities, Caucuses, the Board and the Resolutions Committee can submit resolutions for debate at the Fall Conference. To be properly received, the resolution must be approved by Council.

The 2014 UNSM Annual Conference is being held from November 4th to 7th in Halifax. UNSM Bylaws state that resolutions must be received by the UNSM office 80 days prior to the Annual Conference, putting this year's deadline at August 16th. All resolutions received by that date will be introduced and debated at the Annual Conference.

DISCUSSION

1) HRM Charter Review

In March 2013 Council directed that a review of the HRM Charter be undertaken in collaboration with Service Nova Scotia & Municipal Relations (now NS Municipal Affairs). The rationale for the Charter review was to make it a more flexible and responsive legislative framework that better enabled the municipality to address its population growth and sustained residential and commercial development. In April 2014 Council approved the scope of the Charter review, with a desired goal of achieving a document that is permissive in nature, provides increased legislative and financial autonomy, and allows HRM to respond better to economic, demographic and social issues.

These goals align with the recommendations regarding municipal reform in the Ivany report. The "Now or Never" report recommends accelerating municipal reform to encourage the development of dynamic urban centres that foster growth and innovation. It also notes the need for a shared commitment to sustainable development and regulatory excellence. To that end, Ivany recommends a comprehensive review of municipal structures that will specifically consider issues such as:

- Greater service efficiency and improved value for money
- Evaluate the fairness, effectiveness and sustainability of the current service responsibilities between provincial and municipal levels
- Reductions in the regulatory burden
- Better alignment of tax policies with economic growth objectives

The HRM Charter review offers an early opportunity to consider these issues and start the conversation about new municipal governance models with the Provincial government.

HRM and UNSM have already begun collaborating on Ivany recommendations. The Mayor has written to the President of UNSM, as well as the Premier and opposition leaders, outlining HRM's readiness to work in partnership to develop and implement a province-wide response to the Ivany report. On May 23 UNSM

hosted an event devoted considering how municipalities could act on the Ivany report. Actions include supporting private sector development, creating welcoming communities, and strategic land use planning. However, some of the actions needed to achieve the Ivany goals are currently beyond the scope of municipal abilities under the HRM Charter and the Municipal Government Act. A more permissive Charter could allow the municipality more flexibility to consider different approaches to speed up development applications and improve the business climate.

Mutual support among municipalities for each other's priorities, and an understanding of how municipalities can help each other is important. There is growing understanding of the importance of rural economies within Halifax, as witnessed by the inclusion of rural oriented actions in recent services agreement with both Greater Halifax Partnership and Destination Halifax. Similarly, there have been a number of comments in the media recently from representatives of other Nova Scotian municipalities about the need for a strong Halifax and the benefit it brings to all municipalities.

Given the interdependence of rural and urban economies, the need for municipal reform outlined in Ivany, and the collaborative work municipalities are undertaking to increase economic growth, it is recommended that Council request UNSM send a statement of its support for the HRM Charter Review to the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Proposed Resolution

WHEREAS increasing population and economic growth are issues of vital importance to Nova Scotia; and

WHEREAS the One Nova Scotia Coalition's "Now or Never" report recommends municipal reform as an integral way to achieve this; and

WHEREAS Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is working on a review of the HRM Charter so that it increases the municipality's abilities to strengthen the business climate and create an attractive and prosperous community; and

WHEREAS Nova Scotian municipalities recognize their interdependence and support each other's efforts to increase economic activity and attract people;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities express its support for the HRM Charter review to the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs.

2) Federal Funding for Affordable Housing

HRM is currently engaged on the United Way-led Housing and Homelessness Partnership. While HRM does not have a mandate in the provision of affordable housing, the Municipality recognizes that availability of affordable housing is a key factor in developing vibrant, accessible communities that attract people and business. Municipal support is expressed through land use planning and development tools to encourage affordable housing. HRM is active on the Partnership's affordable housing working group, which aims to upgrade, preserve expand the existing stock of affordable housing throughout the municipality. The United Way Partnership is a multi-stakeholder group with representatives from the three levels of government, Affordable Housing Association of NS, Capital Health, the IWK and the Investment Property Owners Association of NS.

The Province of Nova Scotia oversees housing related programs and services. Traditionally the federal government has contributed a significant level of funding for social housing to the Province. However federal funding is now beginning to expire, with \$1.7 billion being phased out. Without the federal subsidy, one out of three social housing units across Canada are at risk of closing their doors, totaling 200,000 units nation-wide. In Nova Scotia, this represents some 20,900 households and approximately \$50 million in federal subsidies annually. Without this federal support, the provincial government is facing

significant increases in the amount required to support ongoing and deferred maintenance on social housing units.

In November 2013, HRM hosted a roundtable discussion on housing, as part of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) campaign “Fixing Canada’s Housing Crunch.” The campaign calls on the federal government to increase housing options for Canadians and to work with all orders of government to develop a long-term plan for Canada’s housing future.

Given the role affordable housing plays in building accessible, mixed-use communities that can attract and retain people, it is recommended that Council send the following resolution to UNSM’s annual conference for endorsement.

Proposed Resolution:

WHEREAS affordable housing is an integral part of building an accessible, welcoming community that attracts people; and

WHEREAS municipalities have an interest in ensuring their residents have access to an adequate supply of well-maintained affordable housing options; and

WHEREAS affordable housing is an issue impacted by many stakeholders and requires a committed approach from all partners; and

WHEREAS \$1.7 billion in federal government support for social housing subsidy is ending, leaving significant gaps in the funding available for social housing maintenance; and

WHEREAS the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) is undertaking substantial advocacy efforts to maintain and increase the federal government’s role in supporting housing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UNSM express its support for Provincial efforts to secure federal funding for social housing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UNSM endorse the FCM housing campaign to develop a long-term plan for housing that protects federal core investments that allow for ongoing maintenance and expansion of affordable housing stock, and that ensures participation from all partners.

3) Provincial-Municipal Solid Waste Working Group

The NS Department of Environment is reviewing its solid waste regulations. As these regulations have a direct impact on municipal operations, the Minister of Municipal Affairs sent a letter to UNSM on July 10, providing 12 months’ notice of potential financial impact on municipalities, as is required under the Municipal Government Act. As the review is still underway, the actual changes are not yet known. The Minister stated that the Department of Environment plans to consult with municipalities on proposed changes.

Solid waste is a significant item in HRM’s annual operating budget (\$34 million in 2014-15). Provincial regulations are a major driver of solid waste costs for all municipalities. In order to work towards a coordinated and efficient approach to solid waste management services in Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Solid Waste Managers & Directors Committee (NSSWMD) has brought together municipal solid waste managers and directors, representing 99% of Nova Scotian municipalities. HRM is represented on this committee.

The NSSWMD has proposed that a working group be formed to assist in evolving the solid waste regime based on identifying system wide efficiencies to support the Provincial revision of solid waste regulations. The proposed group would include membership from:

- Department of Environment staff
- Municipal Affairs staff
- Representatives from solid waste managers and directors
- NS Solid Waste Resource Management Regional Chairs Committee
- UNSM

This working group would allow municipalities to participate directly in the review of solid waste regulations. It would also be an opportunity to set a benchmark for operating standards across Nova Scotia, and focus on ensuring both fiscal and environmental sustainability of solid waste operations. Given the significant impact this provincial review of regulations will have on municipalities, it is recommended that Council send the following resolution to UNSM's annual conference for endorsement.

Proposed Resolution

WHEREAS the Province of Nova Scotia is conducting a review of its solid waste regulations; and

WHEREAS municipalities are largely responsible for the operation of solid waste systems in Nova Scotia; and

WHEREAS any changes to regulations will have a significant impact on municipal operating costs; and

WHEREAS the Province has committed to consulting with municipalities on any proposed changes to regulations; and

WHEREAS an intergovernmental working group would allow for beneficial information sharing and input from all partners, and potentially set a benchmark for province-wide operating standards;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the UNSM request that a working group be established to inform the solid waste regulation review, with representatives from the NS Department of Environment; NS Municipal Affairs; municipal solid waste managers and directors; the NS Solid Waste Resource Management Regional Chairs Committee; and UNSM.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ALTERNATIVES

Council could choose to forward other resolutions to the UNSM Annual Conference, either in addition to or in place of the three recommendations outlined here.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.php> 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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