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Item No. 9
Halifax Regional Council
April 14, 2015

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed

SUBMITTED BY:

Maggie MacDonald / Acting Managing Director of Government Relations and
External Affairs

DATE: March 10, 2015

SUBJECT: Halifax Higher Education Partnership – Annual Update

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

January 28, 2014 report “Halifax higher Education Memorandum of Understanding”
MOVED by Councillor Mason and seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council approve the attached MOU between HRM, Metro Universities and the NSCC; endorse the Mayor signing the MOU on Council’s behalf, and direct implementation of its initiatives to begin.

March 6, 2014 initial meeting of the Halifax Higher Education Partnership and signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter, section 79 (1) (m): The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for promotion and attraction of institutions, industries and businesses, the stabilization and expansion of employment opportunities and the economic development of the Municipality.

BACKGROUND

On January 28, 2014 Council approved an updated Memorandum of Understanding with Halifax area universities and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) (Appendix A: Higher Education MOU report). This new agreement, called the Halifax Higher Education Partnership (HHEP), replaced the two previous MOUs signed separately with the universities in 2005 and NSCC in 2006. It continues the original objective to work together more closely on issues of joint interest, while implementing more specific goals under set focus areas and measurably tracking progress. The focus area set for 2014-2016 is Talent Attraction and Retention. The HHEP committed to annual reporting on its activities, which is the function of this information report.

DISCUSSION

The HHEP MOU itself was signed in March 2014 by the Mayor, the Presidents of Halifax-area universities, and the NSCC President (Appendix B: Halifax Higher Education MOU). Since then the group has met quarterly. The MOU lists a number of potential initiatives to support the focus area of Talent Attraction and Retention. Updates on progress for each are below.

- Post-secondary institution consultation for Halifax's international branding efforts - the municipality had street teams at a number of Halifax universities to solicit feedback on the brand. The Association of Atlantic Universities and representatives from some individual universities attended the focus groups on proposed brand identities. Halifax Communications also met with Dalhousie's communications team to examine how well the brand is aligned with theirs in terms of recruitment, and research findings were almost identical.
- Making HRM services/website available in other languages – The Halifax.ca revamp is ongoing. The municipality is considering use of an online translation tool which would allow users to access information in any language. In 2014 the municipality updated its Welcoming Guide for Newcomers, which now includes hyperlinks to all the organizations listed in it.
- Consideration of municipal services & adjustments needed by international students to participate more fully in the community – International student coordinators for each institution have been identified and were instrumental in helping the municipality to organize the Welcoming Reception (described below). These relationships continue to be cultivated through the Local Immigration Partnership.
- Measurably increase the total number of university and NSCC articulation agreements; internships and co-op placements – HHEP members have held discussions on some of the challenges faced by international students in securing coop positions. A presentation from the NS Office of Immigration identified new potential streams for employers and international workers to connect. Discussions on ways the HHEP can support this are ongoing.

In 2014 the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) developed a three-year pilot proposal to expand experiential learning, defined as co-op placements, internships, service learning and practica. This proposal was shared with NS Labour & Advanced Education which is studying it.

- Consideration of infrastructure needed to attract students, such as buildings, residences, settlement and career centres – there has been extensive discussion on both municipal and educational infrastructure needs. A presentation from Provincial officials on the Building Canada Fund is scheduled for an upcoming meeting.
- A city-hosted welcome reception/celebration for international students – In September 2014 the Mayor hosted Halifax's first Welcoming Reception for international students. The event saw approximately 300 students from all metro-area institutions attend and network with local organizations such as the Halifax Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, EduNova, Fusion, Multicultural Association of NS and Halifax Regional Library. The municipality had several displays with information to help students settle into Halifax. This is expected to be an annual event.

- Halifax's Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) Coordinator will work directly with Metro post-secondary institutions to help create a welcoming community – representatives from the Atlantic Association of Universities, individual universities, and the NSCC sit on LIP sub-committees.
- The municipality will be invited to participate in an upcoming university recruitment summit – The Halifax Career Fair is an annual event involving Metro's universities, and the municipality is working towards participating in it as well.

The Halifax Partnership presented on opportunities to include post-secondary institutions on trade missions and events such as the World Energy Cities AGM. This will be further explored by the university and NSCC recruitment representatives.

- Set mutually agreed-upon, measurable annual targets for increased out-of-province and international student enrollments – Each university has its own enrollment strategy with institutional targets and tactics.

HHEP meetings have also included discussions on the downtown wi-fi initiative, and ways to support the creation of technology and ocean science incubators being considered by the Province and the private sector.

The HHEP will continue to focus on Talent Attraction and Retention for 2015-16. In 2016 it will review progress and make a decision about the focus area for 2017 onwards.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None for this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The HHEP is a mechanism to engage the post-secondary sector. Engagement is ongoing through quarterly meetings.

ATTACHMENTS

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 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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