

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by _____

John Traves, Q.C., Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by _____

Jane Fraser, Acting Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 28, 2016

SUBJECT: Gun Amnesty Program for HRM

ORIGIN

Stakeholder meetings following increased gun violence in the spring of 2016.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Sections 2(c) (iii), and 34(1) of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*.

Purpose of Act

2 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.**

Council and Chief Administrative Officer relationship

34(1) *The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.*

HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY BY-LAW NUMBER U-100 RESPECTING USER CHARGES

Sec. 4(1) Schedule 1 Halifax Transit User Charges

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Endorse staff support and implementation of a Gun Amnesty Program for Halifax Regional Municipality;
2. Direct Halifax Transit to support the Gun Amnesty Program by contributing Fifty (50) single Transit Tickets for each firearm passed in to Halifax Regional Police or Halifax District RCMP.

BACKGROUND

As the result of a spate of gun violence earlier this spring in HRM involving the deaths of four young men, a number of meetings were held to determine what steps could be taken to stop or mitigate the immediate violence and potentially impact the decrease of violence in the future. These meetings included a number of stakeholders including the Mayor, the Minister of Justice, the HRM Acting Chief Administrative Officer, police leaders of both HRP and Halifax District RCMP, clergy and members of the general public. One of the suggestions from the community was that a Gun Amnesty Program be put in place for HRM, similar to the 2009 "Pixels for Pistols" program. The Gun Amnesty Program would be active for approximately two weeks and provide citizens the opportunity to turn over any firearms and/or ammunition to the police without the fear of being charged for possession of an unrestricted, restricted or prohibited firearm. However, any firearm received would be checked by the police and further investigated if it were found to be implicated in any kind of prior criminal activity.

DISCUSSION

There are data that suggest that Gun Amnesty Programs do not directly decrease violence. However, there are several advantages to running such a program:

- Any firearm that is turned over to the police is a firearm that cannot be stolen and used in the commission of an offense;
- A gun amnesty provides an opportunity to raise awareness about safety issues;
- This type of program provides an opportunity to contribute to overall safety as firearms sometimes get in the hands of untrained individuals or children;
- Support for this program demonstrates responsiveness to the community and assists with keeping community stakeholders engaged when looking for other opportunities to increase public safety.

At the outset of discussions, a retailer indicated their willingness to sponsor a gun amnesty program in the amount of \$5,000 worth of gift certificates. However, due to the timing of the program, the retailer subsequently indicated they were unable to proceed due to other demands on their budget for community sponsorships. Given the loss of this potential sponsorship, Halifax Transit has agreed to provide bus tickets as an incentive for the amnesty program. The proposed dates to run the program are from September 12, to September 23, 2016. This does not preclude HRM from soliciting the participation of another interested sponsor.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for the Gun Amnesty Program will vary based on the number of firearms turned in to the police. Based on the fact this initiative is only running for two weeks it is estimated to cost no more than \$5000 which will be absorbed by Halifax Transit's existing 2016-17 operating budget, unless a private sponsor is identified.

RISK CONSIDERATION

There are no significant risks associated with the recommendation in this Report. The risks considered rate as being low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This initiative results from discussions with a variety of stakeholders including community members who voiced strong support for such an initiative.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ALTERNATIVES

Council could direct staff to conduct the Gun Amnesty Program without offering any incentive which would result in a very low return on firearms or ammunition. This is not recommended.

Council could also direct staff not to conduct the Gun Amnesty Program. This is not recommended.

ATTACHMENTS

None

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.

Report Prepared by: Ted Upshaw, Public Safety Advisor, Government Relations and External Affairs, 902.490.4177

Report Approved by: _____
Maggie MacDonald, Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs, 902.490.1742

Report Approved by: _____
Dave Reage, Director, Halifax Transit, 902-490-5138

Financial Approval by: _____
Ed Thorhill, Director of Finance and Information Technology/CFO, 902.490.4480

Original Signed