



IMMIGRATION ACTION PLAN

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR



Many regions of Atlantic Canada are experiencing significant population declines. This has serious implications for the future - economically, socially and culturally. Although federal and provincial governments have primary responsibility for immigration, the Atlantic Mayors' Congress believes that our communities can play an important role in attracting, welcoming, integrating and retaining newcomers to Atlantic Canada.

The current statistics are staggering. Atlantic Canada receives less than two percent of all immigrants to Canada -- and almost 50 percent of those immigrants eventually choose to settle in other parts of the country. We must significantly improve these numbers.

It is only through better information sharing and a collective commitment by all levels of government and interested organizations that we will be able to improve Atlantic Canada's immigration record. For example, immigration should be a significant component of the formal tripartite agreement that is part of the Federal agreement to share gas tax revenues with municipalities.

At the Atlantic Immigration Conference held in Halifax in May, 200 representatives from three levels of government, community groups and a number of recent immigrants identified ways for communities in Atlantic Canada to make our region more attractive and welcoming to immigrants. A resulting report will provide innovative ideas and suggestions for improving immigration in our region.

Individual municipalities can follow-up on these high level ideas by determining what specific actions they can take in their own communities to make our region more attractive and welcoming for newcomers. The HRM Immigration Action Plan does just that.

I am confident that by working together, we can make a difference.

Respectfully, I remain

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter J. Kelly'.

Peter J. Kelly
Mayor

MESSAGE FROM THE CAO

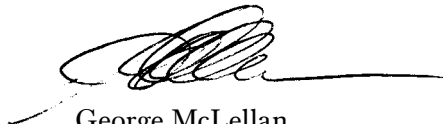


Halifax Regional Municipality's primary role in immigration is to create and maintain a welcoming community. We must never forget that immigration is about people. In order to increase the number of individuals and families who move to our region and stay in the long term, we must create a welcoming environment.

HRM is committed to providing the best possible services to its residents. As we work towards creating a more inviting community for newcomers, I believe that any action we undertake as a municipality will be supported by our residents. It will instill pride in our region and strengthen the relationship between residents and government.

In June, I hosted HRM's immigration forum to discuss specific initiatives we could undertake as an organization to move HRM towards becoming a more welcoming community. With input from representatives of business, government, not-for-profit organizations, immigrant settlement organizations and immigrants themselves, we developed this Immigration Action Plan.

I am confident that by implementing the recommendations put forth in this Action Plan, we can make significant progress.



George McLellan
Chief Administrative Officer





In May 2005, Halifax Regional Council adopted the following vision: “Halifax Regional Municipality is a welcoming community where immigration is supported and encouraged. Halifax Regional Municipality will work with other levels of government and community partners to increase our collective cultural, social and economic diversity by welcoming immigrants to our community.”

As home to 55% of Atlantic Canadian immigrants and 80% of immigrants to Nova Scotia, HRM has a significant vested interest in providing the most welcoming environment possible for newcomers. HRM’s ability to maintain and build upon the immigrant population is fundamental to our region’s economic, social and cultural success.

In August 2004, the Province of Nova Scotia released *A Framework for Immigration*, a discussion paper seeking input for the development of a Provincial Immigration Strategy, a process in which HRM participated. **Nova Scotia’s Immigration Strategy** recognizes the important role that municipal government plays in educating citizens about the benefits of immigration and developing specific, community-level strategies. The strategy states that the Province will “assist municipalities interested in attracting immigrants by engaging them in marketing and promotional efforts and developing service delivery capacity.”

The **Atlantic Immigration Conference** hosted by the Atlantic Mayor’s Congress in May 2005 sought to identify ways for communities across Atlantic Canada to work together and share best practices in terms of attracting, welcoming, integrating and retaining newcomers to the region.

The Greater Halifax Partnership has led the development of a community-based **Halifax Region Immigration Strategy**. The strategy will serve as a roadmap for the successful implementation of a community partnership model consisting of business, government, economic development and settlement-providing organizations. The strategy will also include an approach to increasing the attraction and retention of new immigrants, in addition to a logical approach to addressing immediate short-term actions and medium to long-term initiatives.

Several HRM initiatives, including the **Regional Plan**, **Economic Strategy** and **Cultural Plan**, identify immigration as playing a significant role in addressing our region’s economic, social and cultural realities in years to come. HRM will work collaboratively with our diverse communities, the Province and within the Federal regulatory framework to further our vision of HRM as a welcoming community where immigration is supported and encouraged.

Considering all opportunities currently available and those which can be created, we commit to enhancing the experiences of immigrants in our community by undertaking a series of specific actions to address service needs within our organization.

HRM IMMIGRATION ACTION PLAN



HRM's Immigration Action Plan will compliment the Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy, while recognizing the municipal mandate and supporting the key components of the Halifax Region Immigration Strategy. Because of the level of diversity in our region, HRM is unique and prepared to undertake positive changes that will allow us to more effectively serve our diverse community. HRM currently has in place a Community Race Relations policy that will assist us in providing services to diverse communities. We are committed to ensuring that our service delivery meets new and differing needs.

WHAT WE HEARD:

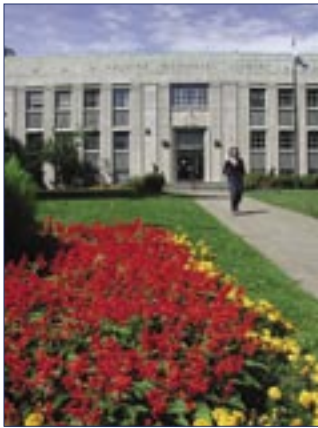
At the HRM Immigration Forum hosted in June 2005 participants shared ideas as to how we can become a more welcoming community. Participants discussed several areas for improvement and provided both immediate (to be implemented over the next 12 months) and medium to long term recommendations (to be reviewed yearly).

Two priority areas were identified:

- **Communications** (external focus): Improving how we communicate with and serve residents of diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- **Organizational** (internal focus): Re-considering our organizational structure. In particular how we recruit, train and utilize employees.



COMMUNICATIONS - EXTERNAL FOCUS



HRM is currently examining methods for increasing the accessibility of municipal programs and services to diverse communities. Many programs, such as recreation, solid waste, library, police and fire must be more accessible to newcomers. The provision of better and more culturally mindful information is necessary to communicate how newcomers may participate and increase their involvement in our community.

PHASE I - SHORT TERM ACTIONS

Over the next year, HRM will:

Use communications tools to make newcomers feel welcome and share important information about HRM.

- Work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to hold citizenship ceremonies in HRM facilities and provide information on municipal services following the sessions.
- Provide welcome letters from Mayor and Councillors to newcomers.
- Website improvements, including:
 - post welcoming remarks for various ethnic communities in their own language on the HRM website.
 - front page portal for newcomers with web links to key organizations of interest such as settlement and cultural associations.
 - work with other levels of government and community organizations to provide coordinated information and links.
- Work with our diverse communities and community partners to develop a “Newcomers’ Guide to HRM”, a printed and electronic directory of services available in HRM. An English language version will be developed in Phase I. Specific services and information to highlight will be determined in consultation with the community, but may include:
 - Public transportation
 - Recreation and Libraries
 - Property taxes
 - Garbage and recycling
 - Snow removal schedule
 - Water and sewer
 - Building a house
 - HRM contact information



Work to better understand our challenges and improve information sharing of HRM services with citizens.

- Develop an advisory group of staff and citizens to identify specific challenges, concerns and needs of diverse communities in accessing HRM services and programs. Focus on isolation reduction and ensure adequate access for diverse communities.
 - HRM will work with immigrant communities to determine specific challenges and to improve service provision.
- HRM access centres will be utilized where appropriate to link immigrants with existing services. Customer service centres, library & recreation facilities and programs will be used to provide information that will assist new immigrants with settlement in our region.



PHASE II – MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Following the completion of Phase I activities, HRM will expand upon those initiatives and:

- Seek opportunities to partner with settlement organizations and universities (a strong resource through their language faculties) to provide HRM service information in multiple languages to address the needs of immigrant communities.
- Work with our diverse communities and community partners to produce additional versions of the “Newcomers’ Guide to HRM” in French and the five most common languages spoken by new immigrants to HRM, including:
 - Arabic
 - Mandarin (China)
 - Spanish
 - Farsi (Iran)
 - Russian



Specific services to be highlighted will be determined in consultation with the community. Upon completion of the guide, HRM will explore opportunities to build upon the “welcome wagon” approach to providing information to newcomers.

- In conjunction with the advisory committee, HRM will increase efforts to involve diverse communities on municipal committees and in policy and event planning.
- Provide staff training to increase awareness of the importance of communicating clearly and concisely with citizens. Provide plain language correspondence. Explore opportunities to direct citizens to HRM staff with various language abilities.
- Explore opportunities for the three levels of government to co-locate service centres.
- Work collaboratively with Halifax Regional School Board to provide information to students on civics and by-laws.



- Promote culture in HRM.
 - Support the aspects of the HRM Cultural Plan that deal with cultural inclusion.
 - Work with local media to promote and celebrate cultural events and important dates.
 - Include important cultural events and dates in HRM's annual corporate calendar.
 - Undertake a diversity campaign involving the promotion of HRM as a culturally diverse community and representation of the ethnic diversity of HRM in our publications.

ORGANIZATIONAL - INTERNAL FOCUS



The HRM Employment Equity Policy states that the municipality will represent the diverse community it serves. HRM is currently reviewing its recruitment strategy and working to reduce or eliminate any barriers newcomers may encounter when trying to secure employment with the municipality. Specifically, we will be looking at our employment and recruitment system, work placement opportunities as well as credential assessment and recognition.

PHASE I – SHORT TERM ACTIONS

Over the next year HRM will:

- Consistently fulfill HRM's diversity mandate to ensure employees represent the population they serve by:
 - Setting standards to improve on designated and targeted recruitment of our diverse communities to reflect the population.
 - Leveraging existing pools of international students by educating them on career choices and available opportunities in the region.
 - Recognizing international work experience and writing job descriptions that recognize job experience as well as credentials.
 - Consider the addition of a practical component to job interviews where feasible.
- Begin the development of a list of potential language interpreters in the HRM workforce.
- Develop and promote, through staff and public education/awareness, the interactions and positive contributions that immigrants make to our society.
 - Establish a "Where in the World" section in the HRM News employee newsletter to provide an opportunity for employees to share stories about their country of origin.



PHASE II – MEDIUM AND LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Following the completion of Phase I activities, HRM will work to expand these initiatives and:

- Support and enhance diversity training and understanding with:
 - Enhanced cultural diversity training for customer service and front-line public facing employees such as training in cultural competencies.
- Encourage appropriate behaviour:
 - Create performance accountabilities for recognizing diversity. Ensure supervisors model appropriate behaviours and hold employees accountable.
 - Enhance emergency services protocols for dealing with diverse languages.

ONGOING COMMITMENT



HRM is making a long-term commitment to fulfill the recommendations of this Action Plan. Over the next few years, HRM will host regular discussions forums with representatives from business, government, not-for-profit organizations, immigrant settlement organizations and immigrants on issues of significance related to municipal services and ease of settlement in HRM to ensure that we are able to continually progress toward our goal of making Halifax Regional Municipality a warm, welcoming community for newcomers.



ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

	Communications - External Focus	Organizational - Internal Focus
Phase I	• Host citizenship ceremonies. • Provide welcome letters to newcomers from the Mayor and Councillors. • Website improvements. • Develop a “Newcomers’ Guide to HRM”. • Create an advisory group of staff and citizens to identify the challenges and needs of diverse communities. • Utilize HRM access centres to link immigrants with existing services.	• Fulfill HRM’s diversity mandate to ensure employees represent the population they serve. • Develop a list of potential interpreters within the HRM workforce. • Establish a “Where in the World” section in the HRM News employee newsletter.
Phase II	• Work with community partners to provide HRM service information in multiple languages. • Develop additional versions of the “Newcomers’ Guide to HRM” in Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, Farsi and Russian and French. • Increase diverse community representation on municipal committees and in policy & event planning. • Improve staff training in communications, in particular in providing plain language correspondence. • Explore opportunities for the three levels of government to co-locate service centres. • Collaborate with Halifax Regional School Board to provide information to students on civics and by-laws. • Promote culture in HRM.	• Enhance cultural diversity training for customer service and front-line public facing employees. • Encourage appropriate behavior and create staff performance accountabilities for recognizing diversity. • Enhance emergency service protocols for dealing with diverse languages.



Photos:

HILC - Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre

MISA - Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association

Halifax Regional Municipality

Design and Printing:

HRM, Corporate Communications



HALIFAX
REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY