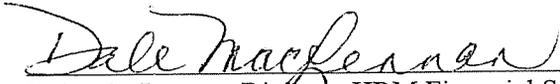




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Halifax Regional Council  
September 17th, 2002

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**   
Dale MacLennan, Director, HRM Financial Services

**DATE:** August 28, 2002

**SUBJECT:** **HRM Community Grants Program: Regional Trails Advisory Committee  
Request for Increased Funding in 2002-2003.**

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

At the meeting of Regional Council February 12, 2002, the Regional Trails Advisory Committee made a presentation to Council. The issue of insurance coverage for volunteer groups was referred to staff for a report: HRM Parks & Recreation will provide a response. The issue of annual financial support towards administrative expenses was referred to the HRM Grants Committee.

On February 25th, 2002, representatives of the Regional Trails Advisory Committee made a presentation to the Grants Committee requesting an increase in the funding assigned the trails development category from the current \$25,000/year to \$100,000.

#### BACKGROUND

The HRM Regional Trails System forms part of a province-wide network of multi-use trails. The development of a regional trails system was initially guided by the 1997 report "Regional Trails System Concept Plan" prepared by independent consultants for the Halifax Regional Development Agency (HRDA). The report presented a development plan to form the basis for recruiting partners and securing funding.

The HRDA's mandate is to promote and support community economic development. Hence, the development of the trails system has placed an emphasis on community consultation and volunteer participation. HRM's departmental lead is Parks & Recreation whose mandate supports accessible recreational opportunities for diverse populations of interest and abilities. Parks & Recreation has also adopted a community development approach to program development and service delivery.

Trails organizations in HRM currently receive assistance from HRM from several departmental sources:

1. HRM Parks & Recreation: Capital funding for the construction of trails. The budget for 2002-2003 is \$300,000 and budget projections indicate a desire to increase funding to \$650,000 in the next two fiscal years (2003-2005). These funds have leveraged contributions from other levels of government and the private sector.

2. HRM Parks & Recreation: Operational funding in the amount of \$80,000 for 1.5 full-time staff members and administrative expenses for 2002-2003. One staff position is cost-shared with Halifax Regional Development Agency.

3. HRM Financial Services, Grants Program: Annual developmental grants awarded through the *Community Grants Program* (Property Development and Community Facilities sector) in the amount of \$25,000 for 2002-2003. Eligibility restricted to member groups of the Regional Trails Advisory Committee. Funds are for equipment purchases, administrative expenses, and marketing.

Further assistance from the HRM Grants Program is anticipated in 2003-2004 with the addition of heritage trails and archeological projects to the Community Heritage sector of the *Community Grants Program*. Eligibility is not limited to organizations who are members of the Regional Trails Advisory Committee. Hence, application could be made by local non-profit groups such as historical societies, heritage interest groups, residents associations, recreation groups, service clubs, environmental organizations etc.

4. HRM Tourism, Culture & Heritage: To date, two trail projects, the North West Arm Trail and the Porter's Lake Trail, have been identified in the HRM Heritage Tourism Strategy, "Natural Tourism", for assistance with direct-to-consumer marketing. The value of contributions made in 2002-2003 totalled \$0. However, efforts are underway to encourage the participation of trails groups in natural heritage tourism marketing through the *Heritage Tourism Partnership Program* administered under the Heritage and Culture Division. In 2002-2003, the Marketing Division of Tourism, Culture & Heritage contributed \$10,000 to develop an inventory of existing natural heritage sites in HRM. This division's responsibilities have since been transferred to the new Destinations Marketing Organization (Destinations Halifax).

5. HRDA: Operating funds towards staff in the amount of \$20,000 for 2002-2003. Assistance in obtaining grants for seasonal trails staffing through Human Resources Development Canada grants has ceased as a result of HRDC's change in funding priorities and application process.

In summary, HRM contributed a combined total of \$415,000 in 2002-2003. This amount excludes any contributions made under the *Councillors Discretionary Capital Funds* (Financial Services) or the *Councillors District Activity Fund* (Grants Program).

Additional opportunities that could be pursued in 2003-2004 include:

1. The *HRM Capital District Project*: offers numerous opportunities for the inclusion of non-profit organizations in specific aspects of urban trails and walkways development (for example the Dartmouth Urban Greenway or the Halifax Urban Greenway). Staff will cooperate in establishing links between community groups, distribution of information, referrals, and technical assistance.

2. *Destinations Halifax* can provide assistance in the distribution of promotional materials to the travel trade and travel media. The DMO targets the tourism and hospitality industries, not the direct-to-consumer marketing undertaken by HRM Tourism, Culture & Heritage and community groups. The DMO has an established network of contacts, trade show venues, and market research capabilities which exceeds the resources of volunteers.

3. *Harbour Solutions*: access to a Community Compensation Fund may be available to specific communities for local enhancement projects. Trails groups within these communities or in close proximity might be included in developmental projects linking neighbourhoods, parks, or local amenities using walking paths, boardwalks, or trails.

## DISCUSSION

The rationale presented for an additional \$75,000 is as follows:

1. Administrative costs are typically not covered by government agencies such as ACOA, NS Sport & Recreation, NS Tourism, Culture & Heritage, or HRM's capital funding;
2. Liability insurance;
3. Administrative costs such as telephone, photocopying, transportation, cleaning products, washroom supplies;
4. Marketing.

Staff have not recommended any re-allocation of funds from the Grants Program budget for 2002-2003 due to the timing of the request and the re-allocation of existing capacity in the amount of \$100,000 to the *Residential Tax Exemption Program* for 2002-2003.

In preparation for the 2003-2004 budget, Grants Program staff met with the Halifax Regional Trails Advisory Team (September 9, 2002) and departmental staff. A briefing report will be prepared by staff of the Grants Program to supplement the recommendations brought to the Grants Committee with respect to funding in 2003-2004. The initial review suggests a coordinated inter-departmental and inter-agency approach is needed for long-term sustainability of both new and existing infrastructure and the volunteer groups.

## COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Growth in the number of trails projects in 2002-2003 will result in the immediate reduction in the value of individual development grants awarded trails groups under next year's *Community Grants Program*. In prior years, grants were awarded on a rotation basis so as to make funds available across a growing number of trails projects. Last year, at the request of the Regional Trails Advisory Committee, the category's allocation of \$25,000 was divided proportionally among all applicants. It is possible to transfer funds between categories of funding within the *Community Grants Program* (from another category of grants funding) but capacity would be limited to a modest \$5,000-\$10,000.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

This is an information report only. Several funding options will be explored in consultation with staff and the Halifax Regional Trails Advisory Team in developing a report with recommendations for the approval of the HRM Grants Committee and Regional Council.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating Reserves, as well as any other relevant legislation.

**ALTERNATIVES**

Not applicable.

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Letter to PJ Temple, Coordinator, Grants Program, from D. Ambler and J. DeBaise, Regional Trails Advisory Committee, February 4, 2002.

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210 or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared By: Peta-Jane Temple, Regional Coordinator, HRM Grants Program 490-5469

Peta J Temple  
Community Grants Program  
Halifax Regional Municipality

Dear Ms. Temple:

In preparation for our presentation to the HRM community grants committee, we are sending you the following outline of our rationale for requesting more funds from the HRM community grants committee.

The need for an integrated and interconnecting trail system was identified as a priority for community economic development by the communities surveyed in 1996 by the Halifax Regional Development Agency. An HRM Regional plan was developed and it was decided that the trails would be planned, constructed and managed according to the community development model.

HRTAT (Halifax Regional Trails Advisory Team) now represents 16 community trail groups. Most of the trails are at various stages of planning and development. A couple of trails are actually moving into the management stages.

As you will note from the presentation, the groups are making the Regional Trails dream a reality. The Regional Trails Team started with five community trail groups in 1998 and the number has expanded to 16 this year. With assistance from HRTAT, HRDA, HRM and provincial and federal funders the groups are securing significant funds to build the trails.

Always excluded in the capital budgets by other funders (N.S. Sport and Recreation, Tourism & Culture, ACOA etc) are the funds for all incidental expenditures that the community groups must shoulder to effectively manage the development of the trails. The following are some points to explain the kind of expenses community groups must cover to make their trail projects get off the ground. Without sources to pay for these administrative costs, it is virtually impossible for the trail projects to proceed and the other funding dollars to be spent.:

- long distance telephone
- photocopy, postage, office supplies, office space, computer costs- ink cartridge, toner
- costs of preparing multiple funding proposals
- project map development
- simple promotional materials like brochures
- web site development
- transportation costs especially for the trails being developed in remote parts of the municipality
- simple maintenance materials- toilet paper, cleaners
- liability insurance

The HRTAT has appreciated the assistance received in the past from the community grants committee. We know that you are well aware of community needs along these lines because you

endorse the community development model in the HRM business plan. Since the Halifax Regional Trails Advisory Team continues to grow , we are requesting an increase in the community grants allocation for trails from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Assuming that the team will grow in 2002 to 20 or more community groups this would provide about \$5,000.00 to each group. Community groups will be able to maintain the momentum and continue to develop HRM's much needed and beautiful trail system.

We are looking forward to making this presentation on behalf of HRTAT on February 11, 2002

Sincerely,

Don Ambler  
HRTAT Chair

Jessie DeBaie  
HRTAT Vice Chair

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