

# HRM STRATEGIC PRIORITIES - 2008/2009

HRM's strategic priorities are represented by a dual set of community and administrative vision statements and as well as action-oriented "focus area/priority" statements. This document outlines, at a high level, the intended 2008/09 strategic direction.

Section	Vision	2008/9 Strategic Direction
Part A	HRM Community Vision	Council Focus Areas
Part B	HRM Administrative Vision	Executive Management Team Priority Areas

## Part A- HRM COMMUNITY VISION

HRM's 20/20 Visioning exercise established this Community Vision statement which helps define HRM's Council Focus Areas and EMT Priorities.

*"HRM is a vibrant, caring, and connected community. Our community is built upon diverse cultures, respects the environment and our heritage, supports economic prosperity, and celebrates active citizenship. This vision is based on citizen values that speak to communities working together, economic prosperity as the backbone of a successful community, responsible active citizenship, social justice for all, protecting our natural environment, preserving our heritage strength through diversity, and dedication to a learning culture."*

(Council endorsed October 3, 2000)

## Part A- Council Focus Areas

In 2006/7 Halifax Regional Council first adopted the use of "Council Focus Areas" as a means to establish a strategic framework to define and prioritize the wide variety of public policy issues it faced. To date, as a result of these efforts HRM was able to work with the community and set strategic direction leading not only to the development of the Regional Plan but also the Immigration, Cultural, and Economic Development Plans. This has positioned HRM to be one of the "best, most livable municipalities in Canada".

As part of setting the 2008/09 strategic direction Council agreed to have four Council Focus Area discussions which cover the following strategic topics:

<i>2008/9 Council Focus Area Discussion</i>	<i>Policy areas covered</i>
Tax Reform	Taxation
Infrastructure	New Infrastructure and Recapitalization of HRM Assets, Transit Enhancements and strategic Transportation, Capital Planning and Delivery
Community Development	Youth, Community Building, Regional Planning
Public Safety	Youth, Bylaw Enforcement, Public Safety

**Part A- Council Focus Area Discussion on Tax Reform**

In January of 2007 Regional Council established its Tax Reform Committee to lead its Tax Reform project and to seek public feedback. In the Spring of 2007 the Committee held public discussions on the Foundations of the tax system.

The Committee has now made a number of key findings. First, it believes that the current property tax system must change. That system no longer has a strong connection to income or to municipal services. As such, it has become less and less equitable. The Committee has concerns over the economic competitiveness of the property tax system as well as the Deed Transfer Tax.

The most critical piece of tax reform is to determine what the foundations of any new tax system should be. Based on public feedback the Committee believes a new system should reflect a combination of municipal services and ability to pay. A Mission Statement with seven principles and 29 objectives has been created. Services should be paid for by those who benefit the most: the individual, the community or the region.

The Committee has designed a Draft Tax Model for additional public feedback. The key elements of that model are:

- Provincial Property Taxes remains the responsibility of the Province and remain on assessment;
- Municipal Services should be collected through nine tax rates with a series of flat amounts per home. Amounts may vary for multi-unit buildings. Assessment should not be used;
- There should be an enhanced property tax rebate for lower income individuals, similar in form to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Credit, and, hopefully administered through the Canada Revenue Agency;
- The Deed Transfer Tax is not connected to municipal services and is an economic disincentive. It should be phased-out;
- The benefits of Economic Competitiveness belong to residents and commercial taxpayers. It is

- critical that work continue into this topic to ensure the entire municipality benefits as much as it can;
- Should it ever be given income tax power it should consider replacing the Regional Tax Rate with a high income surtax.

Additional information on the Tax Reform process can be found on the HRM website at:  
<http://www.halifax.ca/taxreform/index.html>

## **Part A- Council Focus Area Discussion on Infrastructure**

Halifax Regional Municipality has an extensive infrastructure network comprising of interconnected structural elements that provide the framework to support HRM as a municipality. HRM is an organization that is committed to balancing the need for new infrastructure with the requirement to upgrade and maintain the existing assets. Key to this effort is the establishment of a threefold effort to balance an existing infrastructure with growth as well as to improve asset data collection in order to better manage and maintain the infrastructure. During the Council Focus Area discussions in November, Council approved an increased emphasis on recapitalization (improvements made to maintain the safe function of an asset, or extend the life of an asset.) Some examples are: repaving a road, or re-roofing a building.

The development of a five-year capital plan demonstrates the understanding of the critical role infrastructure has in the delivery of municipal services to the citizens. The result is a proactively planned approach that aligns the financial, operational and legislative requirements to develop and maintain a strong and viable infrastructure network.

### **A. Infrastructure Capability Plan**

HRM continues to grow as a vibrant community-based municipality. As such, there are requirements to plan and build a new infrastructure to support this growth in a well managed approach. The five-year capability plan will deliver new projects in 2008/09 that support service needs through the development of buildings and facilities, and improve the transportation and transit systems.

### **B. Infrastructure Recapitalization Plan**

Like most municipalities, HRM has significantly aging infrastructure that continues to decline in condition. The five-year recapitalization plan will channel additional resources to provide improvements to the existing infrastructure. Addressing some of the deficiencies would help lower operating costs in addition to improving the safety of our assets.

### **C. Asset Management**

HRM has initiated an Asset Management plan that supports the development and implementation of the five year capital plan. This project will provide staff with better tools to more effectively plan

and deliver capital work as well as collect data on the condition of the infrastructure in order to facilitate asset maintenance and management. It is expected that this effort will have wide-ranging benefits including increased value for money, improved customer service and compliance with legislation, and securing and safeguarding of HRM's assets.

## **Part A- Council Focus Area Discussion on Community Development**

The following are the areas of emphasis for the 2008/09 Council Focus Area discussion on Community Development:

### **A. Regional Plan Implementation**

Adoption of the Regional Plan has established a policy framework which provides greater predictability for managing growth and infrastructure in our communities. Ongoing implementation of the Regional Plan remains a priority. A Regional Plan Advisory Committee has been established and the Regional Plan will be put into operation through a number of key initiatives such as the development and implementation of 21 functional plans, infrastructure plans, urban design and community visioning (including the HRM By Design project).

### **B. Youth**

The youth engagement model for recreation is proving effective and will be continued. An increased focus has been placed on disengaged or marginalised youth and pre-teens. Youth programming focuses on preteens (10-13) as well as the teenaged youth (13-18). There are numerous community groups and government agencies with youth services and strategies. Community Development will continue to build on existing efforts and increase the coordination of these services by establishing a multi-level partnership and developing programs that better address the specific needs of marginalised youth.

### **C. Community Building**

Many community building initiatives undertaken by HRM (e.g., Uniacke Square; Cogswell, Agricola, North and Barrington Streets; Dartmouth North) are responding to complex social challenges. While HRM does not have a social mandate, communities and their underlying social issues impact local government more than any other level.

Recognizing the important function communities can play in their respective development has required HRM to reconsider its approach to service delivery and shift toward a community-based service delivery model. Specifically, a community based model places greater emphasis on empowering and organising community, building relationships and facilitating community networks and ensuring systems, processes and institutions are in place for communities to be successful. The model focuses on the positive assets of each

community, and less on needs. It emphasizes the importance of community being involved in setting its own priorities and being part of the solutions. Reviewing HRM's community engagement practices is critical to HRM's success in the community building initiative and will continue in 2008/09.

## **Part A- Council Focus Area Discussion on Public Safety**

The umbrella of Public Safety consists of By-Law Enforcement, Emergency Measures Organization (EMO), Fire, Integrated Emergency Services (911) and Police/Royal Canadian Mounted Police Services.

HRM citizens expect the following from our public safety services:

- Timely and appropriate emergency response;
- A feeling of safety, whether they are in their neighbourhoods or elsewhere in HRM; and
- Buildings, properties and infrastructure in HRM that are safe, healthy and well maintained.

HRM Police, RCMP and Fire will continue to do their job working with the community to provide timely emergency response, enforcement of HRM laws and bylaws, crime prevention and investigation, education and problem solving. Results demonstrate that we are more responsive, show a decreasing trend in crime rates and that overall public perception is increasing around public safety.

HRM Citizens also expect their local government to participate in and implement programs aimed at improving social conditions that are a precursor or root cause of public safety issues. While HRM does not have a social mandate, there are a number of root causes impacting public safety, and Police in collaboration with Community Development and other partner agencies will develop an appropriate response that reflects their ability to influence the social issues and the resource requirements to enable us to get ahead of the curve on these social issues.

Police expect to review the findings of the Perivale and Taylor Report, the Mayor's Round Table on Violence, and the Provincial Crime Reduction Strategy and advocate on the next steps that are reasonable and within the mandate of the Halifax Regional Police and RCMP.

Council's approval of the 07/08 budget directed the development of a long term resource strategy as well as service level reviews in order to address public safety needs. At that time, Council recognized that this was a multiyear effort.

In recognition of this long term direction, Public Safety efforts will continue through the following initiatives in 2008/09:

- Developing a Long Term Police Strategy;
- By-Law & Enforcement Service level review with an emphasis on coordination of efforts and improved response time to complaints;

- Addressing the challenge of recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters in our rural communities; and
- Aligning our Fire Service Strategies with the approved Service Delivery Standard.

The development of these long term strategic and operational goals will ensure:

- proper planning,
- identify service delivery improvements and efficiencies,
- identify resources & equipment requirements, and
- improve the safety and maintenance of HRM properties.

## **Part B- HRM ADMINISTRATIVE VISION**

*HRM is the most liveable, best managed municipality in Canada, where service to our residents and our community is our priority.*

The CAO is responsible for leading the organization in carrying out the direction of Council. This includes a number of strategic projects managed within the organizational structure. The goals contained within, are based on operational priorities that the CAO recognizes as strategically important for making HRM one of the most livable, best managed municipalities in Canada. They reflect both those initiatives for which the CAO is personally accountable, as well as those which will be fulfilled with cooperation from the Executive<sup>1</sup> (EMT) and Senior<sup>2</sup> Management Teams (SMT).

## **Part B- Executive Management Team Priority Areas**

In an effort to achieve the above stated Vision Statements, the Executive Management Team (EMT), has identified the following four priority areas in which additional emphasis is required over the coming year. Included are the Council Focus Areas - issues which Council have identified for specific attention. Each priority area addresses challenging areas of public policy; about which residents and Council are concerned, and where improvements in delivery and outcomes are required. Each may require the

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Management team of HRM is comprised of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the Deputy CAO of Operations and the Deputy CAO of Corporate Services & Strategy.

<sup>2</sup>The Senior Management Team of HRM is comprised of members of EMT, Directors representing each business unit in HRM, associate members including representatives from the Halifax Regional Library, the Halifax Regional Water Commission and RCMP, Corporate Communications and respective Coordinators.

involvement of more than one Business Unit and more than one level of government, and each may require action by individuals and local communities, as well as by government. Each of these areas will be monitored by EMT and will become part of a regular reporting program.

The following Priority Areas are considered critical in achieving success:

1. Implementation of Strategic Initiatives
2. Practising Fiscal Responsibility
3. Making HRM an Employer of Choice
4. Providing Excellence in Service Delivery

## **Part B- EMT Priority 1 Implementation of Strategic Initiatives**

EMT's main focus is to ensure HRM's approved corporate strategies are implemented and integrated into day-to-day operations. Deliverables are jointly developed by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and outlined in their annual business plans. Consideration must be given to delivering priorities while maintaining core service delivery. Therefore, prioritization and capacity-planning will be required. The following is a list of the 2008/09 Strategic Initiatives:

1. Council Focus Areas<sup>3</sup> :
  - Tax Reform: Council has asked for an appropriate balance between reliance on the market based assessment system and other forms of taxation and charges.
  - Community Development: The priorities captured under community development include youth, community building and Regional Plan implementation (Ongoing implementation of the Regional Plan's 21 functional plans remains a priority; these focus on environmental sustainability, development issues, transportation, finance, culture and & heritage issues.)
  - Public Safety: The umbrella of public safety includes bylaw enforcement, Emergency Measures Office (EMO), Fire Services, Integrated Emergency Services, Halifax Regional Police and Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
  - Infrastructure: This focus area refers to all asset categories including buildings and facilities, solid waste, transit and transportation networks, fleet and supporting infrastructure items including information technology (IT) and data.

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<sup>3</sup>The Council Focus Areas are the result of a regional strategic priority-setting exercise and an articulation of the areas Council believe require specific and focussed attention. Priorities will be reflected annually in budget and business plans; however, the projects may represent multi-year issues and have to be resolved over a number of budget years. Prioritization of the focus areas will require consideration of the organization's capacity to deliver on each.

2. Cultural Plan: establishes a mandate and program strategy to build on HRM's cultural identity and ensure cultural opportunities for its citizens.
3. Economic Strategy: The Strategy's vision seeks to empower and enrich the lives of all our citizens and identifies ways in which we can grow into a city that is prosperous, dynamic, creative and globally competitive.
4. Immigration Action Plan: HRM's Plan will compliment the Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy, while recognizing the municipal mandate and supporting the key components of the Halifax Region Immigration Strategy.
5. Atlantic Gateway: HRM acts as a multi-modal entry point for the Atlantic region. Due to its size, location and existing transportation infrastructure, HRM has untapped capacity and is well positioned to expand its role as a key hub in the Atlantic Gateway for the shipment of goods both to and from North America.

## **Part B- EMT Priority 2 Practising Fiscal Responsibility**

Fiscal responsibility is a balance of public expectations and needs with the efficient and effective management of municipal resources.

1. **A Healthy financial position for the Halifax Regional Municipality:** HRM will build on its successful multi year financial strategy. It will be transparent, accountable and adhere to sound financial management principles of setting targets with clear links between costs, services and financial capacity.
2. **Capital Planning:** Long term planning and understanding of potential future needs and pressures are essential to HRM's organizational success. A medium-term review of infrastructure needs and a plan to balance base deficiencies and new capacity requirements will keep HRM on the road to long-term financial success.

## **Part B- EMT Priority 3 Making HRM an Employer of Choice**

The Halifax Regional Municipality is an organization where employees experience a supportive, respectful workplace that offers challenging, interesting work and where their contributions are appreciated, recognized and fairly rewarded. As a result, HRM will continue to attract and retain employees who deliver high-quality services to meet the needs of its citizens.

1. **Welcoming Organizational Culture:** Opportunities for growth and advancement are available and meaningful and challenging work is provided. Employees take pride in their work, while at the same time balancing their professional and personal lives.
2. **Safe and Healthy Work Environment:** HRM is committed to providing a safe, healthy and positive workplace to enable employees to live and work to their full potential.
3. **Human Resource Planning :** HRM is committed to addressing the many challenges it may face as an employer, including the continuing commitment to attract and retain an effective workforce. Also, efforts will continue to develop a comprehensive Succession Plan for the future.
4. **Valuing Diversity:** Diversity is an organizational strength and HRM strives to be a workplace that is reflective of our community, demonstrated by valuing diversity in all its forms.

## **Part B- EMT Priority 4 Providing Excellence in Service Delivery**

The culture of Halifax Regional Municipality is one where community (citizen) focussed service delivery is recognized by all employees as a priority and personal responsibility. As a result, the level of customer satisfaction can, and will, be measured by identifying and reporting on performance in critical service areas.

1. **Performance Measurement:** The development of appropriate performance measures for corporate, community, business unit and, ultimately, Council Focus Areas, will ensure

HRM's commitment to performance measurement will be achieved and maintained through regular reporting.

2. Citizen Centred Service Delivery: Service for both internal and external clients will continue to be monitored, reported and improved. Establishment and maintenance of minimum service standards and the tools required to achieve them, are key. Standards are communicated to all staff, Council members and customers, and provide an accountability framework in an effort to maintain and improve outcomes on an ongoing basis.
3. Service Delivery Partnerships: HRM strives to be responsive to client needs and use resources effectively to realize long term success. To that end, service integration and internal/external partnership opportunities will be an ongoing commitment.