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Item No.
Community Planning & Economic Development
June 16, 2016

TO: Chair and Members of Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee

Original Signed by:

SUBMITTED BY:

Maggie MacDonald, Managing Director, Government Relations & External Affairs

DATE: May 25, 2016

SUBJECT: **Halifax Rural Index**

ORIGIN

On January 21, 2016 MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Nicoll that the Community Planning and Economic Development Standing Committee:

1. Request a staff report identifying implementation and cost implications to develop a Halifax Rural Index, including possible participation by Halifax Partnership and in coordination with the Planning and Development Rural Team, and;
2. Engage neighboring municipalities, UNSM and the Province in identifying standards and measures that could be included in the index.
3. Request a staff report on the formation of a rural action committee to consult with residents in rural communities that would include HRM and neighbouring councillors, neighbouring municipal staff and representatives of rural areas.
4. Send the staff information report to Regional Council for information and presentation.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter - Business and industrial Development

71 (1) The Municipality may ...

- (d) prepare and disseminate information about the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas for the assistance of institutions, industries and businesses intending to locate or expand in the Municipality or the surrounding area.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that CPED recommend to Regional Council that staff working in collaboration across municipal business units and with the Halifax Partnership, create and maintain a Halifax Rural Index along the lines described in the Discussion section of this report. It is further recommended that staff continue to explore the development of a broader index involving other municipalities, UNSM and the Province.

BACKGROUND

This staff report responds to the first point in the CPED motion from January 21, 2016. A separate report will respond to the third point in the motion.

The Halifax Partnership produced the first **Halifax Index** (Index) in 2012. It began as a measurement tool for **AGREATERHalifax**, the 2011-16 economic strategy. The Index tells Halifax's story – the state of the economy, the health of the community, and the sustainability of the environment. It provides insights for actions to strengthen and grow the municipality.

The Index tracks indicators in four domains: people, the economy, quality of life and sustainability. The content of the collection of indicators has stayed essentially the same since 2012.

The Index compares Halifax with other "Benchmark Cities" chosen as comparators based on their relative size, population and economic similarities to Halifax. These cities are St. John's, Quebec City, London, Regina and, Victoria. Council approved the benchmark cities in January 2008.

Attachment A provides an "Overview of Indicators in the Halifax Index". The full indices and the accompanying text for each year appear at

<http://www.halifaxpartnership.com/en/home/economic-data-reports/halifax-index/default.aspx>

The Index launch each spring attracts key players in the Halifax economic development field.

To supplement the core data, each year the Partnership also includes "Special Analysis" sections in the Index. These inserts have covered:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2012 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">– International Immigration and International Student Retention– Halifax's International Competitiveness– Demographics of the Regional Centre |
| 2013 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is Halifax's Labour Market sustainable?- A Halifax Innovation Agenda |
| 2014 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Big Data- Head and Regional Offices |
| 2015 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Who is responsible for Youth Retention?- Halifax's Start-Up Community |

For 2016, the Index will include a special insert on Rural Halifax.

The full Index tracks many numbers. The detail can be overwhelming. Several years ago, senior Halifax Partnership officials presented a list of three numbers to measure quickly the economic health of the municipality: population, number of people working, and the size of the commercial tax base.

If these three numbers are increasing, this is a positive indicator for the municipal economy. For the 2016-2021 municipal economy strategy, the Partnership has set targets in each of the three areas. These three numbers could also provide a useful picture for the rural parts of the municipality. It may be necessary to adjust expectations for the size or rates of increase.

DISCUSSION

Halifax Regional Municipality encompasses approximately 5,577 sq. km. and over 200 urban and rural communities. While the Index provides a useful overall snapshot of the state of the municipal economy, the Index numbers mask great differences between urban areas and more rural parts of the municipality.

The information report presented to CPED in December 2015 and the Portrait of Rural Halifax which accompanied it pointed to some of the differences between parts of the municipality. Discussion at CPED and at Regional Council led to the recommendation for this report.

The recommendation asked staff to examine "implementation and cost implications to develop a Halifax Rural Index". Discussions with Halifax Partnership led to an agreement to see what could be included in the 2016 Index in an insert on "Rural HRM". Some draft material prepared for the insert follows:

Summary Statistics by HRM Sub-Region, 2011

Source: 2011 Census, National Household Survey

	Urban Core	Inner Rural	Western Rural	Eastern Rural
Population				
Population	298,535	47,791	24,474	19,523
Pop. change '06-'11 (%)	4.2	10.8	5.9	-3.0
Share of HRM total population (%)	76.5	12.2	6.3	5.0
Population density (pop. per sq.km)	818.0	82.5	31.9	5.2
Share of pop. Age 45+ (%)	42.3	39.7	46.6	51.9
Migrant Population (moved in last five years)				
Intra-provincial	11,305	965	400	620
Interprovincial	21,245	3,185	1,270	720
International	9,655	710	405	65
Postsecondary Attainment, population aged 25-64 (%)				
Postsecondary Total	69.8	71.3	69.6	61.1
Apprenticeships	9.5	13.0	14.8	18.2
College	21.2	25.2	22.2	24.9
University	39.1	33.2	32.7	17.9
Labour Force				
Labour Force	169,030	27,565	13,535	10,230
Participation rate (%)	69.0	73.4	67.3	62.1
Unemployment rate (%)	7.3	5.7	6.2	8.1
Employment rate (%)	64.0	69.2	63.0	57.0
Self-employment rate (%)	7.6	9.4	11.3	11.7
Worked fewer than 40 weeks	18.2	16.3	15.8	22.9
Business				
Number of businesses	26,013	3,183	1,736	1,242

Note: Sub-regions are based on census tract data, which does not line up exactly with Statistics Canada's "population centre" designations. As a result, "urban core" and the "rural" population counts in this table do not exactly match Statistics Canada's "population centre" and "rural area" counts.

Note: The "Eastern Rural" column provides data for the areas called "Rural Halifax" in the report that went to CPED. (See Attachment B – Map of Rural Halifax)

The work done for the 2016 Index rural insert shows that tracking population and employment data for rural Halifax is relatively straight forward. Since complete data comes out after each census, numbers may lag behind circumstances in situations of rapid change,

For the “People” and “Economy” domains of the Index, disaggregating “rural” from “urban” numbers appears generally “do-able”.

Precise boundary definitions do raise some issues. Halifax assessment and tax information depend on GIS data. Halifax boundaries may not align with Census boundaries. Ideally, Halifax boundaries would line up exactly with census or tax filer data but even if they do not, “rural” data would still be useful. For modest fees, Statistics Canada can prepare customized data.

Under “Quality of Place” and “Sustainability” the Index monitors several facets of community life:

- Crime rates
- Per capita personal income
- Perceptions of physical & mental health
- Life satisfaction
- Employment in arts, culture, recreation & sport
- Library use
- Housing construction & building starts
- Transit ridership
- Residential & commercial waste levels
- Fiscal health

Some of these are relevant to the rural parts of the municipality.

Items not tracked in the Index might be useful for a fuller picture of rural Halifax. For example:

- Concentration of property and drug-related crime
- Reliance on Income Assistance
- Proportion of lone parent families
- Attachment to the community – mobility
- Use of community-based addictions and mental health services
- Areas of developmental vulnerability (at age 5)
- Achievement among students (elementary and middle school)
- Graduation rates (grade 12)

There are also service indicators that could be monitored, including:

- Police, fire and emergency response times
- Waste collection data.

For several years, the Statistics Unit of the provincial Department of Finance maintained “Community Counts”, a useful website that included data of various kinds for a series of communities across the province. The province cut Community Counts in 2015 but has recently made the data available as part of its open data site: <https://data.novascotia.ca/browse?sortBy=newest&utf8=%E2%9C%93>

The CPED recommendation asked for this report to assess the implementation implications of developing a Halifax Rural Index (HRI). Given the data available from federal and municipal sources, what is tracked now by the province and the municipality (and business units within the municipality), it should be possible to develop a useful “Halifax Rural Index” to be issued along with the 2017 Halifax Index. GREA, working in collaboration with the Halifax Partnership, Finance, and Planning & Development could produce the HRI.

Development of a broader index involving other municipalities will require more discussion with those municipalities, UNSM and the Province. Such an exercise will take time and may raise content issues with other participants. This broader rural index will be the subject of a separate report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The CPED motion also asked for the cost implications for an HRI. For material related to the municipality, using existing data will require staff time and can be accommodated within the existing 2016/17 operating budget.

RISK CONSIDERATION

Gathering information about rural Halifax and making it available to the public could raise expectations of increased government activity in rural areas, especially if outcomes or services in rural areas are perceived as inequitable. Managing expectations will be very important in the development of the HRI.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Understanding the implications of an HRI and producing the first version of that index does not require community engagement. Using and improving the original material will likely lead to discussions with communities. Having the HRI as a foundation document will be helpful for discussions with communities such as discussions on the proposed rural action committee.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

Preparation of an HRI has no environmental implications.

ALTERNATIVES

Council may choose to maintain the status quo and not have staff produce the HRI.

This is not recommended as an HRI can be produced from data that is available. Producing the index does not have significant extra costs or risks attached.

ATTACHMENTS

- A – Overview of Indicators in the Halifax Index
 - B – Map of Rural Halifax
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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/index.php> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

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Attachment A – Overview of Indicators in the Halifax Index

PEOPLE

- Items in italics are not included in subsequent years. Some were captured only during certain years because of their connection to an annual special topic. Others (e.g. certain census data) may not have been repeated because no new/updated numbers were available.
- The year in parentheses after an item is the year when it was first included in the Index.

<p style="text-align: center;">POPULATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population estimates • Components of growth • Migration by source Immigrant Retention (2014) • <i>Population by age</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Workforce by education</i> • University and college enrolment • Programs of study • <i>Mean reading, science and math scores</i> International & inter-provincial enrolment (2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">LABOUR FORCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour force population • Employment • <i>Labour force by age</i> Outcomes by Age Group (2014) • Unemployment and participation rates 	<p style="text-align: center;">WORKFORCE STABILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Days lost to illness, disability, personal and family responsibility</i> • <i>Days lost to strike</i> • <i>Average job tenure</i> Registered Claims/Time Loss Claims (2014) Weeks of Short Term Disability (2014)

ECONOMY

<p style="text-align: center;">GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDP growth • GDP per capita Research & Development (2013) 	<p style="text-align: center;">SECTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment by sector • Public and private sector employment • Wages by industry
<p style="text-align: center;">CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail sales • Housing starts and sales • Housing prices 	<p style="text-align: center;">CONSTRUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of building permits • Total capital investment • <i>Building permit processing times</i> Construction Employment (2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">COMMERCIAL SPACE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of office and retail space • Vacancy rates 	<p style="text-align: center;">GATEWAY MOVEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and cargo movement through Halifax International Airport and Port of Halifax • Total air and boat movements
<p style="text-align: center;">BUSINESS CONFIDENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rating of Halifax as a place to do business • Optimism of current economic prospects Business Confidence Index (2015) 	

QUALITY OF PLACE

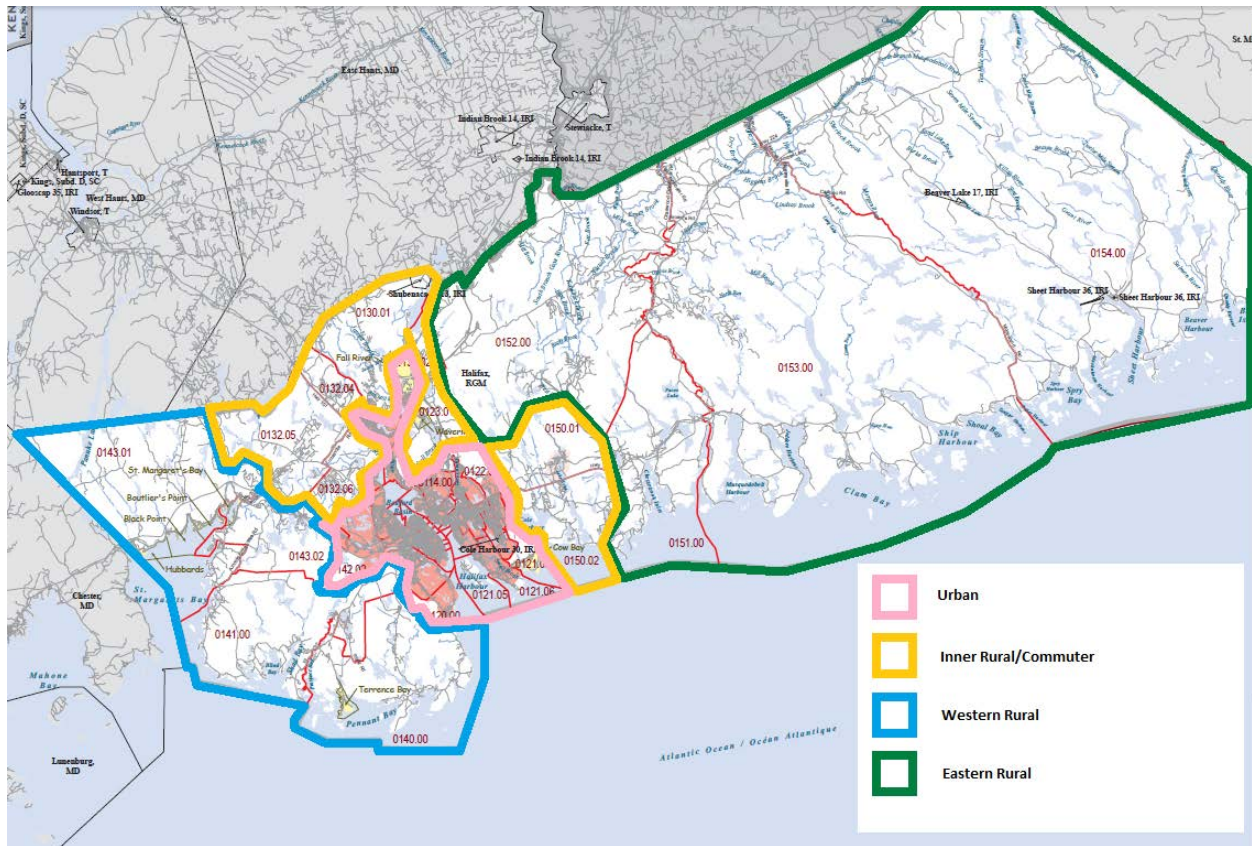
<p style="text-align: center;">SAFETY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total and violent crime indices 	<p style="text-align: center;">AFFORDABILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal income
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence of traffic collision • Crime and fire stats • <i>Community safety</i> • <i>Satisfaction with police services</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of people with low income • <i>Market basket measure</i> • <i>Apartment rental and vacancy rates</i> • <i>Median housing prices and affordability</i> • Inter-city Price Differentials (2015)
<p style="text-align: center;">HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Life expectancy</i> • Perceived health and mental health • Activity levels • <i>Method of transit</i> • <i>Rate of Overweight Individuals & Obesity (2014)</i> • <i>Smoking Rates (2015)</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charitable contributions • Life satisfaction • Sense of belonging to community • <i>Voter turnouts</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and wages in arts, culture and recreation • Use of programs in arts, culture and recreation 	

SUSTAINABILITY

<p style="text-align: center;">DENSITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Density of cities and urban areas</i> • Regional Centre population and dwelling counts • Regional Centre Housing Starts (2014) • Regional Centre Value of Building Permits (2014) 	<p style="text-align: center;">TRANSPORTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode of transportation to work • <i>Median commuting distance</i> • Public transit usage, availability and satisfaction
<p style="text-align: center;">ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Water quality</i> • <i>Air quality</i> • <i>Average water usage</i> • Waste disposal and diversion • Green House Gas Emissions per capita (2014) 	<p style="text-align: center;">MUNICIPAL FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bond rating</i> • Revenues • Commercial tax per property

Attachment B – Map of Rural Halifax



“Rural Halifax” has been divided into three general areas: Inner Rural, Western Rural, and Eastern Rural.

Generally, Inner Rural and Western Rural represent commuter sheds of the urban core and their demographic and other summary statistics reflect that.

“Eastern Rural” covers the areas called “Rural Halifax” in the December 2015 report to CPED.