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**Item No. 12.1.1**  
**Executive Standing Committee**  
**January 18, 2016**

**TO:** Chair and Members of the Executive Standing Committee

**SUBMITTED BY:** ORIGINAL SIGNED  

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Managing Director, Government Relations and External Affairs

**DATE:** 10 January 2016

**SUBJECT:** **Multicultural Advisory Committee**

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**ORIGIN**

December 2, 2014 Regional Council motion: MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Hendsbee, that Halifax Regional Council requests a staff report to investigate the option of establishing a Multicultural Advisory Committee. The committee would focus on ensuring that after immigration we focus on integration. The committee could also be tasked with identifying and defining the strategic role that Halifax Regional Municipality plays in the direction of local multicultural initiatives and the gaps needed to be filled.

June 22, 2015 Executive Standing Committee motion: MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Deputy Mayor Nicoll THAT the Executive Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council not pursue a Multicultural Advisory Committee at this time.

June 22, 2015 Executive Standing Committee motion: MOVED by Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Watts THAT this matter be deferred for 6 months until the Diversity and Inclusion Office is established and can bring forward best practices and recommendations.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

79 (1) The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for (av)(v) any charitable, nursing, medical, athletic, educational, environmental, cultural, community, fraternal, recreational, religious, sporting or social organization within the Province.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council request that staff develop an approach to external stakeholder engagement as part of the development of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework. The approach should include consideration of those best practices and questions identified in the body of this report.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2005, Regional Council adopted HRM's first Immigration Action Plan. The Plan's vision stated: "Halifax Regional Municipality is a welcoming community where immigration is supported and encouraged. HRM 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."

In June 2013, Council approved an updated Welcoming Newcomers Action Plan, which broadened the focus of HRM's work to all newcomers to the municipality, as well as a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). The updated Plan emphasizes the role municipalities play in helping newcomers integrate into the community and the LIP brings together a wide range of stakeholders to provide advice and support on municipal services. Halifax's LIP engages 35 organizations and agencies through four working sub-committees and one action team. There are over 65 LIPs throughout Canada, many of which provide advisory support to municipalities.

As noted in the origin section of this report, in 2014 Regional Council requested staff consider the establishment of a Multicultural Advisory Committee, but this motion was deferred until the Diversity and Inclusion Office was established and able to bring forward best practices and recommendations. The new office was established in June 2015 and has since been working to define its role in supporting diversity and inclusion for the municipality.

## **DISCUSSION**

Many major Canadian cities have advisory committees established to support these cities' roles in meeting the needs of diverse communities. Often, these committees are established out of a significant event in a city or organization or from requests from constituents. A number of best practices and factors are key to the success and sustainability of such committees, including:

- a clear mandate,
- benchmarks based on significant internal and external data and analysis,
- detailed demographic information,
- a clear understanding of community need, and
- strong relationships with stakeholders.

Through the establishment of the Diversity and Inclusion Office and initiation of a diversity and inclusion framework, work has begun in a number of the areas identified above. The diversity and inclusion framework will set a clear direction for the municipality, both in terms of workforce development and external service delivery. The framework is being developed in consultation with staff, external experts in the fields of diversity and inclusion and input from senior staff/directors. Part of the process of framework development involves developing relationships with stakeholders to facilitate information sharing and a better understanding of community needs.

Effective consultation is vital to any diversity and inclusion initiative. In creating the framework, consultation will supplement past work and will examine the requirement for and potential role of a Multicultural Advisory Committee or similar advisory body. It is important at the beginning stage of the process we allow for this data to be collected and analyzed in the broader context of our Diversity and Inclusion activities before putting an advisory committee in place.

Questions that need to be considered in relation to a potential advisory body include:

- What is the mandate and role of the committee?
- What is the relationship of the committee to the internal Diversity and Inclusion team and framework?
- What is the relationship of the committee to Council/standing committees?
- How is the success of the committee measured?
- How will they engage the broader community?
- What would membership look like?

- Would this also encompass the Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian community?
- What would be the balance between immigrant concerns and indigenous community concerns?
- How does this include other communities such as, LGBTQ community?
- What is the relationship between this committee and other stakeholders?

These and other questions will be addressed in conjunction with the development of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework.

Work on the Diversity and Inclusion framework to date includes:

- A scan of best practices locally, regionally and nationally, identifying what Diversity and Inclusion units and frameworks look like in other jurisdictions;
- Meetings between the Manager of Diversity and Inclusion and Directors and other staff to begin the process of identifying the current state of the organization in relation to diversity and inclusion; existing barriers; and best methods to engage staff in the development of the framework.
- Development of a draft vision and mission for the framework.

Moving the framework forward will require the following next steps:

- A detailed internal scan to set the benchmark against which progress will be measured. Halifax does not have benchmarks with respect to diversity and inclusion, so a plan is being developed to determine how to collect the internal data required to move the framework forward. Existing demographic data needs to be reviewed to help in identifying strengths and weaknesses with respect to meeting the needs of diverse communities.
- Internal review of the draft framework by staff at all levels of the organization to gather feedback and to develop an implementation plan.
- Establishment of an internal group of diversity champions, from business units who are doing diversity and inclusion work. This group would be responsible for fine tuning the framework and developing the implementation plan.
- Work with the CAO (or designate) and Directors to establish an internal executive Diversity and Inclusion council which will be responsible for providing leadership on the implementation of the framework. This group will ensure consistent communication of diversity objectives and outcomes both internally and externally.
- Present the framework to business units. The Diversity and Inclusion team will provide support to business units to assist with developing specific goals and action plans.
- Identification of the most effective ways to engage the public and external stakeholders in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework. This could vary from community consultations to the establishment of an external Diversity and Inclusion advisory committee.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Ongoing

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

**ALTERNATIVES**

None

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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