

HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749
Halifax, Nova Scotia
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Item No. 15.1.2
Halifax Regional Council
April 16, 2019

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed by 
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 29, 2018

SUBJECT: Halifax Higher Education Partnership MOU

ORIGIN

January 28, 2014 Motion: MOVED by Councillor Mason and seconded by Councillor Nicoll that Halifax Regional Council approve the attached MOU between HRM, Metro Universities and the NSCC; endorse the Mayor signing the MOU on Council's behalf, and direct implementation of its initiatives to begin.

April 14, 2015 Information report Halifax Higher Education Partnership Update

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter, section 79 (1) (m): The Council may expend money required by the Municipality for promotion and attraction of institutions, industries and businesses, the stabilization and expansion of employment opportunities and the economic development of the Municipality.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- 1) Consent to the addition of the Halifax Partnership as a party to the Memorandum of Understanding; and
- 2) Approve innovation as the identified area of mutual interest for focus under the Memorandum of Understanding for 2018-2020.

BACKGROUND

In 2005 HRM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Halifax-area universities. It was followed in 2006 by an MOU with NSCC. These agreements contained high-level statements about working together more closely, sharing information and mutually supporting initiatives that contribute to the quality of life in HRM. The overall aim was to increase communication and collaboration, inform each other on issues which might affect the other partner, and develop a good working relationship. Both MOUs listed a number of areas for possible collaboration, but no formal monitoring was undertaken.

In August 2013 the Mayor's Office and Presidents of Halifax-area universities and NSCC met to discuss ways to update the MOU and focus efforts on specific, measurable goals. The result was a renewed MOU approved by Council in January 2014. The MOU itself does not change, but the intent was to have a focus area section that could be updated and changed as progress is made and new priorities emerge. The initial focus area was talent attraction and retention. HRM's Economic Strategy at the time had talent retention as a priority goal, and the MOU noted that post-secondary institutions are uniquely positioned to help achieve this goal both by attracting more people and providing an educated labour force.

Since that time the Mayor and the post-secondary Presidents have met on a regular basis, as the Halifax Higher Education Partnership (HHEP). An April 2015 Council report outlined some of the activities initiated by the group, particularly a city-hosted welcome reception for international students which has become an annual event, and ongoing collaboration between HRM's Local Immigration Partnership and post-secondary institutions.

DISCUSSION

The number of international students studying and remaining in Halifax post-graduation has increased. Beginning in 2009, international student enrollment in Halifax universities began to rise rapidly increasing from 2800 to 6700 by 2018. It has doubled over the past 8 years. Halifax's five-year economic strategy, the Halifax Economic Growth Plan 2016-21 has a goal to transition a larger number of international students into permanent residents, and HRM is seeing success here as well, with the percentage increasing from 3.4% in 2015 to 6.9% in 2016 to 9.4% in 2017. The Halifax Partnership (the Partnership) has played an important role in achieving this through its Connector Program and the Atlantic Immigration Pilot. The Connector Program is a best practice program developed by the Partnership that has been adopted by several other Canadian and international municipalities. It aims to increase labour force participation by connecting new residents and local and international graduates with local employers, civil servants and community leaders based on industry experience and professional backgrounds. To date, Connector Program has engaged 1,225 Connectors with 2,914 Connectees and 1202 jobs have been found by program participants.

The Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) is unique to the region and enables Nova Scotia employers to more easily and quickly attract and hire highly skilled international talent and international graduates. International graduates from Atlantic universities can be hired directly out of school. Through AIP, Halifax has been able to retain many international students post-graduation. Since July 1, 2017, the Partnership's AIP team has met with close to 350 business facing labour shortages to promote the AIP, resulting in the referral of 111 businesses to NSOI for Designation projecting 715 new jobs. This total surpassed the 2-year goal in the first year. To November 6th, 2018, over 947 Nova Scotia companies have been designated to hire through AIP.

The Partnership is also working with post-secondary institutions to increase the number of experiential learning opportunities (e.g., co-op placements, work terms, etc.) through the Halifax Partnership Experiential Learning Initiative. This is helping to connect local and international students with the workforce prior to graduation.

The HHEP has assisted in bringing together government, the private sector, and the international student body in Halifax. The group's regular meetings have allowed Partnership staff, the Mayor, municipal staff,

and post-secondary institution presidents to stay up to date on talent retention work and contribute their insights into program design to support this goal. International student retention goals are now built into the ongoing work of both the Economic Growth Plan and the Halifax Partnership's annual business plans. With these efforts well underway, it is an opportune time to consider other focus areas which may benefit from the concentrated work international student retention received under the MOU.

At the January 2018 meeting of the HHEP, members discussed some potential new focus areas. There was consensus that work to increase economic growth and community improvement should be a priority. HRM, HP, Dalhousie University and NSCC are already partnering with the Province on the development of an Innovation District in Halifax. This District is a three-year pilot project to create a multi-sector cluster of start-ups, business incubators and accelerators, and post-secondary and research institutions. THE PARTNERSHIP has developed three goals around the District:

- 1) Establish and strengthen Halifax's emerging Innovation District through partnerships
- 2) Fast-track commercialization by connecting universities with Fortune 500 companies
- 3) Expand the Sell Halifax program to attract greater investment

The Provincial government has committed funds to Dalhousie University, Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Community College to develop innovation districts focused on urban, rural and inclusive innovation

Dalhousie and the Partnership have signed a service agreement to deliver on the first goal, urban innovation, particularly fast-tracking commercialization. The Partnership has been developing collaborative relationships with other Halifax-area institutions, including Saint Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent University, and the NSCC Industry Liaison Offices to establish the research capacity and specialties already in place.

Updating the MOU focus area to innovation is timely, given the work already underway to advance an Innovation District in Halifax and the interests post-secondary institutions have in supporting economic growth. The timeline for the Innovation focus area could coincide with the three-year Innovation District pilot project, which is running from 2017 to 2020. The pilot results will then be reviewed, and the MOU focus area could continue as innovation or be updated if HHEP members so desire. The HHEP provides an additional forum to discuss the District and any other related opportunities for strengthening the relationship between private and academic sectors. HRM has an interest in participating in these discussions as they relate to the goals in its Economic Growth Plan and may identify opportunities for the municipality to assist through its regulatory authorities.

The Halifax Partnership is uniquely placed to forge connections between academic and research institutions, and the private sector. It currently has a leadership role in developing Halifax's Innovation District and is in regular contact with HRM and several post-secondary institutions. The Halifax Partnership has already been extensively involved with HHEP work related to talent retention. Adding the Halifax Partnership as a signatory to the HHEP MOU would formalize its participation in ongoing meetings and acknowledge the important role it plays in facilitating relationships to enhance economic development in Halifax.

The Higher Education Partnership met on December 7, 2018, to review the updated MOU. The Partnership members approved the new focus area of innovation and the formal addition of the Halifax Partnership, and signed the MOU. It is recommended that Council endorse the new MOU (Appendix I).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

RISK CONSIDERATION

The risks associated with the recommendations in this report are rated low.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Consultation has taken place over the past five months with representatives from Halifax universities, the NSCC and the Halifax Partnership.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ALTERNATIVES

Council could choose not to change the MOU focus area to innovation. This is not recommended as work to achieve the current focus area of talent retention is embedded in a number of institutional business plans, and a new focus area would benefit from a similar level of attention. Focusing on Innovation allows the MOU to build on work already underway with a number of HHEP partners.

Council could choose not to add the Halifax Partnership as a signatory to the MOU. This is not recommended as the The Partnership has been doing a significant amount of work that supports HHEP goals, and adding them merely acknowledges this and leverages their expertise on issues going forward.

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix I: Halifax Higher Partnership Memorandum of Understanding January 2019

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Anne Totten, Intergovernmental Affairs Advisor, 902.490.5623

*Memorandum of Understanding
Between
Halifax Regional Municipality,
Metro Universities,
and Nova Scotia Community College
(Higher Education MOU)*

INTRODUCTION

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is home to seven universities and three Nova Scotia Community College campuses, including the largest in the province. These eight institutions are centres of excellence in learning, innovation and research. They are major contributors to the arts, cultural and social life of the municipality. They are also major employers and economic drivers for the region and provide extensive opportunities for HRM residents to acquire skills and knowledge to prepare them for the workforce and the global economy.

HRM's Economic Growth Plan recognizes the contribution these post-secondary institutions bring to the region. The city has one of the most highly-educated populations in Canada because of access to these institutions of higher learning. In the knowledge economy, a talented and skilled workforce is a city's main competitive advantage. The Halifax Partnership is HRM's economic development organization, responsible for implementing the Economic Growth Plan and providing leadership on investment and talent attraction.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the Halifax Partnership, and the Atlantic School of Theology, Dalhousie, Mount Saint Vincent, NSCAD, Saint Mary's university, the University of King's College, Université Sainte-Anne and the Nova Scotia Community College comprise the Halifax Higher Education Partnership (HHEP), making our city the education capital of Canada. The HHEP will build on the collaborative relationship established with HRM in the original Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) adopted in 2005 and 2006 with the universities and community college. The MOU will focus on specific, measurable objectives subject to annual progress review.

PRINCIPLES

This MOU replaces previous MOUs, and will build on the principles articulated in the original MOU.

On matters of mutual interest, the signatories agree to take actions that develop, enhance and mutually support the links that tie them to each other and to the region.

The signatories will strive for greater operational alignment on issues and opportunities on matters of mutual impact and overlap.

The parties to this MOU will identify specific annual goals in areas of mutual interest, and report back on progress on a yearly basis.

In witness whereof the signatory communities have executed this Memorandum of Understanding on the 6th of March, 2014, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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SIGNATORIES

Mayor Mike Savage
Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX

Witness

Rev. Canon Neale Bennet, President
Atlantic School of Theology

AST
ATLANTIC SCHOOL
of THEOLOGY

Witness

Dr. Mary Blubhardt, President
Mount Saint Vincent University

 **MOUNT**
SAINT VINCENT
UNIVERSITY

Witness

Don Bureau, President
Nova Scotia Community College

nscC

Witness

Dr. Richard Florizone, President
Dalhousie University

 **DALHOUSIE**
UNIVERSITY
Inspiring Minds

Witness

Dianne Taylor-Gearing, President
NSCAD University

N·S·C·A·D
UNIVERSITY

Witness



**Dr. Robert Summerby-Murray, President
Saint Mary's University**



One University. One World. Yours.

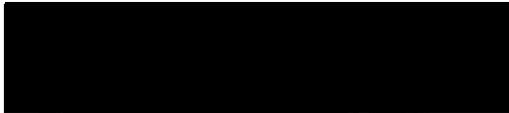
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**Allister Surette, President
Université Sainte-Anne**



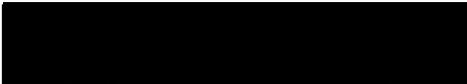
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**Dr. William Lahey, President
University of King's College**



Witness



**John Rogers, Interim President & CEO
Halifax Partnership**



Witness

HIGHER EDUCATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

FOCUS 2018-2020: INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Halifax is experiencing a period of rapid innovation. Benefitting from the number of educational institutions in the area, Halifax is growing dynamic economic sectors around IT ventures and ocean-related industries. The Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) project has just opened its doors, and Halifax was chosen as the site of Atlantic Canada's Ocean Supercluster, a \$250.0 million project with the federal government and the private sector.

There are a number of collaborative initiatives underway to develop Halifax's Innovation District. HRM, Halifax Partnership, Dalhousie University and NSCC are partnering with the Province on a three-year pilot project to create a multi-sector cluster of start-ups, business incubators and accelerators, and post-secondary and research institutions. HP has been developing collaborative relationships with other Halifax-area institutions, including Saint Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent University, and the NSCC Industry Liaison Offices to establish the research capacity and specialties already in place. In each case there is a strong emphasis on fast-tracking commercialization.

There is an opportunity to utilize this MOU to build on the extensive work around innovation already underway. It combines the research capacity of the post-secondary institutions with HRM's and HP's Economic Growth Plan goals, and aligns with Federal and Provincial priorities on economic development. The MOU provides an additional forum to discuss the Innovation District and any other related opportunities for connecting the private and academic sectors. The timeline for the Innovation and Entrepreneurship focus area will run until 2020, to coincide with the length of the pilot phase, at which time it will be reviewed.

The specific focus of this MOU does not preclude collaborative work in other areas.

Potential Initiatives:

The overarching goal of this MOU for 2018-20 is to successfully grow Halifax's Innovation District and provide more opportunities for post-secondary research to reach the commercial market. There are three objectives for the District in its initial three-year pilot stage:

- Establish and strengthen Halifax's emerging Innovation District through partnerships
- Fast-track commercialization to connect universities with Fortune 500 companies
- Expand the Sell Halifax program to attract greater investment

The eight organizations party to this MOU commit to regular and ongoing communication, collaboration, and cooperation.

The partners will establish working group(s) to strategize and implement the priority initiatives as identified and agreed upon by HHEP.

HHEP will meet quarterly or as required. Meeting agendas will be prepared and approved in advance of each HHEP meeting. HHEP will also serve as a forum in which emerging issues potentially impacting the parties can be considered and discussed.