

# HALIFAX

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## Item No. 4

Halifax Regional Council  
April 16, 2019

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

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Original Signed by 

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John Traves, Director of Legal

Original Signed by 

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Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** March 20, 2019

**SUBJECT:** Update on Development of a Social Policy Framework

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### INFORMATION REPORT

#### ORIGIN

December 12, 2017 Regional Council resolution:

That Regional Council request a staff report and recommendations with respect to developing a Social policy lens through which to assess future initiatives by:

1. Assessing municipal responses and actions to support; health and livability initiatives, planning and land use policy/by-laws, recreation program delivery, operational services, and other HRM initiatives.
2. Explore options for enhanced service delivery, not limited to departmental expansion, dedicated resources, partnerships, etc.)
3. Research what other jurisdictions are doing regarding municipal social policies.

#### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*

s. 2 The purpose of this Act is to:

- a) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and
- b) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to
  - i. provide good government,
  - ii. provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality, and
  - iii. develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

As per the Origin section of this report, Regional Council has requested that staff explore the development of a social policy lens. The intent of this report is to provide an interim update for Council on work currently underway, and includes a jurisdictional scan and outline of the proposed approach for dealing with social policy issues. A recommendation report will be provided to Regional Council in the Fall, which will provide Council with a proposed social policy framework.

Council has had an interest in exploring several social policy issues in recent years. One of these issues was a motion to provide options for incorporating social economic benefit, living wage and environmental impact into procurement policy and processes: the work toward developing a social policy approach will inform possible municipal programs and initiatives in the area of social policy, including procurement.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Social Policy***

Policy formation is the process by which social problems are identified, defined, and assessed and recommendations are made to address them. Policy formation spans from the identification of an issue, through its definition and assessment of available options, to the final decision reached to address the issue. Policy processes can occur in a linear fashion (Fig.1), or in a non-linear fashion which occurs when each stage of the process feeds back to previous stages, where appropriate (Fig. 2).

Fig.1 Linear Policy Process



Fig.2 Non-Linear Policy Process



The linear process in Fig.1 does not accurately reflect how most social policy processes proceed in the real world. Social policy is complex, and political, economic, environmental and health events are creating new kinds of policy problems and challenges at the global and local level. Among many definitions of “social policy”, the description from Alberta’s Social Policy Framework<sup>1</sup> is a useful starting point.

#### **“What is social policy?”**

Social policy determines the kind of society that Albertans want for themselves, their families, and their communities. It expresses how we care for (and about) one another, and it influences our development as people and a society. As a result, social policy extends beyond a narrow definition of social services and supports: it is about how we work, live, and spend our time, and it helps determine how we come together to meet human needs like housing, employment, education, recreation, leisure, health, safety, and the care of children.”

Over the past decades, social policy efforts have focused on addressing specific deficiencies and filling gaps; the result has been programs that address single issues or needs (e.g., specifically targeting child

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/spf-full-report.pdf>

care, income support, labour shortages, or supports for seniors). To achieve results that both reflect current needs and solve persistent, complex social challenges, innovative approaches have emerged, including the development of social policy frameworks or lenses.

Policy frameworks are tools that can guide decision making, set future direction, identify important connections, and support the alignment of policies and practices both inside and outside an organization. They are blueprints or roadmaps to help guide an organization. A social policy framework formalizes a way of thinking about and responding to the social impact of changes in a community. In doing so, the framework defines the role of the municipality in responding to current and future social issues.

### **Service Exchange**

Whether, and how, Halifax should support social policy initiatives is linked to some decisions about which governments should be responsible for certain activities, called the “service exchange.”

In 1996 when the provincial government amalgamated Halifax, Dartmouth, Bedford and Halifax County, the Task Force on Local Government report noted that “from the standpoint of equity, services of province-wide concern should not be provided or financed locally, nor should the Province provide or pay for service of local concern”. The Task Force recommended the Province assume responsibility for all aspects of justice administration, social services financing and delivery, and municipal boards of health. Municipalities in turn would become responsible for all local police services and local streets and roads. This “service exchange” essentially removed municipalities, including the new Halifax Regional Municipality, from directly delivering social assistance. The province-wide single tier system for community services became effective April 1, 1996.

Two agreements cover the main elements of service exchange for Halifax. Agreement No. HRM-01 – Halifax Regional Municipality covered the conditions under which highways and their maintenance were transferred from the province to the Municipality. The Social Services Exchange Agreement – April 9, 1996 spelled out the ground rules for delivery of social services.

Service exchange did change the rules about some aspects of service delivery but it did not mean that HRM, or any other municipality in Nova Scotia, could not have a role in social policy issues. The agreement stipulates that the Province is responsible for setting social policy, but it does not prevent Halifax from taking “actions to social support, health and liveability initiatives.” Many “traditional” municipal roles have significant impact, directly or indirectly, on social issues.

### **Current “social” programs in Halifax Regional Municipality**

Some Halifax by-laws, administrative orders and policies already deal with social issues to a certain extent. Two of Council’s current priorities relate to social development:

- (1) HRM’s communities have access to social infrastructure that supports all segments of the community and Healthy, Liveable Communities; and
- (2) HRM is a safe, livable and sustainable community that encourages public engagement and participation in civic life.

HRM’s Economic Growth Plan 2016-2021 focuses on social issues as part of the strategic goal to make Halifax a better place to live and work<sup>2</sup>. HRM’s Public Safety Strategy also has a focus on social issues, and encourages the municipality and its partners to think upstream, or systemically and holistically about the complex, multiple, and interconnected roots of social problems such as crime<sup>3</sup>. The social policy work currently underway at HRM has been inventoried in both the Public Safety Strategy Update<sup>4</sup> and the Building Poverty Solutions- Ideas for Action Report<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.halifax.ca/business/economic-development/economic-strategy>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/Public\\_Safety\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/Public_Safety_Strategy.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/190115rci04.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/190129rc1431.pdf>

Examples of social programs and initiatives underway in HRM include:

- Low Income Transit Pass Pilot Program
- Community Mobilization Team Pilot Program
- Establishment of the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office
- Creation of a Diversity & Inclusion Office
- Promoting community food security (mobile food market)
- Creation of the Community Street Outreach Program
- Participation in the Housing & Homelessness Partnership
- Collaboration with United Way on the Building Poverty Solutions Ideas for Action
- Creation of a Local Immigration Partnership
- Programs for disadvantaged youth (Youth Advocate Program and Youth Live, Multi Service Youth Centre Pilot)
- Development of an Accessibility Framework
- Navigator Street Outreach Program

Halifax also has many tools and policy levers that can support social policy activities. A few examples include:

- Planning and Development
  - Pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods
  - Zoning
  - Building guidelines
  - Removing obstacles and encouraging accessibility
- Transportation
  - Active transportation
  - Transit
- Parks and Recreation
  - Access to programs
  - Use of facilities
  - Grants programs
  - Encouraging more volunteering
  - Strengthening community organizations

### ***Jurisdictional Scan***

Across Canada, different governments have varying rules and customs about what they do or don't do with respect to social policy and important social issues. The field changes regularly as citizens press their governments for action on issues considered important. There are examples of various levels of government implementing social policy frameworks, including the province of Alberta, as well as the UK and New Zealand.

As mentioned previously, the province of Alberta developed and adopted a social policy framework in 2012<sup>6</sup>. The framework has three goals, which include: 1) clarify what the province is trying to achieve, and the roles and responsibilities of different actors and participants; 2) coordinate within and between government departments, to harmonize work between government and other stakeholders, and to ensure that there is policy alignment and consistency; and 3) influence and guide the work of the province to provide overall direction to planning and decision making. Other elements of the framework include a vision, desired outcomes, principles, roles and responsibilities, and policy shifts.

The UK government uses a formalized impact assessment system for all policy interventions and reforms. While not a social policy framework, the impact assessment system has led to many of the policy process

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<sup>6</sup> <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/e269764d-e3ed-431c-9db3-b65073cc6e51/resource/998e15a5-c992-4a61-b6b4-2957eb6227d6/download/6214203-2013-albertas-social-policy-framework-2013-02-28.pdf>

changes that come from a social policy framework<sup>7</sup>. In New Zealand, a similar tool is used called a health impact assessment, which assesses the impact of policies on health, wellbeing and equity<sup>8</sup>. It helps facilitate policymaking that is based on evidence and focused on outcomes, and encourages collaboration between a range of sectors and stakeholders.

Legislation for municipalities in other provinces often gives them different responsibilities than those conferred on Halifax under the HRM Charter. Regardless of legislative authority, many municipalities have undertaken extensive work developing social policies and social policy frameworks. The below table outlines how cities across Canada have identified their role in social policy.

Comparator City	Role of Social Policy in Municipality
City of London	In 2006, the City of London developed a social policy framework to identify issues related to well-being and quality of life and to establish the role that the City of London would take in addressing those issues <sup>9</sup> . London adapted successful models developed in other jurisdictions to meet their local needs and context. The social policy framework defines guiding principles and a model outlining the key social issues to be addressed. The role of the municipality, as well as other community stakeholders, is defined.
City of Red Deer	In 2015, the City of Red Deer developed a social policy framework for helping to sustain the social-wellbeing of the community <sup>10</sup> . The framework was developed as a learning system, which may over time be adjusted as the organization learns through implementation. The main components include: 1) a mechanism for evaluating and addressing community needs; 2) a foundation for coordinating strategic actions; 3) a lens that helps to identify what the community wants to achieve and how to get there, and 4); a system to consider complex social goals across the municipal business units.
City of Brampton	The City of Brampton's 2040 Vision, Living the Mosaic, was released in 2018 <sup>11</sup> . While the City of Brampton does not currently have a social policy framework, this document highlights the need for one. One of the main areas Brampton hopes to target with a social policy framework is poverty. Another component highlighted as part of the framework, is the development of a Social Advisory Council. The Council will provide ongoing input and advice into the local social agenda of Brampton. The plan is to have this as a citizen based group, and it will therefore offer the

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hra.nhs.uk/planning-and-improving-research/policies-standards-legislation/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/health-impact-assessment>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/social-issues/Documents/social\\_policy\\_framework.pdf](https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/social-issues/Documents/social_policy_framework.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.reddeer.ca/city-government/plans-and-projects/ongoing-plans-and-projects/social-policy-framework/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.brampton.ca/EN/City-Hall/Documents/Brampton2040Vision/brampton2040Vision.pdf>

	user perspective to ensure policies and programs are user-centric.
City of Victoria	The City of Victoria's draft strategic plan (2019-2023) includes the following priority areas: Reconciliation and Indigenous Relation, Affordable Housing, Prosperity and Economic Inclusion, Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City, Climate Leadership and Environmental Stewardship, Sustainable Transportation, Strong Liveable Neighbourhoods. Many of the outcomes associated to the priority areas relate to social development <sup>12</sup> . There are measures for each outcome area that are reported on.
City of St. John's	The City of St. John's has an initiative called Healthy City St. John's, which involves making changes in neighbourhoods to promote mental and physical health, strengthen capacity and create a sustainable healthy future for all <sup>13</sup> . They also have a 10-year affordable housing plan.
Quebec City	Quebec has developed a vision for community and social development that is outlined in a detailed document. Their goal is to enable every citizen to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participate actively in social life;</li> <li>• fully develop its potential;</li> <li>• get its fair share of the collective enrichment<sup>14</sup>.</li> </ul>
Regional Municipality of Waterloo	The Region of Waterloo's strategic plan for 2019-2023 is currently under development. However, in 2012 they published a report focusing on the social determinants of health in certain neighborhoods. The report helped to identify what programs and services should be available in those areas <sup>15</sup> .
City of Regina	The City of Regina does not have a social policy framework, but indicate they are committed to providing inclusive, affordable services and programs for all residents. They outline all of these programs and services online under a page dedicated to social programs <sup>16</sup> .

Lessons learned from policy frameworks in other jurisdictions include, but aren't limited to the following:

- expectations must be managed, so that all parties understand the process and their roles;

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.victoria.ca/assets/City~Hall/Mayor~Council/Documents/City%20of%20Victoria%202019-2022%20Draft%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://stjohns.ca/living-st-johns/your-city/healthy-communities>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/apropos/planification-orientations/developpement-communautaire-et-social/index.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regional-government/resources/Reports-Plans--Data/Public-Health-and-Emergency-Services/2012SDOH\\_ValidationReport.pdf](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regional-government/resources/Reports-Plans--Data/Public-Health-and-Emergency-Services/2012SDOH_ValidationReport.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.regina.ca/residents/about-regina/social-programs/index.html>

- horizontal processes are needed for cross communication and collaboration amongst business units, other levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and the public;
- social policy frameworks should connect to environmental and economic plans;
- multiple modes of engagement in the consultation process are needed and consultation must be broad and create feedback loops with participants;
- shared indicators and reliable data must exist or be developed.

### **Proposed Approach**

Any lens or framework needs a foundation of values or principles to guide how it is used and ensure coordination of programs and policies with social components. In the absence of a formal social policy, these values/principles arise from the by-laws, administrative orders, and policies adopted and implemented by Regional Council. The development of a social policy framework will clarify what the municipality is trying to achieve, along with defining the roles and responsibilities for different actors and participants. The framework will coordinate existing and new activities within and between business units and harmonize work between government and other stakeholders to ensure there is policy alignment and consistency.

The resulting framework will consist of six core components. A draft version is provided for the vision and goals, which have been informed by HRM's Strategic Plan 2017-2021, including Council's existing Priority Areas. The remaining four components will be developed through feedback and input from internal networks.

- a clear vision for the future of social policy in HRM;
  - *HRM is a safe, healthy, and welcoming community where everyone has access to the social infrastructure that enables them to participate fully in their community.*
- a statement of goals that establishes the foundation and purpose of social policy in HRM;
  - *reduce inequality;*
  - *protect vulnerable people;*
  - *create a person-centered system of high-quality services; and*
  - *enable collaboration and partnerships.*
- a list of the desired outcomes (or measurable results) to be achieved through social policy;
- an expression of key principles to guide collective efforts in working towards these outcomes;
- a description of the roles and responsibilities of those involved with making the outcomes a reality; and
- a core set of actions—priority commitments where HRM has pledged to play a leading role.

### **Policy Shift**

Councillors, staff, residents and others interested in seeing the municipality improve bring a wide variety of ideas to Regional Council that impact social development. Until now, Council has managed those ideas by assessing them against the legislation, by-laws, administrative orders, policies, strategies and other guiding documents that have been adopted over the years. The current structures and processes are perfectly designed to achieve the outcomes that currently exist.

To achieve new outcomes, a "shift" in the way the organization responds to social policy issues is necessary. The United Way Building Poverty Solutions Report stated that if social issues, such as poverty, are going to be addressed, the barriers faced by many in the community require systemic change. The report highlighted the need to approach the work holistically and comprehensively<sup>17</sup>. Complex issues, such as poverty do not have a single, clear, or correct solution. If these were simple problems, then a single individual or organization could easily identify and implement a solution that would work.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/standing-committees/180326cped1031.pdf>

The development of a social policy framework will take a systems approach, which recognizes that all social organizations and the individuals within them are connected and form a complex whole. To increase the odds of impacting change, the shifts listed in the table below have been identified as a series of principles and innovative ways of thinking and working together. As the shifts occur, research indicates there will be a higher commitment to action, more relevant and effective solutions, more effective use of resources, and a focused application of knowledge and expertise<sup>18</sup>.

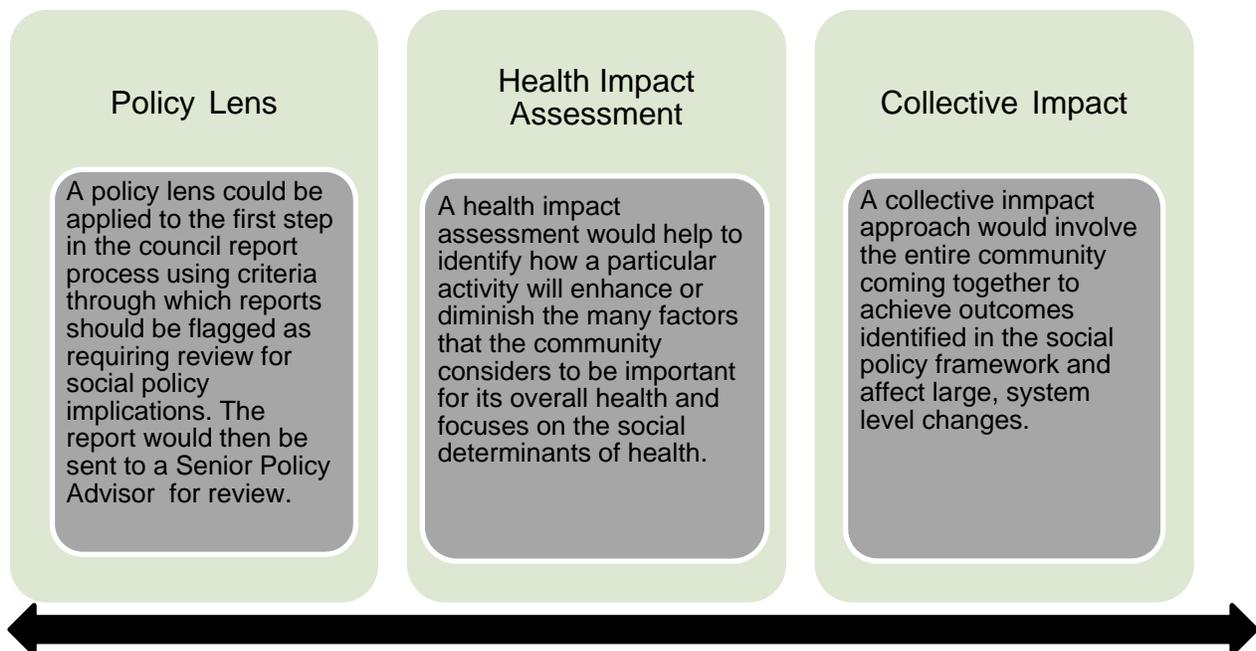
FROM	TO
Programmatic responses	Systemic thinking
Do for people	Do with people
Incremental, organizational level outcomes	High aspiration community-wide outcomes
Working in silos	Collective Ownership
Focus on symptoms	Focus on root causes

**Tools**

The social policy framework will develop and evolve over time. While it is intended as a resource to guide efforts in social policy for HRM, it will be a living document that can respond to complex and changing issues. The framework is not a substitute for decision-making, but a resource to guide thinking and discussion. The framework will provide a structured method and tools to assist decision-makers in assessing how well an existing or new policy, program or practice is working or might work. Depending on the type and impact of the decision, there will be different tools available.

If the decision is more routine, a series of questions may be considered internally to understand the social impact. These questions may include the impact of a decision on the availability of social / recreational activities, people’s sense of safety and physical security, etc. If the decision has a larger impact, a higher level of engagement with community, other levels of government, and relevant stakeholders may be required. The process of when and how to apply these tools will be outlined in the framework.

The image below outlines the spectrum of tools available and possible examples where each could be used.



<sup>18</sup> [https://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/at-fcs-social\\_framework\\_for\\_strathcona\\_county.pdf](https://www.strathcona.ca/files/files/at-fcs-social_framework_for_strathcona_county.pdf)

The City of Strathcona has recently implemented a Social Policy Framework that leans toward the collective impact end of the spectrum. Strathcona has used their framework to help develop community hubs. They are currently exploring a 'community hub' model of services to better meet the community's needs. It will be a "one stop shop where social support and information will be available to citizens when and where they need it"<sup>19</sup>. They are also exploring areas related to affordable housing, and mental health.

In Antigonish County, the health impact assessment tool was used in 2008 for a proposed development of a large-scale (\$27 million), four-season recreation project (Kepoch-Beaver Mountain)<sup>20</sup>. There was significant controversy in the community, so the local government agreed to have a community health impact assessment carried out. Fourteen citizens, representing all regions of the community and both sides of the controversy, were brought together to assess the project. The results of the assessment were presented as an additional source of information for council's decision-making. The process helped to build the capacity of community members to become active participants in the decisions that affect the health and well-being of their community.

It is important to note the development of public policy involves many variables, and it is not as easy to judge the effect of these tools on the subsequent decisions of the local government. While it is possible to identify numerous indirect links between social policy tools and decision-making, there is often little evidence to show how these tools directly inform the decision-making process. This may also be caused by the lack of measurable outcomes associated with social policy frameworks, which indicates the need to have measurable outcomes defined from the outset.

### ***Engagement***

Developing a social policy framework will be an inclusive process that addresses the perspectives of the public, community leaders, service delivery partners, business units, and other levels of government. Meaningful public dialogue that balances a diverse range of viewpoints will be integral to developing a useful framework. To date, engagement has occurred with the following:

- HRM councillors and business units
- Academic institutions
- Province of NS
- Nova Scotia Health Authority
- Other municipalities across Canada

The results of previous engagement sessions related to social policy will be used to inform the development of the social policy framework. This includes drawing from HRM's Public Safety Strategy, the Building Poverty Solutions Report, and the Municipal Children's Charter Council Report. Moving forward, targeted engagement will happen with those that represent the unique needs of various populations, including minorities, those facing disabilities or living in poverty, as well as the indigenous community, non-profit and business sector. Where possible, partnerships will be established with organizations already engaging these community members. For example, the municipality's Diversity and Inclusion unit has well established networks that can be accessed for this purpose.

### ***Achieving and Measuring Success***

A successful social policy framework will enable a common foundation for HRM to evaluate, measure, and report progress in achieving the desired outcomes. The framework will include measurable outcomes to ensure HRM can meet its' current priorities related to social development. A monitoring and reporting process will be outlined in the framework.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.strathcona.ca/council-county/plans-and-reports/strategic-documents/community/social-framework/>

<sup>20</sup> <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.622.4286&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

**Next Steps**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Internal network will be developed to advise on the social policy framework. This group will help to encourage horizontal collaboration across business units on social issues.	March- April, 2019
Finalize list of external community stakeholders for targeted consultation, and prepare all necessary material.	March- April, 2019
Work collaboratively with Public Safety Advisor on the development of measures and indicators as part of the community well-being index to ensure this information can be used as part of the measures for the social policy framework.	April, 2019
Submit interim report on proposed approach to social policy framework to Regional Council.	April, 2019
Develop advisory committee for the development and implementation of the social policy framework. This committee membership may include the provincial government, senior management from HRM, and the university, non-profit, and business sector.	May, 2019
Targeted consultation with external stakeholders will occur. A summary of this consultation will be prepared as part of the development of the social policy framework.	May- June, 2019
Final social policy framework will be submitted to Community Planning and Economic Development for review (CPED). Proceed to Regional Council after feedback has been received from CPED.	August- September, 2019
Begin implementation and subsequent monitoring of social policy framework after Council approval.	October, 2019
Hold information sessions for HRM staff on what the social policy framework will mean for them.	October, 2019

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

This report has no immediate financial implications, however, depending on the method selected to collect and measure data, there could be financial implications for 2019-2020 and beyond. If funds are required for the 2019-2020 year, GREA has capacity in its existing budget.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As mentioned above, one on one meetings were held with key stakeholders throughout the preparation of this report. During the development of the social policy framework, further targeted community engagement will occur. Previous engagement conducted will also inform the development of the framework, as noted above.

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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