

HALIFAX

Women's Advisory (Advocacy) Committee

Staff Recommendation Council Report
Executive Standing Committee
October 28, 2019

The Motion

THAT Halifax Regional Council request a staff report on creating a Women's Advocacy Committee to provide Council with advice on affairs relevant to municipal jurisdiction. The Committee would advocate for women's gender-based issue resolutions and opportunities related to municipal policies, priorities and decisions; promote leadership development to empower women to fully participate in civic life; and research and provide information and resources about women's gender-based issues.



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Recommendation

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

- Adopt Administrative Order No. 2019-004-GOV as set out in Attachment 4 to establish a Women's Advisory Committee to support the creation of a gender inclusive municipality and provide advice to Council on matters relevant to the municipal mandate; and
- Adopt the amendments to Administrative Order One as set out in Attachment 5 to allow the newly created Women's Advisory Committee to report to the Executive Standing Committee of Council.



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Background

Halifax was one of the five cities that participated in Diverse Voices for Change, FCM (2015-2018). Other cities are Montréal, Edmonton, Ottawa and Sioux Lookout.

The projects aimed to:

- Strengthen the capacity of municipalities to increase the number of women in municipal decision-making;
- Address the issue of women's lack of participation in local government and leadership including advisory committees, local agencies, boards and commissions.



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Background (cont'd)

HRM's participation in Diverse Voices for Change has given us good insight on barriers shared by 250 women across the diversity spectrum. Barriers mentioned included:

- Lack of information, resources and tools on municipal governance and women;
- Lack of strategies for engaging women in municipal government decision-making;
- Limited women's involvement in municipal consultations;
- Lack of inclusive policies and practices.



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HRM's Accomplishments towards Gender Equity

- Greater understanding of the barriers to public participation and leadership for women;
- Stronger partnerships with community organizations;
- Hosting several events that centered on experiences of Indigenous and racialized women in HRM, empowering women at the community level, raising awareness and championing these issues at the council level;
- Councillors built relationships with women interested to run for office (mentorship);



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HRM's Accomplishments towards Gender Equity (cont'd)

- In partnership with Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, OD&I developed a culturally proficient campaign school;
- OD&I held a collaborative action planning workshop, bringing together Halifax women, community partners, HRM employees, managers and Councillors to inform of its strategic priorities using an outcome mapping approach;
- This motion, championed by Councillors Nicoll and Blackburn, aims to sustain and strengthen what has been done so far to advance the status of women in HRM.



Role of the Advisory Committee

Based on research in other jurisdictions, staff recommends the creation of the Women's Advisory Committee in HRM.

This committee will:

- Advise on women's and gender-based resolutions and opportunities related to municipal policies, priorities and decisions;
- Promote leadership development to empower women to fully participate in civic life to help HRM claim its leadership in championing gender equity and close the representation gap of women's participation at all levels;



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Role of the Advisory Committee (cont'd)

- Support HRM in learning about GBA+ and how to use it to advance gender equity and inclusion;
- Utilize GBA+ as an analytical tool used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, non-binary and gender-diverse people may experience municipal policies, programs and services; and
- Highlight the benefits of getting women across all diversity in leadership positions in municipal Council and administration.



Alternate Options

- Partner with an external women's organization (e.g. Nova Scotia Status of Women)
 - Benefit - increases HRM's engagement in the community
 - Risk – As this is not lead by the municipality, ability to meet expectations and expected actions may be impacted
- Work with staff (e.g. Office of Diversity and Inclusion) to shift perspective
 - Benefit – increased internal communications and action planning on gender equity
 - Risk – decreased external engagement and therefore reduced opportunity to impact gender equity in HRM



Alternative Options (cont'd)

- Partner with Federal and Provincial Agencies such as FCM
 - Benefit – provides an opportunity to access external resources to support gender equity
 - Risk – work could become dependant on external funding; ongoing lack of engagement with local external partners



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