

February 11, 2010

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**RE: HALIFAX REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY DISTRICT BOUNDARY REVIEW 2010 – PHASE I
ESTABLISHMENT OF COUNCIL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The Halifax Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of 1,700 members and over 90,000 employees across Halifax. The Chamber is and will be taking an active interest in Halifax Regional Municipality's (Halifax) District Boundary Review. The governance structure that Council uses directly impacts not only our city, but our entire province. Halifax now accounts for fully one-half of Nova Scotia's gross domestic product; it is also home to forty percent of the entire provincial population, and growing. Halifax itself employs over 3,000 people and has an annual budget of three-quarter of a billion dollars.

Halifax undertook the last major District Boundary Review in 2003. A limited review process was undertaken in 2007 in advance of the 2008 elections. In 2007 the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board (NSUARB) ordered that a full district boundary review be submitted to the NSUARB by December 31, 2010.

The NSUARB, through their previous decisions, have provided specific direction to the Council with regard to this review. The NSUARB's 2007 decision included the following:

“Determining the size of Council involves the consideration of the desired style of Council, the governance structure of Council, and a determination of an effective and efficient number of councillors. The style of government is a question which should not be decided by Council until adequate public consultation has occurred respecting the expectation of constituents.”

In the Chamber's view, the style of government (governance) is of utmost importance. Council has demonstrated that it recognizes the need for better governance. In 2009, governance was selected as a Council Focus Area.

A better governance model will allow Council to be more effective. From tax decisions to setting infrastructure priorities, businesses in the city depend on an effective and efficient Council to make smart choices for them and the residents that they employ. The role of a councillor is a tall order for anyone. It is critical that individual councillors be able to work within the best governance structure possible that empowers them to focus on their leadership

role for entire municipality, rather than to be drawn into the day-to-day issues and operations of our city that are best managed by professional city staff.

According to George B. Cuff, a well known Canadian authority on municipal government, the role of the councillor includes the following key elements:

- Leadership –outline the future vision, set priorities, uphold laws governing council behavior and ensure a comprehensive budget process is established
- Representation – seek the input of the community and take issues forward on behalf of constituents
- Conflict resolution – resolve differences within the city
- Policy guidance
- Service delivery standards
- Monitor results

Phase 1 of the District Boundary Review addresses the governance structure of Council. The Chamber understands that to complete Phase 1, the Committee of Council will bring forward a recommendation to Regional Council with regard to the size of Regional Council based on the following options:

- 15 districts (and 15 councillors) and the community council based governance model
- 18 districts (and 18 councillors) and the community council based governance model
- 23 districts - status quo

While the size of Council may be one of the tools being considered to implement the best governance model, it is the efficacy of Council that is most important. A smaller council of 15 should be better able to work together, be more focused and cohesive under the appropriate governance model.

The structure that council ultimately embraces is critically important. The Chamber looks forward to following and participating in the district boundary review process, and monitoring the recommendations that come to Council as a result of the community consultation process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,

Valerie Payn
President & CEO

