

**Comments of the Business Environment
Committee**

Re:

**“Economic Potential of HRM and Halifax
Harbour” Study**

May 2004

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Submitted April 2005

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Re: "Economic Potential of HRM and Halifax Harbour" Study

Background:

In the early summer of 2004 the Business Environment Committee was requested, by members of the HRM Planning staff, to review the "Economic Potential of HRM and Halifax Harbour" study dated May 2004, prepared by Gardner Pinfold et al. A sub-committee was formed and an initial review undertaken, a subsequent meeting with HRM Planning Staff enabled an initial exchange of information and views to take place.

The interim report of the sub-committee found; "The Study does a thorough job of addressing the two main objectives outlined ... 1) Review the economic potential of the region on a sector-by-sector basis to support the development of a regional plan. 2) Identify best uses for lands adjacent to Halifax Harbour in support of the development of a harbour plan. The Business Environment Committee's view is that the Chamber can support the report in general and in particular its efforts to consult the business community. Input on specifics of the report would best come from the Chamber committees more directly involved in particular industry sectors." The sub-committee subsequently began the process of consulting with the subject matter related sub-committees, that is, Transportation, Municipal Affairs and HRM Regional Planning.

This consultation process was superseded by the Chamber's decision to prime and host in November 2004 the "HRM Economic Summit 2004". The Summit utilized the "Economic Potential of HRM and Halifax Harbour" study as cornerstone piece of research and engaged Chamber volunteers from the aforementioned Committees in the preparation of the Summit's recommendations.

Conclusion:

The Business Environment Committee concludes that the "Economic Potential of HRM and Halifax Harbour" study provides timely and relevant information to inform both the HRM Regional Planning and HRM Economic Development processes. Following the review of the study and the recommendations of the "HRM Economic Summit 2004", the Committee wishes to particularly highlight the following six recommendations arising from the Summit.

1. Improve commercialization of research by:
 - Mandating metro universities to pool resources (students, facilities, researchers, etc.) to create critical mass within programs for centres of excellence
 - will lead to the attraction of venture capital, researchers and research dollars
 - suggestion: consolidate resources into "functionally integrated" units within areas of specialty (e.g. bio-tech, engineering, computer science)
 - Improving business acumen
 - leverage business faculties within metro universities
 - build entrepreneurship component into the university curricula, learning from NSCC's experience
 - Chamber of Commerce to facilitate interactions between inventors and venture capitalist
2.
 - Ambassadors needed in the downtown – cleaning up litter and providing tourism information
 - "scrub" our streets and building to create an attractive safe environment
 - Support investment in cultural industries to export their products
3. Establish NS Department of Immigration responsible for:
 - Expediting immigrant accreditation and equivalency
 - Establishing a public and business education program building on the public awareness momentum
 - Assessing skill needs and existing substructure

- Targeting specific regions for immigrant recruitment
4. The tax system should support the regional plan
 - Those who benefit from municipal services should pay for them to effect market driven development
 - HRM should use variable tax rates (or special assessments) to capture service cost differences rather than rely on property assessments alone
 - Specific incentives should be used to encourage development (or in some cases, the redevelopment) in specific locations in HRM
 5. Dedicated Bus Lane on CN right of way to Dockyard
 - Starting at Windsor Junction proposed RTC stretches along Rocky Lake Rd through Bedford along Bedford Basin and through Rockingham Yard
 - At south end of Rockingham Yard (Fairview) eight of way branches past Ceres Container Pier, Seaview Park and Pier 9 to exit South to HMC Halifax Dockyard. Permits an exit from right of way at site of new sewage treatment plant and access to Cogswell exchange
 6. Dedicated Bus Lane on CN right of way to Via station
 - In CN rail cut, build a two-lane rubber-tired roadway with rails embedded on one lane
 - HRM's 2003 study indicates cost of approx. \$51 million
 - Single direction express bus service during peak periods without train interference
 - Could permit two-way truck access, co-ordinating rail and traffic compatibility with CN

