HALIFAX CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

Halifax Regional Municipality
Executive Summary
Pre-Budget Submission
2008-2009

Executive Summary

Each year the Chamber presents a pre-budget document to Council, as it undertakes one of its primary roles of approving the annual budget. Highlights of the recommendations to City Council from this year's submission fall under five main headings:

1. **Tax Reform**

- Continue to work with the Province to push for access to various tax revenue tools
- Continue to move towards "benefits based taxation system"
- Implement broad-based tax cuts to the commercial rate, as opposed to sector specific rate cuts, such as a small business rate
- Develop or indicate what measure that is acceptable to HRM as a tax benchmark, so that we can ensure that HRM's tax rate is competitive, relative and comparable to other cities
- Improve 2008 Scorecard result on the measure of Competitive Tax Rates

2. **HRMByDesign and Development Permit Processing Times**

- Set targets for development permit processing times that are at least better than benchmark cities in the Economic Scorecard
- Investigate incentives for the private sector to comply with HRMbyDesign for budget 2009-2010

3. **Infrastructure Investment**

- Invest in Metro Transit
- Align HRM Strategies with those of the Atlantic Gateway initiative
- Allocate necessary funding and human resources to Gateway initiatives

4. **Municipal Expenditures and Debt Repayment**

- Refresh on the Multi-year Financial Strategy, aligning with current fiscal realities
- Maintain focus on Council approved Municipal priorities
- Ensure that debt repayment targets are met
- Ensure there is a long term financing plan in place to replace and renew infrastructure
- Formalize a thorough, annual review of programs and services

5. **Other**

- Develop an annual Community Satisfaction Survey
- Improve efforts towards HRM brand recognition

Copies of the Municipal Pre-Budget Submission have been forwarded to:

- Mayor and Council, Halifax Regional Municipality
- Finance staff, Halifax Regional Municipality
- Stephen Dempsey, Greater Halifax Partnership