

**Municipal InNova Award
2005 Application
Halifax Regional Municipality**

“Sustainable Environment Strategy - HRM”

Executive Summary

Based on the importance citizens have placed on a clean, healthy environment, Halifax Regional Municipality has taken a strategic planning approach towards environmental sustainability. This includes a variety of collaborative partnerships; leading edge environmental projects; and innovative funding that has greatly minimized financial impacts to HRM tax payers and all part of an overall **Sustainable Environment Strategy**.

Reason/ Impetus for the Innovation

Halifax Regional Municipality has organized its services around four major corporate themes, being:

- Excellence in Governance
- Safe Communities
- Excellence in Service Delivery
- Healthy, Sustainable, Vibrant Community

In the 2004 Annual Report in the message from the CAO, it states that the future of HRM will be built on innovation and creativity.... The Message from Mayor Peter Kelly included references to improving the quality of life for HRM residents today and tomorrow.

Residents want a prosperous, vibrant, liveable region and one with a healthy environment with clean air, land, water and energy use.

In a nutshell, innovative and creative approaches were needed towards quality of life environmental improvements through the healthy, sustainable, vibrant community theme.

Funding also needed to be found. In municipal budgeting, there are many competing priorities and it can often be difficult to secure money for new environmental initiatives. Innovative approaches were required to find funding sources and opportunities.

Maximizing all available resources would be essential as well, therefore, efforts towards collaborative partnerships with both the private and public sectors needed to be strategically managed and put in place. We needed everyone pulling together towards a common goal and purpose - healthy environment.

An overall science based approach towards environmental sustainability would be required to manage the process and set the direction. A systems based framework was desirable.

In summary, we needed money, helping hands, and a plan to put HRM on the road to environmental sustainability.

Description of the Innovation

The Plan - A major component of the Sustainable Environment Strategy included a **Corporate Sustainability Analysis**. Utilizing a customized version of The Natural Step (TNS) whole systems methodology, a high level corporate wide Sustainability Analysis was completed in 2004. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities provided 50% cost sharing through the Green Municipal Enabling Funds.

The Analysis provided a snapshot on HRM's sustainability gaps, opportunities and present status. Twelve high level corporate wide recommendations were brought forth.

Priorities - The corporate Environmental Initiatives Group (EIG) reviewed the twelve recommendations and recommended three as immediate priorities. These being:

- Green Corporate Culture
- Green Buildings
- Green Procurement

In 2005 related green activities to date include initiatives such as the following:

- Green Roof Symposium
- Green Procurement Workshops, Protocols and Guide Booklet
- LEED (Green Building) Certification Review
- Pilot Project - E-learning opportunities in Sustainability
- New local chapter of the Canada Green Buildings Council

Staff from various Provincial and Federal departments have participated in these initiatives, along with private sector companies, NGO's and the academic community. Information sharing and exchange has been very helpful.

The Money - One of the most significant enablers helping HRM move forward with its, "Healthy, Sustainable, Vibrant Community" corporate theme has been the establishment of the **Sustainable Community (Green) Reserve** in 2004.

This reserve was created through preferred interest rate borrowing (20 million dollars) towards the Halifax Harbour Solutions Project from the FCM Green Municipal Investment Fund. The interest differential (approximately 3.1-3.3 , million over 10 years) is being reinvested in priority green projects directly linked to the Healthy, Sustainable, Vibrant Community theme and which are incremental to existing budgets and programs. There is no net financial impact on HRM tax payers, and important green initiatives are moving forward and being completed.

Sustainable Community Reserve Project Examples Include:

District Energy Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves hospitals, universities, Port Authority, DND, HRM, Province, Federal Government, and others • GHG Reduction/ Energy Security
Commuter Trip Reduction Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG reduction, encourage public transportation alternatives to personal vehicle use, etc.
Bio-Fuels Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GHG reduction, metro buses, ferries, corporate fleet and buildings
Reduced Idling Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at unnecessary idling • Community based as well as corporate program • Partners also include NRCan, NS Energy, Climate Change Centre, and others
Energy-Environment Roundtables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous stakeholders, all three levels of government, Utilities, etc. • Environment/ Energy/ Economy links
TNS Whole Systems Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science based systems approach to sustainability • Partnered with the FCM
Emission Reduction (Buses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialized catalytic converters for older buses • Major emission reductions
P₂ at Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive P₂ public education and awareness aimed at preventing pollution (P₂) at source
Sustainable and Alternative Transportation Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example projects include, safe bike links from Mcdonald Bridge

The Partners - The planning, funding and actual environmental sustainability projects each have involved a network of collaborative partnerships bringing together all three levels of government, private sector, community, NGO's, academia, etc.

These synergies have helped maximize and engage the various local resources towards environmental and related community health benefits for HRM citizens, businesses and visitors.

How the Innovation Related to the Awards Category

This strategic planning approach to environmental sustainability:

- Puts in place an overall strategic plan following a systems based approach to sustainability
- Addresses key environmental issues that are very important to residents, businesses and others
- Provides for an innovative approach to funding that has greatly minimized any financial impacts on local tax payers
- Brought together private and public sector partners towards common goals and objectives
- Information learned in HRM can be easily transferred to other Nova Scotia Municipalities
- Has enhanced the corporate knowledge base on sustainability
- Provides for much needed new environmental initiatives through an innovative funding approach

Challenges Faced and Overcome

The public desire and political will towards a healthy, sustainable, vibrant community was there.

The biggest challenges included formulating a strategic plan, finding money and engaging partners and citizens.

We believe through creative problem solving and a collaborative stewardship approach, we have met these as described earlier in this application.

The on going challenge will be to stay on the road to sustainability, measure and record performance, keep the partners and community engaged and continue to build on present successes and achievements.

It is an exciting challenge that brings great benefits to the overall community, now and for the future.

On-line Information

Information on HRM's sustainable environment initiatives is available on-line at: www.halifax.ca and follow the Naturally Green and/ or environmental links.

Stephen King
Manager-Environmental Performance
Sustainable Environment Management Office