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CANS blasts HRM CPED committee on proposed changes to noise by-law, says city is not contemplating impacts on economy, labour force, environment, and public safety with its decision

Dartmouth, NS – (06/22/2022) The Construction Association of Nova Scotia, who represents nearly 800 construction contractors, is frustrated by the outcome of the HRM Community Planning Economic Development Standing Committee (CPED) meeting on June 16. Significant changes were discussed and motions passed regarding By-Law N-200 and construction noise policies, all of which have detrimental implications on construction within Halifax Regional Municipality – ultimately exacerbating the housing affordability and attainability crisis and impacting the economy, labour force, environment and public safety.

“We are at a pivotal moment in our city and while the construction industry is doing everything in our power to work with HRM, some councillors are continuously putting up roadblocks and making it difficult for us to do what they’re asking – fix the housing crisis and build a world-class city,” says Duncan Williams, president and CEO of the Construction Association of Nova Scotia. “This latest decision – to reduce hours and explore seasonal operational hours – will reverse any progress we’ve made to this point.”

As the fastest growing city in Canada, HRM council and staff need to be proactive to prevent an exacerbated and prolonged housing shortage and unaffordable living due to population growth. Any restrictive changes to the Noise By-law will have a monumental impact and negative implications on the ability of the construction and residential sector to deliver much needed development. “We live in a city soon to cross the half a million mark in terms of people and we’re still behaving with a small-town mentality,” says Williams.

A reduction in permitted work hours will significantly delay the overall completion schedule of a building project and prolong the associated noise and congestion. Existing noise and traffic delays will continue and any additional restrictions on the work of construction companies will ultimately result in prolonged inconvenience to the public at large. This impact to working hours will exacerbate citizen complaints, not reduce them.

According to reported data collected from 311, there have been 150 complaints over a five-year period. “It’s absurd that HRM is forming policy that affects an industry that generates \$4 billion in economic activity and employs more than 20,000 people throughout our city, based on this negligible data.”

This isn’t just a construction-specific issue – the effects from CPED’s decision have harmful impacts on our economy, the environment, and safety of Halifax’s citizens. There are policies and procedures already in place – that work – for the safety of all parties and efficient management of construction sites, including demolition, removal of pyritic slate, encroachment of sidewalks and roadways, and the list goes on and on.

A reduction in working hours will also increase the duration that heavy equipment will be in operation over the course of a construction project, increasing greenhouse gas emissions and negatively impacting the environment. This will make working towards our net zero goals as laid

out by HRM and the provincial government unachievable. “Currently, construction mobilizes before rush-hour traffic. By reducing hours, heavy equipment will be on the road during peak busy times and impact traffic congestion.”

If council reduces working hours, HRM will be responsible for intensifying the labour shortage. Employees of construction firms affected by proposed changes will experience reductions in wage hours, impacting their income. A reduction in income could lead to workers leaving an already tight labour market in search of employment elsewhere that could provide them with room for overtime hours. Taxpayers in HRM will get less work completed per year and pay noticeably more for it. The cost of a project will get passed on, creating unrealistic and unsustainable economic conditions in our region.

“The construction industry is under unprecedented pressure right now to keep up with the demand to grow our city,” says Williams. “HRM says that more infrastructure and development must happen, and happen quickly, yet they tie our hands behind our backs. How can we build if we’re not allowed to work? They are making it incredibly difficult for us to complete the growth goals the city has promised and help alleviate affordability and vacancy pressures.”

Williams applauds HRM district 4 councillor, Trish Purdy, for expressing concern over proposed changes and motions passed regarding construction noise policies. “The majority of HRM councillors are uninterested in having a conversation to see what this realistically looks like and are creating an artificial problem.”

CANS recently hosted an event in Halifax which saw 1,600 people from the construction industry in attendance. At the reception, Mayor Mike Savage addressed the room and commented, “if you’re going to build, you’re going to make some noise.” CANS will hold him and HRM council to that statement.

“Halifax is a vibrant world-class region with a highly educated workforce, strategic location and poised for exponential growth,” says Williams. “This latest decision to significantly impact construction in our city makes no economic sense and will have detrimental consequences on our ability to be globally competitive and attract people who live, work, and play in our region.”

The Construction Association of Nova Scotia (CANS) is the leading voice of the construction industry respected by members, government, industry, and the public. CANS represents nearly 800 large and small companies throughout Atlantic Canada that build, renovate and restore non-residential buildings, roads, bridges and other engineering projects.

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