

Regional Council  
Clarenville- Bonavista Region  
P.O. Box 159,  
Bonavista, NL  
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July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Mr. Keith Hutchings  
Honourable Minister  
Office of Public Engagement  
PO Box 8700  
Confederation Building  
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

**Re: Policy Advice on Developing Innovative Approaches to Community Engagement**

Dear Minister Hutchings:

I am writing in response to the policy advice document which was submitted to your department by the Grand Falls-Windsor- Baie Verte- Harbour Breton Regional Council.

At our regular meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Clarenville-Bonavista Regional Council had an opportunity to review and deliberate on the advice document. In particular, Council members discussed the list of nine recommendations under Section C. Council feels the recommendations contained in this document are positive statements and we support much of the direction proposed. However, the membership also feels there are additional comments worthy of consideration:

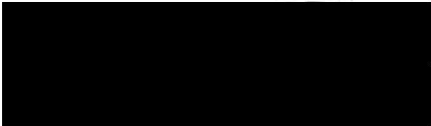
- ***Recommendation 1*** – *The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador should consider adopting a provincial standard for community engagement that incorporates a series of guiding principles.* The Regional Council issues caution here given that the development of a standard set of principles can be too conforming; these approaches must allow for regional flexibility.
- ***Recommendation 4*** – *Use of technology, arts and media in new and different ways to decrease costs of engaging larger audiences, while providing innovation and inclusivity.* The Regional Council adds the caveat that this approach can be appropriate if it does not result in a downloading of costs associated with public engagement on to those organizing the engagement. Furthermore, technological capacity varies throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador which can limit engagement activities. Some media platforms work for some engagement approaches, but cannot be used for others (e.g., Skype). Citizen engagement should have a mixed approach and if technology is to be used, then it should be a tool to encourage and promote broader, deliberative dialogue. Furthermore, community

- engagement is not solely about getting people’s opinions: it is more importantly about involving people in the decision-making process.
- **Recommendation 6** – *Make greater resources available to support leaders in their work, and to build engagement capacity in communities to engage a greater number of volunteers. Youth engagement is especially essential for succession planning in rural communities and should be supported and encouraged.* The Regional Council acknowledges that engaging youth is important. In addition to youth, the working family is another important segment in the community.
  - **Recommendation 8** – *Follow-up and feedback is crucial. Community engagement should be looked upon as an iterative process and not a one-time deal. “Reporting back” should be part of all engagement processes.* The Regional Council views this statement an important recommendation. Furthermore, feedback should be multi-pronged and is essential to closing the engagement loop by highlighting what will happen with the input provided by citizens.

As a concluding comment, the Clarenville-Bonavista Regional Council feels the advice document outlines good advice: community engagement is about being a good citizen. However, engagement must have a purpose; it must have a statement that communicates why we are doing this and what are the expected outcomes from the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to response to this very important issue. We look forward to working with you as we move collectively forward with the new Office of Public Engagement.

Sincerely,



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J. Fay Matthews  
Chairperson  
Clarenville-Bonavista Regional Council

P.c. Grand Falls-Windsor- Baie Verte- Harbour Breton Regional Council  
Dr. Bruce Gilbert, Assistant Deputy Minister, OPE  
Mr. Colin Holloway, Regional Partnership Planner