

HRM provides new guide for immigrants

By MICHAEL LIGHTSTONE Staff Reporter

Halifax Regional Municipality is home to the vast majority of immigrants who settle in Nova Scotia, but recent arrivals in metro can sometimes feel unsure about how to access city hall's programs and services.

So the city has prepared a newcomer's guide to the municipality in an attempt to prevent anyone falling through the cracks.

It provides readers with such handy tips as how to apply for a social insurance number, where to open a bank account, how to find a family doctor, where to find employment specialists and online job sites, how to get help with starting a small business, how to access public transit, where to go for sports and recreation, and how to get involved in municipal boards, committees and commissions.

It even tells it like it is with respect to Canada's cool climate.

"Winter weather in HRM can include high winds, heavy snowfall, freezing rain, blizzards, and very cold temperatures," the guide says. "Be prepared by dressing to suit the weather."

The guide is part of the communications strategy in city hall's immigration action plan. Municipal officials want to try to encourage more immigrants to move to metro to help offset declining birth rates and other demographic shifts.

"We need you and your contributions — as a neighbour, a parent, an employee, a business partner, a volunteer, a citizen — to continue to grow and thrive," Mayor Peter Kelly says in a letter in the guide.

An information item about the newcomer's guide is on the agenda for regional council's Tuesday evening session. A staff report says the guide, available on the municipality's website and at the city's customer service centres, will be unveiled at a city hall event in early April.

(milightstone@herald.ca)