

Province, HRM Announce Next Phase of Convention Centre Proposal

(Thursday, October 1, 2009) - The Province and Halifax Regional Municipality have invited the Rank Group to submit a detailed proposal to develop a new convention centre in Halifax.

"Development of a new convention centre is a major undertaking for both HRM and Province," said Bill Estabrooks, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. "We are taking a measured approach to ensure this is the right project and one that Nova Scotians can afford.

"This is an important step forward in that process and will provide the proposed project details we need to make an informed decision."

The Rank Group was selected as the preferred proponent earlier this year through an expression of interest process. A joint team from the Province and HRM has developed detailed project requirements for the new convention centre for the request for proposal. In its proposal, Rank will be required to outline a design and facility management plan, financing plan, and price.

"I am pleased that we are taking this positive step together toward the development of a new convention centre that will assist in driving the economy of this region, and indeed, the Province," said Peter Kelly, Mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality. "We have shared interest in ensuring we have a solid proposal that balances affordability with the ability to attract larger conferences to the region."

The proposal is due in February. The Province and HRM have hired a consultant to prepare an independent detailed cost estimate to compare with the Rank proposal. The information gathered through both proposals will be used to make a final decision on whether the project will proceed.

The convention centre project, as proposed, fully conforms with the view planes and Citadel ramparts view protection under HRM planning regulations as they have existed for more than 30 years, and does not violate any other existing municipal polices or regulations regarding view planes.

"We will not be part of any project that impinges on protected view planes," said Mr. Estabrooks.

As the proposals are being developed, detailed estimates of economic benefits will be prepared and discussions will continue among all three levels of government about cost sharing for the project. Similar projects in other parts of the country have cost between \$100 million and \$200 million.

A final decision on whether a new convention centre will be constructed in Halifax is not expected until after March.