

## **KEN MEECH'S REMARKS - IPAC**

### **Opening Comments**

- Thank you for the invite
- Good turnout
- Long relationship with IPAC over the years
- National Board

My background in public service was largely in local government in Nova Scotia (30 years).

### **Description of myself**

- Change agent
- Consensus builder
- Open / Transparent
- Delegator
- Listener

### **Process (lack of tolerance / abuse of process / excuse for non decisions)**

### **Proponent of Amalgamation**

- HRM experience
- Public expectations
- Reduced expenses – economies of scale
- Reduced taxes
- Seamless transition / service delivery
- Process for my appointment
- Environment (local governments opposed – majority of municipal politicians against strong emotion / conflict)

### **What a golden opportunity!**

- A new organization –organization design
- 4 municipal units
- Metropolitan authority
- Distinctive culture
- Opportunity to create a new culture free of previous baggage
- Valuable experience in human behavior

### **Forces at Work Expectations (reality set in)**

- Highest denominator salaries / benefits
- Service standards would be brought to highest standard
- Municipal politicians – another opportunity to seek support for their pet program or project

### **Survival**

- Hammered by media / public / growing expenditures / deficits
- Large hit in commercial tax base
- Developed a process to produce a financial methodology to force discipline
- Balanced budget
- HRM Interests – left to administration
- Province and administration were the culprits

### **Approval to obtain commitment (financial stability)**

- Concern about seeking a consensus from full council
- Media responded positively
- Chamber Business Community
- General Public
- Council jumped on bandwagon
- Risk in not including council, however would probably have been comprised

### **Innovation**

- Solid waste process – Public assumed ownership of initiative
- Greater Halifax partnership
- P-3 approach – alternative service delivery
- Public policy versus means / delivery
- Public service – resists change – turf protection, etc.

### **Accountability**

- Story re: Senator – political contributions
- Simple – private sector
- Complex – public sector
- Based on agreement on priorities / outcomes
- No simple of perfect model / difficult to measure

Both innovation / accountability to work in practice / need trust / mutual respect between public service / political masters

Remember in politics there is only one objective – winning

### **Lessons I have learned**

- Attempt to direct and encourage politicians to take the issue to proper forum for collective discussion / direction.
- Difficult to have council address broader issues for the region – strong focus on local issues – that is where they are elected
- Access to politicians, public and employees – difficult to manage
- Political process not favourable to making choices
- Strategic planning decisions – value is in Education
- Political and communication staff have key roles – public service – less influence
- Key change – all about managing the message

### **For Your Consideration**

- Communication – important, followed by action (words alone are not enough)
- Facts versus perception
- Practice delegation
- Demographics – future planning
- Challenge the politicians
- No right or wrong answer – consensus
- Bureaucracy not open to change (get outside the box)
- Consider alternative service delivery – achieve a balance
- Encourage more public consultation – politicians will follow the lead
- Restore the public service to a position of influence in public policy decisions

Nurture and mentor your organization team by encouraging and engaging in candid and open debates. Challenge your staff.