



BACKGROUND

HRM was an early leader in terms of incorporating principles of environmental sustainability into corporate priorities and day-to-day operations. We have established a world-class waste management program, a pesticide use reduction initiative, corporate and community greenhouse gas emission plans and targets, and a climate change strategy. Our experience in sustainability began in 1996 with the implementation of a leading-edge solid waste/resources strategy aimed at minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and the volume of solid waste entering our landfill. Through aggressive targets set in areas of organics, recycling, backyard composting and construction and demolition debris, as well as public awareness campaigns using our “Naturally Green” tag line, we annually divert an average of 60% of the volume of residential and commercial waste from landfill. HRM has one of the most comprehensive solid waste systems in Canada, encompassing the four streams of organic, paper recycling, bottle recycling and regular garbage.

Our “Naturally Green” banner has been used to build awareness around many other sustainability initiatives such as banning the use of cosmetic pesticides, a reduced idling campaign and our Harbour Solutions project. HRM has a climate change strategy, an Economic Strategy, a Cultural Plan and a Community Energy Plan, all of which support the corporate direction of a “healthy, sustainable, vibrant community.” Internally, HRM’s commitment to sustainability mandates all municipal buildings be constructed to a minimum LEED-Silver standard, and we have launched an innovative geothermal-sea water district cooling system for five large municipal buildings on our waterfront.

In 1997 HRM officially joined FCM’s 20% Club, committing to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Following this, in September 2005, HRM adopted a Local Action Plan to reduce corporate greenhouse gas emissions by 20% from 2002 levels by 2012 (the target is to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20,000 tonnes). HRM has undertaken a number of recent initiatives, ranging from large to small, that are helping us achieve our commitment to the extent where we have already achieved 50% of our goal (a reduction of 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions).

Environmental Sustainability is built into HRM’s Corporate Business Planning through the Expected Community Outcomes, Council Focus Areas, and EMT Priorities. Also, HRM has shown leadership by creating a Sustainable Environment Management Office in 2004 which is well resourced and staffed and enables focused effort on implementation of environmental objectives. This office is funded to the tune of close to \$1m per year – a large commitment matched by few other municipalities across the country.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Some examples of the various things HRM is doing as part of our Climate SMART Action Plan are:

- Alderney 5 - the world's first geothermal cold storage system which will save us \$350,000 annually in utility costs and avoid us \$800,000 in replacement costs for air conditioning and heating equipment;
- Integration of geothermal technology into a number of recent community centre builds (Prospect, Fall River, East Preston) to the extent where HRM is now leading everyone in Atlantic Canada in geothermal construction/operation;
- LED traffic lights - which require less energy and last on average ten times longer than conventional lights, currently saving \$150,000 per year. A pilot project testing the use of LED for street lighting is also underway;
- Gas conversion - of various fire stations, community facilities and the Halifax Metro Centre, saving \$400,000 per year;
- Green thermal - using solar energy and recapturing heat from wastewater as part of new facilities like the Canada Games Centre and Bedford 4-Pad Arena Complex, will allow these facilities to consume 50-60% less energy than older buildings;
- Hybrid buses - HRM recently partnered with the Province of NS to purchase two new hybrid buses, which are expected to use 25-30% less fuel while reducing greenhouse gas emissions by about 30%.
- Retrofits - HRM has also piloted programs to convert transit buses to bio-diesel and install "mini-hybrid" retrofits in our transit fleet. Mini-hybrid technology works to improve fuel efficiency, thereby reducing costs and emissions. The technology has been used in 32 other North American cities (though only two in Canada – Vancouver and Montreal) to reduce fuel cost by about 10%.
- In 2009 HRM Council adopted a "vehicle right sizing filter" and a life cycle evaluation tool for general fleet purchases to ensure that when we purchase or lease vehicles they are selected for the right operational requirements while minimizing environmental impacts and long term costs. Combined with our "Driver Smart" program followed by our operators, this will have long term cost and environmental benefits.
- HRM adopted a Pesticide Bylaw in the early 2000's that resulted in a full ban in 2003 of the cosmetic use of pesticides for landscaping – the first municipality in Canada to do so.
- HRM has an Active Transportation Plan and a vibrant Trails program, with exceptional relationship with volunteer groups to develop and maintain trails. Incorporating our Active Transportation, Physical Activity Strategy, Downtown Planning and Environmental Sustainability initiatives are being exemplified with our upcoming Earth Day activities on April 22 which will include a bike ride, several trail walks, and likely the signing of the International Charter for Walking

All of our environmental sustainability moves are carefully considered before we undertake them. As a result, HRM is not only achieving objectives that are making us a leader in the area of sustainability, but we're also helping to support local jobs in the "green economy" and saving money which in turn can be passed on to our citizens in the form of improved services. We recently estimated that about \$6.8 Million invested in sustainability projects over the last 5 years has resulted in savings of over \$1.2 Million annually, an overall return on investment of nearly 19%. Savings realized from our sustainable initiatives go into the Sustainable Communities Reserve, a best practice which allows us to access up-front capital costs for further green projects.



PARTNERSHIPS

Many of projects and initiatives have received the support from our federal and provincial funding partners. Programs such as Eco Trust, which is funded under the Government of Canada's Municipal and Environmental Technology Programs, have been invaluable in allowing HRM to creating improvements in energy sustainability, clean air, and climate change initiatives. Municipal governments have influence over activities that account for 44% of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, and these joint programs allow us to undertake projects to reduce emissions and improve energy efficiency with much more effect than we could otherwise.

One large-scale project that is an excellent example of both sustainable principles and government collaboration is the Seaport Farmers Market being constructed on the Halifax waterfront. The new LEED-certified building will be a leader in sustainable building design using geothermal, wind and solar power sources and green roof technology, in order to bring locally grown, organic food to market here. Funding from HRM, the Province and ACOA enabled the new market to be constructed, and its prime position next to the Port and cruise ship terminal will help attract more people and businesses to the area.

It speaks to the strong working relationship between the federal and municipal government here, that HRM was selected as the first place to undertake a Regional Adaptation Collaborative project. This initiative leveraged expertise and support from Natural Resources Canada to map the harbour floor, identify future sea level rise and flood risk areas, and prepare a Sea Level Rise and Storm Surge Model for Halifax Harbour. This information is a vital tool for future planning decisions and predicting flood hazard impacts on harbourfront properties.

The support and leadership demonstrated by the Government of Canada on sustainability initiatives has been instrumental in the success of many of our initiatives in the past. We look forward to your continued support and leadership in the future.

For more information contact the Chief Administrative Office at 902-490-6430.