

INTRODUCTION

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) came into existence on April 1, 1996 as a result of the amalgamation of the former cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, the former Town of Bedford, the former Municipality of the County of Halifax and the Metropolitan Authority. Unlike other amalgamated regions in Canada, HRM has significant suburban and rural content, in addition to a large urban mix.

The land area of the municipality is 5,577 square kilometers (2,224 square miles), which is an area slightly larger than the Province of Prince Edward Island. With approximately 200 communities within its boundaries and a population of 385,500 (StatsCan 2007), HRM is Nova Scotia's largest and most diverse municipality. Approximately 41 per cent of the total population of the province resides within HRM.

European settlement first occurred in the region with the founding of Halifax by the British in 1749. Nine years later in 1758, an election for Council members was held and Halifax became a forerunner in the later emergence of a democratically elected government in North America. Events of historical significance have greatly influenced the development of the Region. From 1928 until 1971, over a million immigrants arrived in Canada through the Port of Halifax's Pier 21. Many of these immigrants settled in the area, enriching our social and cultural environment. Today, HRM is a region of diverse cultures, deeply rooted in history and tradition.

From the historic downtown areas of Halifax and Dartmouth, which embrace the world's second largest natural harbour; to a coastal region encompassing more than 400 kilometers of shoreline; to the fertile farming land in the Musquodoboit Valley; to the urban communities of Sackville and Cole Harbour; HRM is a first class example of urban, suburban and rural living at its finest.

The Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to supporting the development and growth of business within the Region. It has one of the country's best educated workforces. Through organizations such as the Greater Halifax Partnership, HRM has experienced steady economic growth since amalgamation and is recognized as a great location to do business. It is emerging as a leader in the future of business prosperity.

HRM Statistics (2007)

HRM GDP:	\$11.6 Billion
Inflation (Municipal):	4.0%
Inflation (CPI):	2.0%
Population:	385,500
Population growth:	0.6 %
Household growth:	1.4 %
Taxable Assessment:	\$29.4 Billion
Avg. Residential Assessment:	

The Local Economy

While Halifax has a diverse economy, 87% of the workforce is employed in the service sector, and

only 13% in the goods sector. Total employment in 2007 was about 210,000. The public sector is the largest employer with over 17,400 people working for the three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal). The total value of building permits in 2007 was about \$627 million. More than 3.4 million passengers came through the Halifax Stanfield International Airport in 2007.

The Municipal Government

The municipality is governed by a Council/Chief Administrative Officer form of government, which includes one Councillor for each of the 23 Districts and a Mayor elected-at-large. It is the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer to provide advice to Council and carry out its policies and programs, as well as oversee the operation of the Administration and its 3,600 full and part-time employees.

The services provided by HRM are varied and extensive, and include:

- 1,700 kilometers of streets maintained
- 800 kilometers of sidewalks
- 650 park properties
- 350 playgrounds, 200 ballfields and 180 sports fields
- 240 transit buses, 24 Access-A-Buses, 3 Community Transit Buses, and 3 ferries carrying 18.7 million passengers annually
- 127,000 properties served with curbside collection of recyclables, organics and refuse
- 5 business and industrial parks housing 1,750 businesses
- 14 branch libraries lending 4.6 million items annually
- 4,940 building permits issued in 2007 with a construction value over \$627 million
- approx. 1,000 emergency and non-emergency calls handled by the 911 Centre each day
- 60 fire stations of which 42 are in the rural area
- 47 front line fire trucks in the urban area, and 106 emergency fire vehicles in the rural area
- 138 schools servicing more than 52,600 students

HRM operates on a 12 month fiscal cycle, from April 1st to March 31st of the following year. Under provincial law it is required to prepare an operating budget for ongoing items such as salaries, wages and other recurring costs, and a capital budget, for its fixed assets. HRM's operating budget is fully balanced. Its capital budget is financed through a mixture of debt, cost sharing, reserve withdrawals and transfers from the operating budget. The latter is known as capital from operating or "pay as you go".

As part of Council's financial and other strategies there are a variety of policies and tools which interact with the Operating and Capital Budget process:

- S The Multi-Year Financial Strategy outlines Council's "Principles of Financial Management" as well as its reserve, debt and capital spending policies;
- S Business Plans are required to be developed by all HRM Business Units, including an

overview of their operations, a financial and resource-utilization summary, an analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the Unit, and a summary of the goals for the Business Unit, including specific objectives relating to these goals. Each Business Unit should also provide a summary of their accomplishments against their previous plan, and develop performance measures that they are using to gauge their efforts;

- S Under HRM's Tax Structure, approved by Council in 2003, there are three general property tax rates (urban, suburban and rural) and variety of area tax rates;

HRM has prepared and approved three-year Capital Plans in the past and this year has prepared its first five-year Capital Plan. Included with this document is a five-year Capital Plan with the 2008-2009 Capital Budget as Year 1. Years 2 through 5 of the plan are planning documents and are subject to revision and alteration by Council.

In an effort to provide a framework to debate program and service priorities, HRM underwent an exercise with Council in the fall of 2005 to identify the areas that they were most concerned with. These 'Council Focus Areas' are intended to guide the immediate and long-term investments for the Region and to address many key issues facing our communities. They represent in essence Council's commitment to residents to deal with these issues in a timely fashion.

As part of setting the 2008-09 strategic direction Council agreed to have four Council Focus Area discussions which cover the following strategic topics. These Focus Areas are broken down into four categories, and are analyzed in more detail in the Priorities section found in this book:

Tax Reform

- Taxation

Community Development

- Youth
- Community Development
- Community Recreation
- Community Relations
- Economic Development
- Regional Planning

Public Safety

- Youth
- By-law Enforcement
- Public Safety

Infrastructure:

- Infrastructure
- Traffic Congestion
- Transit
- Recapitalization Buildings