

Mayor Peter Kelly
State of the Region Address
March 31, 2011

Thank you, Jeff (Forbes) and members of the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. First off, I would like to assure you that this speech has been vetted and approved by the auditor general !

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for this opportunity to address you; it is my pleasure to introduce HRM's new Chief Administrative Officer, Richard Butts.

This is Richard's first week on the job. He joins us from Toronto where he was deputy city manager overseeing a budget of \$2.2 billion and a staff of more than 10,000.

Richard is keenly aware that there is only one taxpayer and he is passionate in his pursuit of sound fiscal management by government.

As a leader, he champions cooperation, participation and innovation and is a tireless advocate of customer service and staff accountability.

Richard is a "can-do" administrator with 25 years of experience in both the private sector and government. In other words, he speaks both our languages!

Please welcome Richard.

It's no secret that these last few weeks at City Hall have been lively, to say the least! In fact, you could say they've brought a whole new meaning to that ancient Chinese greeting, "May you live in interesting times."

As we wait for HRM's auditor general to complete his report, be assured that your Council and staff are attending to the municipality's business.

When I sat down to prepare my remarks, my intention had been to invite you, on behalf of my Council colleagues, to take an important journey in search of the future.

I wasn't quite sure how far or how long that trip might be. What I knew for certain was that it would require imagination, inspiration and, most of all, it would require faith in ourselves and in our region.

But then I realized, we don't need to go looking for the future – because it's already here!

All we need is the ambition and the imagination to reach out for it.

And so I am here to offer, not a journey but a partnership; one that will deliver unlimited opportunities.

Senator Robert Kennedy said, "The future does not belong to those who are content with today."

He was right. It belongs to those who have the vision and the courage to own tomorrow.

Residents of HRM have those qualities in abundance; they are confident and they are optimistic.

They are saying, "We welcome the future just as we welcomed the Canada Winter Games."

Thanks to that landmark sporting event, we have a legacy of permanent facilities, especially the Canada Games Centre and the wildly popular People's Oval.

And, as our confidence continues, by this time next year we could be adding a new stadium.

When we direct this kind of positive attitude towards the future, it pays dividends; it makes us a community that works!

We are a smart city. Tomorrow's jobs are being created today; possibilities are becoming realities.

We are attracting pioneer industries, particularly in the neuroscience and biomedical fields.

They are drawn to our diverse economy and our world-class academic/research base.

- According to StatsCan, the percentage of HRM's population with some level of post-secondary education is the fourth highest in the country.

- We are home to 50 of the 55 Nova Scotia cluster companies that benefit from \$110 million a year in research investments;

- The QE 2 Health Sciences Centre has the highest number of certified clinical research coordinators among hospitals in North America;
 - We are host to the Brain Repair Centre - internationally known for its successful treatment of symptoms of Parkinson's Disease, and we have just become a base for Elekta, a world-leader in converting brain research into patient care.
- Then there are our post-secondary institutions. They are doing cutting-edge research to benefit people everywhere.
- Saint Mary's University is the site of the Maritimes' Centre for Green Chemistry. Researchers are looking at ways to use "sustainable chemistry" to remove hazardous materials from waste water and CO2 from industrial emissions.
 - Internationally renowned researchers from The Mount are leading major studies into health and wellness. They are researching obesity in the young, food security for all and caregiving for seniors.
 - At the NSCC Design and Innovation Centre, students, faculty and the private sector are cooperating on finding innovative solutions for a variety of real-world challenges.
 - At Dalhousie, there are 220 fulltime researchers committed to Life Sciences research. The university continually ranks in the Top 10 of international academic institutions at which to perform scientific research.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the future is here. It is populated by the bright, educated people who live and work in our community.

Think IMP. Think BIO. Think RiM.

Think film studios like DHX Media and

Huminah Huminah Animation.

Think LED Roadway Lighting.

These and other innovative companies are changing the way the world behaves.

We are talking new economy; we are talking new jobs; and we are talking new opportunities.

Skilled, educated men and women are moving here from across Canada and around the world. They are attracted by the excitement of our seemingly endless possibilities!

They are telling us: "We are here. We have brought our hopes, our dreams and our ambitions. We have gathered our children and have come looking for our future."

In return, we ask that you continue building the infrastructures that we need to function in the 21st century.

Continue creating the artistic and cultural centres and the recreational facilities that will nurture us.

Continue assembling a strong transportation network so that we may connect locally, nationally and internationally.

Do all this, they tell us, and we will stay. Do all this and more of us will come, because like-attracts-like.

We have heard and we are responding.

Last year, more than three-quarters of a billion dollars' worth of development permits were issued in HRM; almost \$100 million more than in 2009.

Clearly, we are moving forward on many fronts. Now, more than ever, all things are possible.

The fires of innovation have been lit and the flames are spreading. They ignite inspiration and light the way to the future.

Nowhere do these flames burn more brightly than within corporate HRM.

We are engaged. We are in motion.

New community centres, recreation facilities, fire halls and libraries are appearing throughout HRM.

Millions of taxpayer dollars are being committed to improve and expand Metro Transit's service.

Millions more are being invested in HRM's transportation infrastructure.

Council and I are committed to the wellbeing of this great region.

We have embraced the future. We have pledged to a better, brighter tomorrow.

As part of that commitment, we are proceeding with a major strategy called Capital Ideas. It is a blueprint for the future, aimed at simplifying and encouraging growth through two bold initiatives: One is the proposed Strategic Urban Partnership to encourage operational efficiencies by stakeholders; the other is aimed at filling holes in the ground – literally.

Both are new ways to look at old challenges and arrive at innovative solutions.

The Urban Partnership involves all three levels of government working with dozens of agencies, groups and individuals - all of whom have a stake in a healthy and vibrant Core.

This initiative is embedded in the 2011-16 Economic Strategy endorsed by Council last week and will be launched April 28 this year.

This partnership will be a sharing of visions. Instead of mapping tomorrow individually, we will be planning the future together, around the same table.

Think of the efficiencies. Think of the progress. Think of the savings!

It is an idea whose time has come and it will maximize other opportunities.

Now for that second initiative I mentioned – the one about filling holes in the ground.

In HRM's urban Cores, there is a sizeable amount of vacant and under-utilized land owned by government. For example, in downtown Halifax, government owns 31 acres which need a better purpose. That's 12% of the total downtown. In Dartmouth, the figure is similar.

As we would all agree, that's unacceptable.

This land must be put to work - and it will be.

We are open for business and HRM is unrolling the red carpet, not red tape.

HRM and the province will form the Opportunity Sites Task Force to bring our respective downtown acreages to market.

This joint venture will be agile; it will be decisive; it will be action-oriented; and it will be focused on reinforcing our position as Atlantic Canada's regional centre.

The process has already begun; we have received seven responses to our first proposal call on a prime piece of municipal-owned land near Spring Garden Road. More calls will follow.

Our commitment to the future doesn't end there. More initiatives are in play, confirming our confidence in our community and our people.

One involves HRM, the province and the federal government investing in a new central library.

Construction will begin shortly and, when it is finished in 2014, this wonderful asset will draw people from all over.

It will be a gathering point; it will be a place of inspiration.

We have also given support to a new convention centre which should double as a performing arts resource.

This dynamic and absolutely necessary undertaking is now awaiting a decision on federal funding which, we anticipate, will come after the federal election.

Let me remind you, this venture is integral to a half-billion-dollar hotel/office/retail/parking complex which, together with the new library and stadium, represents a massive declaration of optimism in our tomorrow.

The message is crystal clear: If government has this kind of faith in our future, then the private sector should as well.

There are two other Council initiatives to ensure that we embrace the future:

- True to our commitment, we have begun the five-year review of our Regional Plan. This document provides a solid foundation and comprehensive framework to guide urbanization over the next 20 years.

The review will entail a transparent and inclusive public stakeholder consultation process and I encourage the Chamber and its members to participate fully;

- The other Council initiative involves the complete rewriting of the Municipal Planning Strategy and related land-use bylaws pertaining to the Regional Centre.

We are facing 21st Century challenges with 21st Century planning.

Alexander Graham Bell once said, "...so often we look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the ones which open for us."

Ladies and gentlemen, doors are ready to open all over HRM and the key to unlocking them is confidence, the kind of confidence we are demonstrating in ourselves.

It all comes down to this: Business and government must reach out for tomorrow's opportunities together.

Not only do we need to walk together, we need to talk together.

We need to embrace that spirit and find common ground.

Let us now go forward with vision.

Let us believe it is impossible to fail.

Let us remain steadfast in our dedication to the success of our region and the prosperity of all who live here.

Seize the day! Thank you.