

# Opportunities Rising



**HALIFAX**

**2018-19 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND INVESTMENTS**



At the Halifax Regional Municipality we take pride in strong fiscal management as well as sound investments in the services and amenities that make us a wonderful place to live, work and do business.

We are the proud economic hub of Atlantic Canada, with a growing population that includes more young people and Canadian newcomers than at any other time in recent decades. Working with CAO Jacques Dubé and professional staff throughout the organization, Regional Council has adopted prudent budgeting practices that allow us to ensure ongoing financial stability, good value to the public, and sound investments for the future.

Our municipality is taking a more modern approach to long-term financial planning through multi-year operating and capital budgets. Reserve balances remain healthy, allowing us the flexibility we need to take advantage of strategic opportunities to leverage federal and municipal programs to invest in infrastructure that improves livability and spurs the economy.

At the same time, we are keeping pressure on our tax-supported debt to drive it below many similar-sized Canadian jurisdictions. By keeping our financial house in order we are able to better pursue the ambitious goals of our renewed Economic Growth Plan to markedly grow our population and GDP, and create not simply a bigger Halifax, but a better one that affords opportunities to all.

One of the great privileges of being Mayor is the opportunity to see our municipality through the eyes of people who are discovering it for the first time. They often remark on the spirit of this place, on our collaborative nature and the clear commitment among many players to help write a new narrative for this place we call home.

They see a youthful, progressive, increasingly multicultural city with evidence of growth and development everywhere one turns. Halifax has a specialness of place, a deep well of talented people and a cost-competitive price of doing business.

I'm proud of our Council and everyone throughout our workplaces who are committed to the work of building a better Halifax Regional Municipality.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Savage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Mike Savage  
Mayor





## There's an old saying: a rising tide lifts all boats.

The Halifax region continues to be on the rise. Known internationally for our balance of city and rural living, world-renowned beaches, and coastal drives, our vibrant and culturally rich communities represent the differences that bring us together. The influence of our prosperity can be felt across the region and beyond. We continue to invest in new and existing assets to position the municipality as a progressive but sustainable leader.

Our success is due to strong fiscal management, progressive planning and a balance of honouring our heritage while embracing our future. The municipality is governed by a Regional Council comprised of the Mayor and 16 District Councillors. Together, they represent the main legislative and governing body for the Halifax Regional Municipality and its 16 districts. The elected officials are accountable to the citizens of the Halifax region. Councillors also sit on boards, committees, commissions and community councils in their respective districts. Council's involvement and direction provides a critical link from community to the municipal governance structure. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) provides strategic advice and guidance to Regional Council while carrying out relevant policies and programs. Last year, staff presented Regional Council with the first multi-year financial strategy that aligned with Council's Focus Areas. As part of that direction, Regional Council approved the 2017-18 Operating and Capital Budgets and, for the first time, approved a Year-Two Operating Budget "in principle" (for 2018-19). This "in principle" budget was established to budget quality but was meant to be updated for changes in assumptions and circumstances.

### COUNCIL PRIORITY AREAS

Economic  
Development

Service  
Delivery

Healthy, Liveable  
Communities

Social  
Development

Governance &  
Engagement

Transportation



Council's Focus Areas and our municipal strategic plan help us align and adjust our services to Regional Council's priorities. The multi-year budgeting approach has allowed us to apply a more thoughtful planning process that is well aligned with the municipality's debt and reserves policies, which places us in an enviable position. The stories in this booklet highlight just a few of our services and programs as they align with Council's Focus Areas.

Halifax's economy is generally stable and shows consistent yet moderate growth. That growth is supported by a mixture of strong public sector employment and by the considerable presence of finance, insurance, educational and real estate sectors. While the economy remains strong, there has been a significant buildout of office space within Halifax over the last number of years that is now being absorbed.

Our capital budget remains a challenge. Although we are balanced for 2018-19 there are mounting pressures in future years, particularly around our state of good repair accounts, which help to ensure the longevity of our assets. Tough decisions lie ahead. While on a whole, the municipality is in a good financial position, our expenses are outpacing our revenues, which means we may not be ready to take advantage of the economic growth and invest in the bigger opportunities that are rising. Going forward, we will need to make a stronger link between tax decisions and growth and services and continue to look critically at our services as they align with citizens' priorities.

We continue to plan for the future and make sound financial decisions to benefit all.





# Mayor and Council



Mayor Mike Savage



Councillor Steve Streach



DISTRICT 1

Councillor David Hendsbee



DISTRICT 2

Councillor Bill Karsten



DISTRICT 3

Councillor Lorelei Nicoll



DISTRICT 4

Councillor Sam Austin



DISTRICT 5

Councillor Tony Mancini



DISTRICT 6

Councillor Wayne Mason



DISTRICT 7

Councillor Lindell Smith



DISTRICT 8

Councillor Shawn Cleary



DISTRICT 9

Councillor Russell Walker



DISTRICT 10

Councillor Steve Adams



DISTRICT 11

Councillor Richard Zurawski



DISTRICT 12

Councillor Matt Whitman



DISTRICT 13

Councillor Lisa Blackburn



DISTRICT 14

Councillor Steve Craig



DISTRICT 15

Councillor Tim Outhit



DISTRICT 16





As Chief Administrative Officer, it's my responsibility, with the support of my colleagues, to prepare and present the annual budget to Regional Council. Now in its second year, the new, multi-year budgeting process is working to link long-term, sustainable business and budget plans to Council's priorities, with an emphasis on accountability, transparency and service delivery to residents, as well as economic growth for the region.

Our prudent approach to managing public funds allows us to make practical and transformational investments in the future well-being of communities for generations to come. We've embraced a formal Operational Performance Excellence program to identify and measure value from our customers' perspective, helping us get to desired results quicker using less resources. We're also measuring critical service costing and performance data through participation in Municipal Benchmarking Network Canada to drive continuous improvement in public service delivery.

The municipality's collaboration with Halifax Partnership and academic institutions is driving a three-year strategic plan to help build a globally-recognized innovation ecosystem that accelerates entrepreneurship and the commercialization of leading-edge ideas and research throughout the region. We're blessed with an abundance of natural beauty in our region, and our commitment to preserving our open-spaces and wilderness areas is reflected in the recent decisions to purchase lands to create urban wilderness parks that both protect existing ecosystems and provide opportunities for unique urban wilderness recreation experiences.

We continue to invest in celebrated festivals and events and 2018 will be another exciting year. The East Coast Music Awards, Pan American Canoe Sprint Championships and an international rugby match will complement our strong annual program that includes many community events such as Halifax Pride Parade, Nocturne: Art at Night, along with Canada Day and New Year's Eve celebrations. With our new world-class convention centre completed, we look forward to welcoming many visitors to Halifax in 2018 including the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in late May.

From strong fiscal management to improving the quality, efficiency and management of our service delivery across the organization, municipal employees are working hard to put our customers first — our residents. I'm proud to lead a large and diverse team who are making a difference to the people we serve.

Kind regards,

Jacques Dubé  
Chief Administrative Officer

# Financial Overview

Over the past decade or so, the municipality has set a course for future prosperity by establishing the fiscal discipline and capacity to deliver public services. Maintaining that foundation and preparing to grow it to the next level demands more than coasting on the current tack.

## Halifax's Financial Planning

As a public sector entity, the Halifax Regional Municipality has a deep sense of responsibility for the funds with which taxpayers entrust us. The municipality has a conservative approach to handling public money with an emphasis on integrity and transparency. It uses a two-year budget, with the first year being the official budget and the second year being a budget that is approved in principle.

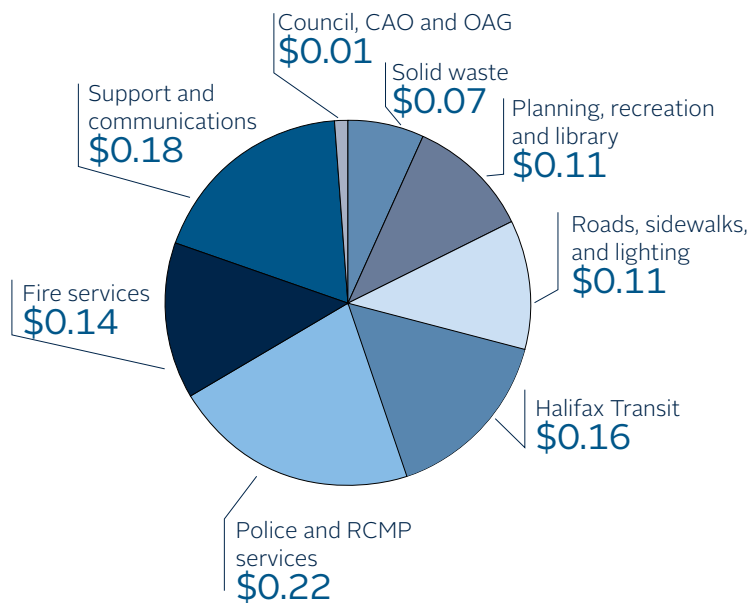
There are four key components to our budget approach: Operating, Capital, Reserves and Debt. In many respects the operating budget is very much like the household budget for any citizen of the municipality, comprising of family income and household costs. The debt that the municipality owes is similar to a household mortgage; our reserve funds are essentially a series of saving accounts; and the capital budget is like the cost of buying, fixing or expanding a home or other asset like a vehicle.

## Operating Budget

The operating budget includes the day-to-day expenses and revenues that are required to run the municipality and provide services to citizens. It includes items such as salaries and wages, contracts, fuel, building costs, materials, debt charges, payments on new capital projects and contributions to and withdrawals from reserves. These costs are offset by the revenues, property taxes (residential and commercial), tax agreements, payments in lieu of taxes, and a variety of fees and fines. The operating budget must be balanced.

In 2018-19 municipal expenditures will total \$761 million in operating and \$128 million in capital. Many factors can influence changes in costs. Over time, the municipality's population has grown while the costs to provide municipal services have also increased due to inflation. At the same time, services to citizens have been enhanced and expanded. As with many organizations, compensation pressures are significant. Recent arbitration decisions have led to significant increases in police and fire wages. In addition, the adoption of enhanced Fire Service standards has led to the hiring of new firefighters, and additional costs. New funding has been made available to improve the municipality's capacity to operate its expanding technology, and better understand and serve the diversity of our communities.

## \$1 tax spending\*:



*Support and communications includes the departments of: Human Resources, Legal Services, Municipal Clerk's Office, Finance, Real Estate, Facilities and Fleet, Information and Communication Technology, Government Relations and External Affairs, Diversity, Corporate Communications and Citizen Contact Centres.*

The 2018-19 budget also includes \$158 million for provincial services such as education, corrections, housing and property assessment. All municipalities must levy taxes for these items and transfer the collected funds to Centres for Education and other entities.

*\*excludes fiscal services*

## Taxation

Municipalities in Canada generally rely on property taxation as their major source of revenue. The Halifax Regional Municipality tends to be dependent on the roughly 80 per cent of all revenues that come from residential and commercial property tax, or various tax agreements and payments in lieu of tax. Taxes reflect the cost of delivering public services to citizens.

When considering appropriate taxes, Regional Council focuses on the average tax bill, not simply the value of the assessment. In December 2017, Regional Council directed staff to increase the average municipal tax bill by 1.97 per cent or \$37 for a typical single-family home.

## Capital Budget

The capital budget funds the purchase, construction and rehabilitation of assets. The municipality has a considerable asset base worth \$3.4 billion that includes over 300 buildings, 1,200 parks and playgrounds, 1,800 kilometres of roads and more than 1,200 vehicles. The capital budget is financed through a combination of debt, cost sharing, reserves and transfers from the operating budget.

The upcoming capital budget will see the municipality spending \$129 million in 2018-19. This includes a \$21 million investment in transit projects, \$44 million in roads and transportation (including \$4 million in active transportation) and almost \$7 million for the completion of the Dartmouth Sportsplex revitalization.



The 2018-19 capital budget will provide funding to the initial capital projects supporting the Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP). New assets often lead to higher costs. For example, a new bus could mean additional costs for drivers, fuel and ongoing maintenance.

Many capital projects take more than a single year to plan, design and develop, with the associated capital funding approved within each budget year until project completion. With changes to federal cost-sharing programs and available reserve funding, new capital investment can fluctuate from year to year. Staff continue to balance capacity to deliver projects against the desire to invigorate plans and strategies with new capital investment.

## Debt

Debt is an important tool that can be used to fund the capital budget. In many respects it works much like a home mortgage, with the principal and interest being repaid over the asset's life. The municipality has a specific debt policy to ensure that all capital repairs of existing facilities are not funded from debt, but from the operating budget or other funding.

The municipality has set specific targets for debt, which has helped us to steadily reduce our debt level and associated debt charges (principal and interest) that must be repaid each year. Over the past 20 years, our debt has dropped by approximately 30 per cent, while the region's population has grown by more than 20 per cent along with the infrastructure that supports it. Reducing our debt has allowed us to use that money to invest in the infrastructure, programs and services to support our growing population.

## Reserves

The municipality has three main categories of reserves, each designed to reflect the specific purposes of the reserve system.

- Contingency funds for unforeseen financial risk such as emergencies or economic events;
- Savings funds for future obligations that the municipality expects to make such as a specific asset or other commitment; and,
- Contingency funds for opportunities such as new cost-shared programs.

The municipality's reserve balances are in a relatively strong position with an available reserve balance of \$103.8 million as of March 2018. At Council's direction, funds are earmarked for initiatives that aren't expected to start until several years from now.

Given the limited cost-sharing with the province, modest room for tax increases and a high dependence on property taxes, the municipality has few options to raise operating revenues.

The municipality's multi-year financial strategy focuses on investing available funds in areas aligned with evolving service needs and providing the best return on investments, and works to ensure a sustainable approach to funding future growth initiatives.

# Budget Highlights

\$760.6 million  
Operating

\$128.6 million  
Capital

In 2018-19 the average taxes per single family home has increased by 1.97%, in line with or below forecasted rates of inflation and economic growth.

Street  
recapitalization



\$27.3 million

Dartmouth Sportsplex  
revitalization



\$7 million\*

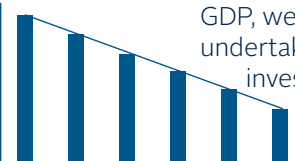
\*Multi-year project. 7 million allocated in 2018-19

Enhanced Fire Safety  
Presence



16  
additional  
Firefighters

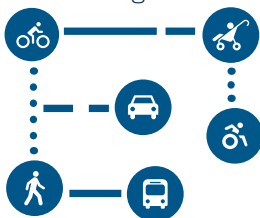
Debt Management  
Strategy



1.3% of Regional  
GDP, well-positioned to  
undertake productive  
investments

## Integrated Mobility Plan

Integration of Transit, Transportation and Public Works and Planning - capital projects to improve liveability and movement across the region



## Halifax Transit Services



\$132 million  
(operating and capital)



## Centre Plan



When the Halifax Regional Municipality was created in 1996, the new municipality inherited inconsistent regulations, by-laws, and planning guidelines from the amalgamated municipal units. Planners have begun working to replace them with coherent plans that reflect the character of neighbourhoods and allow development to meet the demand for growth.

The Centre Plan will support the growth of new communities within the Regional Centre – Peninsula Halifax and Dartmouth inside the circumferential highway – by establishing clear guidelines for development. Proposed developments that conform with those guidelines for each neighbourhood included in the plan will qualify for a simplified approval process.

*The draft Centre Plan is the direct result of significant public engagement and a strong commitment by the Planning & Development team to modernize development rules to reflect the vision citizens have for their communities.*

As a result of research and public consultation to date, the plan is based on four core concepts: human scale design, complete communities, pedestrians first, and strategic growth. The plan will provide for areas where mid-rise buildings will retain the scale of the neighbourhood and open opportunities for developers with smaller projects. Mixed-use developments will contribute to walkable communities, with local services and amenities. Some larger scale residential developments will be required to increase the availability of affordable housing within communities, and residential growth will be focussed in areas with the best access to municipal services like transit, parks and recreation facilities, as well as places of employment and retail amenities.

Public engagement has been a significant part of the development of the Centre Plan. As the project reaches its completion, planners will be welcoming citizen questions and comments throughout the spring at stakeholder workshops, open houses and a storefront information centre.





## Rural Planning Team



While there is much interest around the Centre Plan, rural planning is also flourishing. Last year Regional Council supported the creation of a rural planning team which is working on a Rural Development Pattern paper to outline historical and present-day planning approaches for rural residential development. Team members provide support to the Halifax Green Network Plan and the 100 Wild Island project.

In addition, the team has actively participated in the community planning initiative with Musquodoboit Harbour Chamber of Commerce & Civic Affairs, which resulted in the Community

Development Plan (CDP). The plan, currently under a feasibility review by staff, outlines alternative service delivery ranging from infrastructure projects and streetscape improvements to recreation projects and upgrades to existing facilities.

The community planning initiative in Musquodoboit Harbour is a pilot program of the municipality's Secondary Planning Program. This approach allows a community group to take the lead on the project, with municipal staff providing high-level support and guidance. Staff is reviewing this approach to determine how this model could be applied to future Secondary Planning initiatives.

*The Rural Team is processing all planning applications (approximately 30-35 cases) within rural communities (areas without municipal sewer) inclusive of development agreements, rezonings, land use by-law amendments and municipal planning strategy amendments.*

*For the past year this work has resulted in approximately 14 consultation sessions in the rural communities of the municipality and included a two-day open house in Tantallon and a full day (two-session) open house in Fall River.*

## Bridging the Gap



Youssef Habboush, a young program engineer with the municipality's Planning & Development department, may have left the province for employment upon graduation. The municipal Bridging the Gap program provided an opportunity for him to work in his field.

Since 2013, the program has offered 88 graduates up to 18 months of paid internship to provide them with that critical first job and real-world experience in their field. As a result, many of Nova Scotia's smart and well-educated people are able to find jobs that allow them to remain in the province.

*Over \$5.4 million has been invested in the program since 2013-14, with another \$1million budgeted for 2018-19.*

It also means that the municipality has access to the fresh perspectives and up-to-the-minute skills that new graduates bring to the job. Many, like Youssef, have moved from intern to full time employee as positions open within the municipality. Others have moved on to positions with other organizations or levels of government. Kathleen MacEachern, for example, finds that she uses "the experience from the program daily, as the Policy and Research Analyst for the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, to focus on issues that matter to our members."



Bridging the Gap helps graduates gain valuable work experience in preparation for their next job, helps the municipality attract the new talent we need to maintain the services that citizens deserve, and makes it possible for Nova Scotians to establish viable careers at home.

## Mobile Food Market



*Photo: Sydney MacLennan Photography*

The Mobile Food Market brings fresh, high quality and affordable food to neighbourhoods that need it most. The Mobile Food Market, a project that recently won silver in the IPAC/Deloitte Public Sector Leadership Awards, is a shining example of how community partners and various levels of government can come together and make great things happen. The Market originated from Mayor Mike Savage's "Conversation on Healthy, Liveable Communities" and is a shared project of the Halifax Regional Municipality, Public Health (Nova Scotia Health Authority), Partners for Care, the Ecology Action Centre, United Way Halifax, the Atlantic Superstore and Elmridge Farm Ltd.

The Market relies on a Halifax Transit bus to bring fresh, healthy and affordable fruits and vegetables to five communities throughout the municipality. During the winter, to avoid idling a bus, produce packs are delivered directly to recreation centres in the communities.

Communities selected for the market have a higher proportion of people who often struggle with food access, including seniors, immigrants, single parents and families with low household income. Proximity to a grocery store was another

consideration in community selection. The Nova Scotia Health Authority provides overall project coordination along with the research and evidence needed to select and engage communities. The program recognizes that across our region, some communities have many grocery store options while others have limited access or no way to buy fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables. The Mobile Food Market aims to change that.

What started out as an initiative to address food insecurity has grown to include health promotion and active living, literacy, and social inclusion. Community members can now sign up for a library card or take out a library cookbook on market days and municipal Recreation staff coordinate with market days to bring the Rec Van full of games and activities to the communities.



*Photo: Sydney MacLennan Photography*



## Public Safety Strategy



It may seem odd that a PhD in urban geography from the University of Toronto can be found managing the municipality's Public Safety Strategy, but Amy Siciliano's interest has always focused on the concept that *where* you live affects *how* you live.

The Public Safety Strategy represents a social development approach to crime prevention by addressing the conditions that can lead to criminal behaviour. That means placing a major focus on working with residents to build strong and resilient communities. Good jobs, healthy food, access to education, safe and affordable housing are some of the factors that contribute to a strong and resilient community, where children can grow up feeling valued and included.

Policing is critical to addressing crime, and the Public Safety Advisor works closely with Halifax Regional Police. Building a community where residents are safe, and feel safe, is a job for everyone. A social development approach to public safety includes such municipal responsibilities as economic development, transit, recreation, and land use planning.

The first priority is to work with individuals and organizations to build on the efforts already underway within neighbourhoods across the municipality to strengthen communities and the people and families who live in them.

For more information on the strategy visit:  
[halifax.ca/public-safety-strategy](http://halifax.ca/public-safety-strategy)

**The Public Safety Strategy identifies four priorities:**



### **BUILD RESIDENT RESILIENCE**

Help people to reduce their sense of isolation, build resilience and improve their quality of life.



### **ENSURE SAFE PLACES**

Reduce the opportunities for crime and social disorder at places where people live, work and play.



### **STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES**

Increase local participation and social interaction, and develop ways to deal with conflict in non-violent ways.



### **PREVENT AND REDUCE CRIME**

Protect citizens, organizations, and institutions against threats to their well-being and prosperity.

## Fire Safety Maintenance Inspection Program

An important part of the work of Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency (HRFE) is prevention and education.

After a successful pilot project, firefighters are working with property owners and managers to implement a new Fire Safety Maintenance Inspection Program designed to educate property owners and managers, as well as to check for compliance with the fire code.

The program includes large residential property owners, as well as owners of bars and restaurants, places of worship, and daycare centres, to ensure their fire prevention equipment and procedures are up to date and functioning well.

During a scheduled inspection visit, firefighters check critical fire prevention measures, such as fire doors that close and latch quickly to contain and confine the spread of fire. Property owners have welcomed the program, working with firefighters after the inspection to ensure any problems are fixed, and undertaking regular checks to ensure their buildings are as safe as possible.

During inspections, firefighters become more familiar with the buildings in their area, and are able to note important information such as the location of fire protection equipment, or where hazards may be located. Data collected through the program will allow HRFE to track repeat violations and most frequent failures, and focus on improving compliance. It will also provide a basis for public education on fire prevention and safety.



## Performance Excellence



On April 1, 2017, the Halifax Regional Municipality embarked on a performance excellence journey. A performance excellence organization focuses on improving the way services are provided by streamlining processes and improving methods to minimize the total cost of service delivery, while continuing to deliver desired service results to the customer. The pursuit of organizational excellence is as much about providing exceptional service as it is about cultivating an environment of continuous improvement.

Aligned with performance excellence, Regional Council approved participation in a joint initiative with the province and the business community in late 2017 to reduce regulatory burden and streamline administrative processes. Simplifying the sidewalk café application or reducing the steps to approve a noise by-law exemption for an established annual event, are examples of the municipality's commitment to continuous improvement.

In alignment with red tape reduction, the municipality is working with the province to link with the provincial Business Navigator Service, to offer a single contact for business, to help find regulatory information, and make it easier to comply with both provincial and municipal regulations.

In addition, senior staff have participated in performance excellence training and identified 10 internal corporate processes to review for continuous improvement opportunities. When an organization's internal processes are simplified, the services provided to external customers benefit from efficiencies as well.

Other continuous improvement examples we are excited about include the recreation registration software replacement project; parking technology upgrades; and changes to our permitting, licensing and compliance processes.

As a performance excellence organization, the Halifax Regional Municipality should examine all processes through the customer lens, and public servants should always strive to do things more effectively and efficiently for our citizens, for visitors, and for business.

*Performance Excellence is a way to deliver on our municipal priorities of Service Delivery and Service Excellence, by providing efficient, effective and sustainable delivery of services that responds to our customers' needs.*



## Transit Maintenance Improvements



Transit users may not worry about “what’s under the hood”, but maintenance workers are improving systems to help ensure a smoother ride.

As part of the municipality’s Performance Excellence program, new maintenance systems are helping to save both time and money, and avoid unscheduled service interruptions, by anticipating and repairing mechanical problems before they cause a break-down or extensive damage.

Working with systems analysts and mechanical staff, the maintenance division has established a practice of preventive maintenance — bringing vehicles in for scheduled maintenance and inspection. This replaces a more reactive system of responding to a break-down or identification of a problem through an annual Utility and Review Board (UARB) inspection.

By empowering Halifax Transit’s own mechanics to take responsibility for identifying problems before they cause break-downs or more costly repairs, the service has achieved a 60 per cent reduction in

reported defects issued during UARB inspections. Equally important, the measure has improved fleet management, and decreased the likelihood of a break-down or other interruption of service, resulting in a better and more consistent transit service for customers.

This preventive system allows maintenance staff to gather data about the probable life span of major and critical mechanical parts. Analysis of this information will lead to the next improvement — predictive maintenance — where replacement or rebuild will be scheduled before a part fails and causes additional problems. By identifying unreliable parts, the maintenance division will also be able to work more effectively with Procurement to ensure quality mechanical parts are available to keep the buses in service and reliable.

This improvement initiative will not only result in extended service life for individual vehicles and provide sustainable savings, it will also enable Halifax Transit to make a more reliable plan for capital investments.

*The Transit Maintenance Program has reduced the number of service-impacting breakdowns by an estimated 17-20% in the past year, and has the capability to reduce approximately 21% of the labour associated with current preventative maintenance tasks.*

## Connecting our Oldest Communities with the Newest



In December 2015, Regional Council issued a Statement of Reconciliation in which they committed to supporting and delivering real change and working together with Aboriginal leaders. Since then, they have made a commitment to ensure the appropriate representation of Indigenous history and culture across the municipality.

Council and the CAO are working closely to establish a Nation to Nation relationship with the Mi'kmaw chiefs. In December, Council committed to establishing the Downey Wenjack Legacy room in City Hall, which will display Indigenous art and provide meeting space to support reconciliation. These initiatives support the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Report to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion recently created the position of Advisor, Indigenous Community Engagement. The advisor will lead the development of a framework for Indigenous peoples living in the municipality and support the creation of internal education programs and advisory services.

In its work to welcome immigrants, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion realized that the newcomers had no real knowledge of Nova Scotia's Indigenous people.

To begin building a relationship between the oldest communities and the newest, the Office worked with Immigration Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the Nova Scotia Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and the Millbrook First Nation Community to take a group of new Nova Scotians to participate in the Millbrook Powwow.

During the day-long celebrations, members of the Mi'kmaw community danced, talked, and exchanged gifts with their guests.

Tracey Jones-Grant, Managing Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, believes it is this kind of personal contact that has improved Halifax's ability to retain immigrant families.

Working with business units across the municipality, and with community organizations, she and her staff seek out opportunities to create an environment where people feel welcomed and valued, and where they want to stay.

The Powwow was one such opportunity to celebrate diverse cultures, and build awareness and understanding between newcomers and Indigenous communities.

*The Office of Diversity and Inclusion's mandate is to "build an inclusive organization that values and reflects the diverse community that we serve."*

## Poverty Solutions Framework



In Halifax business is booming. Cranes dot the skyline and the region is enjoying a period of prosperity and a stable economy. Halifax Regional Council has recognized that economic success for the municipality must include economic opportunity for everyone. Despite the general prosperity of the region, according to the United Way, one in seven residents still lives in poverty.

In the delivery of its programs, the municipality has introduced measures such as a low-income transit pass, free or low-cost access to recreational programs, and provision of an out-of-service transit bus for use as a Mobile Food Market.

Halifax is also part of the Housing and Homelessness coalition to ensure safe, affordable housing is available to everyone. As a next step, the municipality has joined the United Way of Halifax, the provincial government, and other community partners in the creation of a report on building poverty solutions. The project represents a commitment by all parties to collaborate to ensure that investments by the province, the municipality, and the community sector are well-aligned, to make every expenditure as effective as possible in the effort to reduce poverty.

The partnership has enabled the municipality to work with the province on a pilot project to provide low-income transit passes to eligible residents. Depending upon the participation rate, this could see an additional 16,800 people benefit from affordable transportation.



*Total amount of  
community market  
events: 182*

*Over 700 people per  
month participate in  
the Low Income  
Transit Pass program*





## Diverse Voices for Change Summit



Women are becoming more visible in positions of power, in both politics and business. But, while women make up 52 per cent of the population, only two of 16 Regional Councillors are women. The Provincial Legislature includes a record 17 women out of 51 MLAs. Nova Scotia has one female Member of Parliament among the 11 Federal MPs. Of these women, there are no African Nova Scotians, and only two immigrant women.

With the support of Councillors Blackburn and Nicoll and funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the municipality's Office of Diversity and Inclusion held a two-day summit to encourage women, particularly racially visible women, to become more engaged in seeking senior leadership or political positions.

Workshops, held in part in City Hall's Council Chamber, included information on how local government works and how individuals can become involved. Participants heard from women who had successfully run for office. They also discussed the barriers, including racism and sexism, that women face when they step up, as well as the growing support for women.

As a result of the Summit, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion has a new partnership with the Nova Scotia Status of Women to develop a culture-specific campaign school to help racialized and immigrant women step forward to run for political office.

Diverse Voices for Change is a reflection of the municipal commitment to engage people from diverse backgrounds and with a wide range of perspectives in municipal government.

*Over 50 women attended focus groups held in December 2016 / January 2017.*

*35 women of diverse background participated in the two-day workshops.*

*80 people attended a public conversation on black women in leadership.*

## Beechville Engagement



Formal open houses and public meetings are standard features of the review of proposed developments. But, when a developer with approval for construction of 300 new units near the historic African Nova Scotian community of Beechville requested an amendment to allow 1,200 new units, municipal planners recognized that something different was required.

The community had already seen its boundaries shrink through decades of encroachment by residential and business development, and many residents felt their concerns had never been adequately addressed. They didn't trust developers, and they didn't trust planners.

Municipal planners approached the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), a division of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, to support the development of an inclusive engagement program to review the proposed development. ANSAIO met first with community members, to provide information about the proposal and to gather community feedback. They then facilitated conversations with the community and planning staff, which resulted in the establishment of a community liaison committee to provide a communications channel between the community and planning staff.

Through consistent communication and the establishment of personal contacts between staff and community members, the planners are gradually gaining trust as the process continues. The success of this process — and the community's ultimate satisfaction with their involvement in it — won't be known until it's completed, but this engagement represents the first joint effort by Planning and ANSAIO and, possibly, a step toward more meaningful consultation with marginalized communities.

*The African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) provides leadership, strategic direction, policy advice and expertise to the Halifax Regional Municipality to strengthen the delivery of municipal services to the residents of African descent and African Nova Scotian communities within the Halifax region.*

*ANSAIO also works with municipal business units to keep African Nova Scotians and all residents of African descent informed by improving relationships and encouraging greater participation of these communities.*

## Complete Streets



*Photo: Mona Ghiz*

The Argyle & Grafton Streetscaping project has created a street with a focus on people. A street that invites strolling, or perhaps sitting on a bench to watch the life of the city. In summer, the wide curbs will be home to the popular sidewalk cafés and offer a venue for street festivals and celebrations. Bikes and people take precedence over cars. The European flair will be heightened with public art.

Argyle and Grafton are urban Complete Streets.

Complete Streets is a new way of looking at streets. Rather than seeing them as a means of moving vehicles, a Complete Streets approach recognizes that people want to walk or bike, as well as drive. On some streets, they want to stroll and meet their neighbours — or they may want to sit and relax.

Complete Streets is one of the foundational concepts of Halifax's newly adopted Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP), which was developed collaboratively across municipal departments and with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. The IMP also reflects extensive public consultation, and discussions with key stakeholders.

A Complete Streets approach requires that designers and planners consider how the street must serve a variety of transportation modes, as well as looking at the surrounding land uses. It also aims to ensure that there are complete networks for all modes of travel and recognizes that some streets are important places in a community, in addition to being links.

As Halifax adopts this approach, we can expect to see more pedestrian-friendly street design and accessibility, especially in places with lots of foot traffic. We will also see improved measures for bicycle and transit priority in residential areas. The movement of vehicles, goods, access to property, curbside management, along with other residential and commercial needs must also be considered in the planning.

Staff in Planning & Development, Halifax Transit and Transportation and Public Works are working to identify projects in the short and long-term that can be enhanced by the Complete Streets approach. With the completion of the Argyle Streetscape, staff are working on several new projects including Spring Garden Road and the implementation of dedicated bus lanes at peak hours on Gottingen Street.

**2014 Regional Plan Mobility Targets**  
*By 2031, at least 30% of all trips will be made by walking, cycling and transit. relationships and encouraging greater participation of these communities.*





## **We are committed to running an efficient and high-quality public service that meets the needs of our citizens.**

Our customers are at the heart of what we do. Across our organization, employees are working hard to put our customers first. Every decision they make is focused on meeting and exceeding customers' needs and expectations.

The stories in this book are just some examples of the way that municipal employees are working to improve the quality, efficiency, and management of service delivery to citizens. Whether it's changing regulations, reviewing and simplifying processes, or investing in data to support evidence-based decision making, citizen needs and expectations are the primary consideration. Investment in programs like Municipal Bench Marking Canada and the Citizen Survey, which will be conducted in late spring, help us to monitor and report on our performance.

We continue our thoughtful growth strategy focused on investing limited funds in alignment with Council's Focus Areas and service needs. We are diligent in managing our finances by controlling operating expenses and finding efficiencies aimed at reducing the cost of programs and services. As of December 2017, staff had projected a general rate surplus of \$12.1 million primarily due to increased deed transfer taxes, contingency funding not required and increased diversion credits in Solid Waste.

The projected reserves and responsible fiscal management have enabled Council to build in new and expanded services such as increasing staff in our public safety divisions to keep communities safe, maintaining the expanded hours on the Alderney Ferry and reducing recreation fees at some facilities to ensure equal access for all.

