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# The Care of HRM Cultural Artifacts/Artworks – including the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial Sculpture©

**September 2012**



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including the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial  
Sculpture©**

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## Preamble

In January 2012, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) became aware of concerns regarding the possible misplacement of a component (the 'doll') of a sculpture depicting the Halifax Explosion, created by the late Jordi Bonet, after the artwork had been removed from its location at the Halifax North Memorial Library in the Fall of 2004. According to a conservator's report filed with HRM, there were four significant and separate components of the sculpture. The OAG was advised by HRM staff, one of these components, a bronze cast 'doll', "went missing" and they were not able to explain how or when this had happened.

It is reported to the OAG, the family of the late Jordi Bonet provided (in 2011) an estimated value of \$90,000 to \$100,000 for the 'doll' portion of the above sculpture. Given the potentially substantial value of this portion of the artwork, the OAG examined the circumstances surrounding its removal to determine what controls were in place at the time, what controls have been put in place to avoid a similar situation occurring and if there were any further changes needed to processes and procedures to prevent the situation from recurring.

## Objectives

Using the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial as an initial basis for understanding, this review had as its objectives:

- To review and gain an understanding of how HRM artworks and artifacts are managed
- To determine which business unit is responsible for the management and safeguarding of these assets
- To determine what documentation is available with respect to the entire HRM collection
- To determine if an up-to-date inventory, valuation and condition status for the entire HRM collection is maintained

With respect to the Jordi Bonet sculpture in particular, the objectives were to determine:

- Under what authority was the decision made to move the artwork?
- What actually occurred when the artwork was removed?
- Who, within HRM, is responsible for the safeguarding of the Jordi Bonet sculpture and is this different from other works of

art owned by HRM?

- When and under what circumstances did a valuable piece of the sculpture appear to be lost and what controls should have been in place to have prevented this?
- Even to present day, why have no formal changes taken place to protect the remaining elements of this significant piece of art?

Finally, in an overall sense, the objective of the report was to make recommendations, as necessary, to strengthen controls and assist with the development of appropriate policies and procedures to avoid a similar occurrence in the future.

## Scope

The OAG looked into the circumstances leading up to the decision to remove the sculpture in 2004, its actual removal, its on-going storage and safekeeping up to 2011, and the actions taken by HRM staff in response to inquiries made from interested members of the public around the condition and whereabouts of the art piece. The OAG also reviewed various policies and procedures both approved and in draft form with respect to the HRM Civic Collection, from the time of the removal of the Jordi Bonet sculpture to present.

## Methodology

The OAG reviewed documentation, email and other correspondence relating to the situation from a variety of staff sources. Interviews were conducted with current and former staff responsible for the removal, safekeeping and storage of the art piece.

Review of various relevant documents; review of various policies and procedures both approved and in draft form.

Limited site visits to gain some understanding of the general conditions in which items in the current inventory are stored and some understanding of their current condition.

Interviews and discussions also took place with outside parties with knowledge of the matter. Advice was sought from professionals in the fields of art and insurance to gain a better understanding of standard practices in these fields as they might apply to the HRM Civic Collection.

## Summary of Recommendations

- 2.0.1 HRM Administration should clarify with staff the proper procedures to follow when divesting of an HRM asset, particularly a piece of artwork or artifact. HRM should also consider creating and implementing specific policies and business procedures for the decommissioning and divesting of HRM-owned artwork or artifacts. (Page 13)
- 2.1.1 HRM should explore opportunities for displaying or using the remaining pieces of the Jordi Bonet sculpture in a manner representative of the artist's original artistic intent, in consultation with the community. (Page 15)
- 3.0.1 HRM should consider immediately assigning responsibility for the civic cultural collection to a position staffed by a suitably accredited individual. In the absence of this individual, an appropriate temporary assignment should be made. (Page 18)
- 3.0.2 HRM Administration should consider completing an up-to-date inventory and condition assessment of the entire current civic cultural collection including the HRM Public Art Collection inventory previously completed. The details from this assessment could then be used to plan for the on-going maintenance, care and conservation of the collection based on factual, relevant and up-to-date information. (Page 18)
- 3.0.3 HRM Administration should consider finalizing and approving procedures and guidelines which are currently in draft form for the maintenance, care, conservation, acquisition, decommissioning and divesting of the cultural assets, and ensure the significant practices contained within each document are communicated to appropriate HRM staff. The documents currently in draft form are:
- HRM Public Art Procedures Handbook
  - HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide. (Page 18)

- 3.1.1 HRM Administration, upon the completion of work contemplated in Recommendation 3.0.2, should consider the merits and feasibility of insuring some or all of its collection, in keeping with the principles and objectives of the HRM Cultural Plan and Regional Council's directives. (Page 22)

### Management Response

*I have reviewed the report on the **Care of HRM Cultural Artifacts – including the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial Sculpture** and I am in general agreement with its content and the overall direction proposed.*

*All of the recommendations contained in the report would seem appropriate given the circumstances. HRM will apply its best professional efforts to ensure the six recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.*

*- Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer  
September 25, 2012*

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## **Detailed Findings and Recommendations**

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## 1.0 Background

*The OAG wishes to make clear, many of the issues outlined in this report are essentially already on public record.*

The OAG wishes to make clear, many of the issues outlined in this report are essentially already on public record. Local newspapers have raised concerns in the past around the piece of artwork which is the focus of this report. Regional Council, through an Information Report submitted by staff on March 15, 2011, has been provided knowledge of the likely loss and the need for reforms to the policies and procedures governing the entire HRM Civic Cultural Collection, both public (on display) as well as in storage.

This report has been prepared as a result of information received by the OAG as to the current status of many of the pieces of artwork and artifacts owned by HRM as well as the overall feeling little has changed which would prevent this situation from taking place in the future.

*The artist, Jordi Bonet, was commissioned in August 1964 by the Building Committee of the Halifax City Regional Library Board to create a work "symbolic of the Halifax Explosion and the city's rebirth after the catastrophe."*

The artist, Jordi Bonet<sup>1</sup>, was commissioned in August 1964 by the Building Committee of the Halifax City Regional Library Board to create a work "symbolic of the Halifax Explosion and the City's rebirth after the catastrophe"<sup>2</sup>. The original sculpture (a combination of bronze, wood, brass and iron, set on a concrete pedestal) was installed in front of the Halifax North Memorial Library on October 24, 1966<sup>3</sup> where it remained until it was removed on or about September 20, 2004.

According to HRM files, a conservator was hired in April 2004 to assess the condition of the sculpture. In a report, dated June 16, 2004, the conservator wrote, "the piece is in bad shape and the remaining metal elements are very dangerous."<sup>4</sup> The reason for obtaining the assessment is not specifically known; however, it would appear to have been initiated as a result of on-going discussions occurring at the time of the decommissioning of the artwork. Subsequently, a decision was made by an informal committee of HRM and Library staff to remove the sculpture and store it, in a manner as suggested by the conservator.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.jordibonet.net/Site\\_jordibonet.net/Home.html](http://www.jordibonet.net/Site_jordibonet.net/Home.html)

<sup>2</sup> Sculpture by Jordi Bonet, Official Opening Programme, Halifax North Memorial Library, Monday October 24, 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Halifax North Memorial Library Sculpture, A joint report from HRM Recreation, Tourism & Culture, Capital District & Halifax Public Libraries, June 16, 2004, page 1



Based on information made available to the OAG, it appears the following HRM business units were involved in the decision and physical removal of the sculpture:

- Halifax Regional Public Library
- Recreation, Tourism and Culture
- Planning and Development – Capital District
- Transportation and Public Works – Operations and Parks and Grounds.

The conservator recommended the sculpture be lifted off the ground to protect it and placed in long-term storage in a secure area on a foundation large and strong enough to support its weight. As well, the conservator recommended the move be documented as follows:

- Record the current condition
- Record the new location
- Take digital images of the current condition
- Record the reason for the move for the official record.

The conservator stated “this documentation is the key for a successful Public Art Policy in general!”<sup>5</sup> and further recommended the piece be monitored for any new damage, kept as dust free as possible and special care be taken if the piece was to be re-installed at another location. With these instructions in hand, staff arranged for an indoor storage location owned by HRM and procured the services of a vendor to have the sculpture dismantled and re-located in late 2004.

In the 2004 report, the conservator also identified four key components of the art piece which were “artistically intentional”<sup>6</sup>. The four key components consisted of:

- Cast copper (bronze) ‘doll’ figure
- Aluminium clock
- Decorative iron ‘slab’
- Davit – original Mont Blanc fragment.

<sup>5</sup> Conservation Assessment - HRM - Halifax Explosion Memorial – Kellie McIvor Conservation April 2004, page 2

<sup>6</sup> Artistically intentional as described by Kellie McIvor Conservation Assessment – HRM - Halifax Explosion Memorial – April 2004 refers to pieces of the sculpture “that were ‘crafted’ [designed] by the artist”. These are pieces of the sculpture with “artistic or commemorative power/value or [on] their own.”

The following is a picture of the sculpture at its original location on the grounds of the Halifax North Memorial Library, Gottingen Street.



The missing bronze 'doll' from the Jordi Bonet Halifax Memorial Sculpture is shown in this picture.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.thecoast.ca/RealityBites/archives/2011/03/31/jordi-bonet-explosion-memorial-is-in-pieces>, Amber Young, March 31, 2011

## 2.0 Removal of the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial Sculpture

*A vendor was hired by staff to dismantle and move the sculpture (through the HRM procurement tendering process) and the removal was completed on or about September 20th, 2004. Events do not appear to have occurred as expected.*

According to HRM staff, an indoor location for the pieces of the sculpture (including all four major components as noted earlier), was acquired at the former B.C. Silver School on Theakston Lane, Spryfield. At the time, the B.C. Silver School property was held by HRM as a surplus property and primarily used as a storage area by a number of HRM business units. Custody and care of the facility fell under the responsibility of Facility Management, Transportation & Public Works business unit (TPW).

A vendor was hired by staff to dismantle and move the sculpture (through the HRM procurement tendering process) and the removal was completed on or about September 20th, 2004. Events do not appear to have occurred as expected. According to some staff, the vendor tried to deliver the sculpture to B.C. Silver School only to be refused access to the building. According to the vendor, the sculpture was never delivered to B.C. Silver School but rather went directly to the Cowie Hill compound (a facility used by Municipal Operations, a division of Transportation and Public Works). Other staff recalled the sculpture being left on the property behind B.C. Silver School where it was cited by parents in the area as dangerous and then subsequently moved by HRM staff to the HRM compound at Cowie Hill.

Most interviewees agreed pieces of the sculpture were left outside at the Cowie Hill compound for a period of time, contrary to the recommendations made by the conservator and accepted by HRM staff, before being moved to an indoor location at the Parks and Open Spaces building on Ilsley Avenue in Burnside. It is not clear when this move actually occurred. There is no official record of the initial move or of the second move of the sculpture pieces from Cowie Hill to the Ilsley Avenue Parks and Open Spaces building.

In March 2006, HRM hired the same conservator (used in 2004) to evaluate the condition of the sculpture and make suggestions as to “what could be done to restore/commemorate the remaining memorial.”<sup>8</sup> At that time, the conservator located and examined two of the four key components of the sculpture (bronze ‘doll’ and davit) which were stored indoors, along with various other metal

<sup>8</sup> Halifax Explosion Memorial Report – Kellie McIvor Conservation – March 2006, page 6

and wood pieces, at the Ilsley Avenue Parks and Open Spaces building.

In addition to the pieces examined by the conservator located at the Ilsley Avenue location, the conservator was able to locate and examine the two remaining significant components (aluminium clock and decorative iron slab) and approximately 20 pieces of the metal elements which were still stored in the basement of the Halifax North Memorial Library and appear not to have been moved in 2004, as was originally thought.

The conservator then reported “This memorial is beyond any repair. The majority of the elements are now bits of scrap metal and ‘artistic intent’ is long gone.”<sup>9</sup>

*To summarize, as of March 2006 all four pieces of the sculpture which were considered by the conservator to be “artistically intentional” were located and stored inside, although in two separate locations.*

*HRM staff made the decision to transfer the davit in isolation as HRM had not formally adopted a policy around the divesting of cultural assets.*

*However, the absence of a specific policy to deal with the disposal of HRM civic cultural artifacts is problematic.*

To summarize, as of March 2006, all four pieces of the sculpture which were considered by the conservator to be “artistically intentional” were located and stored inside, although in two separate locations.

During the March 2006 examination of the sculpture, experts from the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic were called in to examine the davit which they subsequently confirmed was, in fact, the davit from the Mont Blanc, one of the two vessels involved in the Halifax Explosion. Arrangements were made, in conjunction with the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Halifax Explosion, to donate the davit to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. HRM staff made the decision to transfer the davit in isolation as HRM had not formally adopted a policy around the divesting of cultural assets.

The OAG does not question the decision of staff to turn the davit over to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, particularly given the circumstances under which the sculpture pieces were found. However, the absence of a specific policy to deal with the disposal of HRM civic cultural artifacts is problematic. In the absence of specific policies, the disposal of assets is governed by HRM Administrative Order 35, Procurement Policy. Section 13 (4) Disposal of Surplus Assets, states:

The disposal of surplus assets without competition to any not-for-profit corporation, association, or entity or any

<sup>9</sup> Halifax Explosion Memorial Report – Kellie McIvor Conservation – March 2006, page 6

*There is no indication Regional Council was made aware of or approved the transfer of the Mont Blanc davit.*

Municipality, Crown Corporation School Board, or any level of government shall be awarded by Halifax Regional Council.

There is no indication Regional Council was made aware of or approved the transfer of the Mont Blanc davit.

## Recommendation

2.0.1 HRM Administration should clarify with staff the proper procedures to follow when divesting of an HRM asset, particularly a piece of artwork or artifact. HRM should also consider creating and implementing specific policies and business procedures for the decommissioning and divesting of HRM-owned artwork or artifacts.

## 2.1 Sculpture Storage History 2006 to 2010

*They believed they had authority to move the “scrap” metal to another location and were not concerned with protecting it from the elements.*

Following the conservator’s examination of the Jordi Bonet sculpture pieces in March 2006, the pieces in HRM’s direct possession were moved at least twice more. There is documentation indicating the sculpture pieces were moved and stored outside at another Parks and Open Spaces compound located on Cobequid Road sometime in the spring of 2007 because the sculpture pieces were a “dangerous (sharp) item to have near workers”. Staff responsible for having the pieces moved stated they were not aware of the significance of the pieces or the recommended storage requirements. They believed they had authority to move the “scrap” metal to another location and were not concerned with protecting it from the elements. Staff did not recollect what pieces were moved from the Ilsley Avenue location to the Cobequid Road compound.

*Documentation indicates, in January 2008 and again in February 2010, HRM staff were making inquiries as to the location of the significant sculpture pieces; however, even after an extensive search, the location of the bronze ‘doll’ was never determined.*

There is no official record or indication an inventory was taken of the specific pieces at the time they were moved to Cobequid Road. It seems reasonable to assume the sculpture pieces were under the control and care of Parks and Open Spaces, and it appears they were not aware of the likely value of the artifacts. Documentation indicates, in January 2008 and again in February 2010, HRM staff were making inquiries as to the location of the significant sculpture pieces; however, after an extensive search, the location of the bronze ‘doll’ was never determined.

On June 24, 2010, the conservator was again hired by HRM to examine and provide an opinion on the future use of the Jordi Bonet sculpture. The conservator visited all four locations where parts of the sculpture had been or were being stored:

- Cobequid Road compound
- Cowie Hill compound storage
- Ilsley Avenue Parks and Open Spaces storage
- Halifax North Memorial Library

*The bronze ‘doll’ was not among the items located or examined by the conservator at this time.*

The bronze ‘doll’ was not among the items located or examined by the conservator at this time.

*The bronze doll, valued by the artist's family at between \$90,000 and \$100,000 (as reported to the OAG by outside sources) has apparently been lost.*

Eventually, by the end of 2010, HRM staff in Community Development were able to relocate and store those pieces remaining in their possession in a secure container located at the Cowie Hill compound. In June 2011, the conservator returned to complete an inventory and analysis of the condition of the remaining pieces (approximately 56 pieces in total).

Of the four key artistic components, only the aluminum clock and decorative iron slab remain in HRM's possession. The davit from the Mont Blanc resides with the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic display of the Halifax Explosion. The bronze doll, valued by the artist's family at between \$90,000 and \$100,000 (as reported to the OAG by outside sources) has apparently been lost.

A new sculpture titled 'Freedom is North' was installed on the grounds of the Halifax North Memorial Library in 2007. Incorporated into its design is a portion (NORTH) of the original plaque (naming the Library), also designed by Jordi Bonet, and installed on the library grounds in 1966. It is not clear, at this time, where the remaining pieces of this plaque are located.

## Recommendation

- 2.1.1 HRM should explore opportunities for displaying or using the remaining pieces of the Jordi Bonet sculpture in a manner representative of the artist's original artistic intent, in consultation with the community.



### 3.0 Responsibility for Cultural Artifacts

The development of a formal cultural policy for HRM appears to have occurred over a period of time. The following timeline highlights the steps taken (as the OAG understands them) to develop and implement a cultural policy:

- February 15, 2000 – Regional Council approved an Interim Policy to promote the development of murals, monuments and markers in HRM.
- March 21, 2006 – Regional Council, Committee of the Whole formally adopted the 2006 HRM Cultural Plan and directed staff to develop an HRM public art policy. Implementation objectives in the cultural plan included prioritizing the need for “a cultural asset inventory and analysis including public art, civic heritage assets, cemeteries, and cultural facilities and spaces.”<sup>10</sup>
- November 2007 to January 2008 – A conservator was hired to undertake an inventory of public art within HRM and an inventory was prepared of all publicly displayed art within HRM.
- August 8, 2008 – draft HRM Public Art Procedures Handbook was developed by staff.
- September 2008 - HRM established the Culture Development Reserve<sup>11</sup> (formerly the Culture and Heritage Reserve) to support the principles and objectives of the Cultural Plan and Operating Strategy. Under the “Application of Funds” section, the funding purposes of the reserve include:
  - (h) advance HRM’s cultural planning
    - Provide for ongoing maintenance, care and conservation of the Municipality’s cultural assets and public art collection
- September 23, 2008 – Conservator’s report of all publicly displayed art in HRM was presented to Regional Council. The listing was by district as of August 12, 2008. The conservator re-confirmed the Jordi Bonet sculpture had been dismantled by HRM prior to the commencement of the project.
- September 23, 2008 – HRM staff presented a proposed Public Art Policy (revised July 25, 2008) to Regional Council, Committee of the Whole. Attachments to the policy included application forms and criteria to assist staff in assessing the

<sup>10</sup>HRM Cultural Plan, Final Approved Version, Revised March 21, 2006, approved by Regional Council, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2006 page 65

<sup>11</sup>Reserves Business Case, Culture Development Reserve – Q312, September 9, 2008



appropriateness of applications for historic monuments.

- May 28, 2010 – A draft HRM Civic Collection Management Policy and Operational Guide was developed by staff
- March 15, 2011 – An Information Report was presented to Regional Council where staff “acknowledge that the removal of the artwork from its original site in front of the Library in 2004 was executed improperly and without sufficient regard for the standards of collections management and heritage preservation.” They also advised Regional Council “some components went missing.”

The proposed HRM Public Art Policy report presented to Regional Council Committee of the Whole on September 23, 2008 also suggested:

Publicly sited works of art represent an important vehicle for our region’s narrative: the cultural production that a place presents to its citizens and to visitors tells that place’s story. As such, art acts as both a social and financial asset.

The report clarified public art as a collection that “tends to be mostly outdoor works that are broadly available to the public.”<sup>12</sup> The public art policy was described as a “forward-looking”<sup>13</sup> document.

The adoption of the policy in 2008 assigned coordination and implementation of the Public Art Policy to HRM’s Cultural Affairs division which had been the lead in encouraging Regional Council to support public art for HRM. Staff from this division were also actively involved in the decommissioning and removal of the Jordi Bonet sculpture in 2004, although not all of the same individuals, as a number had left the organization.

*Neither of these comprehensive documents appears to be fully implemented at this time, which is acknowledged by HRM Administration.*

HRM’s Cultural Affairs division has developed a draft HRM Public Art Procedures Handbook (August 8, 2008) and a draft HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide (May 28, 2010). Neither of these comprehensive documents appears to be fully implemented at this time, which is acknowledged by HRM Administration.

<sup>12</sup>HRM Public Art Policy, Halifax Regional Council, Committee of the Whole, September 23, 2008, page 4

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, page 2

*While the OAG acknowledges the policies and procedures in place at the time the Jordi Bonet sculpture was first moved were not as comprehensive or protective in nature as those suggested in the Public Art Procedures Handbook or draft HRM Civic Collection Management Policy and Operational Guide, the OAG remains concerned.*

While the OAG acknowledges the policies and procedures in place at the time the Jordi Bonet sculpture was first moved were not as comprehensive or protective in nature as those suggested in the Public Art Procedures Handbook or draft HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide, the OAG remains concerned. These concerns stem from a number of matters.

1. There does not appear to have been any formal acceptance of individual or business unit accountability in safeguarding this particular piece of public art once the decision had been made to remove the sculpture.
2. There does not appear to be any formal practices in place regarding the reuse of decommissioned art, in part or in whole, which considers the artist's rights to the artistic intent of the property.
3. There does not appear to be any formal practices in place regarding the divesting of cultural artwork and artifacts as to whom, how and when these assets can be gifted or sold.
4. In the absence of any remediation, a similar occurrence could happen with any other piece of HRM's civic cultural collection.

## Recommendations

- 3.0.1 HRM should consider immediately assigning responsibility for the civic cultural collection to a position staffed by a suitably accredited individual. In the absence of this individual, an appropriate temporary assignment should be made.
- 3.0.2 HRM Administration should consider completing an up-to-date inventory and condition assessment of the entire current civic cultural collection including the HRM Public Art Collection inventory previously completed. The details from this assessment could then be used to plan for the on-going maintenance, care and conservation of the collection based on factual, relevant and up-to-date information.
- 3.0.3 HRM Administration should consider finalizing and approving procedures and guidelines which are currently in draft form for the maintenance, care, conservation, acquisition, decommissioning and divesting of cultural assets, and ensure

*The documents currently in draft form are:*

- HRM Public Art Procedures Handbook
- HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide

the significant practices contained within each document are communicated to appropriate HRM staff. The documents currently in draft form are:

- HRM Public Art Procedures Handbook
- HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide.

### 3.1 Insurance Coverage and Ongoing Care of Cultural Artifacts/Artworks

The HRM Public Art Procedures document speaks to the process by which public art would be commissioned, acquired and managed by HRM. The HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide document speaks to a “professional organizational framework in order to allow for the proper care and management of HRM Civic Collection Artifacts.”<sup>14</sup> Included within this document is reference to insurance coverage.

Specifically, there is recognition the collections’ material “is irreplaceable” to the people of Halifax Regional Municipality and there is a responsibility to ensure the collection is “reasonably insured, either in part or as a whole, as part of their custodial role in the care of this collection”, although it suggests fire insurance will not be retained.

*When asked about the availability of art for use in HRM offices, the general answer was it could not be “loaned” as there was no inventory of it.*

Currently, HRM does not have separate coverage for its civic collection of artifacts/artworks. The OAG is aware of a number of holding areas where art and artifacts are stored, and is aware of a number of pieces currently displayed in various buildings across HRM such as Halifax City Hall and other offices. The OAG has been advised by HRM staff there does not appear to be a complete and up-to-date listing of all items held by HRM in the various locations nor has a listing of any type been submitted in consideration for insurance coverage at this time. In fact, when asked about the availability of art for use in HRM offices, the general answer was it could not be “loaned” as there was no inventory of it.

There is no indication staff were aware of the potential value of the Jordi Bonet sculpture, nor was the loss of the ‘doll’ portion ever reported through the official insurance coverage process. However, the OAG understands given the value of the piece was at or below HRM’s deductible value for general insurance there is little likelihood of receiving compensation for its loss, should a claim be considered. However, it would seem appropriate to document the possible reporting of the loss and the reasons for not making a claim.

<sup>14</sup> HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide (DRAFT), May 28, 2010, page 2

*As noted, HRM does not have a complete inventory of its civic collection although the OAG understands a project had been commenced on at least two prior occasions.*

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, there are two approaches an owner may take when insuring art and other cultural artifacts. The first approach may be subject to a deductible amount. The second approach would provide for compensation up to the full appraised replacement cost. Under both approaches, it is the OAG's understanding a listing of the items to be insured must be provided to the insurer, including certified appraised values, with the list updated on a regular basis.

The decision to insure some or all of the HRM civic cultural collection can only occur after an inventory, assessment and valuation of the entire collection has been made. After that, some of the collection may be deemed appropriate for insuring. An inventory of public art (displayed outside) within the HRM boundaries was completed in 2008. It identified 300 pieces but there is no indication any of these items have been appraised or considered for insurance purposes. As noted, HRM does not have a complete inventory of its entire civic collection although the OAG understands a project had been commenced on at least two prior occasions.

The valuation of art and artifacts is a very specialized field, provided by independent appraisers with knowledge of the specific artist or artistic medium. According to technical literature, appraisals help both sellers and buyers by providing information on an item's history, origin and condition which are used as support for an item's value.

*The conditions under which the majority of the artifacts are stored is less than ideal and significant restorative measures must be undertaken prior to any future public display of the items.*

As noted earlier, HRM holds a variety of artworks and artifacts in storage or displayed in municipal heritage properties or buildings. According to the HRM webpage, these holdings include approximately 42,000 artifacts focussed primarily on the geographic area of Dartmouth as well as several hundred heritage assets acquired by various business units and staff. The majority of the collection is managed by local groups (on behalf of the residents of HRM) through management agreements, and housed in a number of locations, including two historic buildings and a warehouse in Burnside Industrial Park. The collection includes artwork, clothing, pictures, historical documents and numerous artifacts. The conditions under which the majority of the artifacts are stored is less than ideal and significant restorative measures will likely need

to be undertaken prior to any future public display of the items.

The HRM 2012–2013 Capital Project book makes reference to HRM Public Art as a multi-year project in accordance with the HRM Public Art Policy. Municipal funding for capital art projects (acquisitions) is primarily from the Cultural Development Reserve Q312. However, the reserve policy also allows for funds to be used to maintain, care and conserve HRM public art (i.e. currently owned). The OAG is unable to find within budget documents mention of the completion of an inventory of the current civic collection which the OAG might suggest, fits within the funding purpose of the Reserve, as noted in Section 3.0.

### Recommendation

3.1.1 HRM Administration, upon the completion of work contemplated in Recommendation 3.0.2, should consider the merits and feasibility of insuring some or all of its collection, in keeping with the principles and objectives of the HRM Cultural Plan and Regional Council's directives.

## 4.0 Conclusions

Regardless of whether or not the civic cultural collection is suitable for insuring or the reasons why a proper and accurate inventory has not yet been undertaken, the administration needs to understand these items are held on behalf of the public and there is a need for more active and ongoing management. There is a duty of care required of HRM and its staff in the safekeeping of the civic cultural collection (and all assets in their control) until such time as they are no longer deemed required by the Municipality and disposed of, as determined by policy. To do nothing with the civic cultural collection is not an option; however, without complete information on the content and value of this collection, the development of a comprehensive collections management system is not likely to result in highest value to the tax payers for the funds invested.

In the view of the OAG, many questions remain including:

- What are the policies and procedures for the proper storage and monitoring of these types of assets? As noted earlier, according to the HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide, the intent of the guide is “to allow for the proper care and management of HRM Civic Collection Artifacts”<sup>15</sup>, yet there is no comprehensive listing of what is in storage, what is displayed and in what location.
- What is the schedule for monitoring to be conducted by staff and what actions should be taken if something should be noted as out of the ordinary?
- Who has the authority to dispose, transfer or donate a civic cultural artifact?

*What appears to be missing is a detailed action plan on the timing and rollout of these key processes*

The answer to many of these questions are contained in the draft documents developed by staff. What appears to be missing is a detailed action plan on the timing and rollout of these key processes and an acknowledgement of the fact the majority of the collection may not be housed in suitable facilities to protect the assets.

<sup>15</sup> HRM Civic Collection: Management Policy and Operational Guide (DRAFT), May 28, 2010, page 2

Appendix A - Management Response



Sept 25, 2012

Larry Munroe  
HRM Municipal Auditor General  
Belmont House, Suite 620  
33 Alderney Drive  
Dartmouth, NS  
B3J 3A5

Dear Mr. Munroe:

I have reviewed the report on the **Care of Cultural Artifacts – the Jordi Bonet Halifax Explosion Memorial Sculpture** and I am in general agreement with its content and the overall direction proposed.

All of the recommendations contained in the report would seem appropriate given the circumstances. HRM will apply its best professional efforts to ensure the six recommendations are implemented in a timely manner.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Richard Butts", with a small "RB" monogram to the right.

Richard Butts  
Chief Administrative Officer

C. Greg Keefe, Director of Finance and ICT  
Marian Tyson, Acting Director of Legal Services  
Pam Caswell, Manager, Corporate Reporting & Financial Policy  
Michael Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer  
Brad Anguish, Director, Community and Recreation Services

Encl

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