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**Information Item No. 2**  
**Community Planning and Economic**  
**Development Standing Committee**  
**September 29, 2021**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Community Planning and Economic Development  
Standing Committee

*-Original Signed-*

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Kelly Denty, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** June 7, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Halifax COVID-19 Economic Response Recovery Plan Update

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

**April 2, 2020:** Moved by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Cleary, that Halifax Regional Council directs that:

1. Halifax Partnership be designated to lead the development of a plan to address post COVID-19 economic recovery in Halifax Regional Municipality, and;
2. This plan will be presented via the Chief Administrative Officer to Regional Council for consideration, and;
3. A staff report is prepared to determine a source of funding and a regular reporting schedule in consultation with Halifax Partnership and municipal staff.

**May 12, 2020:** MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Nicoll, that Halifax Regional Council approves the Halifax COVID-19 economic response and recovery plan presented by Halifax Partnership May 12, 2020, and further directs that \$75,000 be approved to fund the Halifax Partnership's response and recovery plan activities.

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The Halifax Regional Municipality Charter 2008, c. 39, s. 2:

The purpose of this Act is to (a) give broad authority to the Council, including broad authority to pass by-laws, and respect its right to govern the Municipality in whatever ways the Council considers appropriate within the jurisdiction given to it; (b) enhance the ability of the Council to respond to present and future issues in the Municipality; and (c) recognize the purposes of the Municipality set out in Section 7A.

Under Section 71, Business and industrial development, the Municipality may:

- (a) solicit and encourage the establishment and development of new, and the establishment, development and expansion of existing institutions, industries and businesses in and around the Municipality;
- (b) publicize the advantages of the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for the establishment and expansion of institutions, industries and businesses;
- (c) pay grants to a body corporate for the purpose of promoting the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas as a location for institutions, industries and businesses;
- (d) prepare and disseminate information about the Municipality or any part of the Municipality and the surrounding areas for the assistance of institutions, industries and businesses intending to locate or expand in the Municipality or the surrounding area.

## **BACKGROUND**

In May 2020, at Regional Council's direction, the Halifax Partnership (the Partnership) began developing a Halifax COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery Plan (ERRP). Created in consultation with key economic development stakeholders, the plan outlines 38 actions HRM and the Partnership will undertake to weather the urgent health crisis, prepare to restart and rebuild the economy when conditions allow, and return to Halifax's long-term growth trend and chart a path forward for a stronger, more resilient municipality.

Regional Council approved the plan on July 7, 2020. An [update](#) to Council was provided in September 2021. The ERRP replaces the Economic Growth Plan 2016-21 as the Partnership's core reporting document to Council.

Due to increasing cases of COVID-19, the Province of Nova Scotia implemented "circuit breaker" restrictions effective April 23 that apply to the municipality and surrounding communities. As restrictions and guidance continue to evolve, HRM is adapting some municipal operations and services, including the closure of all recreation centres, gymnasiums, fitness centres and pools. The municipality's Emergency Management Office is working with provincial partners at Health and Wellness and the Nova Scotia Emergency Management Office to adapt to these restrictions.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report provides an overview of the state of the Halifax economy and the work undertaken by HRM and the Halifax Partnership to foster economic development at this time.

### **State of the Economy**

*This section was written by Ian Munro, Senior Economist at the Halifax Partnership.*

Looking at the entirety of the pandemic period, Halifax stands out for its rebound from the depths of the economic crisis in spring 2020, but risk and uncertainty remain present in a still-active third wave of COVID-19.

At the beginning of this year the Conference Board of Canada estimated that Halifax's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had contracted by 3.5% in 2020 but was poised for growth of 4.6% in 2021. In an update released this spring – but before the third wave had occurred in Halifax – those numbers improved to a smaller contraction of only 2.5% in 2020 and even stronger growth of 4.9% in 2021. The next forecast for 2021, however, may well be downgraded as the impacts of the third wave shutdown are incorporated into the modelling.

From the onset of the pandemic to the spring of 2020 Halifax lost over 23,000 jobs – 10% of the city's employment. Women, youth, and lower-income workers experienced the greatest losses given their

predominance in those parts of the service sector most characterized by in-person contact with customers: food and accommodations, retail sales, and personal services.

By September 2020, total employment was back above pre-pandemic levels, although certain sectors did not share the same level of recovery. By October, female employment surpassed male employment. Youth employment bounced back sharply through the summer but then steadily faded through the fall, plateaued in the winter, and declined further in the spring of 2021.

As of late May 2021, Halifax's economic mood might be described as cautiously and selectively optimistic.

Only a few weeks ago, that optimism would have been far less qualified. Our COVID-19 statistics were the envy of the country, schools were fully open, vaccinations were progressing, new population data showed continued growth, new businesses continued to locate to Halifax, the Atlantic Bubble was scheduled for reopening, and forecasters were calling for a strong rebound in GDP growth. Our most-impacted sectors – e.g., travel, tourism, retail sales, food, and accommodations – were anticipating a much closer-to-normal summer with a return of travelers and customers.

With the arrival of a third wave of COVID-19 in late April, many of these trends in recovery stalled or reversed. We now appear to be slowly descending from a peak in cases and continue to race towards widespread vaccination, but for some the future appears uncertain and precarious. The Halifax Partnership's Business Confidence Survey, which was in the field in the spring of 2021, shows a marked inflection in confidence measures at the point that the current lockdown was imposed.

Sectors like finance, life sciences, manufacturing, real estate, and information technology that do not require significant close contact with customers or that are amenable to remote work by their employees seem well-positioned for continued growth. Even in a pandemic Halifax continues to attract firms in these sectors.

Our post-secondary institutions appear to expect a close-to-complete return to in-person classes in the fall. This bodes well for a resumption of our population growth trends. As vaccinations and testing become more widespread and travel returns to normalcy our broader immigration patterns also could get back to pre-pandemic levels. A flip side of this growth, though, could be exacerbation of existing pressures in the housing and rental markets where prices have climbed dramatically in recent months.

The greatest concerns surround our tourism, food, and retail sectors. Not only are many businesses barely hanging on through government supports, they also may face acute labour shortages when their customers return as many long-term, laid-off workers may have moved on to new positions in other sectors.

Over the longer term the debt that is financing the massive government support programs also will constitute a growing tax burden.

The Halifax Partnership continues to track and report on key pandemic-related economic variables on its [COVID-19 Recovery Tracker](#).

### **Implementation of the Halifax COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery Plan (ERRP)**

The following are some highlights of what the Partnership has undertaken to respond to the urgent needs of residents and businesses during the crisis:

- **COVID-19 Business Supports.** Since April 1, 2020 Halifax Partnership has connected one-on-one with more than 500 businesses to help them navigate and adapt to the many challenges the pandemic has presented. The Partnership retooled its programs and resources to stand up multiple new programs to assist Halifax businesses. They include:
  - [Halifax ShopHERE Program](#). Delivered by the Partnership, in collaboration with Digital Mainstreet, ShopHere has helped 82 small local business in the retail and manufacturing sectors

build their digital presence by developing and launching a free online store.

- [Access Local Program](#), offered in partnership with local start-up vLife. The Program connects businesses to consumers through the vLife app, a social enterprise platform connecting people who are passionate about supporting local with small independent goods and service providers in the local community. Through vLife, users promote their businesses and drive people to their websites and social channels. More than 80 companies have enrolled in the program.
- The [Virtual Adviser Program](#) matched 27 local businesses with a seasoned professional to help business owners solve a new challenge because of COVID-19.
- With funding support from ACOA, the Partnership, working with KPMG, developed and launched a [Business Recovery and Continuity Toolkit](#) designed to help small and medium sized businesses prepare for unexpected disruptions and navigate through an ever-changing business threat landscape. The Partnership is now working with businesses one-on-one and in workshop settings to assist them in using the toolkit.
- The Partnership continues to be actively engaged in the weekly Halifax Economic Partners meetings with the BIDs. The Partnership has supported the BIDs by actively offering the Partnership's SmartBusiness Program, ShopHERE, Access Local, and Virtual Advisor Programs to their businesses.
- **Consumer Confidence Campaign.** In partnership with Discover Halifax, Halifax Partnership, and the Halifax Chamber of Commerce, HRM will be launching a reopening campaign that encourages Nova Scotians to consider themselves tourists in the municipality as the economy reopens. Called "Never Have I Ever," the campaign focuses on local experiences, retail and dining options and will run from June 14 to mid-September with a total marketing value of \$145,000 based on the collaborative efforts, contributions and commitment of the partner organizations. Visit [NeverHaveIEver.ca](#) for details.
- **Economic Data.** Halifax Partnership has provided the most up-to-date statistics and key performance indicators through the [COVID-19 Economic Recovery Tracker](#) and the [Halifax Economic Dashboard](#).
- **Investment Attraction.** The Partnership continues to see strong interest in the municipality as a new location for companies from other parts of Canada and the world. Between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021 seventeen (17) companies opened an office or relocated their business to Halifax. The Partnership continues to work closely with partners including Nova Scotia Business Inc. and Invest in Canada to put forward a collaborative Team Nova Scotia approach to its investment attraction efforts. These 17 new companies are expected to hire more than 1000 people over the next three years.
- **Connector Program.** [Halifax Partnership's Connector Program](#), funded by the Province of Nova Scotia and RBC, continues to successfully operate exclusively on-line. From April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 the Halifax team engaged with 406 participants (immigrants, local and international grads and those Nova Scotians returning home from other provinces). Seventy-three new Connectors joined the program this year and 161 jobs were created. The Connector Program provided new businesses establishing in Halifax and existing businesses looking to grow connect with talented Connectees to support their hiring needs via virtual career fairs.
- **Buy Local.** Halifax Partnership's Marketing and Communication Team is working with its partners to boost consumer and business confidence through initiatives such as the *Heart. Soul. Halifax* and *Buy Halifax* marketing campaigns which encourage residents and visitors to vacation here, buy here and enjoy Halifax. Participating partners on the Halifax Economic Recovery Marketing Working Group include Discover Halifax, HRM, Develop Nova Scotia, Halifax Chamber of Commerce, and the Province of Nova Scotia.

- **Municipal Innovation Outpost.** The Halifax Innovation District has been focusing on its work out of the Halifax Innovation Outpost with respect to *City as a Living Lab* (supporting startups and scaleups) and social innovation (HalifACT and Food Security). Food Security work continues in partnership with Davis Pier. Mealful, Akoma and Hope Blooms have been chosen from 51 expressions of interest to receive ideation, prototyping and piloting support (each company has noted the progress on their ideas would not have occurred without the Outpost's framework and support). With respect to the Green Economy, work is progressing with HRM's HalifACT team to support the evolution of the top three (and possibly more) ideas that were pitched through a climate action hack-athon to reduce GHGs. The Outpost will also move forward with a pilot in partnership with Simptek and Nova Scotia Power.
- **Mayor Round Tables and Working Groups.** As part of the engagement process for the development of Halifax's 2022-27 economic strategy, the Partnership is hosting a series of CEO Councils and Mayor's Economic Roundtables focused on attainable housing, transportation and logistics, and green economy. Working Groups on these topics to inform the new economic strategy's goals and actions.

The following are some highlights HRM has undertaken to respond to the urgent needs of residents during the crisis:

- **Essential Services.** From the outset of the pandemic, all essential services of the municipality – including 311, fire and police – remained operational and adhered to the most updated guidance and precautions from health officials. On March 27, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia designated Halifax Transit an essential service under the provincial state of emergency. The municipality committed to delivering the highest level of public transit service that can be reasonably provided, while continuing to take steps that help minimize the spread of COVID-19 and make buses and ferries as safe as possible under the circumstances. Masks continue to be mandatory on all Halifax Transit buses, ferries and in terminals. Based on current staff availability, conventional bus service has been impacted.
- **Budget.** In May, Regional Council approved \$833 million in municipal expenditures, provincial mandatory contributions of \$173.8 million and a capital plan of \$177.9 million as part of the 2021/22 municipal budget. Council approved a residential tax rate reduction from 0.815 to 0.813, and a commercial tax rate reduction from 3.000 to 2.953. Due to the increase in property assessment values, the average tax bill for both commercial and residential will increase by 1.0 per cent. The average single-family home tax bill will increase by \$21. Debt will remain stable and should be as low as \$241.2 million in 2021/22.

The municipality has received federal assistance of \$46 million, \$31 million of which is being used in 2021/22 to help bridge the gap to full recovery. The remaining \$15 million of the federal assistance was used in 2020/21 to offset lost revenues and increased costs due to COVID-19. HRM has not borrowed from the Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation's short-term borrowing program designed to assist municipalities during the pandemic.

COVID-19 is estimated to directly affect finances for the next 18 months with the impact continuing into the first six months of 2022.

- **Re-animating downtown.** As part of the 2021/2022 annual budget Regional Council approved funding in the amount of \$600,000 to create two COVID-compliant venues showcasing a wide variety of free programming in Grand Parade and Dartmouth Ferry Terminal Park. Programming is slated to begin in late June in Grand Parade, and mid-July in Dartmouth on Thursday, Friday, Saturday early evenings and Sunday afternoons throughout the summer and fall, the exact timing is to be confirmed. The goals of this project are to attract residents and visitors to the downtown core to generate customers and spending to support economic recovery and help small businesses survive the current third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing free entertainment and cultural experiences this project is seen as the "opening act" that encourages people to return to downtown and stay into the evening visiting local establishments. This project will also provide those affected in the entertainment industry with new opportunities to perform to small in-person audiences under current public health guidelines.

During the initial phase of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the declaration of a Provincial Health Order Emergency Order, HRM created a COVID-19 waiver to hold the organizer/host of an event responsible to ensure compliance with the Order. In 2020 and early 2021, twenty event organizers signed the waiver and delivered small events in between lockdown periods. There are now more provincial supports and processes in place than at the beginning of COVID 19 that are sufficient to ensure event organizers take full responsibility for the event they organize. As a result, organizations applying through the Special Events Task Force (SETF) process will no longer be required to sign the COVID-19 Waiver. Instead, organizations will be required to sign an application updated to reflect COVID-19 and submit their COVID-19 Compliant event plan. This application process is for groups wishing to host events maintaining the current gathering limit numbers and those proposing to use a cohort model. Some events will still require signed COVID-19 waivers. They include private weddings, private picnics and functions, and non-public sporting activities.

- **Parking.** Since the last ERRP update, HRM has implemented additional 15-minute loading spaces to facilitate curbside pick-up and supported the Downtown Halifax Business Commission in offering free parking in Zone B during March Break. Council removed the four-hour parking cap in zones and will discuss additional [HRM parking measures to support businesses](#) on June 8, 2021.

In response to increased public health measures and changes to isolation protocols at hospitals, HRM worked with the IWK and QEII to develop a program to provide special parking permits to health care workers. The permits are being administered by the hospitals and allow holders to park in select areas all day without penalty. This will result in roughly 300 parking spaces that will be available to health care workers. HRM will reassess the duration of this measure based on changes and directives from public health.

- **Mobility Response Plan.** HRM continues to implement the Mobility Response Plan to adapt spaces and municipal transportation networks to safely move residents and goods as the municipality re-opens. Implementation highlights in 2020 included the addition of temporary expanded sidewalks on Spring Garden Road and Quinpool Road; implementation of 16 km of Slow Streets in the Regional Centre to support active transportation on local streets and pilot several Local Street Bikeway candidate routes in the Integrated Mobility Plan; closure of Argyle Street and Bedford Row, as well as other street changes, to accommodate a larger number and footprint of patios for physically-distanced; addition of temporary loading spaces in front of businesses to allow them to adapt for more curbside pick-ups and deliveries; and acceleration of a tactical protected bicycle lane on Lower Water Street to complement the AAA cycling facility built on Hollis Street this year.

As outlined in a February staff report to Council, in 2021-22 HRM will focus on creating more space in the right of way that can be used by business (e.g. for patios) and implementing a series of slow street interventions using curbs, planters, bollards, and other materials.

- **Interim tax bill.** In April 2020, the municipality provided immediate relief to both residential and business taxpayers by moving the interim tax bill due date from April 30, 2020 to June 1, 2020. Staff continue to work with individuals and businesses who are having difficulty paying property taxes. This may include creating payment plans to make tax payments more manageable. Tourism operators also have access to the Province of Nova Scotia's Tourism Accommodations Real Property Tax Rebate Program in which qualified operators can receive a 50 per cent rebate on the first six months of commercial property tax paid in 2021-22. Eligible small businesses, meanwhile, can receive a rebate of \$1,000, or 50 per cent of the commercial real property taxes paid for the final six months of the 2020-21 tax year, through the province's Small Business Real Property Tax Rebate Program.
- **Sidewalk patio fees.** In April, Regional Council waived sidewalk patio fees to help restaurants and cafes, businesses that have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic. This has been done for the 2021 season as well.

- **Online Services.** In March 2020, one week after the first pandemic-related provincial State of Emergency was declared and the municipality's in-person customer service counters were closed, HRM enabled businesses and residents to apply, pay, and receive approval of their permit, subdivision and planning applications online. Similar processes for zoning confirmation requests moved online shortly after. These processes became part of the first release of the broader Permitting, Planning, Licensing & Compliance software solution (PPLC Project) that went live in December.
- **Inspections and Licenses.** HRM Building and Compliance has worked with industry to provide building-related services, including mandatory inspections, while public health measures are in place. The construction industry provided input to site practices and weekly conference call between HRM and construction industry leaders are being held to refine this work.
- **Infrastructure and major capital investments.** In 2021-22, HRM is proceeding with several transformative infrastructure projects and capital investments that will keep money flowing through the economy. They include:
  - Beginning the demolition of the Cogswell Interchange, an initial stage of the Cogswell District project which will transform land and aging, underutilized transportation infrastructure into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood, reintegrating historic aspects of downtown and the waterfront within the north end of Halifax;
  - Continuing planning for the redevelopment of the Windsor Street Exchange that will reduce the amount of truck traffic in the downtown core, improve transit and active transportation connectivity, and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
  - Beginning to procure electric buses and charging infrastructure and making transit facility renovations as part of HRM's conversion from a fully diesel-powered fleet to zero emission buses; and,
  - Advancing the Rapid Transit Strategy (RTS) - that describes a network of four rapid transit lines that cover approximately 50km and three ferry routes, connecting peninsular Halifax and downtown Dartmouth with developing suburbs on both sides of the harbour - by advancing Strategic Multi Modal Corridor work functional and preliminary planning and investigating the Mill Cove Ferry.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, HRM submitted 12 applications for intergovernmental capital funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). To date, two projects have been approved: the Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Community Centre and the Sheet Harbour Community Centre.

- **Assistance to vulnerable communities.** The municipality's Emergency Management Division (EMD) is working with Joint Emergency Management (JEM) and the Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs) to provide resources, public health messaging, personal protective equipment, and food security supports.

CMT work to date includes: bi-weekly meetings for community check-ins; connecting those in need to resources and services through CMTs; a physical distancing contest in the Prestons; creation of community profiles and a pandemic asset map; Mobile Food Market support; and a digital storytelling pilot project in Mulgrave Park to maintain social connection.

Masks are being provided to homeless shelters and outside water resources are being provided to vulnerable populations in partnership with Halifax Public Libraries and Halifax Water. The Public Safety Office (PSO) led the inventory and mapping of municipal (including Halifax Public Libraries) washroom facilities, and this information is available on the Public Safety Office webpage on halifax.ca.

The municipality's African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) is part of the North Preston Pandemic Response Committee which provides pandemic-related outreach and communications. ANSAIO's work with this group is supported by HRFE/EMD, PSO and Corporate Communications.

Multi-year funding (\$140K over three years) for the Navigator Street Outreach Program was [approved](#) in February 2021. The program is a proactive, positive lifeline for individuals who struggle with securing and maintaining housing and employment due to addictions, mental health issues and homelessness. NSO works on the street, as opposed to within the shelter system, and supports unsheltered, street involved and homeless individuals who are unwilling or unable to access support out of Halifax's shelters. Regional Council increased its financial support, in part, due to Covid-19 ramifications.

PSO is working with the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK to scope the development of a municipal drug strategy and is assessing the feasibility of establishing Managed Alcohol Programs and Sobering Centres in the municipality, as per a Council motion approved earlier this year. PSO continues to liaise nationally with members of both the Canadian Municipal Crime Prevention Network and UN Women Safe Cities to understand how pandemic exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, and to generate evidence on best practices on municipal responses to heightened vulnerabilities.

- **Communications.** In support of efforts to mitigate the health crisis and promote economic recovery, HRM's Corporate Communications team developed and delivered extensive communications initiatives to inform residents and staff about municipal efforts in response to the impacts of COVID-19. Efforts included:
  - Launched [halifax.ca/coronavirus](http://halifax.ca/coronavirus) webpage on March 13, 2020 which continues to be updated regularly with the latest information about the status of municipal services, public health messaging, etc. (483,170 total pageviews; 423,855 unique pageviews).
  - "Apart. Together." awareness campaign with ads on buses, dailies and community papers, social media, digital screens, etc.
  - Hosted 10 media briefings with Mayor Mike Savage, Chief Administrative Officer Jacques Dubé, Assistant Chief of Emergency Management, Erica Fleck and other senior staff at the Emergency Operation Centre between March 16 to May 25, 2020.
  - Ongoing communications efforts to advise residents of impacts to municipal services resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and associated updates to public health directives. This includes more than 54 public service announcements to date.
  - Internal communications efforts range from regular all-staff messages from the CAO and updates via the employee intranet to support for HRM's COVID-19 Task Force focused on employees returning to work.
  - Participation on the Halifax Economic Recovery Marketing Working Group, with partners including Halifax Partnership, Discover Halifax, Develop Nova Scotia, Halifax Chamber of Commerce and the Province of Nova Scotia.

Attachment 1 provides detailed updates on the implementation of each of the ERRP's actions.

### **Next Steps**

HRM and the Halifax Partnership are in the process of developing a new five-year economic strategy for 2022-27 as directed by Regional Council on [March 9, 2021](#).

The Partnership and HRM staff will provide ongoing updates to Regional Council on the ERRP's implementation, as well as the development of the 2022-27 Economic Strategy.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The ERRP is being implemented and the 2022-2027 economic strategy is being developed with existing budgets. There are no financial implications.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Economic development stakeholders and HRM business units were engaged in the ERRP's creation. There was no community engagement in the development of this report.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Halifax Economic Response and Recovery Plan: Updates by Action

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

Report Prepared by: Jake Whalen, Senior Advisor, Economic Policy and Development, 902. 292.7351

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**Halifax COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery Plan**

**Help the Halifax economy and community to:**

- Weather the crisis during its current phase
  - Prepare to restart and rebuild when conditions allow
- **Get back to our long-term growth trend and chart a path forward for a stronger, more resilient City.**

**Guiding Principles:**

- Follow the advice of our healthcare experts
  - Leverage our teams, expertise, data, and networks
  - Pursue alignment among all three orders of government
  - Work with the Nova Scotia Business Labour Economic Coalition (NSBLEC)
    - Engage and collaborate with our local stakeholders
  - Act nimbly and creatively with clear purpose
    - Build resiliency
- (HRM staff, Halifax Partnership Investors, Discover Halifax, Events East, BIDs, chambers, associations, universities and colleges, etc.)

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
 <p><b>Phase 1: Current Urgent Health</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Follow public health directives and respond to the urgent needs of businesses and residents</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Safely move to Phase II based on Public Health Directives from the Province of Nova Scotia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lockdowns here and across much of the world</li> <li>• Case counts still rising; major concern over disease spread</li> <li>• Business shutdowns, mass layoffs, liquidity and income crisis</li> <li>• Real possibility of severe operational impacts on critical operations</li> <li>• Historic economic stimulus required and now available</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure Municipal financial liquidity.</li> <li>2. Protect residents by supporting Public Health Authority measures through outreach, communications, support, services, and penalties.</li> <li>3. Maintain essential services.</li> <li>4. Ensure prompt payment to vendors and suppliers to help with immediate cashflow needs.</li> </ol>	<p>HRM's budget was adjusted and approved in May 2021. The total operating budget was approved at \$1 Billion, with municipal expenditures returning to their pre-pandemic trend. Regional Council approved a Capital Budget of \$177.9 Million. HRM had capacity to borrow up to \$130M from the Nova Scotia Municipal Finance Corporation's (MFC) short-term borrowing program designed to assist municipalities during the pandemic. To date, HRM has not had to use MFC short-term loan resources, with Federal safe-restart funding offsetting any short-term financial pressures. In 2021/22, HRM expenditures return to their prior-year expenditure trend, in part due to internal resiliency and federal stimulus to households and firms.</p> <p>HRM EMO is working with Joint Emergency Management Teams and Community Mobilization Teams to communicate COVID-19 precautions as well as working with homeless shelters to provide masks. Also partnering with Halifax Libraries and Halifax Water to provide outside water sources for vulnerable populations.</p> <p>The African Nova Scotia Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) has been working with African Nova Scotian groups to build stronger outreach across the community. ANSAIO has been involved with the North Preston COVID Response Team (which has now evolved into the North Preston Pandemic Response Committee) to provide community information with the support of EMO/PSO/ and Corporate Comms/Fire Services. HRM developed and distributed COVID-19 awareness posters. It also drove around the North Preston community in a firetruck to communicate public health information.</p> <p>From the outset of the pandemic, all essential services of the municipality – including 311, fire and police – remained operational and adhered to the most updated guidance and precautions from health officials. On March 27, 2020, the Province of Nova Scotia designated Halifax Transit an essential service under the provincial state of emergency. The municipality committed to delivering the highest level of public transit service that can be reasonably provided – while also continuing to take steps that help minimize the spread of COVID-19 and make buses and ferries as safe an environment as possible under the circumstances.</p> <p>HRM continues to ensure prompt payment to vendors and suppliers to help with immediate cash flow needs.</p>	

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
		5. Assist vulnerable communities by maintaining and enhancing support for programs and initiatives that address food insecurity, discrimination, substance mis-use, homelessness and domestic abuse.	<p>Emergency Management Division (EMD) is working with Joint Emergency Management (JEM) and the Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs) to provide resources, public health messaging, personal protective equipment, and food security supports.</p> <p>CMT work to date includes: bi-weekly meetings for community check-ins; connecting those in need to resources and services through CMTs; a physical distancing contest in the Prestons; creation of community profiles and a pandemic asset map; Mobile Food Market support; and, a digital storytelling pilot project in Mulgrave Park to maintain social connection.</p> <p>Masks are being provided to homeless shelters and outside water resources are being provided to vulnerable populations in partnership with Halifax Public Libraries and Halifax Water. The Public Safety Office (PSO) led the inventory and mapping of HRM (and Halifax Public Libraries) washroom facilities, and this information is available on the Public Safety Office webpage on halifax.ca.</p> <p>Meanwhile, ANSAIO is part of the North Preston Pandemic Response Committee which provides pandemic-related outreach and communications. ANSAIO's work with this group is supported by HRFE/EMD, PSO and Corporate Communications.</p> <p>PSO is working with the Nova Scotia Health Authority and the IWK to scope the development of a municipal drug strategy and is assessing the feasibility of establishing Managed Alcohol Programs and Sobering Centres in the municipality, as per a Council motion approved earlier this year. PSO continues to liaise nationally with members of both the Canadian Municipal Crime Prevention Network and UN Women Safe Cities to understand how pandemic exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, and to generate evidence on best practices on municipal responses to heightened vulnerabilities.</p> <p>In May 2020, HRM Regional Council approved HRM's Social Policy. Due to the current COVID crisis, the initial implementation of the social policy has shifted to focus on coordinating a municipal response to social issues resulting from the COVID crisis. A social policy team consisting of internal staff from multiple business units has been created to guide and organize this work, assist with decision making, provide future direction, identify important connections with partners, and support the alignment of programs and services both internally and externally during the pandemic and its after effects.</p>	Halifax Regional Municipality
		6. Facilitate /advocate for rapid testing among vulnerable communities and HRM essential staff.	<p>EMD works daily with Nova Scotia Public Health and 811 to obtain rapid testing for all essential employees in HRM. EMD continues to work with vulnerable communities on messaging for COVID-19. HRM has produced an ad in multiple languages encouraging people to use 311 to access the latest information about municipal services.</p> <p>ANSAIO continues to support the Preston Area Pandemic Response Team in conversation with Public Health Team and community groups to organize testing clinics within the Tri-Community. Efforts have also continued around providing timely information to the community concerning public health regulations and vaccination. North Preston Recreation Centre staff is working with the Response Team to use the centre as one of the testing locations.</p>	
		7. Offer virtual opportunities for recreation and promoting well-being.	<p>Virtual opportunities have been ongoing since the onset of the pandemic and HRM will continue to offer into the future even as traditional programming resumes.</p> <p>The Civic Events team pivoted from typical in-person event delivery to offer virtual programming to replace several large-scale events including Bedford Days, Canada Day and New Year's Eve and supported other virtual events held in 2020. Halifax was one of three cities across Canada chosen by Canadian Heritage to create a virtual performance which was showcased at the National Canada Day broadcast. To celebrate the Christmas season, civic events worked with local artists and musicians to create projections on City Hall and the Post Office in Dartmouth as part of the Evergreen Festival. Working with partners at Scotiabank Centre, a virtual NYE event provided entertainment by celebrities such as Ben Caplan, Ria Mae and others. In December 2020, civic events was chosen by Canadian Heritage to create a special virtual program for the 2021 Winterlude festival. This included projections at Peggy's Cove with a performance by Ria Mae. For summer and fall 2021 scalable, in-person event activities will be planned according to the public health guidelines. Specific programming will be created at Grand Parade and Ferry Terminal Park in Dartmouth to animate the downtown core and attract residents and visitors to businesses that have been negatively impacted due to COVID-19. This programming will also provide employment to artists and performers across the municipality. An Events recovery fund has been approved and program details are in development.</p> <p>With recreation programming being cancelled under the Public Health Order, virtual programming was offered to the public and is updated with new programs on a regular basis.</p> <p>The 2020 Volunteer Conference was offered virtually with 150 residents participating. Virtual and some in person training was offered in the summer, fall, winter to not for profit organizations, residents and summer students. For not for profit organizations, HRM staff provided support and training to groups struggling to adapt their programs and services to the ever changing Covid health requirements.</p>	
		8. Move core HRM business services online (e.g. permit applications and approvals online).	<p>Planning &amp; Development, with ICT support, created an electronic application submission process which utilizes online, email and telephone components. This process allows businesses and residents to apply and pay for their permit, subdivision and planning applications. The review and approval process is now completely digital and approved permits are issued by electronically. The process was implemented and published via halifax.ca on March 25, one week after the State of Emergency was announced and HRM in-person customer service counters closed. Shortly after the initial process was launched, HRM added the same technology and business processes for zoning confirmation requests. This new electronic submission process is considered interim until the implementation of the new Permitting, Planning, Licensing &amp; Compliance software solution (PPLC Project), expected in late fall 2020.</p> <p>Release 1 of the new Permitting, Planning, Licensing &amp; Compliance solution went live on December 15, 2020. At that time, all net new permit applications shifted to the new solution. P&amp;D's subdivision and planning applications, as well as zoning letter requests still follow the online processes implemented in March'20. These will transition into the PPLC solution through the 2nd and 3rd releases. These are expected early winter'21 and late spring'22.</p> <p>Parks &amp; Recreation has launched "Rec at Home" initiative, a suite of online programs from arts and crafts to at-home workouts to help residents of all ages to stay active while following public health measures.</p> <p>As part of the collective effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19, Regional Council has approved procedures for Virtual Public Hearings. The procedures for Virtual Public Hearings are outlined in Schedule 1 of Administrative Order 2020-009-ADM Respecting COVID-19.</p>	
		9. Communicate COVID-19 assistance programs, services, and other resources available to business through the Partnership's website and other channels.	See #25 Below.	

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
		10. Consult with companies one-on-one and connect them to resources to address their most pressing needs.	See #25 Below.	<b>Halifax Partnership</b>
		11. Create an online COVID-19 Government Assistance Tool for business to determine their eligibility and communicate how they can access government supports.	An online tool for businesses was launched on the Halifax Partnership's COVID-19 Resources webpage on April 29, 2020, connecting those with questions to the organization's SmartBusiness team. A link to this resource has been provided on HRM's webpage regarding municipal efforts to address the impacts of COVID-19 ( <a href="http://halifax.ca/coronavirus">halifax.ca/coronavirus</a> ).	
		12. With partners, match employers' urgent employment needs with students, immigrants and others looking for work (e.g. refocus the Halifax Connector Program and the mobile Connector App to respond to needs).	<p>The Connector Program, funded by the Province of Nova Scotia and RBC, has transitioned exclusively to online and demand remains high.</p> <p>Halifax Partnership's Connector Program continues to successfully operate exclusively on-line. From April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 the Halifax team engaged with 406 participants (immigrants, local and international grads and those Nova Scotians returning home from other provinces). 73 new Connectors joined the program this year. 161 jobs were created. The Connector Program provided new businesses establishing in Halifax and existing businesses looking to grow connect with talented Connectees to support their hiring needs via virtual career fairs.</p> <p>The Connector Team also delivered practical digital networking skills sessions to more than 120 individuals through ISANS Engineer Bridging Program, EduNova's current Study and Stay Cohort, and Dalhousie's School of Management.</p>	
		13. Create an online tool for job seekers to determine willingness and eligibility to work in sectors across Nova Scotia that are experiencing immediate labour demand (e.g. agriculture, fish processing).	On May 20, the Partnership launched a labour market initiative to connect businesses in agriculture, fish processing, and transportation and logistics with access to a pool of job seekers. Twenty-three submissions from job seekers were received.	
		14. Promote summer jobs to students looking for work and the new 100% wage incentives for businesses looking to hire a summer student.	The Partnership launched the 2020 edition of the Guide to Hiring Youth on the Partnership's website to promote youth hiring incentive and development programs to employers. The Guide is being promoted through digital marketing with the Partnership's media partner, Saltwire, and through the Partnership's communications channels. The Partnership also created an online article promoting the 100% funding available for hiring summer co-op students (launched May 25, received 300 views).	
		15. With BIDs, Discover Halifax, rural partners, and others, help develop a Buy Local program to boost consumers' willingness to spend.	<p>Halifax Partnership's Marketing and Communication Team is working closely with a number of partners to boost consumer and business confidence through initiatives such as the Heart. Soul. Halifax and Buy Halifax marketing campaigns which encourage residents and visitors to vacation here, buy here and enjoy Halifax. Participating partners on the Halifax Economic Recovery Marketing Working Group include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discover Halifax</li> <li>• Halifax Regional Municipality</li> <li>• Develop Nova Scotia</li> <li>• Halifax Chamber of Commerce, and the</li> <li>• Province of Nova Scotia</li> </ul>	
		16. Celebrate and share good news stories of local companies responding to the crisis.	<p>Halifax Partnership efforts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participated in national #CanadaResilient campaign through partner Invest in Canada, showcasing stories of resiliency and innovation in Halifax. The hashtag #CanadaResilient was shared 47 times by Halifax Partnership and Halifax Innovation District on Twitter. These posts resulted in a total of 41,768 impressions.</li> <li>• Profiled Halifax Partnership investors with four written good news stories focused on reopening operations in Halifax (Beaumont &amp; Co., Halifax Chamber of Commerce, Workers Compensation Board and Cox &amp; Palmer have been featured).</li> <li>• Amplification of six written good news stories on the Partnership's LinkedIn channel resulting in 3327 impressions.</li> <li>• Creation of two written good news stories featuring SmartBusiness clients who have shown resiliency and innovation during COVID-19.</li> <li>• Featured in two profiles by the Global Institute of Innovation Districts and Brookings Institute, a global leader in innovation on web and social.</li> <li>• Published a monthly Innovation District roundup covering April, May and June featuring good news stories from startups, scaleups, support organizations and corporates in the District during COVID-19.</li> <li>• Followed RFQ process for creation of video success stories, with creative concept finalized. Expecting a fall content distribution date.</li> </ul>	
		17. Identify and address with partners the immediate economic development issues of traditionally marginalized groups.	Halifax Partnership's Director of Capacity Building & Strategic Initiatives, African Nova Scotia Communities, worked with several community groups during the crisis phase to support and help navigate available resources and connections.	

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		18. Monitor and report on economic and labour market statistics.	On June 23, the Halifax Partnership launched the Halifax Index for 2020 to measure and report on progress made in 2019 and to identify the initial economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Index can be found here: <a href="https://halifaxpartnership.com/research-strategy/halifax-index-2020/">https://halifaxpartnership.com/research-strategy/halifax-index-2020/</a> Up to date labour and economic stats can be found on the Economic Dashboard at <a href="https://halifaxpartnership.com/research-strategy/economic-dashboard/">https://halifaxpartnership.com/research-strategy/economic-dashboard/</a>	
		19. Advise all orders of government on policy changes that could assist businesses during the crisis.	Halifax Partnership and HRM sit as members of the Nova Scotia Business & Labour economic Coalition (NSBLEC). Established in mid-March, it is a forum for all three orders of government, businesses, employee organizations, and industry associations to identify and address COVID-related issues. NSBLEC meets weekly. This group represents over 10,000 organizations and 200,000 employees.	
 <p>Phase 2: Stabilization Getting Back to Business</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Support business planning for reopening or resuming full operations; prepare for Public Health restrictions if COVID-19 resurges</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Safely move to Phase III based on Public Health Directives from the Province of Nova Scotia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with governments and other stakeholders on possible reopening scenarios.</li> <li>Share governments' communications with businesses to help them do their own planning.</li> <li>Collaborate with under-served community leaders and organizations to assess business and consumer needs and develop plans for reopening.</li> <li>Work with other economic development organizations to align plans, initiatives and resources: Discover Halifax, Events East, the Business Improvement Districts, Dept. of Business, Develop NS, NSBI, BBI and others.</li> </ul>	<p>20. Temporarily adapt transportation networks in high pedestrian areas, where feasible, to respond to provincial health directives</p> <p>21. Re-assess, advocate for, and proceed with key infrastructure projects that stimulate the economy and address climate change.</p> <p>22. Take advantage of provincial and federal stimulus funding opportunities that align with the Municipality's priorities.</p> <p>23. Identify and address immediate and critical regulatory needs so businesses can resume operations.</p> <p>24. Re-open and adapt municipal sites, buildings, and non-essential services in accordance with emergency and public health measures, changing fiscal circumstances, municipal climate change targets, and new user needs.</p>	<p>HRM continues to implement the Mobility Response Plan to adapt spaces and municipal transportation networks to safely move residents and goods as the municipality re-opens. Implementation highlights in 2020 included the addition of temporary expanded sidewalks on Spring Garden Road and Quinpool Road; implementation of 16 km of Slow Streets in the Regional Centre to support active transportation on local streets and pilot several Local Street Bikeway candidate routes in the Integrated Mobility Plan; closure of Argyle Street and Bedford Row, as well as other street changes, to accommodate a larger number and footprint of patios for physically-distanced dining and to encourage street life; addition of temporary loading spaces in front of businesses to allow them to adapt for more curbside pick-ups and deliveries; and, acceleration of a tactical protected bicycle lane on Lower Water Street to complement the AAA cycling facility built on Hollis Street this year.</p> <p>In 2021-22, HRM is proceeding with several transformative infrastructure projects and capital investments that will keep money flowing through the economy. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning the demolition of the Cogswell Interchange – an initial stage in transforming land and aging, underutilized transportation infrastructure into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood, reintegrating historic aspects of downtown and the waterfront within the north end of Halifax;</li> <li>Continuing planning for the redevelopment of the Windsor Street Exchange that will reduce the amount of truck traffic in the downtown core, improve transit and active transportation connectivity, as well as help reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and,</li> <li>Beginning to procure electric buses and charging infrastructure and making transit facility renovations as part of HRM's conversion from a fully diesel-powered fleet to zero emission buses; and,</li> <li>Advancing the Rapid Transit Strategy (RTS) (that describes a network of four rapid transit lines that cover approximately 50km and 3 ferry routes, connecting peninsular Halifax and downtown Dartmouth with developing suburbs on both sides of the harbour) by advancing Strategic Multi Modal Corridor work functional and preliminary planning and investigating the Mill Cove Ferry.</li> </ul> <p>Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, HRM submitted 12 applications for intergovernmental capital funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP). To date, two projects have been approved -- the Beechville Lakeside Timberlea Community Centre and the Sheet Harbour Community Centre.</p> <p>As outlined in the staff report that went to Council in February, in 2021-22, HRM will focus on creating more space in the right of way that can be used by business (e.g. for patios) and implementing a series of slow street interventions using curbs, planters, bollards, and other materials.</p> <p>In summer 2020, the Joint Project for Regulatory Modernization helped to identify some immediate municipal and provincial regulatory barriers to business re-opening during the COVID-19 recovery period. Development of a rapid business impact evaluation tool was considered to help incorporate a strong business lens into decision-making during the pandemic however, following discussions both HRM and the Province agree that the current business impact assessment (BIA) tool used by both governments, can be streamlined and adapted to the more rapid decision-making processes that are required in today's business climate. HRM will undertake testing of the BIA tool in the spring of 2021 to improve how and when the tool is used to inform regulatory decisions.</p> <p>Through HRM's partnership with the BIDs information has been gathered on regulatory barriers that are impacting business operations. In the early months of the COVID 19 pandemic HRM launched an on-line permit and license application, waived sidewalk café fees, established additional loading zones, and widened streets to accommodate outdoor dining. Also, through the Joint Project for Regulatory Modernization with the Province and Business Advisory Panel, HRM has expedited actions from the Phase II Joint Project work-plan including amendments to the temporary sign By-law and Streets By-law which were both approved by Council late fall 2020.</p> <p>All recreation centres, gymnasiums, fitness centres and pools have closed and re-opened as Public Health Guidelines allowed. As a result, all indoor recreation programming and services in these facilities have also been cancelled. With the phased re-opening plan underway, the facilities will re-open accordingly.</p>	Halifax Regional Municipality

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
		25. Provide companies with a diagnostic tool to develop detailed plans for returning to work based on key considerations: virus spread, guidance from public health authorities, workforce readiness to return to work, and legal liability.	<p>Since April 1, Halifax Partnership has connected one-on-one with more than 500 businesses to help them navigate and adapt to the many challenges the pandemic has presented. The Partnership retooled their programs and resources to stand up multiple new programs to assist Halifax businesses including Halifax ShopHERE Program, Digital Mainstreet, and the Access Local Program, offered in partnership with local start-up vLife. They also launched the Virtual Adviser Program that matched 27 local businesses with a seasoned professional to help solve a new challenge as a result of COVID-19.</p> <p>Halifax Partnership provided the most up-to-date statistics and key performance indicators through the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Tracker and the Economic Dashboard.</p> <p>Halifax Partnership's Connector Program continues to successfully operate exclusively on-line. April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 the Halifax team engaged with 406 participants (immigrants, local and international grads and those Nova Scotians returning home from other provinces). 73 new Connectors joined the program this year. 161 jobs were created. The Connector Program provided new businesses establishing in Halifax and existing businesses looking to grow connect with talented Connectees to support their hiring needs via virtual career fairs.</p>	Halifax Partnership
		26. Address the gap of temporary foreign workers and connect the students, immigrants, unemployed and underemployed with companies needing workers.	To be developed.	
		27. Re-examine Halifax's value proposition for investment in light of COVID-19 impacts.	Halifax Partnership completed a refresh of its Sell Halifax marketing creative and materials to best position Halifax as a destination of choice for global business and talent. These new materials include a series of videos, photography of Halifax's skyline, cityscape and talent, and key sector profiles that focus on Halifax's Talent, Location, Cost and Innovation value proposition. All materials also emphasize differentiators that have been amplified as a result of the pandemic (i.e. quality of life/lifestyle, remote work opportunities, collaboration, innovation). Materials were loaded onto a common sharing platform through Discover Halifax and have been shared directly with stakeholders who are using them in their own work to attract companies to Halifax. A toolkit is being created to make them available through the Partnership's website. First use of these Sell Halifax materials was through a digital marketing campaign targeting attendees of the virtual Oceanology International conference. Launched during the conference, the goal was to raise awareness and interest of Halifax among key decision makers in the ocean sector. The campaign generated half million ad impressions, reached over 200,000 users, resulted in 6,000+ clicks on our ads through to our ocean sector landing page and generated over 35 qualified leads.	
		28. Continue initiatives under the Halifax Innovation District Project and the Halifax Innovation Outpost to support startups and scaleups.	<p>The Halifax Civic Innovation Outpost is a joint initiative between HRM and the Halifax Partnership (Partnership) and is intended to: broaden opportunities for start-ups and scale-ups to develop their products and services through increased understanding of municipal and community needs; leverage municipal and community interests to beta test products and services; address complex social issues; and, improve HRM service delivery. The Outpost opened at Volta Labs in downtown Halifax in November 2020. Recent highlights include:</p> <p><b>HalifACT Prototyping and Engagement.</b> The Halifax Innovation Outpost has engaged two local-area consultants to create a greater awareness of HalifACT and to facilitate climate change mitigation and adaptation projects that could be led not only by the municipality but by organizations within our community. Activities to date include a partnership with Complexity University to offer the Gigatonne Challenge, an intensive, advanced-learning program building practical skills to tackle the climate crisis. In the two-week session that started in early April, municipal staff from Government Relations and External Affairs (GREA), Energy and Environment, Solid Waste Resources, and Parks &amp; Recreation are working with representatives from the Province of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Power, Dalhousie University, Halifax Water, Ecology Action Centre, Clean Foundation and others to learn the collective impact approach to problem-solving and to develop and test solutions in the areas of electric vehicles and e-mobility, climate change leadership, and climate adaptation. From March 19 to 21, 2021, Dalhousie University's Shiftkey Labs ran a hackathon to find sustainable solutions to reducing climate change. Ten proposed solutions were pitched. The project team is determining how to test and advance these and other solutions developed through the hackathon. The Municipality's Energy &amp; Environment team helped inform the Outpost's launch in late 2020 of a Green Delivery Service pilot project, in which local startup, Haligone, used electric vehicles to deliver non-perishable products for up to 25 retailers, and mobile food delivery service, Kangaroo, provided independent restaurants and customers in rural areas of the municipality with a platform for food delivery. With the Energy &amp; Environment team, the Outpost is developing a Climate Action Charter, as proposed at the Mayor's Economic Roundtable on Green Economy, that will be modeled after the successful Nova Scotia Health and Safety Leadership Charter.</p> <p><b>Food Security Innovation Initiative.</b> The Outpost has partnered with consulting firm Davis Pier to support community organizations to develop and test prototypes to improve food security in the Halifax Regional Municipality. Since February 2021, the project team that includes the Halifax Partnership, Davis Pier, and the municipality's GREA team, has been overseeing four food security pilots at various stages of development. Project partners are Akoma, Hope Blooms, Mealful affordable meal service for students, the Mobile Food Market, Farmers Markets NS, and Nourish NS. These projects to be completed this summer.</p> <p>The Halifax Partnership is finalizing negotiations with two companies to use federal funds to beta test products in Halifax. The Outpost intends to extend its lease at Volta beyond July 2021.</p>	

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
		29. Work with the BIDs to restore the dynamism of main streets.	<p><b>Events.</b> As part of the 2021/2022 annual budget Regional Council approved funding in the amount of \$600,000 to create two COVID-compliant venues showcasing a wide variety of free programming in Grand Parade and Dartmouth Ferry Terminal Park. Programming is slated to begin in late June in Grand Parade, and mid-July in Dartmouth on Thursday, Friday, Saturday early evenings and Sunday afternoons throughout the summer and fall, the exact timing is to be confirmed. The goals of this project are to attract residents and visitors to the downtown core to support economic recovery and generate customers and spending to help small businesses survive the current third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing free entertainment and cultural experiences this project is seen as the "opening act" that encourages people to return to downtown and stay into the evening visiting local establishments. This project will also provide those affected in the entertainment industry with new opportunities to perform to small in-person audiences under current public health guidelines.</p> <p>During the initial phase of the COVID 19 pandemic, and the declaration of a Provincial Health Order Emergency Order, HRM created a COVID-19 waiver to hold the organizer/host of an event responsible to ensure compliance with the Order. In 2020 and early 2021, twenty event organizers signed the waiver and delivered small events in between lockdown periods. There are now more provincial supports and processes in place than at the beginning of COVID 19 that are sufficient to ensure event organizers take full responsibility for the event they organize. As a result, organizations applying through the Special Events Task Force (SETF) process will no longer be required to sign the COVID-19 Waiver. Instead, organizations will be required to sign an application updated to reflect COVID-19 and submit their COVID-19 Compliant event plan. This application process is for groups wishing to host events maintaining the current gathering limit numbers and those proposing to use a cohort model. Some events will still require signed COVID-19 waivers. They include private weddings, private picnics and functions, and non-public sporting activities.</p> <p><b>Parking.</b> Since the last ERPP update, HRM has implemented additional 15-minute loading spaces to facilitate cue side pick-up and supported the Downtown Halifax Business Commission in offering free parking in Zone B during March Break. Council also removed the four-hour parking cap in zones. Regional Council will discuss additional HRM parking measures to support businesses on June 8, 2021.</p> <p>In response to the recent increased public health measures and changes to isolation protocols at hospitals, HRM worked with IWK and QEII to develop a program to provide special parking permits to health care workers. The permits are being administered by the hospitals and allow holders to park in select areas all day without penalty. This will result in roughly 300 parking spaces that will be available to health care workers. HRM will reassess the duration of this measure based on changes and directives from public health.</p> <p><b>Partnership-BID Collaboration.</b> The Partnership continues to be actively engaged in the weekly Halifax Economic Partners meetings with the BID's. Halifax Partnership has supported the BID's by actively offering the ShopHERE, Access Local, and Virtual Advisor Programs to their businesses.</p> <p>BID's have formally asked Halifax Partnership to work with them to hire FBM to research, gather statistics and provide retail positioning strategies for the Halifax BID's. This ask is currently being reviewed.</p> <p>Halifax Partnership, through its Innovation District work, is partnering with others to take advantage of the Gritty to Pretty Program to have a mural painted on the side of the building that houses Volta.</p>	Halifax Regional Municipality & Halifax Partnership
 <p><b>Phase 3: Recovery Open for Business</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Support businesses in resuming full operations; build local business and consumer confidence; ramp up national and international investment attraction</p> <p><b>Timing:</b> Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are once again free to work, study, socialize, buy, sell, and travel</li> <li>• Investors are ready to once again deploy capital</li> <li>• While their finances will need some repairs, governments have moved beyond fiscal and monetary crisis mode</li> <li>• Some degree of normalcy returns to other jurisdictions; exports, imports, tourism, etc. begin to resume</li> </ul>	<p>30. Identify, maintain, and enhance municipal processes adopted during the crisis that are both viable and of benefit to businesses and residents in the long-term.</p> <p>31. Address the climate change emergency in the context of COVID-19, taking advantage of the opportunity to transition to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050.</p> <p>32. Identify and address new regulatory challenges and opportunities for active government response given the changed business landscape.</p> <p>33. Launch business and consumer confidence campaigns.</p> <p>34. Accelerate Investment Attraction and FDI.</p>	<p>P&amp;D Building and Compliance division worked with industry to create an on-site process where buildings under construction would be cleared of workers to ensure physical distancing while inspections took place. As a result, the division was able to continue to provide building-related services, including mandatory inspections. The construction industry provided input to site practices and was kept apprised through regular conference calls with staff.</p> <p>UPDATE: P&amp;D has continued to provide uninterrupted, safe inspection and permit services over the last year. P&amp;D continues to meet (conference calls) with construction industry leaders weekly ensuring consistent engagement on site practices, permitting information, process updates, etc. These weekly meetings have proven to be a valuable collaboration between industry stakeholders and HRM staff.</p> <p>HRFE Fire Prevention continues to prioritize requests from the business community. This includes applications for liquor licenses, occupant loads and sidewalk cafés, which have increased due to the opening of outdoor venues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On June 23, 2020, Regional Council unanimously approved HalFACT 2050, Halifax's climate strategy from now until 2050. This approval included a commitment to net-zero municipal operations by 2030.</li> <li>• Staff continue to work with provincial partners to understand possible green economic recovery funding opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Mayor held his first Economic Roundtable on a Green Economy. Exploring creation of a CEO Charter committing to climate action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three more multi-stakeholder teams have been trained in collective impact for climate solutions.</li> <li>• HalFACT Hackathon at Dalhousie's ShiftKey Labs resulted in several promising solutions to prototype.</li> <li>• Green economy is one of four themes used to guide the development of Halifax's next 5-year economic growth plan.</li> <li>• A multi-stakeholder design team has been established and is meeting weekly to guide the development of a deep energy retrofit program for our community.</li> <li>• The Halifax Regional Municipality Electric Vehicle Strategy is complete and will go before Council for approval this summer.</li> <li>• All new builds in HRM are being built to a net-zero (or ready) standard to adhere to corporate emissions targets and help grow the clean economy in our region.</li> </ul> <p>Priority focus areas and a work-plan for Phase III of the Joint Project for Regulatory Modernization are being developed in consultation with the business advisory panel and in alignment with economic recovery needs.</p> <p>Emphasis will be placed on implementing a more integrated regulatory improvement response to support areas of business impacted by the pandemic such as restaurants and tourism-related industry. Multiple regulatory barriers for that area (municipal and provincial) will be identified and followed up with a joint action plan for improvements beginning in 2021.</p> <p>HRM and the Province have struck a hands-on working group made up of senior regulators in both organizations, facilitated by Regulatory Modernization staff, to advance a streamlined legislative solution for enabling e-scooter operation in the HRM right-of-way in 2021. This solution will positively impact businesses by providing more micro-mobility options.</p> <p>HRM will be conducting a targeted business stakeholder survey in the spring of 2021 to identify areas where regulatory red-tape is prevalent in HRM and where priority improvements should be made.</p> <p>See action #15.</p> <p>Halifax Partnership continues to see strong interest in Halifax as a new location for companies from other parts of Canada and the world. Between April 1, 2020 and March 31st 2021 17 companies opened an office or relocated their business to Halifax. HP continues to work closely with partners including Nova Scotia Business Inc. and Invest in Canada to put forward a collaborative Team Nova Scotia approach to its investment attraction efforts. These 17 new companies are expected to hire over 1000 people over the next three years.</p>	Halifax Regional Municipality

Phase	Context	Proposed Actions (some actions will carry over Phases)		Lead
		35. Consolidate lessons learned from our initial responses to the pandemic to help prepare businesses for future shut-downs.	COVID-19 has certainly shown us how quickly businesses can be disrupted. Some experienced dramatic downturns, while others experienced surges in demand for their products and services. Through the Halifax Partnership's business outreach activities, it became obvious that businesses who planned for business disruptions were able to respond to change and get their business back on track more quickly. With funding support from ACOA, Halifax Partnership, working with KPMG, developed and launched a Business Recovery and Continuity Toolkit designed to help small and medium sized businesses prepare for unexpected disruptions and navigate through an ever-changing business threat landscape. The toolkit can be found here: <a href="https://halifaxpartnership.com/how-we-help/covid-19-support/business-recovery-continuity/">https://halifaxpartnership.com/how-we-help/covid-19-support/business-recovery-continuity/</a> . The Partnership is now working with businesses one-on-one and in workshop settings to assist them with understanding the toolkit.	Halifax Partnership
		36. Re-assess how best to grow Halifax's population based on changes in migration (international students, newcomers) patterns.	Latest population growth data showed surprisingly strong results. Assuming Nova Scotia successfully tamps down current COVID outbreak and post-secondary institutions return to in-person classes in September, we may revert to something close to our recent trends for immigration and population growth. COVID situation in India and Canada's relationship troubles with China are a concern as these have been top source countries for migration.	
		37. Identify and capitalize on specific sector initiatives, opportunities and projects that have emerged as a result of the crisis.	To be developed.	
		38. Update long-term economic projections for the private sector's and HRM's planning purposes.	Halifax Partnership meets regularly with HRM staff to share relevant forecasting data.	Halifax Regional Municipality & Halifax Partnership