

#### 2023/24 MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROVED

Regional Council has approved the 2023/24 Budget of \$1.2 billion – including an operating budget of \$979.6 million (total municipal expenditures) and provincial mandatory contributions of \$192.2 million – as well as a capital plan of \$333.3 million. The average residential tax bill is increasing by 5.9%. Due to the increase in property assessment values, the residential tax rate will decrease from \$0.794 to \$0.760 per \$100 of assessment.

A new commercial taxation policy came into effect on April 1, 2023, changing the way that commercial property taxes are calculated going forward. Geographical tax boundaries for commercial properties will change from the previous urban, suburban and rural areas to one of five new tax areas. As well, for each tax area, rates will vary by assessed value of the property, within three tiers of assessment. The rates for each tier and tax area are listed on: [www.halifax.ca/taxrates](http://www.halifax.ca/taxrates).

Municipal tax-supported debt will remain stable at approximately \$194.5 million in 2023/24, with tax supported debt servicing costs under 5% of revenues, which is well below provincial guidelines of 15% for debt management. The annual HRM budget funds all costs associated with servicing a growing municipality. This includes day-to-day municipal operations (for example, transit, police, fire, garbage collection, and staffing costs), as well as capital projects and investments to purchase, construct, rehabilitate and replace municipal assets. [www.halifax.ca/city-hall/budget-finances/budget](http://www.halifax.ca/city-hall/budget-finances/budget).

#### WEEKLY ORGANIC BIN COLLECTION

As a part of the 2023/24 Budget, the resumption of weekly organic green cart collection will commence again this Summer for a three-month period (July, August and September). However, Regional Council has decided to keep the bi-weekly blue bag recyclable collection schedule. This service adjustment primarily impacted the urban HRM zone where it was a weekly service. These changes come into effect on Monday, July 3, 2023.

#### HRM LAKEWATCHERS PROGRAM

Again, this year HRM will be doing its Lake Water Quality Monitoring Program called "LakeWatchers", which conducts environmental monitoring in 76 lakes across the municipality. The purpose of the program is to collect data, such as pH levels, to inform future actions to maintain or improve a lake's health. The data will be publicly available through future staff reports to Regional Council and through the municipality's Open Data Portal: <https://catalogue-hrm.opendata.arcgis.com/maps/lakewatchers/about>.

Data collection will take place twice a year through internal sampling (e.g. sampling done by staff or contractors) and/or trained community teams, called 'LakeWatchers'. The municipality will leverage existing water quality community groups and, also welcomes new volunteers to collect data in support of this program. The LakeWatchers Program is separate from regular water quality testing done for the HRM supervised beach/swimming sites. This program will run every summer from July 1 to August 31. To learn more about how you can help, visit: <https://www.halifax.ca/about-halifax/energy-environment/lakes-rivers/lakewatchers>.

#### HRM CITIZEN AWARDS

Every year HRM presents a Citizenship Award to outstanding Grade 9 students throughout the municipality. The recipients are chosen based on qualities of leadership in their school and community, and commendable performance in the courses in which they are enrolled. This year the following students from our district were bestowed with this honour: Matteo Aaboe McIntosh (Oyster Pond Academy) Ava Raeh MacDonald (Marine Drive Academy) Great efforts by these outstanding students!

#### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION UPDATE

HRM Planning and Development Department (P&D) is updating its public engagement strategy to advance best practices in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. The previous public participation policy dates to 1997. P&D staff developed a "Public Engagement Guidebook" to help staff develop a consistent approach to engagement for proposed planning documents, and amendments, and for other proposed policies, programs, and services. Regional Council directed staff to develop a new Administrative Order on Public Participation which will set minimum standards for public engagement; set requirements for engaging with neighbouring municipalities; and direct how the Public Engagement Guidebook should be used to develop public participation programs. Visit [www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/public-participation-policy](http://www.shapeyourcityhalifax.ca/public-participation-policy) to learn more.

To support the new Administrative Order on Public Participation, P&D reviewed existing community plans and land use by-laws and identified that these plans have different engagement requirements in different communities. The new Administrative Order will ensure consistent requirements across the region and help residents to clearly understand the standards of engagement. A public hearing regarding the proposed amendments to support the implementation

of the proposed public participation guidelines will be held at City Hall on Tuesday, June 6 at 6 p.m.

If you have questions about the public hearing process, please contact the Municipal Clerks Office by email [clerks@halifax.ca](mailto:clerks@halifax.ca) or call 902.490.4210. Should you have questions about the nature of the application itself, contact [regionalplan@halifax.ca](mailto:regionalplan@halifax.ca). If the internet is unavailable to you, a paper copy of application materials can be sent to you by mail, by contacting Shilo Gempton [gemptos@halifax.ca](mailto:gemptos@halifax.ca) or by phone at 902.943.9158.

#### JOIN THE LITTERATI CHALLENGE

HRM Solid Waste Resources team are launching the "Litterati" challenge in each municipal district to see which district's residents can pick up the most pieces of litter! Litterati is an interactive app that allows residents to photograph and tag common pieces of litter that they find within their neighbourhoods and communities. The data that is collected using the application will be used to see where litter clean ups are taking place, and track trends in the types of litter we are seeing in the community. This data will also be used to help inform and guide our waste education efforts around reducing litter.

HRM Solid Waste Resources staff will be offering free webinars throughout the summer and fall months to train residents on how to download the Litterati App and to how it can be used to benefit their clean-up efforts! To get more information on Litterati, residents are encouraged to follow Halifax Recycles or visit [www.halifax.ca/litterati](http://www.halifax.ca/litterati). Join the challenge by first downloading the "Litterati" app and searching your municipal district number, plus the word "Cleanup." (e.g. District 2 Cleanup).

#### NS ROADSIDE LITTER PICK-ME UP

The NS Adopt A Highway offers a community clean-up program. Check their website: [www.nsadoptahighway.ca/register-a-clean-up/](http://www.nsadoptahighway.ca/register-a-clean-up/) or social media for information on their litter pick-me-up programs. They are accepting registrations now. So, if you wish to schedule a clean-up or have any questions, please email them at [info@nsadoptahighway.ca](mailto:info@nsadoptahighway.ca)

#### CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

I want to congratulate the Class of 2023 Graduates! May each of you find your own path in life that leads to many successes and the best of luck with your future endeavours.



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