

INTRODUCTION

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) came into existence on April 1, 1996 as a result of the amalgamation of the former cities of Halifax and Dartmouth, the former Town of Bedford, the former municipality of the County of Halifax and the Municipal Authority. Unlike other amalgamated regions in Canada, HRM has significant suburban and rural content, in addition to a large urban mix.

The land area of the municipality is 5,577 square kilometers (2,224 square miles), which is an area slightly larger than the Province of Prince Edward Island. With approximately 200 communities within its boundaries and a population of 377,932 (2003 Census), HRM is Nova Scotia's largest and most diverse municipality. Approximately 40 per cent of the total population of the province resides within HRM.

European settlement first occurred in the Region with the founding of Halifax by the British in 1749. Nine years later in 1758, an election for Council members was held and Halifax became a forerunner in the later emergence of a democratically elected government in North America. Facts and events of historical significance continued to occur and have greatly influenced the development of the Region. From 1928 until 1971, over a million immigrants arrived in Canada through the Port of Halifax's Pier 21. Many of these immigrants settled in the area, enriching our social and cultural environment. Today, HRM is a region of diverse cultures, deeply rooted in history and tradition.

From the historic downtown areas of Halifax and Dartmouth (which embrace the world's second largest natural harbour); to a coastal region encompassing more than 400 kilometers of coastline on the eastern, western and southern shores; to the fertile farming land in the Musquodoboit Valley; to the urban communities of Sackville and Cole Harbour; HRM is a first class example of urban, suburban and rural living at its finest.

The Halifax Regional Municipality is committed to supporting the development and growth of business within the Region. It has one of the country's best educated workforces. Through organizations such as the Greater Halifax Partnership and the Halifax Regional Development Agency, HRM has experienced steady economic growth since amalgamation and is recognized as a great location to do business. It is emerging as a leader in the future of business prosperity.

HRM Statistics	
HRM RDP:	\$11.3 Billion
Inflation (Municipal):	5.0%
Inflation (CPI):	1.8%
Population:	380,844
Population growth:	0.6 %
Household growth:	1.2%
Taxable Assessment:	\$24.1 Billion
Average Residential Assessment:	
- Property	\$169,100
- Single Home	\$149,700

The Local Economy

While Halifax has a diverse economy, 87% of the workforce is employed in the service sector, and only 13% in the goods sector. Total employment in 2004 was about 203,200. The public sector is the largest employer with over 16,700 people working for the three levels of government (Federal, Provincial and Municipal). Personal income per capita in 2004 averaged \$31,821 compared to the national average of \$30,125. The total value of building permits in 2005 was about \$627 million, an increase of 10.4% over 2004. Almost 3.2 million passengers came through the Halifax International Airport in 2004.

The Municipal Government

The municipality is governed by a Council/Chief Administrative Officer form of government, which includes one Councillor for each of the 23 Districts and a Mayor elected-at-large. It is the responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officer to provide advice to Council and carry out its policies and programs, as well as oversee the operation of the Administration and its 3,700 full and part-time employees.

The services provided by HRM are varied and extensive, and include:

- 1,582 kilometers of streets maintained
- 760 kilometers of sidewalks
- 825 park properties
- 325 playgrounds, 206 ballfields, 120 sports fields, and 11 arenas
- 223 transit buses, 20 Access-A-Buses 3 Community Transit Buses, and 3 ferries carrying 17.2 million passengers annually
- 122,000 households served with curbside organic waste collection
- 12 business and industrial parks housing 1,600 + companies
- 14 branch libraries lending 4.6 million items annually
- 4,940 building permits issued in 2005
- 1,145 + emergency and non-emergency calls handled by the 911 Centre each day
- 61 Fire Stations of which 43 are in the rural area
- 39 front line fire trucks in the urban area, and 98 emergency fire vehicles in the rural area
- 138 schools servicing more than 55,000 students

HRM operates on a 12 month fiscal cycle, from April 1st to March 31st of the following year. Under provincial law it is required to prepare an operating budget (for ongoing items such as salaries, wages and other recurring costs) and a capital budget (for its fixed assets). HRM's operating budget is fully balanced. Its capital budget is financed through a mixture of debt, cost sharing, reserve withdrawals and transfers from the operating budget. The latter are known as capital from operating or "pay as you go".

As part of Council's financial and other strategies there are a variety of policies and tools which interact with the Operating and Capital Budget process:

- The Multi-Year Financial Strategy outlines Councils “Principles of Financial Management” as well as its reserve, debt and capital spending policies;
- Business Plans are required to be developed by all HRM Business Units, including an overview of their operations, a financial and resource-utilization summary, an analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the Unit, and a summary of the goals for the Business Unit, including specific objectives relating to these goals. Each Business Unit should also provide a summary of their accomplishments against their previous plan, and develop performance measures that they are using to gauge their efforts;
- Under HRM’s Tax Structure, there are three general property tax rates (urban, Suburban and Rural) and variety of area property tax rates;
- The Reserve Budget.

As an attempt to improve its processes, HRM prepared its first three-year Capital Plan in 2003-2004. Included with this document is an updated three-year Capital Plan with the 2006-2007 Capital Budget as Year 1. Years 2 and 3 of the plan are planning documents and are subject to revision and alteration.

In an effort to provide a framework to debate program and service priorities, HRM underwent an exercise with Council in the fall of 2005 to identify the areas that they were most concerned with. These ‘Council Focus Areas’ are intended to guide the immediate and long-term investments for the Region and to address many key issues facing our communities. They represent in essence Council’s commitment to residents to deal with these issues in a timely fashion.

These Focus Areas are broken down into four categories, and are analyzed in more detail in the Priorities section found in this book:

A. Planning and Infrastructure:

- Regional Planning
- Infrastructure
- Traffic Congestion
- Transit

B. Public Safety

- Police, Fire, Emergency Services
- By-law Enforcement

C. Community

- Community Relations
- Community Recreation
- Community Development
- Youth
- Economic Development

D. Taxation

- Taxation