

By Mayor Peter Kelly

Halifax Regional Municipality

Hello again. I hope you are enjoying a happy spring.

Because of the recent mild weather, many HRM residents have made an early start on their gardens.

Unfortunately, not everyone has a patch of earth to call their own and that's why interest in community gardens is on the upswing, particularly in these tight economic times.



As their name implies, these horticultural havens are created by groups of individuals for their mutual benefit and, selflessly, for that of others.

Council gave community gardens the green thumbs-up; and, I'm pleased to say, HRM is increasing its efforts to encourage these worthwhile growing endeavours on municipal land. (Check out <http://www.halifax.ca/crca/index.html> under Links for details.)

In fact, as a part-time gardener myself (or I try to be!), I'm thinking it might be fun to develop a community garden, right here in Grand Parade. This would be an ideal spot to grow a bumper crop of fresh vegetables for the food banks around metro.

Now, where did I put my hoe and packet of seeds...?

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Despite the severe downturn in the economy, I can report that commerce in our municipality has generally held its own, particularly in the Dartmouth area.

Take Burnside Industrial Park, for example; interest remains steady in acquiring land there. One new client is proposing six office buildings totalling 37,000 square metres plus 4,600 square metres of commercial/retail space.

In the adjacent City of Lakes Park, among those setting up shop are the Canadian Blood Services, which will build a new regional centre this summer, and the RCMP, who will locate their new headquarters there.

At Dartmouth Crossing, some 35 adjacent hectares have been rezoned for mixed-use development, including medium- and high-density residential projects.

As well, Metro Transit is anticipating expanding Route 72 Portland Hills to introduce two-way service along Wright Avenue in Burnside. It also plans improvements for its service to Dartmouth Crossing. These changes, which are subject to budget approval, are proposed for August.

And let's not forget the big new Metro Transit terminal to be built this year, near the Dartmouth Sportsplex.

Meanwhile, the new Highfield Park pedestrian bridge over Highway 111 should be ready for use the first week of June.

Once it is, people will be able to make their way safely on foot from Highfield Park to Burnside Drive.

Good news, indeed, for residents of District 9.

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To most of us, police officers are distant guardians of law and order. That's why I believe Canadian Police Week is an ideal opportunity for all of us to familiarize ourselves with the realities of policing and strengthen our relationship with the men and women who protect us.

This special week runs May 9-15 and there are a number of events laid on by the two forces which police our municipality – Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP.

The biggest event will be a police exhibition taking place May 13-15 at the Dartmouth Sportsplex. The hours will be 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 - 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday then 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Saturday.

There will be lots of fun things for children to do, including trying on police tool belts and safety equipment; learning about finger-printing; and seeing how fast they can throw things, timed by radar.

There will also be demonstrations by an emergency response team as well as a police dog and its handler.

It all sounds like a fun, informative event. I hope you and your family can make it.

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And finally, on a personal note, that old saying about "No pain, no gain" has been popping into my head a lot these days. That's because I'm trying to train for the upcoming Scotiabank Blue Nose Marathon.

The event takes place May 21-23 and it's actually a series of marathons. I've set my sights on the 10-km run and, believe it or not, that's 10kms farther than I've ever run before because! (I'm more of a part-time jogger, when I get the time.) Not only that but, depending how I do, I might also enter in the Dartmouth Natal Day Road Race, this summer.

So why would someone who's not a runner put themselves through all this? I can explain it in two words: the challenge. That's what this run is to me, a personal challenge and, since this is my first marathon, I'll be happy just to finish.

I hope you'll be there that weekend, to cheer us all home!

Is there something on your mind about life in HRM? As mayor, I'd really like to hear from you. You can reach me here at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning me at 490-4010.