

By Mayor Peter Kelly

Halifax Regional Municipality

Hello again. I hope you are enjoying these fine spring days. And speaking of spring, I'm reminded that it was just one year ago that residents of the Spryfield area experienced that terrible forest fire.



By the time the blaze was under control, more than 1,000 people had been forced to flee while eight homes lay in ruins with as many again damaged.

We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to all our firefighters as well to the countless volunteers who stepped up to comfort and care for the evacuees.

Obviously, we should be careful with fire at any time but especially now, with the brush and other vegetation still tinder-dry from our mild winter.

To learn more about the dangers of fire and how to protect your home and property from it, go to <http://www.halifax.ca/FirePrevention/>.

While you're there, check out some facts and myths about grass burning, such how it supposedly controls weeds – believe it or not, it doesn't!

If we all exercise a little care, we will avoid a repeat of last spring's fiery crisis.

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I'm sure you'll agree with me that the greatest investment any community can ever make is in its young people.

I echo the words of American author/activist Helen Keller who once observed: "It is not possible for civilization to flow backwards while there is youth in the world."

HRM considers the young to be our most priceless asset and warmly endorses National Youth Week, which takes place the first week of May.

A few days ago, I was privileged to attend a special awards ceremony to launch this annual salute to the contribution youth makes to every community. I also got to meet all those who assist with HRM camps and programs for youth.

I came away inspired by the ongoing activities which are organized by our staff and community groups to engage and encourage youth.

You'll see what I mean if you go to www.hrmyouth.ca and check out "Events and Programs."

I mentioned earlier how fortunate we are that so many of our residents are willing to donate their time and energy to make life better for the rest of us.

I'll give you another example. HRM's call for 5,000 volunteers to help make next February's Canada Winter Games a success is being answered.

I'm pleased to report that, by the end of April, we were half-way to our target.

If you'd like to help make these Games the best ever, you'll find the details at www.canadagames2011.ca/volunteer or by calling 490-4000.

Recently, as part of National Volunteer Week, HRM held a recognition ceremony at which 90 citizens, including 16 young people, were recognized for helping make us a

better, stronger community. Also honoured were representatives of the 21 Community Neighbourhood Facility Boards which operate HRM-owned facilities.

Volunteers really are the lifeblood of any community. Without them, many of the events and services we all enjoy would simply never happen. And let's not forget the men and women who operate such vital services as volunteer fire departments, Citizens on Patrol and Neighbourhood Watch.

According to statistics I've seen, some 12 million Canadians aged 15 and over donate almost 2 billion hours of their time in an average year. That's the equivalent of a million fulltime jobs.

How proud we should all be that HRM has more than its fair share of these dedicated people.

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And finally, by the time you're reading this, the Dingle Tower in Sir Sandford Fleming Park should be open for the season once again.

The opening was delayed slightly because repairs were needed to one of the landings and also to some masonry.

The landmark tower is more than 100 years old and we want to make sure it lasts at least as long again.

Your patience was appreciated.

□ I'd welcome your input on these and any other HRM items of interest. Reach me here at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning 490-4010.