

Hello there again. It's hard to believe it's May already!

I'm pleased to inform you that the flame has been lit for the 2011 Canada Winter Games, set for HRM next February. The ceremony happened Monday on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

The flame will eventually ignite four torches which young relay runners will carry around our province to promote the Games.

The torches will start their journeys in Cheticamp, Amherst, Lunenburg and Yarmouth and, from there, will visit many community events, including the Blue Nose Youth Run in Halifax on May 22.

Ten youngsters will be needed for each of the participating events. If you're aged 12 to 21, go to www.canadagames2011.ca for a chance to carry one of these special torches.

Let the Games - oops, sorry; let the *relay* contest begin!

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Work has finished on the new steps leading into the Grand Parade from Argyle Street. Actually, they're the same steps we've always had, made safe after the damage done over the years by winter frosts. The repositioning took about three weeks.

Too bad forthcoming repairs to City Hall won't get done as fast but renovations to this beautiful old building will be a much bigger job. The work will take several years and is being kick-started with an injection of \$2-million, cost-shared by all three levels of government.

City Hall cost \$105,000 to build, more than 120 years ago, and is designated a National Historic Site. It has masonry walls two feet thick, all faced in sandstone from the Wallace area, and sits on a solid granite foundation.

The building survived the 1917 Halifax Explosion relatively unscathed; however, time and previous clean-ups have taken their toll.

Once all the scaffolding and protective sheathing is in place, I plan to make a tour of inspection to see for myself just how bad things are. (Good job I'm not afraid of heights.)

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Our community has witnessed a number of solemn ceremonies these last few days, each acknowledging an important military milestone in this country's history.

Last Saturday, we honoured the Canadian Merchant Navy's contribution to victory during the Second World War; the following day, we paid tribute to the Canadian Navy for its magnificent role during the Battle of the Atlantic; on Tuesday, at a spectacular ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy, I declared Navy Centennial Day in HRM and granted Freedom of the City to Maritime Force Atlantic.

Later that same day, there was a special tribute paid to Canadians who fought and died to liberate the Netherlands.

And, lest we forget, this Friday marks the 65th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe.

We owe our brave veterans, and all the gallant men and women who serve our country today, more than we can ever repay. Thank you, all.

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And finally, a personal heads-up to all you fellow gardeners out there.

If you have a green thumb but nowhere to use it, you'll be pleased to learn that HRM is redoubling its efforts to promote community gardens - small-scale municipal plots where you can grow your own fruit, flowers, vegetables and herbs.

We're streamlining the application process for anyone wishing to start such a project. If you're interested, please check out <http://www.halifax.ca/crca/index.html> under "Links" for details.

As a part-time gardener, (trying to be), I like to get my hands dirty whenever my schedule allows which, frankly, isn't as often as I'd like. With spring finally here, maybe it's time I started my own community garden, right here in Grand Parade. After all, look at all the time I spend nearby in City Hall!

Looking out my office window, I can see several likely places for a decent crop of vegetables and other items that I'm sure local food banks could use.

Hmm...

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