

Hello once more. I hope you enjoyed a very pleasant long weekend.

As a politician, I can honestly say that this is the most difficult time of the year. Why?

I'll tell you in just three words: the annual budget.

Regional Council and I have been spent many hours going over the draft budget that staff has presented to us. That's on top of the many hours we had already invested in the process.

Frankly, this budget is not going to be without pain because the draft contains cuts to services, higher service fees and an increase in taxes – all measures Council and I have been trying strenuously to avoid.

Members of staff have work extremely hard to balance the books - something we legally have to do - and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their efforts. I'd also like to express Council's appreciation to you, the public, for the ideas you have sent us to help us in our difficult task.

Bringing down a municipal budget is never easy. Understandably, people want increased services but little or no tax hikes to pay for them.

I suspect many of my colleagues on council lose sleep trying to find a reasonable compromise. I know I do.

By the time you read this, we may well have reached that point or be very close to it.

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What kind of services and facilities would you like to see in HRM's new central library?

I'm sure your family has some great ideas and we'd really like you to share them with us, now that we've entered the design phase.

By sharing your suggestions now, the new library will be a tremendous resource for everyone when it opens in 2014.

To encourage your input, the architectural team of Fowler Bauld & Mitchell and Schmidt Hammer Lassen will host a series of public meetings, starting in June.

The first meeting will be June 10 at the Dalhousie Student Union Building (McInnes Room), at 6136 University Avenue in Halifax, starting at 7 p.m. Watch for the other dates in the media and keep an eye on www.halifaxcentrallibrary.ca.

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The Boundary Review process is nearly ready for the next stage in the process, scrutiny by Regional Council.

Every eight years, municipalities must review the whole governance procedure by which we operate, including the boundaries of electoral districts and the size of Regional Council.

The review committee, which I chair, held seven public meetings around HRM this winter and has come up with its report for Council.

One of the recommendations is that the number of Councillors be reduced from 23 to 20 and that the number of Community Councils drops from the present 6 to 4, with five councillors serving on each.

The report is expected to go before Council within the next two weeks.

As a member of the public, you'll have another opportunity for input this fall, before we make our submission to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, later this year.

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And finally, on a personal note, if you pass me pedalling along the street on my bike during the next few days, feel free to slow down and say hello.

I'll be doing my bit for HRM Bike Week, which starts Friday and runs to June 6. This is a good time for everyone to dust off their old two-wheelers and go for a spin. You'll get some great exercise and be doing your bit for the environment at the same time.

Last year, 4,000 residents took part in with more than 30 special cycling events.

If you'd like to know about this year's activities, visit www.halifax.ca/bikeweek and click on 'schedule of events' to see what's happening.

Now, where's my helmet...

Reach me at kellyp@halifax.ca or on my personal website www.peterkelly.ca or by phoning 490-4010. You're also most welcome to join me on my Facebook or Twitter pages.