

**By Mayor Peter Kelly**

**Halifax Regional Municipality**

Hello once again. I hope things are going well for you.

**Let's start** with some encouraging environmental news.

In what we believe is a first for Canada, if not North America, the soft-drinks industry is cooperating with a visionary energy-reducing initiative spearheaded by myself and Regional Council.



Pepsi, Coke and others have agreed to install special devices on 2,000 refrigerated vending machines they have in our area, to reduce the energy they use by up to 25 percent. This lower demand translates into less coal being burned in power stations which, based on our calculations, will keep up to 5,000 tonnes of harmful emissions reaching the atmosphere each year.

Since Council and I are committed to reducing HRM's greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1997 levels by the year 2012, we applaud the soft-drinks industry for this kind of social responsibility.

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**Speaking of** saving energy, staff informs me that every traffic light in the metro area will be switched from incandescent lamps to LED ones by the end of this year.

More than half our 260 traffic signal systems have already been converted to the more efficient kind, resulting in an 85-per-cent reduction in energy costs. Part of the funding for the switch-over has come from Conserve Nova Scotia and Nova Scotia Power Inc. Problems we encountered with build-ups of snow and ice on the new, cooler LED traffic lights have been solved by retrofitting special globe lenses. (Let's hope we don't need to worry about *that* kind of weather for a while!)

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**I'm sure** you're aware that Regional Council has given the green light to a new, \$55-million central library in our community by the year 2014. It'll be built downtown at the corner of Spring Garden Road and Queen Street and will be a great asset for the entire municipality, thanks to the many resources it will contain and the services it will offer. Now, here's the thing: since this is going to be *your* library, it must meet your expectations which means we'll need your input, and soon. The project is entering the design phase and the architectural team of Fowler Bauld & Mitchell and Schmidt Hammer Lassen wants to hear from you.

Starting next month, representatives will be hosting a series of public meetings and I encourage you to watch for announcements telling you where and when you can have your say. I also recommend you keep tabs on [www.halifaxcentrallibrary.ca](http://www.halifaxcentrallibrary.ca) for more news about this important project.

Let's make our new library an asset for which generations to come will thank us.

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**And finally**, here's a question: are you a gardener with nowhere to grow?

As someone who enjoys gardening, I can appreciate just how frustrating it must be for if you have a green thumb but no patch of dirt to call your own. Perhaps you live in an apartment or a condo or somewhere where the soil just isn't fit for planting.

Well, here's something you may not know: HRM encourages residents to get involved with community gardens – those small plots on municipal land where you can grow your own food, plants or flowers.

Community gardens are a marvellous idea which Council and I have been promoting for some years now. Not only do these plots help beautify neighbourhoods and get residents interacting with each other, they promote an active lifestyle and environmental sustainability. They're also a great opportunity for young gardening enthusiasts to learn from the older generation.

There are a few rules, of course. Community gardens have to be small-scale, non-commercial and must comply with HRM's bylaws.

You'll be pleased to know that we've streamlined the application process for anyone wishing to start such a project. If you're interested, there are several ways to go about it. You can log onto <http://www.halifax.ca> and enter Community Gardens in the search box on the left-hand side. Or you can phone the HRM Call Centre at 490-4000 (1-800-835-6428) and one of our staff will be pleased to help you.

I'm a part-time gardener myself (well, trying to be), however my schedule often keeps me so busy here at City Hall that I don't get home until it's too late to get my hands dirty, even on weekends.

I was thinking about that the other day as I looked out my office window at the Grand Parade. That's when I got the idea: why not start my own community garden, right here!

The Parade has several out-of-the-way places where my green thumb could be put to satisfying use, planting vegetables that could then be donated to local food banks at the end of the season.

No, seriously...

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