

Hello again. How are you enjoying summer so far?

I'd like to tell you about a really exciting event that's happening in Halifax this week.

It's the Arts for Community Engagement Symposium (<http://www.artsengage.com/>), running until Sunday at the NSCAD Port Campus, 1107 Marginal Road by Pier 21 in Halifax.

The event is all about fostering a sense of community through song, dance, painting and a host of other creative ways to express ourselves.

One of the workshops is called "Placemaking." It's being presented by Michael Cook of

City Repair (<http://cityrepair.org/>), an innovative movement which encourages healthy communities and is based in Portland, Oregon. Essentially, placemaking is a grass-roots beautification and pride-of-place initiative, one which celebrates collective values.

It encourages neighbours to come outside, literally, and take "ownership" of their public spaces in a variety of ways. It may be by painting a mural on a right-of-way or erecting a sculpture or setting up benches on their street.

Placemaking is an innovative concept and HRM staff members are already working with a metro neighbourhood to create a street mural as a pilot project.

Since we all want our community to be a wonderfully liveable place, I encourage you to attend this week's Arts for Community Engagement Symposium. Mr. Cook will be giving workshops on placemaking, both days and Council and I plan to meet with him, before he returns home.

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Congratulations to everyone associated with the idea of establishing a Regional Firefighters Interpretation Center in HRM. With a helping hand from Regional Council, the dream is about to become a reality.

HRM has made available a surplus building on Highway 2 in Fall River, where the group can house its collection of firefighting artifacts, including antique pumper vehicles.

The volunteers hope to have the centre open to the public, sometime in July. I'm sure it will be a popular attraction, not least because Canada's first fire and police services were established, right here in our area. (To learn more about the project, please see <http://www.rfic.ca/>)

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One of the most rewarding aspects of my job as Mayor is helping to encourage young people play a role in our community.

I was reminded of this the other day, while participating in HRM's annual youth citizenship ceremony held during the regular meeting of Regional Council.

This year, we recognized 48 Grade 9 students who had been chosen by their principals for their leadership skills; their strong academic ability; and their commitment to our community.

If these young leaders are anything to go by, (and I believe they are), the interest and enthusiasm today's youth has in wanting to make HRM the best it can be is most encouraging.

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And finally, on a personal note, I'm pleased to report that the Grand Parade garden is finally underway.

I told you recently how I like to toil in the soil but, unfortunately, not having a lot of time to do so. Solution? A little plot of earth, right here outside City Hall. And besides, what better way to promote HRM's community-gardens program than by showing some leadership. (To learn more about the program, call 490-4000 or go to <http://www.halifax.ca/> and enter Community Gardens in the Search Box.)

The soil is ready and, once the vegetables and potatoes are planted, I'll be able to pop out regularly for a spot of weeding and feeding, then be back at my desk in no time flat.

Actually, the garden is a joint project with a group of kiddies from nearby St. Joseph's Children Centre. They've agreed to help me during their regular outings in the Grand Parade and it should be a good learning experience for everyone, including me!

In the fall, we'll donate everything to the Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank because, for them, fresh produce can be hard to come by.

Well, time to get growing. See you next week!

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