

Hello again. I hope things are going well for you and your family.

**I'd like to start** this week by joining in a salute to some very special people in our community – the volunteers.

This is National Volunteer Week and, as always, HRM holds a Volunteer Recognition Ceremony. This year on your behalf, Council and I are honouring 90 very deserving citizens.

Among those being recognized are 16 young people aged 13 to 19. Each week, these teens willingly donate an average of 6 hours to their community. Meanwhile, the adults who are being honoured have volunteered for an average of 12 years, giving about 10 hours a week of their time to others.

We are also acknowledging members of the 21 Community Neighbourhood Facility Boards which operate HRM-owned facilities.

It really is true that selfless people like these are the lifeblood of every community.

Without volunteers, our municipality would be hard-put to sustain many of the services that we all enjoy and take for granted.

Just think, for example, of the debt we owe the 600 citizens who operate HRM's various volunteer fire departments. Each year, these dedicated men and women train for more than 120 hours in order to respond to 4,000 emergency calls.

And speaking of volunteers, I'm pleased to report that HRM is half-way to meeting its target for next February's Canada Winter Games.

Earlier this year, organizers put out a call for 5,000 volunteers to help make the Games a success and, to date, 2,500 people have stepped forward.

That really is most encouraging and I would like to offer them sincere thanks for their public-spiritedness.

If you'd like to donate your time and energy to the Games, I encourage you to learn more at [www.canadagames2011.ca/volunteer](http://www.canadagames2011.ca/volunteer) or by calling 490-4000.

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**How's your** spring cleaning going? If you have any energy left, how about lending a hand to tidy up our community, now that winter's over.

You could organize a clean-up of your street or neighbourhood; or perhaps you could help your local church or seniors' centre make its surroundings nicer. You could even get in touch with non-profit Clean Nova Scotia to help with its annual spring Pick-Me-Up event.

Even putting one piece of trash in its place makes a difference.

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**I'm sure everyone** was pleased to learn that the Halifax Public Gardens had opened three weeks earlier than usual, thanks to the better weather.

This year, we've welcomed two additions to the Gardens' resident waterfowl population – a pair of Toulouse geese, one male the other female.

The thing is, the birds have no names so we're inviting HRM youngsters aged 5-12 to submit suggestions. If your children would like to help us, please tell them to log onto <http://www.halifaxpublicgardens.ca/> where they'll find all the details.

The contest closes May 15 and I'll tell you the winning entries in a future column.

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**And finally**, on behalf of the residents of HRM, I would like to take this opportunity to extend deepest condolences to the 4,000 people of Polish descent living here, as well as to the people of Poland itself, for the great loss they have suffered.

The terrible plane crash that took the lives of President Lech Kaczynski, his wife Maria, and dozens of the country's top officials was the cruellest of blows, even for a country as indomitable as Poland.

We share the pain of Polish people everywhere as well as their sense of overwhelming loss. We trust that the comfort those in our community found during last Sunday's commemorative mass at St. Anthony's Church in Dartmouth will allow the healing to begin.

God bless Poland. Bóg błogosławił Polska.

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