

I'm excited!

I've just returned from another visit to the skating Oval on the Halifax Common and I'm feeling excited!

I'm excited that the track built for the forthcoming Canada Winter Games is proving so popular with thousands of residents who are enjoying free skates.

I'm excited to see the mix of people - men, women and children; students, business executives and seniors - all skating together along with a growing number of tourists and having a great time. (Look at all those smiles!)

Most of all, I'm excited by the wonderful feeling of togetherness I get, each time I drop by. I believe the Oval has reignited our sense of community and camaraderie by bringing us closer together, and what a wonderful bonus that is.

Frankly, there have been times lately when it seemed like the only thing uniting us was our *disunity* on some issues. While I recognize that friction is a necessary ingredient of democracy, what ultimately moves us forward as a community is harmony. When we have that, coupled with a positive outlook, nothing can stop us. We can fulfill our full potential as Canada's best, most dynamic place to live.

How do we do that? It's easier than you might suppose: We get involved; we become positive; and we adopt a "can-do" attitude.

But most of all, we get excited because, as residents of HRM, we have so much about which to get excited.

For example, let's get excited about the spectacular Canada Winter Games that we're hosting in mid-February. Let's get animated about the new Central Library coming our way and all the wonderful cultural/recreational services it will bring.

Let's get enthusiastic about all the pending mega development projects earmarked for Halifax and Dartmouth and the economic opportunities they represent.

Let's get electrified about the possibility of a new stadium for our municipality; one that will become a regional mecca for all kinds of events and activities.

Most of all, let's get excited about our own neighbourhoods, our own streets. Let's make a real effort to connect with the people around us. And as we're doing so, let's find ways to make our community a more walkable, liveable and sustainable place, inspired by HRM's own Good Neighbours/Great Neighbourhoods program (<http://www.myhrm.ca/>).

Let's harness the enthusiasm of the young with the experience of their parents and mix in the wisdom of our seniors. We have 400,000-plus resources we can tap into.

Let's embrace the challenges of 2011 and be confident of finding our way around the thorny ones. Let's apply forward thinking, lateral thinking, even *upside-down thinking!*

But above all, starting now, let's get excited about our community.

Just like all those happy skaters at the Oval.

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