

Hello and welcome back.

I have another mixed bag for you today, including a personal note.

Let's start with a salute to a very dedicated individual - Police Chief Frank Beazley.

Chief Beazley celebrates his 40th anniversary in uniform this week and I'd like to extend to him our community's thanks for his years of hard work and commitment.

Congratulations from all of us, Chief, for a job well done!

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And speaking of appreciation, I'd like to thank everyone who completed HRM's recent Citizen Survey. Council is extremely grateful to you for your interest and your time in answering the 300 questions.

Based on preliminary results (<http://halifax.ca/CitizenSurvey/>), we are encouraged to learn that, generally, Council's priorities match your own, namely: transit and transportation; public safety; infrastructure; smart and sustainable development; and improved communications.

The results will help us update our business-planning process, along with our operating and capital budgets. They will also be valuable in determining how we need to allocate resources to better meet your needs and expectations.

I'd like to share with you some of the survey's findings, both good and bad.

Nearly 80% of you are satisfied with the quality of life in HRM and feel this is a good place to live. Between 65% and 70% of you feel this is a good place to raise a family,

work or retire; and nearly 70% believe the quality of life has stayed the same or improved over the last five years.

On the other hand, 25% of you say the quality of life has worsened in the last five years, blaming crime, traffic congestion and higher taxes. This is unfortunate, given our ongoing efforts to address those particular concerns. Not only have we hired 100 new police officers in the last five years; we have invested heavily in roads and other infrastructure; and we work prudently on our fiscal affairs to achieve responsible tax levels and balanced budgets.

The survey suggests 44% of you are satisfied with the overall direction of municipal government while 34% of you are not.

Many of you feel your voices are not heard or reflected in Council's decision-making; so obviously, this is an area where we must renew our efforts to reach out to you.

On the environmental scene, 75% of you feel the quality of water in the harbour is poor. Happily, that situation will be remedied when our \$333-million Harbour Solutions project reaches full operation, later this year.

In all, there are 500 pages of information to be studied. Once that's been done, staff will present us with further recommendations. Council is eagerly awaiting the input because we know that, as hard as we work to make HRM a great place to live, we can always do better. And we will, thanks to you.

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And finally, the personal note I mentioned - I'm training for this year's Blue Nose Marathon, set for May 21-23.

I know this isn't a major announcement because, let's face it; the weekend usually attract more than 8,000 runners.

What makes it special for *me*, however, is the fact that, after several years of planning to run but never actually making the start line, this year is going to be different. This year, I'll *be* there!

Why am I so sure? I thought that if I put it in writing, I won't be able to back out at the last minute like I usually do.

So why do I want to run in the marathon? It's my own personal challenge; I want to see how far I can push myself. I'm also planning to enter the Dartmouth Road Race during this summer's Natal Day celebrations.

Training is going well. I'm averaging 6-to-8 kilometres, two or three times a week, and all my aches have subsided to a dull pain.

I'll keep you apprised of my progress over the next few weeks.

See you there!

Let me hear from you. Reach me at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning me at 490-4010. You're also most welcome to join me on my Facebook or Twitter pages.