

By Mayor Peter Kelly

Halifax Regional Municipality

Welcome to March, everyone. Happily, this is the month that spring returns - and not a moment too soon!

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A controversial proposal which has come to Council for consideration will, if approved, change the way you organize your garbage.



The proposal would make it mandatory to use clear bags as part of your garbage disposal and would also cut the allowable number of bags you may place at the curb from 6 to 4.

Supporters of the changes (you'll find the proposals outlined at <http://www.halifax.ca/recycle/>) believe they will improve recycling efforts however, they are running into increasing resistance. I am hearing from a growing number of residents and the majority are strongly opposed to this new direction. Citizens are telling me they will be penalized by the lower limit and say their right to privacy will disappear with the clear bags. They also consider clear bags will be a waste of resources and yet another expense for households with no reduction in taxes for this reduced service.

As mayor, I am concerned by what I am hearing and would encourage you, if you feel the same way, to contact your Councillor. If you don't have your representative's phone number or e-mail address, call 490-4050 or go online to <http://www.halifax.ca/> and hit the icon for Councillors.

A public hearing into these proposed changes is scheduled for March 8, starting at 6 p.m. in the Council Chamber at City Hall. You may state your view in person or make a written submission to the Clerk's Office by 3 p.m. the same day.

I hope you will make your opinion known.

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I am sure you are aware of the debate about the merits of HRM becoming home to a new stadium. I back the idea strongly and believe it's a matter of "when," not "if."

I believe that the right-sized stadium will bring numerous benefits for everyone. Let me list some of them for you:

It will confirm our position as the hub of the Maritimes by enabling us to attract a variety of events at the provincial, regional, national and international level. I'm talking big-name concerts, major sporting events, trade shows, cultural festivals and other gatherings.

A new stadium also has the potential to be much used by local groups, organizations and universities.

It should be an added incentive to attract and keep newcomers, including immigrants and their families. It could also help prevent our young people from "going down the road."

Then there are the commercial opportunities that come with a major stadium. In addition to the actual construction jobs, I believe this asset will be a catalyst for new businesses and the payrolls they represent. It will also boost trade for lots of existing companies - especially hotels, bars and restaurants - throughout HRM.

Since a final decision rests with Council, my colleagues and I have begun our due diligence by committing to a \$100,000 consultation and business planning analysis. Consultations will occur with citizens; sport and recreation groups; and potential partners. Completion date of this first phase will be June. In addition, Council will appoint a citizen-led Project Steering Committee to provide advice and direction to municipal staff.

By decision-time, Council will have examined construction costs; operating expenses; and all possible revenue streams. We will also have identified all funding sources – both public and private - and what opportunities a new stadium will generate. Rest assured, if we go forward with a new stadium, we will do so armed with a sound, sustainable business plan as well as a practical design.

If the report is positive, Council will also decide on where to locate a stadium, with input from the new steering committee. I believe two strong contenders are Shannon Park and a site in Burnside, near the two artificial-turf playing fields. Both locations are close to numerous amenities.

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And finally, everything seems so quiet, now that the 2011 Canada Games are over. I took the opportunity to attend many of the events and could only marvel at the awesome sporting abilities of our nation's young people.

On behalf of Council, I'd like to thank everyone who made the Games such a resounding success: the splendid athletes; the hard-working coaches and officials; the untiring volunteers; the dedicated Canada Games Board of Directors and Management

Team; and, of course, all the HRM residents who turned out in such great numbers to cheer the performances.

Clearly, these have been the best Canada Winter Games ever and I am sure they have left a positive impression on everyone involved. I hope you share my pride in how well everything has gone and I look forward to our next opportunity to stage a national event on this scale. We have shown that, when it comes to hosting Canada, our community is second to none.

And don't forget, folks, even though all the athletes have gone, the People's Oval is still here for us all to enjoy!

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