

November is a month of keen contrasts. It's a time of solemn remembrance and yet it also marks the exciting run-up for the holiday season.

On Nov. 11, Halifax Regional Municipality joined the nation in paying tribute to all who've served our country and to those who've made the supreme sacrifice while doing so.

Sadly, it's a price still being paid by Canadians in

Afghanistan, a sacrifice that brings a new sadness each Remembrance Day.



On that special occasion, thousands of us gathered at local cenotaphs to lay wreaths and bow our heads in silent reflection. We drew comfort from the presence of so many residents and left renewed in our support for the cause of freedom in areas of the world where that light never shines.

Like any other municipality, HRM must find the money to fund the services which residents expect. The lion's share of this revenue has always come from a general tax rate levied on the assessed value of residents' property and is now to the point we are more dependent on property taxes than any other major centre in Canada.

Given this, and the fact other municipalities are availing themselves of a variety of tax-gathering options, Council is investigating whether property assessment is the best, fairest way of funding HRM operations. For one thing, the connection between property and income isn't as clear-cut as it once was; these days, not everyone's ability to pay matches the value of their property and many families are struggling to stay afloat. Also

of concern to Council is the fact that, when tax bills rise because assessments have increased, there isn't necessarily an increase in municipal services.

Given the importance of this whole issue, Councillors have decided they needed additional information and clarification before going any further on reform. To that end, members will hold a workshop on the issue to help guide them when they resume the debate on property taxation, likely in December.

In the meantime, I invite you to visit <http://www.halifax.ca/taxreform/> for more information.

Well, the Olympic torch has visited HRM on its exciting journey to Vancouver and the 2010 Winter Olympics.

The flame arrived in Enfield on Nov. 18, just before 10:30 a.m., and reached Halifax that afternoon. While it was in HRM, dozens of runners relayed it through the streets of Waverley, Cherry Brook, Cole Harbour, Dartmouth, Bedford and Lower Sackville. Throughout the day, thousands lined the streets to cheer on dozens of relay runners who carried the torch through metro to downtown Halifax and the official welcoming ceremony in the Grand Parade. Hometown hockey great Sidney Crosby handed the flame off to Olympic snowboarder Sarah Conrad who stepped forward to light the special community cauldron.

What a wonderful occasion it was, and what an honour for our municipality. It was a day when we were all Olympians for a few hours.

I'm happy to report the re-commissioning of the Halifax wastewater treatment facility is on schedule.

The process involves two main stages, both of which are well underway. The first began in September and saw the diversion of dry-weather flows from the peninsula through the main Halifax plant. Floatables are being screened out and then discharged via the diffuser pipe, about one kilometre out in Halifax Harbour. This has eliminated odours experienced in the area of the Cogswell Street interchange.

The second phase involves final recovery of all processes and systems in the wastewater treatment facility in anticipation of the main Halifax plant resuming full operations by next spring. All damaged equipment is being repaired or replaced, with funding for the recovery effort provided primarily by the project's Builder's Risk Insurance.

Meanwhile, work continues on the other major components of HRM's \$333-million Harbour Solutions Project. Progress is being made at the still-commissioning Dartmouth facility to ensure all systems do what they're supposed to do, prior to completion. The facility has been treating wastewater since July 2008. The new plant in Herring Cove has completed what's known as dry-testing and is now undergoing test trials using freshwater. Both facilities are still under the care and control of the contractor, not HRM or Halifax Water. Recent applications to the province for extensions to commissioning permits was a matter of due-diligence on the part of HRM because construction is still underway at both plants.

Once again, I'd like to thank all of you for your patience and understanding. If you'd like more details on the Halifax waste water treatment facility or any other aspects of the Harbour Solutions project, you'll find a wealth of information posted on the HRM website at <http://halifax.ca/HWWTF/index.html>.

Those of you who enjoy the Public Gardens in Halifax will be delighted to learn that your wish is our command – the facility will remain open a little longer this year, weather-permitting.

So many of you asked us to extend the visiting season that our parks people have decided to keep the Gardens open until the end of November. Normally, the gates are closed November 12 and stay closed until the Mother's Day weekend. The reason this oasis of tranquility and beauty has to close for the winter is to prevent runoff damage from the sand and salt that would be necessary to keep pathways open.

Public transit has always been a vital part of HRM's ongoing growth and civic wellbeing and never more so than today, given that we're anticipating as many as 65,000 newcomers living here by 2026.

With that in mind, a draft Five-Year Strategic Operations Plan - Taking Transit to the Next Level, has been presented to Regional Council and must undergo extensive review, prior to councillors endorsing its findings and approving any or all of its recommendations.

You can view the complete five-year strategic plan for our transit system online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/documents/091027cow4plan.pdf>

As I mentioned earlier, November is the start of the run-up to the holiday season.

There's always so much for HRM families to enjoy during this joyful time and I'm happy to share some of those events with you now.

On Monday December 14, as part of the Chanukah Celebration for those of the Jewish faith, there will be the ceremony of the Lighting of the Menorah. This moving ritual will take place in the Grand Parade in downtown Halifax at 6 p.m., followed by a reception at City Hall with everyone welcome.

The Christmas tree in the Halifax Grand Parade will be switched on during a ceremony Saturday, November 28. The fun starts at 6 p.m. and will feature entertainment, special guests and fireworks.

Bedford's tree lighting will take place Sunday, November 22 following that evening's parade of lights, starting at Bedford Place Mall at 5:45 p.m. The lighting ceremony, complete with Santa and a carol singing, will take place in DeWolf Park.

Lower Sackville will light its tree Thursday, December 3, with events starting at 6 p.m. and lasting for two hours. The ceremony will take place outside the public library on Sackville Drive and, in addition to lots of entertainment, will include a Nova Scotia Power Christmas light exchange for more energy-efficient LED lights.

Dartmouth will make its Christmas tree come alive Saturday, December 5, at Sullivan's Pond. The event will be from 4:30-6:30 p.m. with lots of free hot chocolate, cookies and candy canes, as well as a choir and fireworks.

There are also lots of parades happening throughout our region at this time of year.

Here's a taste:

Saturday November 21 - Chronicle Herald Holiday Parade of Light in downtown Halifax;

Sunday November 22 - Light Up Bedford Parade;

Sunday November 29 - Spryfield Santa Claus Parade;

Sunday November 29 - Middle Musquodoboit Christmas Parade;

Sunday November 29: Fall River Lions Christmas Parade

Sunday December 6: Sheet Harbour Christmas Parade

Sunday December 6: Beaver Bank/Kinsac Christmas Parade, with a storm date of December 13.

And don't forget, Friday December 4 is the annual Stuff-A-Bus Campaign for Feed Nova Scotia. The campaign was conceived 19 years ago by the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 508, and Metro Transit who have been joined by media sponsor, C100. Why not get your office or school together to collect food or monetary donations for Stuff-A-Bus for Feed Nova Scotia. Just register to have Metro Transit and ATU Local 508 volunteers drop by to pick up your donations December 4 by visiting www.c100fm.com.

Last year, the campaign raised more than \$100,000 and 419,000 lbs of food.

Yes, there's going to be something for everyone in HRM as November slowly gives way to December. I do hope you take time to enjoy yourself at one or more of these events I've mentioned, not least because an awful lot of people have worked really hard to make them happen. I'm sure I can speak on behalf of all of you when I say a big "thank-you" to each and every one of them.

There's one other upcoming important event I'd like to mention: it's the 92nd anniversary of the Halifax Explosion. On December 6, 1917, two ships collided in the harbour Narrows, one of them a heavily-laden munitions vessel. What followed was the largest

accidental man-made explosion the world has ever experienced. When it was all over, the north end of Halifax was gone, more than 2,000 residents lay dead and some 9,000 people had been injured, some terribly.

Each year on December 6, members of the public are invited to join myself and local councillors at the memorial bell tower on Fort Needham Hill in the north end of Halifax to commemorate the tragedy and honour the victims. The event begins at 8:50 a.m.

And finally, if you have a comment or concern about any of the topics mentioned here - or about life in HRM in general - I'd really like to hear from you. You can reach me here at City Hall at kellyp@halifax.ca or by phoning 490-4010.

My best wishes to you and your family.

Respectfully, I remain,

Peter J. Kelly



