

**Hello again.** I'm glad you stopped by.

**On Sunday,** I shall be attending the service at Fort Needham marking the 92<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the 1917 Halifax Explosion.

One little-known aspect of the tragedy is the speed with which our community rallied to help itself. Much is made, and rightly so, about the assistance which came speedily from the people of Massachusetts and the rest of Canada.

The fact remains, however, dazed citizens came together to help themselves just hours after this huge explosion had killed and injured thousands and flattened north-end Halifax, much of Africville, Tufts Cove and parts of Dartmouth.

In her book *Shattered City, The Halifax Explosion and The Road to Recovery*, author Janet Kitz describes what happened.

By noon, elected officials, the police chief and 20 concerned citizens met at Halifax City Hall, led by Lieutenant-Governor MacCallum Grant.

Immediately, they formed the Halifax Relief Committee, an umbrella organization with numerous sub-committees, each directing a different phase of rescue and recovery operations.

As Ms. Kitz puts it: "Seldom had so much business been conducted at City Hall in so short a time."

Meanwhile, things were moving almost as fast in Dartmouth where the mayor assembled councillors and business people to establish the Dartmouth Relief Committee.

It was a remarkable effort on both sides of the harbour, given there wasn't even a rudimentary emergency measures procedure in place at the time.

**You'll be glad** to hear HRM plans to redouble its battle against graffiti.

Graffiti is a costly plague. It's the first step in eventual neighbourhood deterioration.

I compare it to what's called "the broken-window syndrome." If you don't fix the first broken window in a building, the message goes out that no-one cares and, eventually, every window gets broken.

In 2008, our crews answered 984 requests to remove graffiti, mostly from HRM property. This year, to the end of September, we've responded to almost 1,100 calls. Total cost over the last two years is about one million dollars.

The municipality is fighting this vandalism on numerous fronts, including through the resources of a Graffiti Task Force and also a civic-pride initiative called Good Neighbours, Great Neighbourhoods.

Until now, however, we haven't had the legal ability to force people to keep their property free of graffiti. This may be about to change.

We've asked the province for permission to amend our civic charter to allow us to make property owners remove this blight.

As well, next spring, under the chair of District 17 Councillor Linda Mosher, council will embark on a major campaign to educate everyone about the harm of graffiti.

In the meantime, please continue reporting graffiti to our assistance line at 490-4000.

**One of the best things** about my job as Mayor is being invited out into the community. It's a good opportunity for me to learn first-hand what's on people's minds.

Take the other evening, for example, when I attended a meeting of the Halifax Regional Homeowners Association.

We got straight into one of my favourite forums: a question-and-answer session. The questions came thick and fast on a variety of topics, including: graffiti and other kinds of vandalism; traffic issues; HRM's large population of university students; ways to monitor building contractors; and Harbour Solutions.

It was an energizing evening and I promised residents I would get back to them with additional information on their concerns.

There's no substitute for direct public input like this. It keeps me on my toes.

**And finally**, encouraging news from Beaver Bank/Kinsac where a September fire destroyed the busy community centre.

The community, working with local Councillor Barry Dalrymple, has found temporary new homes for most of the displaced agencies and organizations. As well, residents have raised \$14,000 towards a new centre.

On behalf of council, I salute the unquenchable spirit of this community.

*[] It's your turn now to talk to me. Reach me here at City Hall at [kellyp@halifax.ca](mailto:kellyp@halifax.ca) or by phoning me at 490-4010.*