



The Coast's candidate questionnaire

Witt Gittigan

To: Matthew Stickland

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Hey Matt,

I thought the deadline had passed, before I could complete this enormous task.

Every year the municipal budget has far less money than the city needs to do everything it wants. This year is shaping up to be the worst one yet. Why do you think this is?

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has been facing budget shortfalls in recent years, and the situation is projected to worsen in 2025 due to several key factors:

1. Inflation and Rising Costs

- Like many municipalities, HRM is grappling with inflation, which has driven up the costs of materials, labor, and services. Essential infrastructure projects, road maintenance, public transit, and city services have become more expensive, stretching the city's budget.

2. Population Growth and Urban Expansion

- Halifax has seen significant population growth, particularly from immigration and internal migration. While this growth is positive for the economy, it also creates strain on public services such as healthcare, education, public transportation, and affordable housing. More residents mean increased demand for services without a proportional increase in revenue.

3. Limited Revenue Sources

- HRM relies heavily on property taxes as its main source of revenue. However, property tax increases are often politically unpopular and limited in scope. This creates a revenue gap, especially when the cost of providing services increases faster than the ability to raise funds.

4. Infrastructure Deficits

- Halifax has aging infrastructure, including roads, water systems, and public buildings. Repair and maintenance costs for this infrastructure are escalating, creating additional

financial pressure. Delayed or deferred maintenance from past years has compounded these issues, making them more expensive to address now.

5. Federal and Provincial Funding Uncertainty

- HRM, like other municipalities, depends on transfers from the provincial and federal governments for some of its large projects. These funds can be unpredictable, and recent economic challenges may lead to cutbacks or delays in such funding, especially as governments themselves face deficits.

6. Affordable Housing Crisis

- The housing crisis in Halifax has intensified, putting pressure on the municipality to invest in affordable housing solutions. This has required HRM to divert resources toward addressing homelessness and housing affordability, further straining the budget.

7. Public Transit Deficits

- Halifax's public transit system has been under pressure, with rising operational costs and declining ridership due to factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. The transit system often operates at a deficit, which adds to the budget shortfall.

8. Climate Change and Emergency Preparedness

- Climate change has led to more extreme weather events, including storms, floods, and coastal erosion, all of which have a financial impact. HRM has had to allocate more resources toward climate adaptation, mitigation, and emergency preparedness efforts.

9. Debt Servicing

- As HRM borrows to fund large infrastructure projects and operational needs, it faces increasing debt servicing costs. The cost of borrowing is expected to rise due to higher interest rates, putting further pressure on the budget.

The combination of these factors means that HRM is entering 2025 with a projected budget deficit, making it a challenging financial year for the municipality. Without significant new revenue streams or cost-saving measures, Halifax will face difficult choices in terms of cutting services, raising taxes, or deferring critical investments.

What could it do differently?

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) could consider several strategies to address its financial challenges for 2025 and beyond. These approaches would aim to diversify revenue streams, improve efficiency, and address key cost drivers without overly burdening residents with higher

taxes. Here are some options:

1. Diversify Revenue Streams

- **Introduce User Fees:** HRM could consider implementing or increasing user fees for certain services, such as recreational facilities, waste management, or parking, ensuring those who use the services contribute more directly.
- **Tourism and Event-Based Revenue:** Halifax could capitalize on its growing tourism sector by introducing or increasing hotel and tourism-related taxes, such as a "visitor tax" or "event hosting fees" to generate revenue from major events or festivals.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (P3):** HRM could explore public-private partnerships for large infrastructure projects or services, allowing the city to share financial responsibility with private companies while still delivering essential services.

2. Increase Housing Supply to Boost Property Tax Base

- **Streamline Development Processes:** Speeding up approvals for residential and commercial development could help increase the property tax base. HRM could adopt more efficient zoning and planning policies to accelerate housing projects, particularly affordable housing, which would also relieve housing pressures.
- **Encourage Densification:** Promoting higher-density housing, particularly in the urban core, would allow the municipality to increase its tax base without expanding the footprint of services, thus maximizing revenue from smaller areas.

3. Introduce New Taxes or Adjust Existing Ones

- **Vacancy Tax:** HRM could consider a vacancy tax on empty or underused properties. This would encourage property owners to either rent or sell unused properties, which could alleviate the housing shortage while generating additional revenue.
- **Progressive Property Taxation:** Instead of broad property tax hikes, HRM could implement a more progressive property tax system where higher-value properties are taxed at higher rates. This could generate more revenue without placing undue burden on lower-income residents.
- **Commercial Property Tax Adjustments:** By increasing commercial property taxes, especially in high-value commercial districts, HRM could generate more revenue from businesses that benefit from prime city services.

4. Reduce Operating Costs

- **Digital Transformation:** The city could invest in technology to digitize more services and automate administrative processes. This could lower operational costs by reducing the need for manual labor in areas like customer service, permitting, and record-keeping.
- **Shared Services Model:** HRM could collaborate with other municipalities in Nova Scotia or nearby regions to share services like waste management, road maintenance, or

procurement. This could result in economies of scale and reduced costs.

- **Energy Efficiency Initiatives:** Investing in energy efficiency for municipal buildings, street lighting, and public transit could reduce long-term operating costs. Programs that reduce the city's carbon footprint could also attract federal and provincial green grants.
- **Outsource Non-Core Services:** HRM could explore outsourcing some non-essential services to the private sector, such as certain park maintenance or administrative tasks, which could lower operational costs.

5. Address Climate Adaptation Proactively

- **Invest in Resilient Infrastructure:** Rather than reacting to climate events, HRM could invest in infrastructure that is climate-resilient. This would help reduce long-term costs associated with repairs and emergency response by preventing damage before it occurs.
- **Federal/Provincial Climate Grants:** HRM could aggressively pursue federal and provincial climate adaptation grants to reduce the financial burden on the city's operating budget while addressing pressing environmental issues.

6. Public Transit Reform

- **Expand Public Transit Efficiency:** HRM could optimize its public transit routes and reduce underperforming services. Expanding ridership programs that encourage more frequent use (such as discounted passes for low-income residents or students) could increase revenue while reducing the system's deficit.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Partner with developers to build around transit hubs, increasing density and tax revenue in areas serviced by public transportation.

7. Leverage Real Estate and Land Assets

- **Sell or Lease City-Owned Property:** HRM owns underutilized land and buildings that could be sold or leased to private developers, especially for affordable housing or commercial use. The sale of surplus property could provide an immediate cash infusion, while leases generate steady income over time.
- **Development Incentives:** Provide incentives for private sector investments in areas like affordable housing, mixed-use developments, or tech hubs, which could boost long-term economic growth and expand the tax base.

8. Collaborate with Higher Levels of Government

- **Advocate for Sustainable Funding Models:** HRM could lobby the provincial and federal governments for more predictable and long-term funding arrangements, especially for infrastructure and housing. One approach might be a formal cost-sharing model where higher governments contribute more consistently to areas like public transit, housing, and climate adaptation.
- **Seek Additional Healthcare and Social Service Support:** As healthcare and social

services like housing are partially under provincial jurisdiction, HRM could advocate for greater provincial support in addressing homelessness and healthcare issues, allowing it to focus more on core municipal services.

9. Promote Economic Development

- **Business and Innovation Incentives:** Attracting new industries and businesses, particularly in tech, green energy, or creative sectors, could help expand HRM's economic base. Offering tax incentives, grants, or reduced red tape to entrepreneurs or tech companies might boost local employment and generate new tax revenue.
- **Encourage Green Economy Growth:** HRM could invest in the green economy (solar panels, energy-efficient housing, etc.), helping create jobs, reduce emissions, and attract federal green funds or private investment.

By pursuing a combination of revenue diversification, cost reduction, and sustainable development, HRM could better position itself to meet its financial obligations in 2025 without significant cuts to essential services or large tax increases. The key would be a balanced approach that addresses immediate fiscal challenges while fostering long-term growth.

Staffing Improvements:

It's common for municipalities, including Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), to periodically review staffing levels and ensure that human resources are optimized. Whether HRM has "too many" employees or inefficiencies in human resources is subjective and would require an in-depth internal audit. However, some general areas where there might be opportunities to improve efficiency and reduce waste are common across many city governments. Here's how these might apply to HRM, and what can be done to improve efficiency:

1. Conduct a Comprehensive Staffing Audit

- **Audit Staffing Levels and Functions:** HRM could benefit from a third-party audit or internal review to assess whether staffing levels align with actual needs. An audit could identify redundant positions, areas of overstaffing, or departments where employees' roles overlap.
- **Identify Underperforming or Low-Value Roles:** Certain roles may not provide a significant return on investment in terms of city services delivered. Understanding which positions or departments are underperforming can help reallocate resources to higher-priority areas.

2. Eliminate Redundancies

- **Consolidate Departments or Functions:** If certain functions or departments have overlapping responsibilities (e.g., multiple departments involved in permitting, compliance,

or inspections), HRM could merge them to improve coordination and reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts.

- Cross-Department Collaboration: Encourage departments to collaborate more effectively to share resources, reduce the need for additional hires, and avoid duplication of work across multiple areas of government.

3. Emphasize Digital Transformation and Automation

- Automate Administrative Tasks: Many routine tasks such as payroll, permitting, customer service requests, and reporting could be digitized or automated, reducing the need for administrative staff. This could streamline processes and reduce human resource costs without sacrificing service quality.
- Digital Self-Service Options: HRM could increase the availability of digital services for residents, such as online applications for permits, bill payments, and service requests. This reduces the workload for front-line municipal employees and shifts more tasks toward automated systems.

4. Improve Workforce Productivity

- Performance Management and Accountability: HRM could implement stricter performance management processes to ensure that all employees are delivering value. Employees who underperform or who are not fully utilizing their work hours could either be re-trained, reassigned, or replaced.
- Flexible Staffing Models: The city could adopt more flexible staffing approaches, such as employing part-time, temporary, or contract workers to manage fluctuating workloads. This reduces the burden of full-time salaries and benefits when work levels decrease.

5. Optimize Public Service Delivery

- Service Delivery Review: Conducting a review of how services are delivered (waste management, road maintenance, etc.) could reveal opportunities to improve efficiency. HRM could explore outsourcing certain non-essential services to private contractors, who may provide them at a lower cost due to economies of scale or specialized expertise.
- Shift Resources to High-Demand Services: During periods of change, HRM could shift resources from low-priority or underutilized services to areas with higher demand, such as affordable housing or public transit.

6. Promote Early Retirement or Voluntary Separation Programs

- Voluntary Retirement/Separation Incentives: To reduce the workforce gradually without layoffs, HRM could offer early retirement or voluntary separation packages to older employees. This can help reduce headcount while minimizing labor disruption or morale issues.
- Succession Planning: As older employees retire, HRM could focus on succession

planning to ensure that critical skills are retained and that there's no need to hire multiple new employees to perform similar roles.

7. Outsource Non-Essential Services

- **Outsource Administrative or Low-Skill Tasks:** Non-core administrative or technical tasks (e.g., IT support, payroll processing, facility maintenance) could be outsourced to third-party providers. This would allow HRM to focus on core functions, reducing the size of the municipal workforce and associated costs.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** In areas like transit, waste management, or certain social services, partnering with private organizations could lead to more efficient service delivery.

8. Implement Lean Management Practices

- **Adopt Lean Principles:** HRM could adopt “Lean” management principles, which focus on reducing waste and improving processes. This involves continuous improvement and finding ways to do more with less, often by eliminating non-value-added steps in a process.
- **Employee-Led Efficiency Initiatives:** Encourage employees to submit suggestions for improving productivity and eliminating waste. Often, frontline workers are in the best position to identify inefficiencies in day-to-day operations.

9. Address Absenteeism and Productivity Gaps

- **Manage Absenteeism:** A common issue in large organizations is absenteeism, where employees take excessive sick leave or fail to report to work regularly. HRM could implement programs to reduce absenteeism by improving workplace wellness, offering flexible work schedules, or adopting stricter leave policies.
- **Remote Work Options:** By allowing employees to work remotely (where possible), HRM could cut down on the need for office space and other overhead costs. Studies have also shown that, when managed well, remote work can increase productivity.

10. Use Data-Driven Decision Making

- **Data Analytics for HR Optimization:** HRM could leverage data analytics to track productivity and staffing needs more accurately. By using data to identify inefficiencies or gaps in service, the city could allocate its human resources more effectively.
- **Predictive Staffing Models:** Implement predictive analytics to forecast the city's staffing needs based on patterns in service demand, population growth, and budget constraints. This ensures that HRM hires only when necessary and in the right departments.

11. Engage in Union Negotiations

- **Negotiate with Unions for Flexibility:** HRM may have collective bargaining agreements that create rigid structures around hiring, pay, and workforce size. By negotiating with

unions, the city could gain more flexibility around staffing levels, job responsibilities, and pay scales.

- **Productivity-Based Pay Increases:** Instead of across-the-board salary increases, HRM could explore performance-based compensation tied to individual or departmental productivity.

12. Public Engagement and Transparency

- **Communicate with Residents:** Engage the public in discussions about municipal staffing levels and service delivery. If residents are made aware of where inefficiencies lie and how human resources are being reformed, it will build support for necessary changes.
- **Transparent Reporting:** HRM could publish more transparent data on staffing costs, roles, and productivity to highlight areas where improvements are being made.

Conclusion:

It's not necessarily about having "too many" employees, but about ensuring that HRM's workforce is deployed efficiently and effectively to deliver the best value for residents. By improving performance management, reducing redundancy, automating routine tasks, and exploring outsourcing opportunities, HRM can reduce waste in human resources and align its workforce more closely with its needs and budget constraints.

In June of this year, council passed an Infrastructure Asset Management Administrative Order. What does this AO do? Do you think it is needed? Why or why not?

The overall purpose of Administrative Order 2024-003-ADM, also known as the Corporate Asset Management Policy, is to guide Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) in making informed, sustainable, and cost-effective decisions regarding its municipal infrastructure. The order establishes a framework for managing assets throughout their entire lifecycle, from planning and design to maintenance and eventual disposal. It seeks to:

1. **Maximize Efficiency:** Ensure that HRM's assets (roads, parks, buildings, etc.) are managed in a way that extends their life and reduces long-term costs.
2. **Enhance Sustainability:** Incorporate environmental and social sustainability into infrastructure management, ensuring that assets can withstand climate challenges and are managed with future generations in mind.
3. **Improve Accountability and Transparency:** Provide a systematic approach for decision-making that includes regular reporting and stakeholder engagement, making it easier for residents and council members to understand how decisions are made.
4. **Risk Management:** The policy focuses on identifying and mitigating risks related to infrastructure failure, with a particular emphasis on preventative maintenance and long-term planning.

Why It Is Needed:

This order is necessary for several reasons:

- **Aging Infrastructure:** HRM, like many municipalities, has aging infrastructure that requires careful management and strategic investment to avoid costly failures or emergency repairs.
- **Budget Constraints:** The policy helps manage HRM's financial resources more effectively by focusing on minimizing the overall costs of maintaining assets over their lifetime, which is critical in a context of limited municipal budgets.
- **Public Accountability:** The order ensures that decisions about public infrastructure are made transparently, with input from citizens and regular reporting on the condition of assets.
- **Sustainability Goals:** By incorporating environmental and social sustainability into decision-making, the policy ensures that HRM's infrastructure will be resilient in the face of climate change and other future challenges.

In summary, the Administrative Order 2024-003-ADM is needed to ensure that HRM's infrastructure is managed efficiently, sustainably, and transparently, addressing both current and future challenges in a cost-effective manner. Without such a structured approach, HRM could face higher costs, increased infrastructure failures, and reduced public trust in municipal governance.

One of the first major policies you're likely to vote on is the on-going regional plan review. What do you know about this review?

The ongoing Halifax Regional Plan Review, as outlined in its most recent draft from June 2023, sets a comprehensive vision for the municipality's growth and development over the coming decades. This plan responds to key challenges such as population growth, housing demands, transportation needs, economic development, and climate change mitigation.

Here are some key aspects of the current draft:

1. **Housing and Growth:** The plan acknowledges the pressing demand for housing due to rapid population growth and introduces measures to accommodate this through densification in designated growth areas, while also preserving rural and natural spaces. It includes provisions to increase serviced land for residential development to meet future housing needs.
2. **Mobility and Transportation:** The review integrates the Integrated Mobility Plan, focusing on creating a more sustainable and efficient transportation network. This includes the designation of key mobility corridors, updated mode-share targets, and the introduction of an Urban Transit Service Boundary to enhance public transit access and reduce car dependency.

3. **Economic Development:** The plan aligns with Halifax's economic strategies, particularly the People Planet Prosperity plan and the African Nova Scotian Road to Economic Prosperity. Policies focus on supporting African Nova Scotian communities, preserving industrial lands, and fostering collaboration with key institutional partners like the Halifax Port Authority and Halifax Stanfield International Airport.
4. **Cultural and Heritage Preservation:** The plan updates cultural and heritage policies, with a strong emphasis on reconciliation with Mi'kmaq and Indigenous communities. There are also new policies to protect heritage sites and support African Nova Scotian community planning efforts.
5. **Environmental and Climate Action:** Climate resilience is a critical theme, with updates to policies ensuring sustainable development and reducing carbon emissions. The plan includes guidelines for managing water resources and protecting wildlife corridors, aligning with the municipality's broader environmental goals.

The ongoing review process also includes public engagement opportunities to gather feedback and refine these proposals before the plan is finalized in 2024.

The Halifax Regional Plan Review places significant emphasis on rural areas, addressing the unique needs and challenges these regions face. The current draft highlights the following key aspects for rural regions:

1. **Growth and Land Use Management:** The plan focuses on controlling urban sprawl by directing most new growth into designated growth areas, while maintaining the rural character. Policies limit large-scale subdivisions in rural regions that are not part of serviced areas, which helps preserve the environment and existing rural communities

Under Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) Growth and Land Use Management policies, large-scale subdivisions in rural regions that are not part of serviced areas are limited to control urban sprawl and protect rural character and natural environments. Here are the key policies that outline these restrictions:

- a. **Urban Service Area Boundary:** HRM has established an Urban Service Area Boundary that separates serviced urban areas from rural regions. Within this boundary, full municipal services such as water and wastewater are available, and this is where higher-density development is encouraged. Outside the boundary, in rural regions, large-scale subdivisions are discouraged to prevent sprawling development that would be difficult to service with infrastructure(
- b. **Limited Subdivision Rights:** In unserviced rural areas, the Regional Plan enforces policies that restrict subdivision development to ensure that only minimal new lots are created. This is meant to preserve large tracts of undeveloped land

and prevent fragmentation of rural landscapes, supporting environmental protection efforts like wildlife corridors and water source protection().

- c. Growth Management Policies: These policies regulate the subdivision of rural land by requiring that new developments meet strict environmental and infrastructure criteria. In many rural areas, the subdivision of land is permitted only if it does not result in significant environmental impact or the need for costly infrastructure extensions, such as road paving, water, or sewage services

2. Support for Rural Economies: There is an emphasis on enhancing rural employment opportunities, particularly through tourism and rural entrepreneurship. The plan supports rural tourism initiatives and identifies rural employment lands for development to diversify the economy in these areas(

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3. Infrastructure and Services: The review includes provisions to improve infrastructure and services in rural regions. This includes better access to transportation services and collaboration with other regional partners to ensure that essential services, such as water and wastewater management, are adequately planned for rural areas(

4. Environmental Protection: Protecting natural landscapes, wildlife corridors, and water resources is a central theme for rural regions. The plan highlights the importance of balancing growth with conservation, ensuring that rural communities remain sustainable and resilient against climate change(

5. Overall, while much of the plan's focus is on urban and suburban areas, it acknowledges the importance of preserving rural character, enhancing local economies, and improving infrastructure without compromising environmental integrity.

Over the past five years, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has implemented several policies and programs to support its rural regions, focusing on areas such as economic growth, recreation, and tourism.

1. Tourism and Economic Development: HRM has made significant strides in supporting rural tourism. The municipality introduced two dedicated Account Executive positions at Halifax Partnership and Discover Halifax to work closely with rural businesses. These positions focus on business retention, expansion, and tourism development in rural areas. This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance tourism through the Integrated Tourism Master Plan, which aims to grow rural attractions like Peggy's Cove and Lawrencetown Beach(

The two dedicated Account Executive positions introduced by HRM to support rural businesses are:

1. Dolores Atwood at Halifax Partnership: Dolores works as the Rural Account Executive, focusing on business retention and expansion in rural communities. She helps rural business owners connect with the right resources and government departments to address their unique challenges. No longer there in the role as: Rural Account Executive, SmartBusiness, May 2022 - June 2023

It is now Lindsay Morley - Rural Account Executive, SmartBusiness Program
With over two decades of experience in business development and recruiting, Lindsay comes with a strong understanding of the resources and opportunities available to support rural businesses. Lindsay has worked at small start-ups to large corporations where she helped grow businesses through strategic partnerships, talent acquisition, and networking.

Living in rural HRM, Lindsay appreciates the importance of collaboration and virtual communication across geographic boundaries. What continuously excites Lindsay about life in rural HRM is the strong sense of belonging fostered within rural communities. From June 2023.

2. Mallori Inzinga at Discover Halifax: Mallori serves as the Rural Tourism Account Executive, proactively engaging with rural tourism businesses. Her role involves fostering community-led tourism initiatives and helping rural tourism operators address issues and seize growth opportunities
3. Last HRM Master Plan was 2019: chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://discoverhalifaxdmo.com/files/documents/ITMP_Discover_Report_8x10_FEB_22_2021-No-Action-Plan-FULL_DIGITAL.pdf

2. Rural Recreation Strategy: In January 2024, HRM approved the Rural Recreation Strategy, which tailors recreation solutions to the needs of rural communities. The strategy includes long-term recommendations for volunteer support, programming that meets rural needs, and partnerships with community organizations. It highlights the importance of creating equitable access to indoor and outdoor recreation facilities across the rural parts of HRM().
3. Short-Term Rentals (STRs): In 2023, HRM introduced new regulations for short-term rentals (STRs) in rural areas. These regulations aim to create consistency across the municipality by allowing one dwelling unit per lot to be used for STR purposes. This policy provides rural communities with more opportunities for income from tourism, while maintaining flexibility for commercial land use in rural areas(

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Eastern Shore was given high priority in the Rural Recreation Strategy - repurpose of high school??

These initiatives show HRM's commitment to fostering rural economic growth, improving recreational opportunities, and supporting tourism, while ensuring that rural communities retain their character and unique needs.

In the [current draft of the plan](#) there are a lot of proposed changes to municipal governance. What are some of your favourites and why?

The draft Regional Plan for Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) proposes several changes to municipal governance, primarily aimed at better managing growth, addressing climate change, and improving safety and equity across communities.

1. **Stronger Growth Management:** The plan introduces tighter controls on urban sprawl, especially in rural and suburban areas, by restricting large-scale developments outside designated serviced areas. This is designed to concentrate growth in areas that are easier and more cost-effective to service with infrastructure like water and sewer systems.
2. **Improved Subdivision and Connectivity Policies:** New rules for subdivision design and community connectivity are proposed to improve emergency access and overall community safety. This comes in response to challenges like the wildfires experienced in HRM, where lack of proper infrastructure made evacuation and emergency access difficult in certain areas. The municipality is also looking to address developments that were built without sufficient growth management tools in place.
3. **Equity and Climate Resilience:** The plan integrates goals from various HRM priority plans, including those addressing climate change and equity. This includes new policies for community safety, especially in areas with private lanes and limited emergency access, and measures to ensure that developments do not exacerbate climate-related risks like wildfires and flooding.

These governance changes aim to prepare HRM for its anticipated population growth and address long-standing challenges in rural and suburban developments. The goal is to create a more sustainable and resilient framework for both urban and rural growth.

In addition to the previously mentioned changes to growth management and subdivision policies, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) draft Regional Plan includes several other proposed changes to municipal governance, aimed at ensuring more effective management of

urban, suburban, and rural growth and addressing the challenges posed by rapid development, environmental concerns, and equity issues:

1. **Community Engagement and Governance Framework:** The draft plan proposes to strengthen community engagement processes by setting clear standards for public consultation and community involvement. This is aimed at ensuring that diverse voices, especially those from traditionally underrepresented groups like the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities, are heard in decision-making processes().
2. **Climate Change and Resilience Policies:** A significant aspect of the plan is to introduce governance mechanisms that prioritize climate resilience. This includes new regulations for development in wildfire-prone and flood-risk areas, with stricter guidelines for managing the urban-wilderness interface (WUI) and increased focus on building climate-resilient infrastructure. The municipality will adopt governance structures that ensure developments meet these new environmental standards(
3. **Coordination with Provincial Governance:** The plan acknowledges the tension between municipal and provincial governance, especially where provincial decisions override municipal planning rules. HRM is proposing clearer frameworks for collaboration with provincial authorities to ensure that municipal concerns, such as emergency egress and safety in rapidly growing suburban areas, are adequately addressed. This governance shift aims to give HRM more influence over local planning decisions that currently may be subject to provincial authority

These additional governance changes are part of HRM's broader efforts to align its policies with modern challenges, ensuring that future growth is equitable, safe, and sustainable for all residents.

What are some of the proposals that you would change and why?

Here are some proposals in the draft Halifax Regional Plan that I would consider modifying, along with the reasoning behind those changes:

1. Tight Restrictions on Rural Subdivisions

Proposed Change: The plan places strict limits on large-scale subdivisions in rural areas outside the Urban Service Area to prevent sprawl and protect natural landscapes

Suggested Modification: While it's crucial to manage sprawl, these restrictions could inadvertently stifle rural economic growth and limit affordable housing options for rural residents. A more flexible policy could allow controlled subdivision development with stricter environmental protections and infrastructure requirements. This would balance the need for growth with environmental concerns while providing more housing options and economic opportunities for

rural areas.

Why: Many rural communities rely on modest growth to sustain local businesses and maintain population levels. Complete limitations could risk stagnation in these areas and prevent rural regions from attracting new residents or businesses.

2. Stronger Focus on Urban Transit at the Expense of Rural Connectivity

Proposed Change: The plan proposes to improve urban transit systems, including the expansion of the Urban Transit Service Boundary, which primarily benefits suburban and urban areas

Suggested Modification: Rural transportation needs more focus. Introducing dedicated rural transport solutions, such as flexible bus services or increased ride-sharing support, could ensure that rural residents aren't left behind in terms of mobility and access to services. The plan should invest more in innovative rural transit options alongside urban improvements.

Why: Many rural residents struggle with limited public transit options, which impacts their access to services, jobs, and education. Better rural transit would help bridge the gap between rural and urban residents and promote equitable development.

3. Limited Collaboration with the Province on Planning Decisions

Proposed Change: HRM has voiced concerns about provincial overrides on municipal planning decisions, especially in areas like emergency egress for subdivisions

Suggested Modification: Instead of just acknowledging these tensions, HRM should propose a more formalized collaborative governance framework with the province. This could include the establishment of a joint municipal-provincial planning body to resolve conflicts and harmonize policies, especially for safety-critical issues like wildfire management or infrastructure development in fast-growing areas.

Why: A more structured governance model would ensure that local needs are not sidelined by provincial decisions, leading to better outcomes for community safety, development, and environmental protection.

4. Tourism-Focused Economic Development for Rural Areas

Proposed Change: The plan emphasizes tourism as a key economic driver for rural areas

Suggested Modification: While tourism is important, the plan could expand its focus to include broader rural economic development strategies beyond tourism. This could include support for agricultural innovation, local manufacturing, and digital entrepreneurship. By diversifying the economic base, rural areas would be less vulnerable to fluctuations in tourism demand.

Why: Relying heavily on tourism makes rural communities susceptible to economic downturns,

as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. A diversified approach would promote more resilient and sustainable rural economies.

5. Lack of Immediate Action on Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

Proposed Change: The plan includes long-term goals for climate resilience, especially in terms of managing growth in wildfire-prone areas

Suggested Modification: HRM should include more immediate, actionable steps for upgrading climate-resilient infrastructure, particularly in rural and vulnerable suburban areas. For instance, incentivizing green building practices and requiring new developments to incorporate climate adaptation measures (e.g., flood-resistant designs) from the outset would mitigate long-term risks more effectively.

Why: Given the increasing frequency of wildfires and extreme weather events, proactive measures are essential to protect communities and reduce future costs. Waiting until long-term goals are achieved could leave many areas unprepared for climate challenges.

These modifications would aim to ensure that HRM's plan is more inclusive, flexible, and prepared to tackle both immediate and long-term challenges.

Earlier this year, the city passed a set of bylaw changes known as the Housing Accelerator Fund By-laws. In your own words please describe what the point of this policy change is. Do you agree with it?

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) by-laws passed by Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) aim to address the growing housing crisis by accelerating the construction of new homes. This initiative is driven by a federal agreement providing over \$79.3 million to remove barriers and streamline housing development across the city. Key aspects of the policy include:

1. **Increasing Housing Density:** The by-laws allow up to four units per lot within municipal service areas and reduce parking requirements for new residential projects, which helps promote higher-density housing development.
2. **Streamlining Permitting:** The plan includes improving the efficiency of the permitting process and introducing pre-approved building plans, which reduces delays and costs for developers.
3. **Encouraging Development Along Transit Routes:** There are provisions for building taller structures along transit corridors, further boosting housing capacity in high-demand areas.
4. **Heritage and Affordable Housing:** While expanding development, the policy also balances heritage conservation. Additionally, the municipality is allocating funds to non-profits and providing incentives for affordable housing, ensuring that lower-income

residents benefit from the housing push.

The goal of these changes is to fast-track the construction of 2,600 housing units over the next three years and spur the creation of over 8,800 units in the long term, addressing the significant housing shortage in HRM

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) by-laws primarily target urban and suburban areas within HRM that have access to municipal services like water and sewage. While the policy does make room for increased density in serviced areas, rural communities are less directly impacted because they typically fall outside these service zones. This means rural areas are not likely to see the same level of density increases, such as the allowance for four units per lot, which is a significant feature of the by-law changes in urban settings(

However, rural communities may benefit indirectly through the overall increase in housing supply, as the pressure on urban housing markets is expected to ease. This could result in less spillover demand in rural areas, where development is typically slower and infrastructure less dense.

The policy does not seem to provide specific provisions for rural areas, focusing instead on zones close to transit routes and within existing service boundaries. However, HRM's broader development strategies, including identifying surplus land and incentivizing conversions, could eventually lead to opportunities for tailored rural housing initiatives(

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) by-laws focus heavily on increasing housing density in urban and suburban areas within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), particularly those with access to municipal water and sewage systems. This focus may lead to some indirect negative impacts on rural areas:

1. Resource Allocation: Since much of the funding and policy attention is directed towards urban development, rural areas may experience slower progress in addressing their own housing and infrastructure needs. The policy prioritizes urban density increases and transit-oriented development, leaving rural communities potentially underserved in terms of housing investments and improvements to services like water, sewage, and public transportation(
2. Urban-Rural Divide: The accelerated development in urban and suburban areas could exacerbate the existing divide between urban and rural communities. With more housing being built in city centers and suburban zones, rural areas might see less attention from developers and policymakers, potentially leading to stagnation in housing development or economic opportunities in those regions.
3. Displacement of Rural Residents: As housing becomes more available and affordable in urban areas due to the new policies, some people currently living in rural areas due to the lack of affordable housing in the city may choose to move back to urban centers. This

could reduce population growth or even cause depopulation in rural communities, potentially affecting local economies and community life(

4. In sum, while the policy aims to alleviate housing issues in HRM, the emphasis on urban development may inadvertently neglect or slow progress in addressing housing and infrastructure needs in rural areas.

What changes would you make to the HAF bylaws, if any? (Please be as specific as possible.)

To modify the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) by-laws to better support rural areas in HRM, a few key changes could be considered:

1. Infrastructure Investment in Rural Areas: One of the main barriers to rural housing development is the lack of essential infrastructure, such as water, sewage, and broadband. A portion of the HAF funding could be allocated specifically for improving rural infrastructure, enabling higher-density developments or new housing projects in these areas. This would allow rural communities to benefit from housing growth similar to urban zones. NOTE: this is where you can reference the water shed project with the Old School, might not be able to get sewer, but they do have plans for a small development. This should not be led by the Old School but the ground work is there to explore.
2. Incentives for Rural Housing Development: Developers are typically less inclined to build in rural areas due to lower demand and the higher cost of extending services. Offering incentives like tax breaks, reduced permit fees, or direct subsidies for rural development projects could help attract investment. These incentives could be tied to sustainability or affordable housing goals, ensuring that the new rural developments are both environmentally friendly and affordable(Encouraging Rural Affordable Housing Projects: Expanding the scope of affordable housing grants and incentives to target rural areas could help address housing shortages in these regions. The HAF could create a specific fund for rural non-profits or developers to build affordable housing in underserved rural communities.
3. Flexibility in Zoning Regulations for Rural Areas: Rural areas have more space but stricter zoning rules that limit multi-unit developments. Modifying these zoning regulations to allow for small-scale multi-unit dwellings or eco-villages in rural zones would encourage more innovative and sustainable housing solutions that align with rural lifestyles.
4. Support for Local Economic Development: To ensure that new housing developments in rural areas are sustainable, the HAF could include policies that link housing projects with local economic initiatives. By supporting small businesses, agriculture, or tourism in rural areas, housing developments can be integrated into broader community growth strategies, making them more attractive to potential residents

By implementing these changes, the HAF would ensure that rural areas benefit from the overall

sustainability challenges, and infrastructure efficiency to better serve the needs of a growing population and address the housing crisis. The Housing Accelerator Fund and provincial directives are part of the effort to expedite these necessary changes.

In the current [draft of the suburban plan](#) there are a lot of proposed changes. What are some of your favourites and why?

Same thoughts as above.

In the current draft of Halifax's suburban plan, several proposed changes stand out as progressive steps toward more sustainable and livable communities. Here are some of my favorites and why I think they are particularly beneficial:

1. Promoting "Missing Middle" Housing: One of the most exciting proposals is the push for "missing middle" housing, which focuses on medium-density developments like townhomes, duplexes, and small apartment buildings. This aims to fill the gap between single-family homes and high-rises. These types of housing are crucial for creating more affordable and diverse options for residents while preventing urban sprawl. It encourages a better balance of housing density in suburban areas, making housing more accessible without overwhelming infrastructure().
2. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD): The plan promotes higher density along existing and planned transit routes. This approach is part of the Integrated Mobility Plan and aims to create more walkable, transit-friendly suburban communities. By concentrating growth near public transit, the proposal reduces reliance on cars, alleviates traffic congestion, and promotes a more sustainable lifestyle for suburban residents(Affordability Measures: The introduction of inclusionary zoning is another important element, which ensures that a portion of new housing developments remains affordable. This approach seeks to create mixed-income communities, helping to combat the rising cost of living and housing shortages that disproportionately affect lower-income residents(Increased Density with Thoughtful Zoning: Another highlight is the plan's flexibility in increasing building heights in some areas, allowing for mid-rise to high-rise buildings in key growth zones, while also ensuring appropriate transitions between different types of development. For example, the proposal allows for buildings up to 40 storeys in some central areas, which balances growth with maintaining the suburban character(These proposals focus on sustainable development, improving transportation, and increasing affordable housing options, which are critical for addressing Halifax's rapid population growth and ensuring a vibrant, connected community.

Addition: Favourite parts for rural

increase in housing while addressing the unique challenges that rural communities face in terms of infrastructure and development.

As part of the Housing Accelerator Fund money, the federal government asked Halifax to expedite its suburban plan review. The provincial government did the same when they announced the most recent special planning areas. Why do Halifax's suburbs need to change?

This is the answer it provide but I think there needs to be a spin on you relying on the suburban councilors for what they feel is best for those areas as you would expect them to rely on you for rural.

Halifax's suburbs need to change due to several critical factors related to population growth, housing shortages, and infrastructure limitations:

1. **Population Growth:** Halifax has experienced rapid population growth in recent years, with an increase of over 20,000 residents in a single year, and projections of continued growth at a rate of 2–4.5% annually(). This population surge puts pressure on housing availability in suburban areas, which have traditionally relied on low-density, single-family homes. To accommodate this growth, suburban areas must increase density and adopt more sustainable housing models.
 2. **Housing Shortage and Affordability:** HRM is currently facing a housing shortage of around 20,000 units, with rental vacancy rates at a low 1%. Housing costs have risen significantly, exacerbating the affordability crisis(). Suburbs, with their large expanses of low-density housing, contribute to this shortage by limiting the number of available housing units. Expediting the suburban plan review aims to create opportunities for higher-density developments, like townhomes, multi-unit buildings, and affordable housing projects, addressing the urgent need for more housing options.
 3. **Sustainability and Urban Sprawl:** The current suburban development model, characterized by sprawl and car-dependent communities, is seen as unsustainable in the long term. It leads to environmental degradation, higher infrastructure costs, and traffic congestion. By increasing density and promoting development along transit corridors, the suburban plan review seeks to create more sustainable communities that reduce reliance on cars and limit the expansion of urban sprawl().
Infrastructure Strain: Low-density suburban areas require extensive infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, and public services, to serve fewer residents. This is expensive and inefficient compared to higher-density urban models. Changing the development pattern in the suburbs could ease this strain by making better use of existing infrastructure and reducing the need for costly expansions().
- In summary, Halifax’s suburbs need to adapt to population pressures, housing shortages,

In the draft of Halifax's suburban and regional plan, several proposals specifically benefit rural areas. Here are my favorite parts:

1. **Supporting Rural Economies through Tourism:** The plan recognizes the importance of rural tourism in boosting local economies. It proposes policies that support the development of rural tourism infrastructure and attractions, like enhancing natural spaces and promoting rural cultural heritage. This provides a sustainable revenue stream for rural communities, helping small businesses thrive without compromising the rural environment(
2. **Preserving Agricultural Lands:** The plan includes provisions for protecting agricultural lands from inappropriate development. By restricting large-scale subdivisions and ensuring agricultural areas are preserved, the proposal aims to maintain rural character while supporting long-term food security and rural livelihoods(
3. **Broadband and Infrastructure Investments:** The draft also highlights the need for improved infrastructure in rural areas, specifically broadband expansion. This is crucial for supporting rural businesses, particularly in the digital economy, and ensuring rural residents have equitable access to essential services like education and healthcare
Rural Transportation Improvements: While the focus on transit-oriented development is strong in suburban areas, the plan also addresses rural mobility issues by exploring ways to improve transportation services in rural communities. This includes enhancing connectivity between rural and urban centers, making it easier for rural residents to access jobs and services
These initiatives help protect the rural lifestyle while providing opportunities for economic growth and infrastructure improvements.

What are some of the proposals that you would change? What would you change and why? (Please be as specific as possible.)

Here are some changes I would suggest to better benefit rural areas in Halifax's regional and suburban plan:

1. Expand Rural Transportation Options

Current Proposal: While the plan focuses heavily on improving public transit in suburban areas through transit-oriented development, rural transportation remains underdeveloped(

Suggested Change: HRM should introduce more robust and flexible rural transportation solutions, such as demand-responsive transit (DRT) or rural ride-sharing initiatives. These services could provide flexible and affordable transportation options to connect rural residents with urban centers, healthcare, and educational facilities.

Why: Many rural residents are dependent on personal vehicles, which limits access for those without reliable transportation. Improving mobility would boost access to essential services and employment opportunities for rural populations(

2. Broaden Economic Support Beyond Tourism

Current Proposal: The draft plan places a strong emphasis on tourism as the primary driver for rural economic growth(

Suggested Change: Expand economic strategies beyond tourism to include support for agriculture, forestry, and local manufacturing. This could involve offering incentives for rural innovation in areas like sustainable agriculture, agri-tech, or small-scale renewable energy projects.

Why: Relying too heavily on tourism makes rural economies vulnerable to seasonal fluctuations and external factors like travel restrictions. Diversifying the economic base with other sustainable industries would create more stable year-round employment(

3. Prioritize Digital Infrastructure

Current Proposal: The draft acknowledges the need for improved broadband but doesn't provide detailed timelines or priorities for rural connectivity(

Suggested Change: Establish a clear timeline and prioritization for expanding broadband access in rural areas. Partner with federal and provincial governments to fast-track infrastructure development, with a focus on closing the digital divide between urban and rural communities.

Why: Reliable internet access is essential for modern education, healthcare, and business development. Fast-tracking broadband expansion would enable rural businesses to compete in the digital economy and improve access to remote work opportunities(

4. Increase Focus on Rural Housing Solutions

Current Proposal: The plan focuses more on addressing housing shortages in urban and suburban areas, leaving rural housing development less defined(

Suggested Change: Introduce specific rural housing strategies that incentivize affordable and sustainable housing development in rural areas. This could include relaxed zoning for smaller, eco-friendly homes and financial incentives for developers to create mixed-income housing.

Why: Rural communities face unique housing challenges, such as aging populations and a lack of affordable options for younger residents. Tailoring housing solutions to rural needs would ensure these areas can attract and retain a diverse population(

5. Strengthen Environmental Protection While Allowing Managed Growth

Current Proposal: The plan restricts large-scale subdivisions in rural areas to preserve natural spaces and prevent sprawl(

Suggested Change: Maintain environmental protections but allow for more controlled, eco-friendly rural developments. Implement stricter environmental guidelines for new subdivisions, such as mandatory green building practices and preservation of key wildlife corridors.

Why: Rural communities need room to grow, but growth should be balanced with sustainability. Allowing carefully managed development would enable rural areas to evolve while protecting their natural environment(

These changes would help ensure rural areas are not left behind in terms of infrastructure, economic opportunity, and growth while still preserving their unique character and natural landscapes.

As we all know, driving in this city low-key sucks. The city's plan to fix this is something called the [Integrated Mobility Plan](#). In your own words please describe what this plan aims to achieve and how it aims to achieve it.

The Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) is a long-term strategy developed by Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) to improve transportation across the region. Its goal is to create a more efficient, sustainable, and accessible transportation network that encourages people to use various modes of transportation, reducing reliance on cars. The plan covers walking, cycling, public transit, and road networks, focusing on moving people and goods more efficiently and sustainably.

Key Aims of the IMP:

1. **Reduce Traffic Congestion:** The plan seeks to ease traffic congestion by improving road conditions and encouraging the use of alternative transport modes.
2. **Promote Public Transit:** The IMP emphasizes improving the public transit system, making it more reliable and convenient. This includes expanding bus and ferry services, as well as developing rapid transit corridors.
3. **Increase Active Transportation:** By enhancing infrastructure for walking and cycling, such as creating safer bike lanes and pedestrian pathways, the plan aims to make these options more attractive and accessible.
4. **Environmental Sustainability:** The IMP supports Halifax's climate action goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles and promoting environmentally friendly transportation options.
 5. **Enhance Road Safety:** The plan focuses on improving road conditions, intersection designs, and traffic signals to ensure safer travel for all users, including pedestrians,

cyclists, and drivers.

6. **Equity and Accessibility:** Ensuring that all residents, regardless of income or location, have access to affordable and reliable transportation options is central to the IMP's vision.

How the IMP Aims to Achieve These Goals:

Infrastructure Investment: The plan includes upgrading roads, bridges, and transit infrastructure, with an emphasis on improving safety and efficiency.

Mobility Hubs: The IMP proposes the development of "mobility hubs" – areas where multiple transport options (transit, cycling, walking) are available in one place to make commuting easier.

Improved Transit Service: Halifax Transit will see improvements in routes, schedules, and service levels, particularly with the addition of express bus routes and better connections between communities.

Active Transportation Infrastructure: Expanding the network of sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, and greenways to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient.

Traffic Management Solutions: The IMP incorporates better traffic management systems, including smart traffic signals and optimized traffic flow to reduce delays and congestion.

Public Engagement: The plan emphasizes the involvement of local communities in planning to ensure that solutions meet the specific needs of different neighborhoods.

In essence, the Integrated Mobility Plan aims to build a transportation system that reduces car dependence, improves mobility for all residents, and enhances the overall quality of life in Halifax through more sustainable, safe, and efficient transportation options.

If you believe the IMP is a good plan, please explain why you think it has not been as successful as its ambitions. How do you hope to change this?

Strengths of the IMP:

1. **Sustainability:** The plan aligns with global trends toward greener cities by promoting public transit, cycling, and walking. Reducing reliance on cars helps cut greenhouse gas emissions, which is important for environmental sustainability.
2. **Multimodal Focus:** By addressing walking, cycling, public transit, and cars, the plan is comprehensive and inclusive. It accommodates diverse transportation needs, which can improve overall mobility and quality of life.
3. **Road Safety:** A focus on improving road infrastructure and making intersections safer can benefit all users, from drivers to cyclists and pedestrians. This can reduce accidents and improve travel conditions.
4. **Congestion Reduction:** Encouraging alternative transport modes helps relieve

congestion on roads, which benefits drivers who still need to use cars, especially in peak hours.

5. Equity: The plan aims to ensure that everyone in HRM has access to affordable and reliable transport, helping those who cannot afford cars or live in underserved areas.
6. Economic Benefits: Investing in transit and transportation infrastructure can spur economic growth by improving access to jobs, services, and business areas. It also can create jobs through infrastructure projects.

If you believe the IMP is a bad plan, please explain your preferred alternative.

Potential Challenges and Criticism:

1. High Costs and Implementation Time: Large-scale infrastructure projects like this often come with significant upfront costs. The benefits might take years to materialize, while citizens bear the short-term inconvenience and cost.
2. Car Dependency is Still High: While promoting public transit and active transportation is a positive step, HRM is still a relatively car-dependent region. Shifting behaviors to embrace transit and cycling might take a long time and face resistance.
3. Rural Accessibility: The IMP could be more beneficial for urban areas than rural ones. Residents in outlying regions may still rely heavily on cars, and public transit improvements may not extend far enough to serve them adequately.
4. Transit System Challenges: For the plan to succeed, Halifax Transit needs significant upgrades in service reliability, frequency, and coverage. If these improvements fall short, residents might still prefer private vehicles over public transport.
5. Community Resistance: Some residents may push back against certain measures, such as changes to road layouts, traffic calming initiatives, or investments in cycling infrastructure that they feel could negatively impact drivers.
6. Slow Cultural Shift: Encouraging a shift from car use to active transportation and public transit requires a cultural change, which can be slow and face opposition, especially in regions where the car has been the dominant mode of transportation for decades.

Conclusion:

The IMP is generally seen as a good plan, particularly because it aligns with sustainability goals, enhances mobility, and seeks to address long-standing transportation challenges. However, its success depends on proper implementation, public buy-in, and addressing the unique needs of both urban and rural communities in Halifax. Like any large-scale urban planning project, it faces challenges, but its vision for a more sustainable and efficient transportation system reflects a progressive approach to addressing future mobility needs.

Over the past few years the city has taken a "[managed encampment](#)" approach to people living outside. Before saying whether or not you agree with this, please describe, as best

you understand it, why city staff are recommending this approach.

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has adopted a "managed encampment" approach in response to its growing homelessness crisis. The strategy aims to balance the immediate needs of unhoused individuals with community impacts. Here's a summary of HRM's approach based on the document:

1. **Designated Encampment Sites:** HRM has established specific locations where unhoused people can set up tents. These designated sites provide basic services, such as access to portable toilets, water, and garbage collection. Currently, four designated locations exist, but these are often over capacity, leading to challenges with overcrowding.
2. **Support Services:** While HRM offers basic amenities at designated sites, they emphasize individualized case management, encouraging encampment residents to access available shelter or housing options when possible. HRM is also collaborating with the province to provide more long-term solutions like mental health and addiction services.
3. **Short-Term Solutions:** The municipality is expanding encampment locations to address growing demand while ensuring support services and supervision are enhanced to mitigate the harmful effects of encampments on both residents and the surrounding community.
4. **Civilian-Led Response Team:** HRM plans to implement a civilian-led team to handle non-criminal incidents and provide on-the-ground support in managing encampments. This approach aims to reduce the need for police involvement and de-escalate situations more effectively.
5. **Long-Term Goals:** Ultimately, HRM's long-term approach is a "no encampments" strategy, which focuses on increasing shelter and housing options to eliminate the need for encampments entirely. However, current resource limitations mean encampments are a short-term necessity until more permanent housing solutions are available.

Overall, HRM's managed encampment approach is a temporary measure designed to address homelessness until more sustainable housing resources become available([Encampments](#)).

The "managed encampment" approach was recommended for several reasons:

1. **Overcrowded Shelters and Housing Shortage:** Halifax has a shortage of shelter beds and affordable housing, leaving many people with no choice but to sleep outside. This approach provides designated spaces where people can live temporarily while waiting for better housing options.
2. **Health and Safety:** Unregulated encampments pose health and safety risks, both for the unhoused individuals and the broader community. The managed sites help mitigate these risks by offering access to basic services like clean water, sanitation, and garbage collection, improving living conditions for those staying there.
3. **Balance Community Impacts:** Encampments often cause disruptions in public spaces, affecting local communities. By designating specific areas for encampments, HRM aims to reduce the negative impacts on neighborhoods while still supporting those who need

shelter.

4. **Temporary Solution:** The long-term goal is to eliminate encampments entirely by providing more permanent housing options. However, due to the immediate lack of affordable housing and shelter space, this managed encampment strategy serves as a short-term solution until more permanent options are available.
5. **Human Rights Considerations:** Halifax has taken into account human rights frameworks, recognizing that forcing people to leave encampments without providing alternatives violates their rights. The managed encampment approach ensures that people have a safe place to stay while awaiting more suitable housing options ([Encampments](#)).

If you would do anything different, what would you do and how would you do it? Please limit your answer to things possible with municipal powers.

To mitigate homelessness differently within municipal authority, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) could explore several strategies to address the problem more effectively:

1. Increase Affordable Housing Options

- **Incentivize Affordable Housing Development:** HRM could offer tax breaks or fast-track approvals for developers who build affordable housing units. This would encourage the private sector to create more housing options for low-income individuals.
- **Utilize Vacant Land:** The municipality could identify and repurpose vacant or underutilized municipal land for affordable housing projects or modular housing.

2. Strengthen Eviction Prevention Programs

- **Rental Assistance and Support Programs:** HRM could introduce or expand programs that provide financial aid to help low-income residents avoid eviction. This could include emergency rental assistance and housing stabilization funds.
- **Tenant Support Services:** The municipality could partner with community organizations to offer legal and advisory services to tenants at risk of eviction, helping them negotiate with landlords or find alternative housing before becoming homeless.

3. Expand Shelter Capacity and Services

- **Increase Shelter Availability:** HRM could work with non-profits to expand the number of emergency shelter beds, especially for specific populations like women, families, and those with mental health or addiction challenges.
- **Create Year-Round Day Shelters:** Offering day shelters with access to food, showers, laundry, and social services can provide critical support to those experiencing homelessness while helping them transition to permanent housing.

4. Create More Transitional and Supportive Housing

- **Transitional Housing:** The municipality could invest in transitional housing, offering temporary homes with support services to help people move from homelessness to stable housing.
- **Supportive Housing Programs:** HRM could expand housing that integrates services for individuals facing mental health or addiction issues, helping them maintain stable housing while receiving the care they need.

5. Strengthen Coordination and Collaboration

- **Enhanced Interagency Collaboration:** HRM could improve coordination with provincial agencies, non-profits, and healthcare providers to ensure a seamless system of support for the homeless, focusing on long-term housing solutions, healthcare, and mental health services.
- **Community-Led Solutions:** The municipality could engage directly with communities and those with lived experience of homelessness to co-create solutions, ensuring their voices shape policies.

6. Address Regulatory Barriers

- **Zoning Reforms:** HRM could adjust zoning laws to allow for a greater variety of affordable housing types, including tiny homes, co-housing, and other low-cost options.
- **Streamline Approvals:** Simplifying the approval process for affordable housing projects could speed up construction, reducing wait times for new housing.

7. Strengthen Public Awareness and Community Engagement

- **Public Education Campaigns:** HRM could launch campaigns to educate the public on homelessness, reduce stigma, and encourage community involvement in helping address the issue.
- **Volunteer Programs:** The municipality could coordinate volunteer programs that bring the community together to support shelters, food banks, and other services that help those in need.

8. Expand Employment and Training Opportunities

- **Job Training and Employment Programs:** The municipality could partner with local businesses and organizations to offer job training, employment programs, and apprenticeships for individuals experiencing homelessness, helping them transition back into stable housing.

By taking these steps, HRM could address the root causes of homelessness while offering practical, compassionate support for those currently living without shelter.

The city of Halifax is undertaking some pretty substantial police reform. Can you please

describe what the city is doing and where it is in the process?

In 2024, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is moving forward with significant police reforms, driven by the recognition that its current dual policing model, which involves both Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and the RCMP, is fragmented and inconsistent. This model has created operational challenges and a growing strain on leadership and community safety.

Key reforms underway include the push towards an integrated policing model, where HRP and RCMP work more cohesively. This would streamline operations, reduce safety risks, and enable better resource sharing between the two forces. The need for reform became evident through a report commissioned by HRM in 2022, which highlighted the inefficiencies in the existing system. The municipality has opted to retain both policing bodies but aims to integrate their functions to improve service delivery.

Additionally, HRM is exploring shifts in how certain non-core police functions are handled. This includes the potential for civilian-led teams to manage mental health crises and traffic enforcement, reducing the burden on police officers for tasks they may not be best equipped to handle. These reforms aim to better align police roles with community needs, with a focus on systemic change, particularly in addressing issues like systemic racism as outlined in the Wortley report on street checks.

While the process is still in its early stages, with more planning and consultations ahead, these reforms represent a comprehensive effort to modernize policing in Halifax and improve community safety through a more integrated and efficient approach.

The reforms are expected to unfold over several years as HRM navigates this complex transition(

Would you do anything differently around police reform? If so, what and why?

If I were to approach police reform differently, I would focus on a few additional areas that could complement Halifax's current efforts:

1. Community-Driven Approach: While HRM is consulting citizens, I would emphasize a stronger role for continuous community engagement. Creating local councils or committees that work with the police to monitor reforms and provide feedback regularly could help ensure the reforms align with evolving community needs. These could also act as oversight bodies to maintain transparency.
2. Emphasis on Prevention over Enforcement: Instead of focusing heavily on integrated policing structures, I would push for investment in social services that target the root causes of crime, such as poverty, mental health, and education. Shifting some budget from police to community programs, housing, and mental health services could reduce the

need for police intervention in non-criminal matters, easing the pressure on law enforcement.

3. **Police Accountability and Training:** While Halifax is addressing the integration of police services, a more robust focus on accountability could include independent civilian review boards with real power to investigate complaints and enforce discipline. Additionally, police training reforms could focus more on de-escalation, anti-racism, and implicit bias, along with a stronger mental health component.
4. **Technology and Data Transparency:** Implementing technology to track police interactions and making data publicly available in real-time can increase transparency and community trust. Requiring officers to use body cameras with strict privacy controls, for instance, could also build more accountability.
5. **Diverse Recruitment and Cultural Competency:** Recruiting from within communities, especially underrepresented groups, would diversify police forces and improve relations with marginalized groups. Training on cultural competence should be mandatory to ensure officers understand the diverse communities they serve.

These changes would support HRM's reforms by shifting the focus from enforcement to long-term societal improvements while fostering greater trust between police and the community.
Cheers Will Gilligan