

Mayoral Candidates:

David Boyd

Councillor Sheila Fougere

Mayor Peter Kelly

Moderator:

Dan Leger, Director of News Content, The Chronicle Herald

The debate was held from 4:00-5:00PM at Neptune Theatre, Halifax

***Please note: candidate answers have not been transcribed verbatim; some of the answers have been summarized.***

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Candidates had two minutes for an opening statement and two minutes for a closing statement.

**Opening Statements**

David Boyd

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is David Boyd. I was born and raised here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I would like to start by saying that I am really pleased to have this opportunity to be here to speak to all of you.

We are very lucky right now to have three important elections in the month of October. We have a really great selection of candidates for all of these elections. I believe the Municipality is on the verge of the greatest prosperity we have ever seen. The next four to eight years are crucial for our municipality. We, the people, are ready to move forward for this prosperity that is coming our way.

Friends, we all know the mayor's position is a big and important responsibility. He or she must know the issues that make our place unique. Our place is like no other municipality around. He or she must know the hopes and dreams that inspire people and make people wake up every day and go to work.

We are in a great position: we have an exciting opportunity to elect a new mayor or to keep the current mayor in office. I am not here to say that HRM has done badly over the last eight years; I am saying just the opposite. Our city is great. I have seen progress here that shows the determination of the people of HRM. Our city is moving forward. I am not here to undermine the last eight years, but I am simply here to say that change is necessary. Change isn't easy but change is necessary.

Friends, we all agree that business opportunities need to be created. We need to look at our community services, increase policing and support our current police force. All governments' top priorities should be affordable housing for our communities. Recreation and youth centres should be a top priority for our young people.

I believe we are at a turning point. I have a different approach than any of the other candidates. I am a blue collar worker. I have talked to other blue collar workers, business people and professionals. They all agree that we need to do better and that we need to move forward. As your mayor, I would like to move our city forward. I am running for mayor, not because that I think HRM is bad, but that things are getting better. It is a great place to live and work. If we adjust our hopes together, we can make it a better community.

Peter Kelly

Good afternoon. I would like to thank the Chamber for hosting this debate and for all of you for coming out today. For the last eight years, we have invested in our infrastructure, have had no deficits and have continued to pay down our debt. Because of this strong fiscal leadership, HRM has recently been upgraded to a AA rating from Standard and Poors.

Over the past eight years, HRM has enjoyed over \$4.5 billion worth of construction activity. Several projects have been approved or are going through the approval process that will bring additional development over the next few years: \$1.5 billion in the downtown area of Halifax, \$1 billion in Dartmouth and \$4 billion in residential development over the next ten years throughout HRM. Our crime rate is also trending down.

We have a long list of environmental accomplishments, such as the Harbour Clean Up, Alderney Five, a world class water management program, a new community energy plan, a greenhouse gas reduction plan, and a climate change strategy.

Transit ridership has increased dramatically and Council has approved a five year, \$155 million Transit Implementation Strategy. This is just a sample of our many accomplishments.

Did I do this on my own? Absolutely not. This took team work. Success like this can only happen with much consultation, teamwork and cooperation. We reach our goals together; not just Council, but organizations like the Chamber, volunteer and community groups and individuals. We are thriving, growing and we are starting to become even greater.

We need to make our streets and neighborhoods even safer with more police officers and positive programs with help from our partners. We need to create an integrated transportation authority so that roads, transit, bridges, ferries, bike ways, and walkways can be managed more efficiently and effectively. We need to create a strategic capital investment fund which will leverage existing funds and leave a lasting legacy.

We need to continue to implement our well thought-out concept plans including our Regional Plan, Economic Plan, Cultural Plan, Community Visioning and HRMbyDesign.

I look forward to having the opportunity to work you in the future.

Sheila Fougere

The question I ask myself when faced with a problem is “What am I going to do about it?” Waiting to see how things turn out has never been my style. During ten years as a leader on the Council team, I have personally brought forward the Bikeways Master Plan, the need for tax reform initiatives, improved public hearing procedures, weekly green cart pick up, and the successful push for the first new recreation facility in Peninsular Halifax in forty years.

I rolled up my sleeves and did the grunt work on the committee for the Regional Plan, the Harbour Clean Up and the Economic Strategy.

Recently, polls have indicated that fifty to sixty percent of HRM residents feel a disconnect with their local government and suggest a change. Pretending the status quo is fine won't cut it. The public needs good information on new models for governance and a say in how that happens.

Back room chats and a lack of a strong leader left HRM tax payer with 2/3 costs of the \$315 million dollar plus cost of the harbor cleanup project, rather than the original 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 deal with the provincial and federal government.

Back room chats and a lack of a strong leader saw \$700 million dollars in provincial and federal funding for athletic and recreation facilities, affordable housing and transportation walk from this community.

Lack of a strong leader saw the promise of future commuter rail options disappear as CN tore up its second rail line into Halifax and sell it for scrap.

Credit is taken for eight years of balanced budgets, when in truth, they are required by legislation and the plan to keep us on track financially was adopted in 1999 under the previous mayor.

Lack of strong leadership failed to act on issues of violent crime in our community until after the tragic murder of an American sailor in 2006. It created an international reaction. 32 murders occurred in HRM between 2000 and 2006 and no action was taken by our leader.

Talk minus action equals zero. Media points don't solve problems. I think HRM is outstanding and deserves more. When I asked myself what I was going to do, I decided to offer an alternative. When you have a choice to make a difference on October 18<sup>th</sup>, please vote to do so.

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The debate format consisted of ten questions; each candidate had two minutes to respond.

**1. Council's Focus Areas for budget 2008-2009 were Safety, Infrastructure, Community Development and Tax Reform. Specifically, what do you think should be Council's priority focus areas over the next Council term?**

Sheila Fougere

1. Transportation
2. Tax reform
3. Economic development
4. Quality of place issues (including public safety and work with social agencies)
5. Service excellence to the public

Peter Kelly

The ones that we started with are the ones we need to complete. Specifically:

1. Safety
2. Infrastructure
3. Tax reform
4. Economic development
5. Transportation

David Boyd

Issues that should be top priority should be:

1. Affordable housing
2. Transportation
3. Business development
4. Emergency services

## **2. What do you see as HRM's biggest governance challenge and what should be done about it?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

### David Boyd

- The size and structure of HRM is great; we had some growing pains but we need to work together to find solutions.
- Rural areas need just as much representation as our urban areas.
- It's time to work together to make it work.

### Sheila Fougere

- We need to improve on what we have now. Geographically, we are larger than the PEI.
- An average city our size has a council of twelve; I would like to see the size of council reduced.
- We should use our community councils; they have a lot of powers they don't use. They can bring things back to the Council table that are relevant.
- There is a large group of people that believe that we should split HRM into a rural and urban divide; I'm not certain that that's the answer. I think information should be provided concerning this option and that the public should decide this in a plebiscite. It could cost multi-millions of dollars and therefore people may not support it. It needs to be addressed; we cannot ignore it.

### Peter Kelly

- The current structure of 23 councillors has had some challenges but it has worked fairly well in terms of the overall democratic process.
- There is a large land mass that needs to be governed. We must realize this. There are differences in the 196 communities; they want some latitude to grow as they deem appropriate, not as the politicians think they should grow.
- I support giving more autonomy to the communities through the community councils, which can be achieved through increased powers and financing.
- To go back to amalgamation would cost \$30 million dollars, plus the carrying costs, for a total of \$45 million. To go back, we would spend that and then some. We would also have to go back and rehash all the amalgamation issues.

**3. There has been much discussion in the business community about the implications of tax reform.**

**a) Do you support the current proposed serviced-based system, where commercial and residential tax payers pay for the services they consume?**

**b) Do you support elimination of the Deed Transfer Tax?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

Sheila Fougere

- The current tax reform proposal is not quite where we want to be. What is suggested in the proposal is a variety of serviced based initiatives: that you pay for the services you receive; however, there are some provisions involved related to income levels.
- From talking to people, I learned that they are in support of paying for services they receive; it's all the nuances in the proposal that cause concern.
- Talking to commercial property owners, such as apartment building owners, they are worried that they will pay more in taxes, even though they use less municipal services on a per dwelling basis.
- Investment in a property needs to be looked at differently than investment in your home.
- I don't support elimination of the Deed Transfer Tax; if we do eliminate it, we need to make up for it somewhere else, as we need to pay the bills.

Peter Kelly

- 54% of our budget comes from property taxes.
- We need to fine tune this process as there are people paying for things they don't get.
- I do not like the current tax reform proposal.
- I do not support elimination of the Deed Transfer Tax, as it would mean an 8% tax increase across the board for all tax payers.
- We also have to take into account that the province gets a percentage of our tax revenue; their percentage is based on assessment.

David Boyd

- The current tax system is not working.
- We have to go back to the people to see what they would like to have as a reformed tax system.

- Personally, I am against the Deed Transfer Tax; however, once again it should go back to the people to decide.

#### **4. Part One**

**Do you think that there is an immediate need for a transportation authority which would combine Metro Transit, HRM Transportation and the Bridge Commission?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

##### Peter Kelly

- Yes I support, and will try to work towards, a Transit Authority. Four to five years ago, we had discussions with the Province about this; we need to go in this direction.

##### David Boyd

- Yes I support a Transit Authority.
- We should look at Boston and other cities as models.

##### Sheila Fougere

- No, I don't support a Transit Authority. The reason I don't, is because I think that we have a good platform for what responsibilities are ours.
- Municipalities are supposed to provide services to properties and that includes roads.
- The provinces should take responsibility for the services they provide but charge the municipalities for (education and corrections) and HRM should take over roads within our borders, other than the one hundred series highways. HRM should hit up the federal government for money to maintain those roads.
- The Bridge is maintenance intensive and they operate well, independently from the province and HRM. I think they should continue to operate that way.

#### **Part Two**

**Metro Transit's Five Year Transit Enhancement Plan was approved by Council in the spring of this year. However, each individual project under the plan is still subject to budgetary approval by Council. The eleven projects listed in the plan total \$115m and are all planned to be fully operational by 2013.\***

**If you could make one change to the Five Year Transit Plan, what would it be?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

Peter Kelly

- The Transit Plan is one that we need to move forward on. If there is one thing to change, it should be moved up as quickly as possible.
- We need more buses and routes.
- We need to tie into the rural areas, so they can get downtown.
- We need to look at other bodies and options, such as the high speed Ferry, to make sure that there is a business plan in place; if it's feasible, go ahead; if not, don't.

David Boyd

- We have a great system, but we need to tweak our current system.
- We need to add more buses, access-a-buses, and amalgamate the taxi zones.

Sheila Fougere

- Move the ferry away from five years down to ten, which would allow us to do two things: one, spend the current pocket of money that we have now from the federal government on enhancing the current transit system and two, work with the province in terms of timing around their plan for the Bedford waterfront.

## **5. What do you think is the biggest mistake this Council has made?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

David Boyd

We have seen wasteful spending and in-fighting. The cat by-law was embarrassing; our council should be focused and not waste time on issues such as cats and chickens.

Sheila Fougere

Being very quiet about the Commonwealth Games and not being more public about the negotiations around that. Not making Canada fight for the games and doing too many things behind closed doors.

Peter Kelly

Council being bogged down in details and not working cohesively. We need to deal with the issues more collectively, rather than individually. We need to conclude the debate and move on to more important things

**6. Do you support HRMbyDesign? Why or why not? Is it time to clean up the delays in approval of development permits?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

Sheila Fougere

- Yes, I absolutely support HRMbyDesign.
- It sets clear parameters for building in the downtown.
- There is a misconception out there that developers are the breaking rules, which is fueled by the fact that our regulations are very flexible. There are set rules now but, if you don't want to obey those rules, you can apply for another process. HRMbyDesign should help to clarify this.
- HRMbyDesign sets clear guidelines for building heights and heritage protection.
- It also rewards good building design, which is something we haven't done before.

Peter Kelly

- Yes, I support HRMbyDesign.
- We have to make sure the downtown is walkable, livable and a place where people want to be.
- Right now, as indicated, there is over \$1.5 billion dollars of construction projects in various stages of discussion. Those seven projects will transform the downtown in concert with HRMbyDesign, to make sure that when tourists come here they see a dedicated understanding for heritage, but also, they see that we want growth for tomorrow.
- We can also look forward to taking down the Cogswell interchange to free up that land for development.

David Boyd

- Our city is long overdue for a plan. Yes, I support HRMbyDesign. It's a great way for our city to move forward with a planned structure.

**7. What is the most important thing that the next Council can do to support economic growth in our city?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

Peter Kelly

- We spend many years consulting with the public, and sometimes we get frustrated by how long it takes. But we must understand that politicians are supposed to represent the views of the public.
- We must take that information that we collected, implement the strategies that we have in place and meet the public's goals and expectations.

David Boyd

- I think we should look to the people and business organizations to tackle this problem.

Sheila Fougere

- Actions around people are the most important: retaining young people here and making HRM the place of choice when they chose somewhere to settle down.
- Make HRM the place of choice for the immigrant community and incorporate that goal into everything we do.

**8. You have three sentences to describe HRM after your leadership in the year 2020.**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

David Boyd

- We have a true participatory democracy, with the public having the opportunity to vote on different issues (such as polls in shopping malls);
- That we are one of the top cities in Canada that is a great place to do business, with many immigrants.

Sheila Fougere

- That we continue to be the most beautiful, immensely livable city, with historic charm and new architecture, state of the art education and research facilities and a thriving business community;
- The most accessible and easy to get around, environmentally friendly, with a healthy, active population, in a safe, secure environment;

- And that we have the best transit system, with the healthiest people in North America.

Peter Kelly

- We want to make sure that HRM is a welcoming, open community that all cultures feel a part of;
- An integral, cultural city;
- That the municipality can meet the public expectations and help them grow and live within what we have to offer and what they want for the future;
- A safe community, with proper police resources, to ensure that you and your family feel safe;
- A transit friendly city, with an integrated Transit Authority that uses all elements; road, rail, water, bikeways, pathways whatever is there;
- Uses the environment to our advantage; that it is left in a healthy state for our children and our grandchildren; that we go in the direction of geothermal and reduce greenhouse gases that will be more challenging in the year 2020.

**9. Recent reports have branded Halifax as a violent city.**

**a) What can we do to help people feel safe in Halifax?**

**b) How can we begin to re-brand our city as a safe place to be?**

Key points mentioned by the candidates were:

Peter Kelly

- The concerns that we have had about being branded as an unsafe municipality are not true, when you look across this country and see what is going on.
- We have to implement the 64 recommendations in Prof. Clairmont's report.
- We need to address the reasons behind crime; change the economic and the opportunities and change to a reflective approach to crime; to understand the causes of crime and work with our partner organizations.
- We have to improve our ratio of police to citizens. Pre-amalgamation the ratio was 1 officer for every 500 citizens – now the ratio is 1 officer for every 566 citizens. We need to get back to the pre-amalgamation levels.
- We need more street on the feet and we need to have police officers connect with the citizens like they used to do.

- We need to provide the dollars, the resources, the policing and the understanding of how we can change, and to work with our partners to make sure that it is complete.

#### David Boyd

- We need more police, but also we need more visibility on the streets.
- Phone booths and kiosks as they have in England.
- We need a centralized and decentralized police force.
- We need to bring the issue back to the people and see what they want.
- I don't feel that we are branded as an unsafe city. I live in the North End of Dartmouth and I feel safe in my community.
- If you tell people they are safe, they will feel safe; it is a change in mentality.

#### Sheila Fougere

- Feeling safe is a perception; being safe is a reality. To make people feel safe, we need to have more police visibility and communication.
- We are one of the parts of this country where people still talk to each other. We need to work with the schools and church groups to keep them in our neighborhoods. These are the places where people gather to feel part of something.
- On the social front, we have huge social issues for a community our size.
- Re-branding needs to be earned. We need to call on our friends in the media to stop sensationalizing violence in our community because that just expands the brand.

#### **Closing Statements**

##### David Boyd

Our community is great; there are many improvements we could do here. We are on the right track - the ship is going the right way; we need a new captain. My themes are; I would like to bring the issues back to the people and that the Mayor is not all powerful; that the mayor needs to work with council. I would like to meet the right people, make connections and make this city a great place to live.

##### Sheila Fougere

I guess I got into politics to do something; not to be somebody. That is why I am willing to walk away from what is probably a pretty secure Council seat to seek the position of Mayor. I don't think that leadership is about control; it's about information and communication and I think leadership is what our community really needs. When I wake up on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October my life will not be the same.

That could be one way or the other. The citizens of Halifax will wake up on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October and their world will either be different or the same and they can make that choice on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Peter Kelly

We have had many, many successes over the last number of years, but we still have work to do. There have been some challenges on the way, but for the most part, we have come out strong. Over \$4.5 billion dollars of economic activity over the last eight years and over \$7 billion over the next ten years ready to roll out. Things are on a high, but things are not yet where they need to be. We have to make sure that we stay focused. All the energy that was spent by all of you and all of us, doing the Regional Plan, the Economic Plan and the Transit Plan are things that we now need to implement and complete. With your help we can continue to grow. It is a vibrant, beautiful place in this country. This is one of the best places in which to live, to learn, to work and to play.