



CALL TO ACTION

To all Members of the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce November 4, 1998

MAKE HARD DECISIONS NOW, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is a large service provider with a diverse client base. There are no simple, short-term solutions to the fiscal challenges it is facing. The Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly called for HRM to get its financial house in order. To do this, HRM's top priority must be to get its expenditures under control. Increased taxation is **not** the answer.

A plan has been put forward by HRM staff to deal with the most pressing financial issue - the ballooning deficit for the current year. The proposed measures are intended to rationalize municipal service delivery in order to satisfactorily meet the needs of the community with the resources available. We support the need for this type of aggressive action. There is a great deal of work which remains to be done, however, and HRM will face more difficult decisions in the weeks and months ahead.

To this point, HRM has not been able to make the difficult decisions and choices necessary to put HRM back on sound financial footing. **Too much time has been spent debating the effects of amalgamation and too little time spent preparing our community to move forward.**

We must, as a community, take a real hard look at the services we need and want. The objective must be to identify areas where we exceed this minimum level so that our limited resources can be reallocated to the areas where those resources are needed more urgently.

Service restructuring can either come now, in a planned and controlled manner, or they can come two years from now, after massive tax increases, as a last desperate effort to avoid financial chaos. Three years of ad hoc decision making has led us to the current situation. Council must be willing to make the hard decisions now, before it is too late and we, as residents and corporate citizens, must support them in those choices.

The Chamber would like to call on its members as individuals and business people to contact your councillor and make the following four points:

- 1) **You are contacting them as both a concerned resident and as a business owner.**
- 2) **The long term future of HRM depends on council's ability to reduce expenditures now.**
- 3) **You and the Chamber support the need for aggressive action to rationalize municipal service delivery.**
- 4) **Council must put aside their focus on the district they represent and make the decisions which are in the best interest of HRM as a whole.**
- 5) **Tax hikes are a short term "band-aid" solution and are NOT the answer.**

Together, Council, staff and the community can create and maintain an effective municipal government which delivers a high level of service in a cost effective way. Our goal is a stronger community in which to live and work, we thank you for your efforts and support.

The following page includes contact information for all HRM Councillors and the Mayor. Please feel free to contact both the Mayor and the Councillors for your area of residence and your area of business.



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