

# 2024-25 Election Guide

Halifax Regional Municipality



**HALIFAX  
CHAMBER OF  
COMMERCE**

# Taxation

## Municipal Property Taxes

Canadian municipalities rely on property tax as their major source of revenue. Roughly 81% of HRM's revenues come from residential, resource and commercial property taxes, tax agreements, and payments in lieu of tax.

### Current Situation

Halifax's recent population boom has put enormous pressures on the city to create new infrastructure. Because of this, HRM has been forced to raise its average municipal tax bill by an average of 4.9% over the past 4 years (1%, 4.6%, 5.9%, and 8.2%). And, while Halifax property values remain relatively lower compared to other major Canadian cities, our commercial tax rates per \$1,000 of assessed value are some of the highest in the country.

*(Source: Altus Group Property Tax Benchmark Report)*

### Chamber's Position

Last year the Chamber advocated for a reduction to the expected 9.7% property tax increase to 4.1% for the 2024 fiscal year (Halifax's level of inflation).

The Chamber will continue to work collaboratively with HRMs Budget Committee to find a balance between the need to accommodate demands for new infrastructure from record population growth, with a fiscally responsible level of taxation.

### Questions for Candidates

- At what point can Halifax Businesses and Residents expect a break from consecutive yearly property tax increases?
- How can HRM improve our property tax system to reduce the unfair burden currently placed on commercial properties every year?
- The Capital Plan shows significant spending in the next 3 years. Are we able to meet this level of spending without significant tax increases?

# Housing

## Housing Supply Gap

Halifax's Population has increased by over 60,000 people in the past 5 years. This massive and rapid increase in population has put significant strain on the existing supply of housing with Halifax needing 20,000 new units by 2030.

### Current Situation

Over the first 5 months of 2024, Halifax has increased the number of housing starts by 215% compared to last year. Halifax will also be receiving \$79.3M in funding installments through the Federal Government's Housing Accelerator Fund to help fast track the creation of at least 2,600 new homes.

HRM is also collaborating with the Province through the HRM Executive Housing Panel to create special planning areas, and remove barriers to development.

### Chamber's Position

Last year the Chamber advocated for more transparency and reduced administrative costs for the implementation of the Housing Accelerator Fund.

The Chamber will continue to work collaboratively with HRM officials to try and remove barriers, reduce costs, and improve efficiency for housing development in HRM.

### Questions for Candidates

- What specific policies would you implement to increase the availability of affordable housing in our city?
- How do you plan to ensure that new housing developments include units that are affordable for low- and middle-income families?
- What accountability measures will you need to see from staff to ensure the development approval process is transparent?

# Transportation

## Public Transportation Infrastructure

Rapid population growth has increased the stress on our region's public infrastructure like public transportation as demand is increasing faster than new infrastructure can be built, improved or retrofitted.

### Current Situation

The Municipality has 2 strategies to improve public transit, the Rapid Transit Strategy, which encompasses 4 Bus Rapid Transit lines, 3 new ferry routes, and the Electric Bus Proposal. As well as their Integrated Mobility Plan, which aims to increase the modal split of sustainable forms of transportation across HRM.

Transportation infrastructure and related projects represent a sizable portion of HRMs yearly budget, with Roads, Active Transportation, and Bridges accounting for 37% (\$111M) of the total 2024/25 Capital Plan (nearly \$100M of that is allocated for street recapitalization and the Cogswell District Project).

### Chamber's Position

The Chamber will continue to work collaboratively with HRM officials to ensure that our public transit system is enhanced in a way that not only meets the needs of our members and their staff that rely on it, but is also developed in a way that is environmentally and fiscally sustainable.

### Questions for Candidates

- What do you see as the biggest issue facing our public transportation system and how can we address it?
- In other provinces, municipalities receive provincial funding to help with public transit and infrastructure (e.g., Ontario's Gas Tax Program). Do you believe that Halifax requires a similar agreement to meet its strategic public transit goals?
- How can the Municipality better work with the Province to improve the outcomes related to public transit in HRM and surrounding communities?