

## **Fred Morley, Executive VP and Chief Economist, Greater Halifax Partnership**

### **Key Messages on HRM Charter – Bill 179**

HRM is the largest municipality in Nova Scotia, and is home to 40% of its residents and half the economy of our province. The Conference Board of Canada calls Halifax the economic hub of Atlantic Canada, one of only 9 in Canada. With an urban area that is over 5500 square kilometres, or the size of Prince Edward Island, a municipality of this size faces unique challenges that do not affect other Nova Scotian towns and cities. HRM is unique in Nova Scotia and more broadly, unique in Atlantic Canada.

The Municipal Government Act was not designed to address the unique challenges of the various towns, cities and municipalities throughout the province. So when HRM requests amendments to the MGA, they proceed through province-wide consultations like all other amendment requests and require approval by the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities. This process becomes very cumbersome and unnecessary when the amendment is of no interest to the other municipalities, and especially when it causes problems for them.

As I understand, HRM submitted over 30 legislative amendments for consideration during the fall sitting of the Legislature. All of these amendments are important to improving the lives and welfare of Haligonians, but not all of them will proceed in this session of the House due to time constraints. Re-establishing the Charter will help avoid this situation. It will give HRM the power to make its own administrative amendments without seeking individual amendments to the MGA. This will be a practice in efficiency, and reduce the amount of time lost by the municipality while it waits for legislative requests to be approved.

Other municipalities will also benefit from an HRM Charter. Often times the requested amendments are for matters that only apply to HRM yet province wide consultations must be held on each one. This reduces the amount of time the province has to spend working on issues of a more provincial nature that will affect all Nova Scotians.

As a representative of the Greater Halifax Partnership, an organization tasked with increasing the economic growth of the region, we are in support of this measure to increase efficiency in governance and allow HRM greater flexibility in achieving long term economic growth. In particular, the provisions to enable HRMbyDesign's plan for downtown Halifax are especially important. HRMbyDesign provides a blueprint for growth and development over the next 25 years in downtown Halifax, our economic centre and regional showroom. The streamlined development approvals process proposed by HRMbyDesign requires the amendments to the site plan approval process contained in the Charter in order to be fully realized.

On behalf of the Greater Halifax Partnership, I would like to affirm our support for the HRM Charter and urge you to support it.