

**Halifax
Regional
Municipality**



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Mayor

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April 2, 2009

The Honourable Rodney J. MacDonald
Premier of Nova Scotia
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, NS B3J 2T3

Dear Premier MacDonald:

Re: *Halifax - Atlantic Canada's Hub City*

I am writing in follow-up to a Forum on the Greater Halifax Economy that I hosted on March 30, 2009. Over 300 people from all sectors of the local economy attended to hear a keynote address from Glen Hodgson, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the Conference Board of Canada, and to participate in a panel discussion on the HRM Economic Strategy. The intent of the Forum was to gain insights into the effect of the global economic upheaval on HRM. As we are in year four of the five-year Economic Strategy, I felt an examination of the Strategy's priorities and emphasis was timely and the discussion at the Forum would help inform that review.

As I mentioned during our meeting today, the presentation from Mr. Hodgson of the Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) was particularly interesting and I have included it for your review. CBoC research has identified nine hub cities - Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina & Saskatoon, Calgary & Edmonton, and Vancouver - and concluded that these cities are the economic engines in their respective regions or province.

In the case of HRM, the CBoC concluded that not only are we an engine for Nova Scotia, but for the entire Atlantic region - the only regional economic hub city in Canada.

The point was strongly made that strategic investment in a province's hub city has far-reaching benefits for that entire province, more-so than investment on a mere per-capita basis.

In order for the province to receive maximum benefit, HRM must reach its full economic potential. The need to invest in the downtown core as the "showroom" of the region was also stressed. This is a priority both our governments share, and I would like to establish it as a common focus area in the coming months.

The theme of alignment and common priorities came up often during the Forum's panel discussion. Dick Miller, Chair of Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee, provided a review of the results of the Economic Strategy to date, the challenges and possible responses (attached as well). While HRM is doing well in areas that are directly influenced at the Municipal level, areas that require alignment between all three levels of government are falling behind. Examples include areas such as public investment, regulations affecting land and property development and university admissions.

Three key themes emerged from the panel discussion:

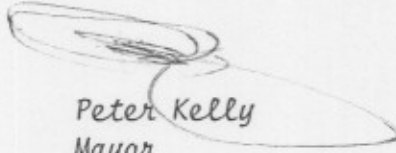
1. **TALENT** - how do we keep people here, how do we get more new people and how do we train and educate them to sustain our growth?
2. **INFRASTRUCTURE** - we need to set priorities for what do we need to acquire, build or complete to get our economy moving more quickly.
3. **CONFIDENCE** - we need to deliver and articulate a brand and messaging for Halifax that supports and strengthens business confidence here at home and abroad.

While much of this is already captured in the HRM Economic Strategy, the Forum highlighted the need to re-prioritize and think creatively about how to achieve these goals. I expect to receive specific recommendations from the advisory committee in the coming weeks.

Once I receive these recommendations, I would like to discuss them with you in order to ensure our governments and the business community can identify common goals and collaborate on ways in which to achieve them. A meeting between ourselves, Dan English, Dick Miller as Chair of Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee, and Stephen Dempsey as President and CEO of the Greater Halifax Partnership would be useful.

Aligning our priorities will ensure we are able to reach our full potential as a hub city, to the benefit of our community, our province, and indeed the entire Atlantic Region.

Respectfully, I remain

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Peter Kelly". The signature is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

*Peter Kelly
Mayor*

*c. Mayor's Economic Advisory Committee
Halifax Regional Council
Greater Halifax Partnership*