

Halifax Regional Municipality 2016 Election: Candidate Construction Questionnaire

	<p>Q 1: Construction procurement is complex and involves significant risk. Consistent application of industry standards to the procurement and awarding of construction is beneficial to all parties concerned. Our members frequently report inconsistent procurement practices, delays in awarding work and lack of transparency. What would you do to address this important issue for the benefit of all parties involved in construction procurement?</p>	<p>Q 2: Modern infrastructure is critical to the social and economic vitality of HRM. A comprehensive multi-year infrastructure plan that considers maintenance, replacement and new construction is required to achieve these ends. What will you do to ensure that a comprehensive multi-year infrastructure plan is developed with meaningful representation and contributions from industry, businesses and the community?</p>	<p>Q 3: Responsible development is important to HRM and contributes to our ability to compete on the world stage, attract investment and be a community of choice for residents. Frequently, we hear concerns from members about delayed approvals, inconsistent application of policy and unnecessary red tape; each of which negatively impacts our community's ability to compete. What would you do to ensure responsible development that is consistent in approach, efficient and transparent?</p>	<p>Q 4: Decisions pertaining to construction in HRM are often made by the municipality with little or no consultation with the industry or a full understanding of the implications on industry businesses. Progressive municipalities view industry as a partner in the development, growth and the vitality of their communities. What would you do to ensure that our industry is a partner in the decision making and policy formation process?</p>
<p>Name: Shelley Fashan District: 2</p>	<p>I would consult with the Construction Association on these issues and what they identify their solutions that involve all parties.</p>	<p>Develop such a multi-year plan using the Construction Association and HRM facilitating the process and involving all partners, industry, businesses and community.</p>	<p>I would have to see examples of such problems to determine if they are a common issue. Discuss and research these concerns with the folks who have been negatively impacted by them and consult with all parties that are impacted. For example why the delays, is it a human resource issue or something else, with inconsistent application of policy, ensure that all staff are interpreting policy keeping the community in mind. Re-evaluate these policies to determine that they are clear in their interpretation. Continue to communicate with the community on these policies.</p>	<p>Ensure that that consultation happens, we are in this ark together and it is very important that we take a holistic approach and view involving industry, community and HRM.</p>
<p>Name: Gail McQuarrie District: 2</p>	<p>I believe to be fair to everyone, a standard of policy needs to be in place and that standard must be met in accordance with that policy each and every time there is a procurement request. This way everyone knows the parameters and no one benefits more than the other. Changing mid-stream is unfair and creates a host of problems. Maintenance of the standards also ensures councillors are doing their jobs without favoritism.</p>	<p>Councillors do not know construction, builders know construction. I believe a policy must be in place in order to know where we are going and with what means we will achieve the end result. It makes sense to liaise with the industry professionals to know what we need and when we need it. Not so that the industry to dictating to the council but so that infrastructure is planned appropriately. I will be all for working together to the end that best benefits the public purse.</p>	<p>The three things you mention above are of reverse order of importance to me, residents, investment attraction and world stage competition. I agree when approvals are delayed but for non-compliance with present policy then this delay needs to disappear. But when delay arises because someone wants policy changed, then that again we need to ensure all are treated fairly. Transparency cannot be bought, and too often it seems that this is what happens. Policy will ensure consistency and it will also ensure efficiency. This what I will work towards.</p>	<p>As mentioned above I believe it makes complete sense to have industry work with staff and council. I will request consultation, but not for the main priority of protecting industry, rather protecting the municipality. It is the implications for the municipality that will be first and foremost on my mind and priority list. The industry needs to fit into that equation, it is not up to the municipality to fit into the objectives of industry.</p>
<p>Name: David Hendsbee District: 2</p>	<p>I would prefer to see an accelerated procurement process. Currently 50% of capital budget is allowed to go to early tender process prior to final budget approval. As for transparency, I would like to see all bidders listed that took out bid packages and not just the ones that submit bids. Need to know how competitive the market is or it is just consolidating. And I wonder if our bonding requirements might be too strict or restrictive.</p>	<p>Already HRM has a multiple year capital budget that should give some assurance and predictability to forecast construction projects. Perhaps more project plans can be contracted out to get blueprints and construction drawings ready in advance of tendering. Too much time is lost in the preparatory work.</p>	<p>Currently HRM & Province is looking at RED TAPE Reduction to regulations and procedures. I welcome suggestions from the construction industry on what and how it can be done. Also we need to hire more planning staff to better deal with the workload of applications and plan reviews.</p>	<p>Again I ask for Industry input on Red Tape Reduction. Also as HRM requests for public inputs on various Municipality planning initiatives, I would expect the construction industry to participate and provide perspective and insight.</p>

Name: Lorelei Nicoll District: 4	<p>I ran uncontested this municipal election and subsequently 'acclaimed', therefore, I am not necessarily considered a candidate during the current municipal election. As you know, for the past term, I supported the efforts of the Construction Association of NS by chairing/facilitating regular meetings between the CANS Executive and staff from both HRM and Halifax Water. I took on this initiative because I believe face to face conversations result in a stronger mutual understanding. I would like to think these efforts yielded good results. I look forward to continuing to facilitate these conversations as needed/required in the future.</p>			
Name: Ned Milburn District: 5	<p>Process and communication is crucial. The municipality works for its residents, so fairness, respect, and transparency are key. I feel comfortable reviewing the processes and the communications within the process to see which parts of the process need amendment to ensure fairness and transparency for all involved parties.</p>	<p>Compile a data base of existing infrastructure and desired infrastructures, with details of their maintenance time and cost cycles. This must exist before making any decisions on a plan. Measure financial need based on projected maintenance requirements. Confirm available ongoing funding. Create a plan that balances need with ability, and remembering that a balanced maintenance cycle, rather than a boom-and-bust maintenance cycle, is preferable for overall cost of maintenance as well as steadiness of employment.</p>	<p>Ensure all public input is given and considered at the beginning of the process. This will help avoid problems later in the process that can result in projects getting delayed, amended, or even cancelled in worst case scenarios.</p>	<p>Industry employs people of the community. Everyone's livelihood is at stake, and we truly are one community. Each interest group should have fair opportunity to share its views so that decisions can be made based upon the collective voices of the full community.</p>
Name: Wayne Mason District: 7	<p>Yes, I have met with staff of major contractors to discuss the problem, I think HRM is on the right path with our new procurement chief but we do need to complete this work.</p>	<p>We are about a year away from the SAP Enterprise Asset Management system being operational. I think your members have heard me say repeatedly during budget that we need to complete that project, the pavement management program, and make sure new projects have good projections for total life cycle cost so that budgets get adjusted on a going forward basis.</p>	<p>Centre Plan. Similar plans for suburban areas. We need to take the downtown plan model and implement it in the serviced area. Most cities don't do MPS and LUB amendments like HRM does, we need to get to a place where we are implementing a plan and not struggling with a staff and resource intensive cycle of major amendments.</p>	<p>I think a lot of this can be addressed through procurement reform. I think processes like what HRM used to develop construction mitigation can be very effective. Having everyone in the room participating in solving a well-defined problem is the way to go on our next set of issues, whatever they may be.</p>
Name: Linda Mosher District: 9	<p>Based on a myriad of issues and meeting with the Construction Association of Nova Scotia, I brought to Council a request to review the Procurement and related Policies, specifically our Administrative Order to ensure we are advancing projects and payments in an appropriate and timely manner. A year after my request to Council, the Auditor General also raised concerns when he reviewed the Washmill Court Extension Project and he suggested the procurement process could be clearer.</p> <p>The report was completed and presented to the Audit & Finance Committee, of which I am Chair. The committee recommended to Regional Council that it be discussed at a future Committee of the Whole session. The date has not been established. I support the recommendations in the report as they will increase transparency, provide consistency and reduce times to award contracts and ensure work is completed on a timely basis. The report can be found at www.lindamosher.ca under the News tab. If you wish to provide feedback either email me directly linda.mosher@halifax.ca or the Municipal Clerks Office: clerks@halifax.ca and request that your correspondence be distributed to all members of Council.</p>	<p>We must ensure our infrastructure is appropriate and reflects our needs. Ongoing maintenance costs must be included in our multi-year budgeting. Any new infrastructure purchases should reflect both capital and operating over the length of the useful life of the asset. We must evaluate the total cost of ownership to conduct a financial estimate to assist us in determining the direct and indirect costs. This management accounting concept assesses the full costs, and can include ecological economics and social costs.</p> <p>As Councillor, I have always been devoted to meeting with all stake holders on infrastructure investments and opportunities in my district. It is important to understand how projects affect residents and how projects can enhance the life in a community, It is for this reason that I remain committed to enhancing the public engagement process and bringing all stakeholders from industry, businesses and the community together.</p>	<p>Recently council approved funds to have a working group with the province with a goal for red tape reduction. I supported this and will support any feedback on ideas to improve time frames and reduce red tape. We also need to ensure that staff are empowered to make decisions and that files do not keep getting handed from staff person to staff person. As Councillor, I will ensure our new Chief Administrative Officer makes this a priority. I was on the hiring committee and am confident that he will make positive changes to address these issues.</p>	<p>As a Councillor I feel it is imperative to formulate policy based upon consultation with a multitude of stakeholders. I do view that industry is a partner in the development, growth and vitality of our communities. In the past when I brought forward policy recommendations we have consulted with industry to ensure the policy was reflective of the other partners/stakeholders. Two examples are the revised blasting bylaw and the procurement policy recommendations mentioned in 2. I will continue to ensure industry partners are consulted in order to have effective and inclusive policies.</p>

One of the main reasons I brought this to council is that we have a very short construction season, particularly for paving roads and sidewalk construction. Staff puts the capital budget together over many months and Council has a fulsome budget process where we discuss both the capital and operating budgets. Over the years I have had both residents and construction companies complain that projects were not getting done on time, despite them being included and approved in our budget. Some projects are pre-tendered but most are not and many do not come before Council until the fall, making it almost impossible for them to be included in the current construction year. Many of these delays can be attributed to our procurement and payment policies. The staff review took eighteen months and included an evaluation of internal HRM wide purchasing. It also evaluated the Province of Nova Scotia, external groups such as engineering and construction organizations, and best practises in other cities such as Ottawa, Winnipeg and Hamilton. The review concluded there were opportunities to reduce red tape and shorten approval processes, in some cases saving about six weeks per tender. As well that it would add marketplace clarity, be consistent with other levels of government, and would provide defined standards for each process and point of approval.

Staff's recommended changes include specific responsibilities for purchasing processes, posting, methods, and award authority such as a business unit having the ability to purchase smaller amounts directly, the ability of the Director to delegate for requesting goods and services to a higher amount, and award authority. The changes also allow for a negotiable request for proposals which could be used as a risk mitigation tool.

The award and signing authority would change and confirm the Manager of Procurement and Director of Finance as authorities for Standing Offers, combine award authority and signing authority and allow our Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to exercise options to extend contracts within constraints. It would reduce the volume of awards that must be approved by Council.

	<p>These changes are expected to decrease the period between closing and award by one to six weeks depending on the project.</p> <p>It is important to note that it would allow the CAO to delegate their full award authority ONLY if the Project Budget was approved by Council and the low bid is within + or – 10% of the pre-tender estimate that was included in the overall budget approved by Council. As well it provides a clear description of authority, delegation of authority, which reflects the direction and clarity requested by the Auditor General.</p>			
Name: Russell Walker District: 10	The construction Association needs to contact councillor's and let them know what the inconsistent procurement practices are.	With a new council and CAO we will be setting out a comprehensive multi-year infrastructure plan and so it meets the funding from other levels of government.	Council has already started the process of reducing red tape that has caused delays. They are to report back in six months and I am in full support of reducing red tape and making the process faster.	I will meet with the industry at any time and will bring their concerns to staff and council. We can also decide how the industry wants to move forward to be a partner in the decision making and policy information process.
Name: Bruce Holland District: 12	You are not the only organization that feels this way. I will meet with stakeholders to gather specific concerns and then meet with senior staff in the procurement department to rectify the issues.	This is of great concern to me. It is my intension to create an active committee, which would include representation from your organization, to look at the ongoing needs of the Municipality to identify multi-year needs and create a plan to deal with them.	The Municipality has recently created a "Red Tape" committee. I will be looking at the structure of that committee to make sure the private sector is represented. In addition, the Municipality needs to move faster on resolving the inconsistencies around planning and development. From my perspective this should include private sector involvement if we want to get it done in an efficient and timely manner.	Coming from a business background, representing a group of businesses in my most recent career, I am well aware of the inability of Municipalities to make progress in areas that ensure effective, responsible construction and development in a timely manner. We must include industry in the decision and policy making process to keep policies up to date and effective. I will be making my voice heard at every opportunity to include industry in the policy development and implementation process. Doing this will ensure we have the best processes and policies possible.
Name: Scott Guthrie District: 12	I too have seen issues with the procurement practices from the outside looking in. The way in which procurement in the municipality is carried out has concerned me for quite some time. I myself have been working for companies that are CANS members for the last seven years and experienced some issues. We need to peel away some of the red tape and ensure there is a balanced playing field for all proponents and in a way that it does not favor any specific companies. Before deciding how to address some of the issues it is important to sit with stake holders like CANS and the procurement department to better understand exactly what those specifics are and find a way to address them together. I am all for fair and equal opportunity for all companies that qualify for contracts, and we must also be aware not to write our tenders in such a way that show exclusivity to any one proponent.	Safety First... We absolutely need to properly budget for and maintain our capital assets for public safety, and, to get the most out of these investments. A comprehensive multi-year infrastructure plan is needed to ensure that what we invest in today is in good repair and safe for generations to come. Government at all levels need to adopt such plans in order to properly manage capital assets. Nothing lasts forever but with the proper capital planning using statistics, facility master plans, regional plans, development projections and industry input we can properly identify present and future service needs that will extend the life of our capital assets and help prepare us for the eventual replacement of the same. For many decades there are areas that have seen much neglect due to inappropriate budgeting practices and lack of routine maintenance. Savings can be seen for the short term however; it usually ends with much higher premature replacement of the same in the long term with a much higher cost in the end.	I fully agree that there is far too much red tape at many levels in HRM and that it is currently under a review. I am sure you are aware on February 16th, 2016 Regional Council unanimously moved and passed the motion a Red Tape Reduction Strategy to include consideration of a broad strategy inclusive of public engagement, stakeholder consultation to define red tape, best practices for its reduction, and an accountability framework inclusive of cost reductions and process enhancements. I am not sure if the recommendation coming forward from this Strategy will go far enough to both protect public interest and make it easier for the industry to more effectively and economically grow this city, but I am cautiously optimistic. I look forward to reading the report that is expected to come forward presumably in the New Year at such time will be open to further debate and public consultation.	Fair and transparent partnerships throughout the industry are crucial to ensure that we can grow HRM in an economical, balanced and effective manner. We need to listen to industry experts, listen to the community and realize that we do not have to reinvent the wheel on every proposal. Halifax needs to modernize, but to do so properly we must do so involving all stakeholders at the table to obtain realistic and obtainable goals that reflects smart, sustainable development that is in balance with the communities they are in.

		Council and Staff must make certain that there are routine and preventative maintenance schedules in place and followed for all capital asset projects.		
Name: Bruce Smith District: 12	I believe contracts should be awarded on 'best value' not 'lowest bid' in multi your plan.	A multi-year plan is necessary to ensure adequate funding is applied in the areas required. Public consultation is essential to identify maintenance and replacement requirements within individual communities. Industry and business consultation will ensure that the resources are available when they are required.	A consistent approach of efficiency and transparency can be accomplished through establishing standards. Such standards can be achieved through consultation with the industry and city staff to develop a strategy to be approved by City Council.	I believe I've answered this question above.
Name: John Bignell District: 12	I hope to represent District 12 at Regional Council by bringing my skills as an advanced care paramedic to city politics: specifically, critical thinking, working in team environments under stressful circumstances, and being held accountable to the people that I serve by the decisions that I make.	As a councillor, I would be open and be transparent and work with both industry, business and the people of District 12.	As a small business owner, I understand the challenges of red tape and how it negatively impacts our city. I want to ensure that we can reduce the red tape and keep our development growing in a safe direction.	If elected, I would like to spend time with your organization to make sure I fully understand the industry.
Name: Lisa Blackburn District: 14	Transparency is one of the keys of my campaign and something that will transfer over to my time on council. I agree that there are inconsistencies in how work is awarded and it is my opinion that the cheapest deal is not always the best deal. I would be vocal about procurement practices and call out the inconsistencies when I see them.	I fully support at multi-year plan and in a district where development is growing with little foresight, it is critical. I'd like to work with fellow councillors in surrounding districts to put a plan together that would lean heavily on the industry for guidance.	Delays and unnecessary red tape are driving business out of HRM and is giving us a reputation as a difficult place to do business. Solving the problem can only be done when councillors, industry and staff work together. I'd like to be a facilitator to help make that happen.	Without the consultation of industry, decisions are made with incomplete information. As a councillor, I would insist on industry being a full partner in the process. Anything less is irresponsible.