

Action is our Middle Name

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

At the end of 2021, the population of Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia reached one million people. The Built Environment Team has focused its efforts on regional-scale opportunities to shape where and how Halifax Regional Municipality is growing. We continue to closely monitor the municipality's Regional Plan review process, improving awareness about opportunities for public input.

We responded to the Municipality's 2022/23 Budget and Business Plan, advocating for more resources dedicated to planning complete communities, active transportation infrastructure and a broad parks spectrum. During the budget period, we campaigned to get Halifax's climate action plan, HalifACT, adequately funded.

With the help of volunteers, contracted researchers and Our HRM Alliance, we continue to search for planning tools and creative solutions to protect the environment from sprawl while thinking about how to meet Halifax's housing pressure. Looking forward, we want to work with communities to envision density and intensification in the suburbs.

MARINE

In February, the Healthy Bays Network held a virtual press conference in response to the Nova Scotia Aquaculture Review Board's retroactive approval of a boundary expansion at the Rattling Beach salmon farm in the Annapolis Basin. Communities across Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia came out in force to dispute the decision, call for review of the process and reinforce that salmon farming does not have social license in our province.

With Make Stewardship Count, a coalition of over 90 organizations, experts and academics pushed for improvements to the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) eco-label. We released our third and final round scorecards evaluating the MSC review of their Fishery Standard, the scoring by which fisheries are assessed to become an MSC certified fishery.

With SeaChoice, we organized a letter with 25 other seafood companies, grocery store chains and experts calling on the federal government to bring Canada's seafood traceability standards into the 21st century.

TRANSPORTATION

We celebrated 15 Bike Buddies completing the five-week program in December 2021. Our Winter Walk Day event had 16,500 students celebrating a walk to/at school, with 81 schools participating across the province. After two years, our youth-led active transportation project with the Glace Bay High Changemakers is complete! Their pedestrian pathway and bridge are implemented, along with benches, bollards, bike racks, picnic tables and positive messaging signage.

The Una'maki Bike Repair Workshop series partnered with four communities in Una'maki (Cape Breton) to deliver two-day bike repair sessions focused on skill-building, knowledge exchange and a DIY bike repair kit for each community.

We continue to hold governments to their sustainable transportation commitments; monitoring budgets, plans and policy documents. We're also launching an exciting interactive map visualizing Nova Scotia's active transportation future, infrastructure projects proposed in municipal plans and the province-wide network connectivity between them. The map is available at: activeatlantic.ca/map

FOOD

The Food Team continues to develop the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region, a municipal food strategy co-developed by the Halifax Food Policy Alliance and HRM. We're gathering community feedback and meeting with government staff whose work impacts our food system. This spring, we'll be sharing draft recommendations of the Action Plan with key actors, community groups and food system stakeholders.

The federal government has announced plans for a national school food policy. As a member of the Nova Scotia Coalition for Healthy School Food, we drafted a letter pushing the province to match incoming federal funds and consult with school food leaders to design programs that suit the local context.

We're also working hard to ensure there are strong policies and programs to support farmers as they mitigate and adapt to a changing climate. We're advocating for a climate-focused Agricultural Policy Framework, to be launched in 2023.

WILDERNESS

We provided a detailed submission to the first stage of the new Northern Pulp Environmental Assessment process – the Terms of Reference public consultation. Among other things, we strongly recommended the assessment include the impacts of firing up the Pictou County mill again on forest ecosystems, wildlife, wetlands and watercourses.

We launched a Stop Clear-Cutting Public Lands lawn sign campaign with Nature Nova Scotia and the Healthy Forest Coalition. We also launched a social media campaign against the use of forest biomass for electricity generation: Biomass is NOT a climate solution! Meanwhile, the threats and impacts of gold mining continue to grow. In addition to their existing open-pit gold mine at Moose River, Atlantic Gold is pushing for the approval for three additional open-pit gold mines on the Eastern Shore. Now another company, Anaconda, wants to open a gold mine at Goldboro. We continue to advocate against these destructive and polluting mines.

ENERGY & CLIMATE

This winter was a busy time for the Energy Team. We joined forces with Efficiency Canada and others in asking the federal government to commit \$2 billion for low-income energy efficiency in the upcoming federal budget. This is especially important for Mi'kma'ki, which has some of the highest rates of energy poverty in Canada. We also advocated for a zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) mandate.

December also signalled the start of the EAC's Electric School Bus (ESB) initiative, which will bring together voices from across the province to call for the deployment of ESBs in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve health outcomes for young Nova Scotians.

In February, we organized a panel discussion to brainstorm ideas to transition to a clean electricity grid in Mi'kma'ki. Among the fresh ideas were a sustainability mandate and aligning electric utility performance with a future that values affordable, reliable, green energy for all over corporate profits.

COASTAL

The Coastal & Water Team has been continuing work with community members in the Northwest Arm of Halifax and government officials to prevent infilling of water lots and consulting with the province on the upcoming Coastal Protection Act.

We also continue to spread awareness about the importance of wetlands and advocating for strengthening protection of wetlands. On February 2, the anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands being adopted as an international treaty in 1971, we celebrated World Wetlands Day! We collaborated with wetland groups and organizations across the province to honour these incredible natural features and to reflect on the importance of wetlands in climate change adaptation, both globally and here in Mi'kma'ki/Nova Scotia. A number of exciting wetland events took place and we also compiled some great educational resources on wetlands which you can find on the EAC website!