



Ecology Action Centre – Candidate Survey 2024

Candidate for Councillor, District 12 – Timberlea - Beechville - Clayton Park - Wedgewood

Name of Candidate: Janet Steele

1. The [Halifax Green Network Plan](#) (HGPN) should be used to guide the region's growth, but full implementation of the plan requires resources and enforceable rules to protect important greenspace and wildlife corridors. Will you support the full implementation of the HGPN to protect the Green Network? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes, I support continuing to fund the Halifax Green Network Plan. I will seek opportunities in Council to address the essential requirement of embedding the Halifax Green Network Plan in our yearly capital and operating budgets. There are many social and environmental benefits to be achieved through open space planning. Being deliberate about how we protect and use open space over the long term is important for the sustainable growth of our city and the development of more livable and complete communities. It will be important to look for partnerships over time to share the costs and challenges as HRM continues to grow. In addition, the plan may need to be updated in the future.

Locally, we are encouraged by Parks Canada and other stakeholders to finalize plans for the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Urban Wilderness Park. As the one of the Councillors responsible for this spectacular Urban Park, I very much look forward to working with the other four Councillors neighboring its boundaries to encourage an enhanced program for residents and visitors as a part of the Green Network Plan.

2. Will you commit to ensuring Halifax Transit attracts and retains enough staff to implement the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network and ferry routes in the [Rapid Transit Strategy](#)? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. As a regular transit user this would be a key priority. Many residents have raised the importance of reliable, rapid transit. I regularly see on X ferry and bus cancellations, and I know this is a strong disincentive to using public transit. I would ask pointed questions about the management of Halifax Transit to encourage better working conditions for drivers and ferry operators.

3. Will you commit to implementing the [Road Safety Strategy](#) and achieving its vision of zero injuries and fatalities across all modes of transportation? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes, the importance of road safety whether walking, rolling, cycling or driving is one of the key reasons I entered the Council race. Daily I see excessive speeding on our residential streets. I know the Halifax Regional Police and the RCMP cannot be everywhere to enforce traffic rules so we must adopt a multi-pronged approach to addressing this most critical issue. Some key components include, crosswalks, traffic calming, speed display signs, signalization, active transportation networks and ongoing safety education for all.

4. Are you committed to ensuring the continued implementation and full funding of the [JustFOOD Action Plan](#) as the municipality's first comprehensive, long-range food strategy, which will increase collaboration across levels of government and among community partners, strengthening our collective capacity to build a just, healthy, and sustainable food system. Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. One of the things I notice in District 12 is the lack of community gardens to support affordability in our district. With many apartment and condo dwellers and others with limited backyards, it is important to have this option to grow healthy food. One idea put forward by a long-time and informed resident would be to have a seniors community garden. Pursuing a grant for an idea such as this, among others, would support food security, wellness and community building as well as address the social isolation felt by our increasing senior's population.

The municipality needs to be encouraged to work with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to ensure HRM is accessing all available funding and that the three levels of government partner on supporting community groups. I believe that food security is a critical issue in our HRM community, and we must take concrete measures to address it. It is important to note that Nova Scotia has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country. I am hopeful that the recently launched NS school food program will help food insecure families.

Participating in and supporting *Square Roots is helping a small number of our residents. In addition, expansion of programming to endorse the concept of community kitchens around HRM would help create skills and serve a larger population. Possible access to schools after hours is an avenue to explore. An excellent model for this type of initiative is Dartmouth's North Grove, a community food centre and farm.

***Square Roots offers produce from farmers for free or low-cost Friday/Saturday bi-weekly. Food that would be thrown away due to slight imperfections is made available to communities.**



5. With climate change wreaking heat waves even in temperate climate zones, and the price of home-heating fuel spiking due to global conflict, access to affordable home energy efficiency has become a human right crucial to comfort and standard of living. Cities across Canada are seeing tenants mobilize for these rights. As an elected official, would you support a “right to efficiency” by-law supporting tenants’ rights to affordable energy efficiency support? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I would support it as there is a serious public health threat with extreme heat. To address affordability of new temperature and energy efficiency requirements, it may be necessary for all levels of government to provide financial incentives focused on rental buildings, non-profits and cooperative housing. HRM has already set a precedent several years ago in directly assisting HRM homeowners in the financing of installing solar heat to drive down their electrical costs. This program was well received

Education is key to inform and encourage participation by all sectors and there may be incentives developed such as tax breaks or rebates for participants.

6. There are multiple stressors on local freshwater quality and quantity such as increased development and an increase in water-related climate events (e.g., floods, droughts, storms). Do you commit to advocating for and supporting watershed level management in municipal planning? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. There are over 1000 lakes and more than 20 rivers and streams in the Halifax Regional Municipality. This management is complicated by the shared and sometimes overlapping jurisdiction over fresh water in Nova Scotia between federal, provincial and municipal governments. There are many risks associated with not managing watersheds. These include nutrient enrichment, chloride contamination, biodiversity loss, increased flood risk, decreased water security for households not within the municipal service boundary and there are also administrative challenges related to lack of appreciation for ecological goods and services, insufficient funding for spending on habitat restoration and water quality remediation and policy and regulations that do not sufficiently address changing environmental conditions. Education will play an important role at the local level too for homeowners, dog owners and recreational users of our lakes and watersheds.

7. Will you, in the absence of a provincial Coastal Protection Act, advocate for and work towards passing municipal by-laws designed to address development on vulnerable coastal properties and infrastructure? Explain why or why not (optional).



Yes. It is disappointing the province has decided not to proclaim the Coastal Protection Act. This leaves this role to property owners, the municipalities and the province of NS. HRM will have to work with the province on by-laws and it must work with all available partners (including other provinces, universities and the federal government) on modelling and other tools to avoid inappropriate development.

