



Ecology Action Centre – Candidate Survey 2024

Candidate for Councillor, District 8 – Halifax Peninsula North

Name of Candidate: Anika Riopel

1. The [Halifax Green Network Plan](#) (HGNP) 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 HGNP to protect the Green Network? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. It should be noted that climate change, rising sea levels, more frequent and severe storms, and fires and flooding will continue to cost individuals and the municipality money, and most importantly put lives at risk. As a coastal city and province, we need to be proactive in understanding these risks and planning for the future. Investing in mitigation and adaptation measures will save us money down the line, however, I am not willing to kick that can forward. We need a strategy and commensurate investments now, and ones that protect our assets, generate employment, and ensure that our quality of life remains high.

That means funding and supporting the already established plans and programs (the Halifax Green Network Plan, HalifACT climate action plan, Integrated Mobility Plan, Bus Rapid Transit, JustFOOD Action Plans and People Planet , Prosperity Economic Plan) and listening to experts like the folks at the EAC, Clean Foundation, and other environmental organizations. There are also creative policies being researched and implemented all around the world, and we should borrow from other municipalities and regions to deepen our own toolkit.

So, yes, I'll support the HGNP! Our green and blue networks are critical to people and the planet! The Halifax Green Network is essential to curbing urban sprawl, and providing free and accessible opportunities for outdoor recreation to our residents. Council adopted the HGNP in 2018 but there are still many actions that have yet to be implemented towards protecting our green network.

Haligonians love access to nature! By establishing and protecting parks, from neighbourhood parks to wild areas in our urban and suburban communities, we are preserving access to the outdoors and our health and wellbeing. Further, these spaces need to be accessible by public transit to ensure equitable access to these benefits for all community members.

We have amazing groups of volunteers and orgs already working on this! I strongly believe in working together to make their work easier!

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! Having effective and reliable transit is linked to combating climate change as well as affordability and housing. We need attractive alternatives to single use occupant vehicles. We can't have good transit without supporting our transit drivers/operators. They need living wages, good working conditions, and reasonable shifts. I will commit to ensuring that these are attractive jobs that will enable the recruitment and retention of transit operators. I have met with the Local Transit union rep and will continue to listen to them on how best to support these amazing frontline workers!

I also believe that transit operators are green jobs and should qualify for federal and provincial funding subsidies! I will work with the other levels of government to advocate for more operating funding (staff) as well as capital investments (new stations, new electric buses/ferries etc).

Finally in the North End, we need to get the express buses that don't serve the neighborhood off Gottingen and onto Barrington. This means revisiting the turn radius on the bridge ramp and looking at reconfiguring the routes with HRM staff.

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, I've worked as an Active Transportation advocate for the past seven years and I'm deeply committed to creating safer streets for walking and rolling. I was pleased to see HRM update its vision to "zero" instead of the previous "towards zero". I am committed to giving HRM staff priorities, tools and resources to action the Integrated Mobility Plan, The Strategic Road Safety Framework and the Rural Active Transportation Program, and fund programming that reduces barriers to accessing walking, cycling, and rolling (like bike and walking, school buses, the Halifax Cycling Coalition I Light Halifax and community rides, spaces like Bike Again, programming like the Art Bikers, Pop-Up Bike Hub, etc.)

Speeding on residential streets is an issue raised constantly by residents during door knocking. Lowering speed limits and implementing photo radar is the fastest and most effective means of lowering speeds - as seen in cities across North America and the world. I am committed to working with the province to allow HRM to reduce the speed limits in HRM and implement photo radar for speeding and running red lights. These measures reflect the best practices that have successfully calmed residential neighbourhoods, making them safer and more enjoyable for everyone, especially children and vulnerable users.

In the meantime, temporary speed bumps and bump outs and other tactile infrastructure interventions are low cost means of slowing cars down. In general, a thoughtful approach to infrastructure could place greater priority on road safety, and lead to certain minimum design features and standards for new projects and some forms of upgrading and maintenance.

My dedication to road safety is very personal. When I was 16 I was hit while riding my bike by a car that left me with lifelong back problems and scars. The accident and the many near misses have motivated me to work in this field to make our roads safer.

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, I would be committed to the full implementation and funding of the JustFOOD Action Plan!

I'm very excited by the new Halifax Food Council outlined in the JustFood Action Plan. This autonomous collaborative governance model will act as a convening body that will bring different levels of government, sectors, and community actors together to integrate new food systems. For HRM this removes the massive burden of addressing food (in)security by bringing more people and levels of government to the table!

This is particularly relevant to the North End. Our district has massive food deserts with the concentration of two big corporate grocery stores. This is due largely to real estate clauses that these large corporations have secured and may require more scrutiny. I would work with the other levels of government to nullify restrictive covenants that limit who can sell food in an area. Specifically, addressing this is included in recommendation 16b from the JustFood Action Plan.

Despite these restrictions, the North End has an amazing array of small-scale food retailers that include local produce, food co-ops, and a variety of regional markets. I would love to see more of these pop-up all around the North End. Likewise, I love that community gardens exist as an opportunity for people to grow their own food, particularly given that many people live in apartment buildings in the area and don't have access to a backyard.

The JustFood Action Plan also has recommendations for African Nova Scotian Food Justice and Sovereignty that include the creation of an ANSB Food Hub providing access to growing space, and supports for community capacity building for ANS-led, ANS-serving food projects, and



programs to respond to community food insecurity. I will whole-heartedly support these recommendations.

Finally, the North End has numerous food banks and hot meal programs that are supporting an ever increasing amount of clients. I believe that streamlining municipal funding streams (like moving to multi-year funding instead of one-year grant cycles) and increasing funding will help these superstar programs continue to support our community.

I worked on farms and in kitchens in my early 20s and food is not only the way to our hearts but also the way in which we build community. Everyone deserves access to healthy and sustainable foods!

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. Having access to the vital services of heat, hot and cold water, electricity and fuel is a human right. Energy poverty is a serious issue facing many Nova Scotians - forcing households to make hard choices between rent, heating, food and other essentials.

We have lots of programs aimed to help Nova Scotians afford their energy and improve the energy efficiency of their homes - but these programs all have paperwork and bureaucratic barriers in accessing them. For those already living with the stress of struggling to make ends meet - additional paperwork is a huge barrier. I will work to complete and improve a municipal navigator program to help haligonians access these programs.

We need to ensure that new developments are energy efficient. And we must invest in programs to give homeowners and renters access to affordable retrofits to reduce energy consumption. Such programs should support low-income families that are most at risk of facing energy poverty through financial support.

I believe strongly in adapting programs that work in other cities - we aren't alone facing these complex problems and we should be learning from other cities around the world. Locally the Solar City Program is a great model, as is Energize Bridgewater!



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. Good urban planning policies are key to protecting our watersheds. We need to continue to focus on building dense complete communities and containing urban sprawl.

Currently we don't plan around watersheds (an area that contains the flowing of water - including rivers, lakes, wetlands, basins and oceans), but individual wetlands - which isn't a holistic or smart method of development since it's only looking at one component of a watershed system instead of the whole.

Wetlands themselves are worth protecting because they absorb water and reduce the likelihood of flooding, they retain water during droughts, they can help buffer wind and waves and can act as firebreaks. As well, they are huge biodiversity hotspots. The long term economic impact of not protecting wetlands is immense when you consider the safety and clean up/rebuild costs of floods, droughts, storms and fires.

HRM actions are limited by the Province under the HRM Charter, but as outlined in the East Coast Environmental Law's A Citizen's Guide to Wetland Conservation in the Halifax Regional Municipality (2014) HRM could be a leader in "coastal stewardship by zoning land as environmentally sensitive, at risk of erosion or prone to flooding, and enacting by-laws against certain types of development, and creating setbacks along the coastline – so long as none of these are directly in contradiction with a provincial statute." This zoning could be extended to include interior wetlands as well as coastal tidal estuary adjacent wetlands.

Finally, recent studies have determined that the primary pollutant in our watershed isn't phosphorus (fertilizers) as thought but road salt. Once again our dependency on single occupant vehicles drives up the use of salt on our roads and subsequently into our water. Reducing vehicle travel and replacing it with public transit, walking and cycling will also help reduce road salt and protect our water!

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 deeply disappointing that the provincial Government has shelved the Coastal Protection Act - despite broad public support. Under the current circumstances, it's now on the shoulders of

municipalities to set regulations to protect our coasts. Failure to act will put citizen lives at risk, impact infrastructure (like roads and buildings) and cost significant funding for first responders and clean ups. All of these costs come from us as taxpayers.

Like wetlands protections, HRM does have some power in zoning - that would prohibit certain types of development and establish setbacks along our coast lines. And ensuring that any municipally owned infrastructure is built/retrofitted with climate change mitigation in mind. Given the lack of provincial leadership, HRM has the opportunity to be a leader in Nova Scotia by strengthening our coastal bylaws.

HRM could also support and fund coastal protection projects that use nature based solutions that are more cost effective than shoreline hardening, like Helping Nature Heal's Living Shorelines - which help prevent erosion and preserve current coast lines. Likewise, working with all levels of government to ensure that infilling projects like those in Dartmouth Cove and the Arm are prevented.

Finally, coastal access is connected to equity. Most beaches in Halifax are only accessible via car, rather than transit. In the North End, the public only has access to the ocean via the Africville boat launch. Historically Africville was a place that the African Nova Scotian community swam and fished. Restoring ocean access in Africville in partnership with the African Nova Scotian community would be a project I would love to see along with transit access to beaches and hiking opportunities.

