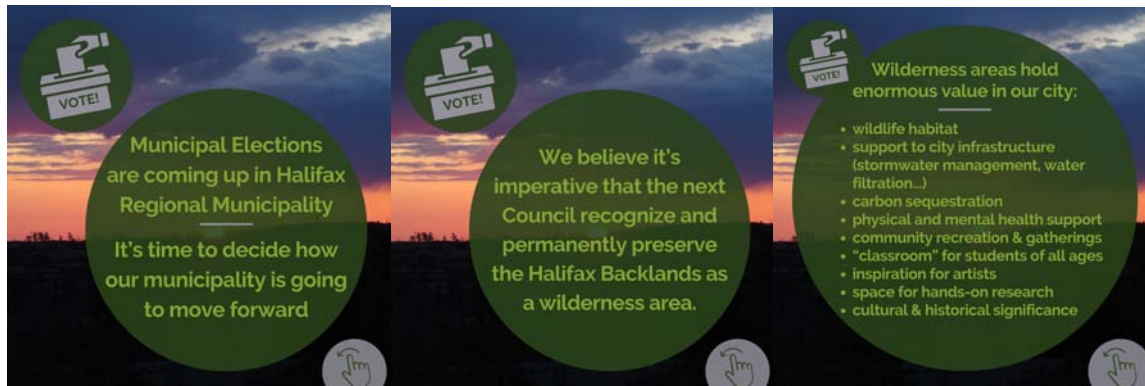


Questions to Ask Candidates, re: The Backlands



Elections are coming up fast in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) - are you ready?

At the Backlands Coalition, we believe it's imperative that the next Council recognize and permanently preserve the Halifax Backlands as a Wilderness Area. But no wilderness area survives as an island...

On October 19, 2024 as citizens of HRM we will hold the power to decide how our municipality moves forward over the next 4 years. HRM is growing faster than ever, resulting in more pressure on our housing, transportation, social/health services, and our wilderness areas. Pressures that are often pitched as battling against each other. So we're here to pitch for a path that moves us forward together - it's not "park *or* housing"... "wildlife corridor *or* highway"... "wilderness area *or* social services" - It's "**AND**", especially when our urban wilderness areas offer so many benefits to the citizens of our whole municipality and province.

No matter what District you vote in, we've put together a few questions that might help you determine your candidate's position regarding the Halifax Backlands, and policies that affect all HRM wilderness areas. Keep an eye on our socials - we'll be sharing these over the next week!

Question #1



No matter where in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) you'll cast your vote on October 19, 2024, your Councilor will have an impact across the entire municipality, so we've put together a few questions that might help you determine your candidate's position regarding the Halifax Backlands, and policies that affect all HRM wilderness areas.

Our first question is about the Halifax Green Network Plan:

The Halifax Green Network Plan defines a system of interconnected parks and wilderness spaces for HRM. The Green Network helps HRM maintain important land and aquatic systems, as well as identify land suited for parks and wildlife corridors. The Halifax Green Network was approved by HRM Council in 2018, but it took more than 5 years before staff was hired to begin to implement the Plan (*5 years*!!!!). In the meantime, urban development didn't grind to a halt and wait... meaning that areas originally identified as integral to Green Network have been altered or destroyed entirely (e.g. wildlife corridors between wilderness areas).

Ask candidates in your District:

"What steps will you take to formally protect the Halifax Green Network before it is lost?"

Question #2



Hey Halifax! When you head to the polls on October 19, 2024, you'll be helping to decide the path Halifax Regional Municipality will take for the next 4 years. As you consider the candidates in your District, we've put together a few questions that you might want to ask to help determine their position regarding the Halifax Backlands, and policies that affect all HRM wilderness areas.

Our second question is about the wildlife corridors that were mapped out in the Halifax Green Network Plan:

The Halifax Green Network Plan defines a system of interconnected parks and wilderness spaces for HRM. Wildlife corridors are imperative for the Green Network because they help wildlife move between green/blue spaces while avoiding urban areas. Several of these wildlife corridors connecting the Backlands to neighbouring wilderness areas were mapped in the Halifax Green Network Plan. However, Since then, due to little-to-no action being taken to protect corridors identified in the Green Network Plan, all of the corridors from the Backlands have been lost to development along Herring Cove Rd.

Ask candidates in your District:

"Will you commit to working to remediate or reconstruct the wildlife corridors mapped in the Halifax Green Network Plan? What steps will you take to ensure this is done?"

Question #3



On October 19, 2024, citizens of Halifax Regional Municipality go to the polls - there are many important topics at stake in the outcome of these elections, including how the new Council will treat our valuable wilderness areas. We've put together a few questions that you might want to ask candidates in your District to help determine their position regarding the Halifax Backlands, and policies that affect all HRM wilderness areas.

Our third question is specifically about the Halifax Backlands:

The Backlands is a beautiful, urban wilderness located across the Northwest Arm from the downtown peninsula. It is especially important for conservation due to its proximity and accessibility to the urban core of Halifax. The area has been enjoyed for generations by local residents and visitors. It is an oasis of calm in the heart of the city. But it is that accessibility and proximity to the city that makes this area at high risk for development and encroachment.

Ask candidates in your District:

“Do you support the preservation of the Halifax Backlands? What steps do you believe need to be taken to protect this special urban wilderness area?”

Question #4



Have you met the candidates for your District in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) yet? Even if you've already got a specific candidate in mind, do you know how they stand concerning the Halifax Backlands and other HRM wilderness areas? We've put together a few questions that might help you determine your candidate's position regarding the Halifax Backlands, and policies that affect all HRM wilderness areas.

Our fourth question is about land in the Backlands that is already owned by HRM:

There are multiple kinds of property owners in the Backlands, including HRM, which recently purchased a critical piece bordering Williams Lake, the Shaw Wilderness Park and the McIntosh Run. *However* HRM ownership or park zoning does not ensure the land is actually protected from future development.

Ask candidates in your District:

"If the opportunity to provide formal, permanent protection to HRM-owned land in the Backlands came to Council, would you vote to protect it?"

This is the last prepared question suggestion we have for you, now it's your turn - with the municipal election coming up, what's on your mind regarding the Halifax Backlands... the Green Network Plan... wetlands... threatened species... recreational wilderness spaces... development of wilderness areas...

Green Flag / Red Flag Answer Guide



Just like there are multiple trails to choose through the Halifax Backlands, there are multiple paths that Halifax Regional Municipal Council may take to permanently preserve the Halifax Backlands as a Wilderness Area - some of these paths may be rockier, some shorter, some may have great views but cause ecological damage, some might require assistance, and some might be so long that they just aren't practical.

Over the past few days, we've shared 4 questions that you may wish to ask the candidates in your District to determine what path they intend to take regarding the Halifax Backlands and other wilderness areas. We can't decide for you whether the path they each champion is the "best" answer, and only you can decide which is being the most genuine and likely to act. But we do have a few tips to help rate your candidate's answers:

Good answers ("Green Flags") may:

- Show an understanding of the Backlands, their uniqueness, and their lack of protection.
- Recognize that timely action is required to protect greenspace and wildlife corridors from development or destruction.
- Make a commitment to protecting the Backlands, and to supporting the Halifax Green Network Plan.

Answers to watch out for ("Red Flags") may:

- Show unfamiliarity with or misunderstanding of the Backlands, the Regional Plan, the Green Network Plan or zoning issues. An example of this would be answers that refer to the Green Network Plan as already whole/complete.
- Refer to greenspace protection as 'too expensive' (ps... the majority of the Halifax Green Network can be protected by zoning which is low cost)
- Support housing and development as always more important than protection of wilderness areas, rather than it all being part of a necessary conversation.