

Candidate Survey: Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park

Thank you for participating in our survey for HRM Candidates in the 2020 municipal election! There is an urgent need for a coherent and collaborative effort by Regional Council and HRM staff to follow through on the commitment to establish Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes (BMBCL) Regional Wilderness Park. Thank you for responding, your answers may be released to the public.

Email address *

JohnStewart4District4@gmail.com

District # & Candidate Name: *

District 4 John Stewart

1. Have you ever visited any part of the BMBCL area? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

☐ Other: _____

2. Halifax Regional Municipality is responsible for creating the BMBCL Regional Park as promised in the 2006 Regional Plan and in the updated plan 2014. If elected to HRM Council, will you commit to following through on the earlier HRM promise to create the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

3. a) HRM has acquired three blocks of land for the BMBCL in the last three years but in the absence of a strategy, land acquisition has been haphazard and guided by chance. If elected, will you ask staff and Council for a coherent land acquisition strategy? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

3. b) Please provide comments on your commitment.

I believe that HRM Council must continue to honour past commitments subject to the current conditions HRM and council are facing. If it becomes necessary to reconsider on a commitment this is a decision of the entire council and not any single councillor. I am in favour of all acquisitions occurring within the framework of a fully formed acquisition strategy.

4. a) As Councillor, will you support the continued purchase of lands around the perimeter of the provincial wilderness area to create the Regional Wilderness Park? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

4. b) Over your four-year term, would you push to have BMCBL land acquisition included in the annual HRM budget? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

4. c) Please provide comments on how you would influence land acquisition.

As stated above council needs to form a land acquisition strategy and operate within that strategy.

5. a) Having a signature wilderness park within the urban core of our municipality has tremendous benefits including recreation, climate mitigation, health and wellness, and the economy. If elected, would you push for the creation of this park through a coordinated planning approach and the commitment of HRM staff resources to ensure that opportunities for land acquisition and major access points/facilities are not lost? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

5. b) As an elected Councillor, please comment on what policies or actions you would introduce or support to ensure the creation of this park. *

I agree with the formation of urban parkland for recreation and its additional benefits. I believe we must operate towards this as a goal whenever possible. I believe that items that benefit HRM as a whole benefit the individual Districts as well and all councillors must work together for the good of their districts and HRM as a unit.

6. The HRM Regional Plan is currently undergoing another regular review and it is expected to be brought to Council for approval in 2021. Will you ensure that this updated Regional Plan includes policies that support the establishment of the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park AND excludes policies that will compromise the future park? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

7. a) The public are not being engaged on new developments that impact the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park. Staff reports to Council are too often discussed in-camera leaving the public in the dark. Will you commit to providing for effective and open stakeholder engagement and public information, and challenging the inappropriate reliance on in-camera Council meetings that exclude the public? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

7. b) Please comment on the public engagement you would support.

I cannot agree to conditions on what to include or exclude from a report without reading recommendations and reasons for the inclusion or exclusion of any information. I can commit to a fair and thoughtful reflection of the recommendations and making decisions that my reflection deem to be in the best interest of the people of HRM and District 4. If it is appropriate to go in-camera then I would support it but if it is not appropriate then I will oppose it.

8. Would you like to join us for a guided hike to see this wilderness area firsthand and learn more about the Regional Wilderness Park? This could include a visit to those lands acquired by HRM. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

9. Would you be interested in viewing a Powerpoint presentation (via link) of a backgrounder on the BMBCL Regional Wilderness Park? *

☒ Yes

☐ No

10. (Optional) Please add any personal comments as related to the creation of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park. And, thank you for your participation!

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