



P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Item No. 15.2.2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**May 27, 2025**

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**FROM:** Councillor Cathy Deagle Gammon, Chair, Audit and Finance Standing Committee

**DATE:** May 21, 2025

**SUBJECT:** One-time Withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421 for Year 10 (2025/26)  
Funding for the Halifax Mobile Food Market

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**ORIGIN**

May 21, 2025 meeting of Audit and Finance Standing Committee, Item 13.1.5.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommends that Halifax Regional Council approve a one-time, unbudgeted withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421 to fund \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) of the Mobile Food Market (MFM), as approved by Halifax Regional Council on March 25, 2025 and outlined in the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

**BACKGROUND**

Audit and Finance Standing Committee received a staff recommendation report dated May 4, 2025 to consider the increase to municipal support for the Halifax Mobile Food Market for Year 10 (2025/26) with inflationary increases per annum until Year 13 (2028/29).

For further information refer to the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

**DISCUSSION**

Audit and Finance Standing Committee considered the staff report dated May 4, 2025 and approved the recommendation to Halifax Regional Council as outlined in this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial implications are outlined in the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Risk consideration is outlined in the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Meetings of the Audit and Finance Standing Committee are open to public attendance and members of the public are invited to address the Standing Committee for up to five (5) minutes during the Public Participation portion of the meeting. Meetings are live webcast on Halifax.ca. The agenda, reports, video, and minutes of the Standing Committee are posted on Halifax.ca.

For further information on Community Engagement refer to the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implications are outlined in the staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Alternatives are outlined in the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated May 4, 2025.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Staff recommendation report dated May 4, 2025.

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Report Prepared by: Dorothy Maponga, Legislative Assistant, Municipal Clerk's Office 902.478.2408

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**Item No.13.1.5**  
**Audit and Finance Standing Committee**  
**May 21, 2025**

**TO:** Chair and Members of Audit and Finance Standing Committee

**FROM:** Bill Moore, Commissioner of Public Safety

**DATE:** May 4, 2025

**SUBJECT:** One-time Withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421 for Year 10 (2025/26)  
Funding for the Halifax Mobile Food Market

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**ORIGIN**

On March 25, 2025, MOVED by Deputy Mayor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Morse

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct funding in the amount of \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) of the Mobile Food Market (MFM), as identified in the financial implications section of the staff report dated January 30, 2025, to be funded with a one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421, subject to approval of an unbudgeted withdrawal from the reserve by the Audit and Finance Standing Committee.
2. Approve continued support for the Halifax Mobile Food Market for Years 11-13 (2026/27 to 2028/29), as outlined in Table 2 of the staff report dated January 30, 2025; and,
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to:
  - i) work with the MFM and other partners to develop a capital campaign for the purchase of a new hybrid or electric market vehicle and bring potential funding options to Regional Council for consideration;
  - ii) explore the feasibility of the MFM's use of an HRM fleet vehicle in the interim period until a new vehicle is purchased; and,
  - iii) explore funding options for the next iteration of long-term support for the MFM and report to Council in Year 13 (2028/29) with a recommendation for Regional Council's consideration.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On March 25, 2025, Halifax Regional Council approved the next round of increased municipal support for the Halifax Mobile Food Market (MFM) to \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) with inflationary increases per

annum until Year 13 (2028/29). Due to the time pressures of finalizing Budget 2025/26 for Council consideration and the timing of the Report, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) directed that the MFM Report recommend to Regional Council that Year 10 funding be an unbudgeted withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421, with Years 11-13 to be included in Community Safety's annual budgeting processes. This recommendation was approved unanimously by Regional Council, conditional to Audit and Finance's approval of the one-time withdrawal from the Reserve for this fiscal, the subject of this report. Staff are recommending the Committee approve this Reserve withdrawal, in keeping with Regional Council's approval of increased funding for the next four years in totality.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The Audit and Finance Standing Committee recommend Halifax Regional Council approve a one-time, unbudgeted withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421 to fund \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) of the Mobile Food Market (MFM), as approved by Halifax Regional Council on March 25, 2025 and outlined in the attached Staff Report (Attachment 1).

### **BACKGROUND**

The MFM is a well-established, community-based food access program that embodies the core principles of the JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region, recognizing that collaboration, dignified access, and social inclusion are key to improving food security and community resilience. As a founding partner and long-time supporter, the Municipality has a continued role to play in ensuring the sustainability and adaptability of the MFM. On March 25, 2025, Regional Council approved the next iteration of funding for the Halifax Mobile Food Market, committing to four more years of funding (Years 10-13).

Since the last round of municipal support was approved at the start of 2021/22, MFM has increased the amount of food distributed into communities by 2.5-fold, and increased distribution six-fold since 2019/20. This dramatic increase has challenged MFM's ability to expand programming and respond to communities and organizations in need of the MFM's services. Regional Council has approved a funding increase from the \$75,000 per year for 2020/21-2024/25 to \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) with inflationary increases per annum until Year 13 (2028/29). This funding will continue to support a senior leadership role (the Executive Director role has been funded by HRM for the past four years), an additional FTE, and a small amount of program funding.

As the MFM Staff Report was being written and reviewed, Finance Staff were finalizing the numbers for Budget 2025/26 and the timing didn't align for this matter to be included in Community Safety's budget. To reduce confusion and with the requirement for Council to approve the next round of MFM funding, the CFO directed that the MFM Report recommend that Year 10 funding be an unbudgeted withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421, with Years 11-13 to be included in Community Safety's annual budgeting processes. This one-time withdrawal was approved by Regional Council, subject to Audit & Finance's review and approval.

### **DISCUSSION**

Per the Provincial Financial Reporting and Accounting Manual, the surplus of a municipality is to be placed into an operating reserve. The Options Reserve, Q421, receives any year-end surplus, and can then be used to fund operating costs, offset deficits, or fund new operating initiatives and/or capital expenditures. Due to timing conflicts with budget target setting for 2025/26 and Regional Council's unanimous approval of the next four years of funding, it is reasonable to use the Options Reserve Q421 for its intended purposes of funding operating pressures and approve an unbudgeted withdrawal to cover Year 10 funding for the MFM, with future years being incorporated into standard budget setting practices.

Staff are recommending that the Audit & Finance Committee approve this one-time withdrawal, preventing any further delays in getting the approved funding to the MFM. As the MFM is facing unprecedented demand for their services, seeing a six-fold increase in volume of food distributed/year since 2020, the funding is critical for attraction and retention of people power needed to fuel the service.

While Provincial funding and grants from other agencies are invaluable to MFM operations, these funds typically only support short-term staffing positions and programming. As with many non-profits, the MFM is consistently working to build capacity to meet growing needs and attain additional funding, but without sustainable funding there's a risk of interrupted, reduced, or cancelled programming, which could damage relationships and hinder ability to address food insecurity. The approved municipal funding increase for Years 10-13 will enable MFM to strengthen the team with key staff positions, expand community markets and bulk food deliveries, and enhance operations to serve more people.

Should the Committee decide that the Options Reserve is not suitable for fulfilling Regional Council's funding commitment for 2025/26, the delay to seek an alternative municipal funding source could require the MFM to expend effort seeking bridge funding rather than focusing on adapting and responding to the need.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Year 10 (2025/26) municipal funding for the Mobile Food Market is \$175,700.00, which Council approved as a one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421, subject to the approval of an unbudgeted withdrawal from this Reserve by the Audit and Finance Committee, the subject of this report. There are sufficient funds in the Options Reserve to cover this withdrawal.

#### **Budget Summary: Option Reserve, Q421**

Projected Net Available Balances, as of Q3, 2025/26	\$ 8,813,786
Unbudgeted withdrawal	<u>\$ 175,500</u>
Projected Available Balances	\$ 8,638,286

The approved funding for Years 11-13 (2026/27-2028/29), indexed for inflation and contained in Table 1 of the attached Report, would be accounted for in Community Safety's annual budgeting processes under C421-8001.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

Not approving a one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve to cover Year 10 (2020/25) would contravene Regional Council's approval and intent to increase support and funding for the Mobile Food Market for the next four years, 2025/26-2028/29 inclusive.

Additional risk considerations of not funding the Mobile Food Market can be found in the Risk Consideration section of the attached staff report.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community engagement details are contained in this section of the attached staff report.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Environmental implication details are contained in this section of the attached staff report.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Audit & Finance Standing Committee could vote not to approve the one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve for Year 10 (2025/26) of the next four years of approved municipal funding for the Mobile Food Market. This is not the recommended option as it would contravene Regional Council's intent to provide four years of funding beginning this Fiscal, with the first year of funding to be an unbudgeted withdrawal from reserves and Years 11-13 being included in annual budget setting.

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

Legislative Authority is outlined in the attached staff report dated March 25, 2025.

***Administrative Order One, Respecting the Procedures of the Council, Schedule 2 Audit and Finance Standing Committee Terms of Reference:***

**8. The Audit and Finance Standing Committee shall review and make recommendations on proposals coming to the Council outside of the annual budget or tender process including:  
(g) the creation or modification of reserves and withdrawals not approved in the approved budget.**

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: March 25, 2025 Staff Report: Long-term Support for Mobile Food Market: Years 10-13 (2025-2029)

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Report Prepared by: Leticia Smillie, Food Policy Strategist, Community Safety. 902.266.4958

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P.O. Box 1749  
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**Item No. 15.1.4**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**March 25, 2025**

**TO:** Mayor Fillmore and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**FROM:** Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** January 30, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Long-term Support for Mobile Food Market: Years 10-13 (2025-2029)

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**ORIGIN**

As a founding partner and long-term supporter, Municipal investment in the Mobile Food Market (MFM) originates from multiple Regional Council motions since 2015, as described in Attachment 1 of this report.

This staff report outlines the proposal for the next four years of municipal support, building on the April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Halifax Regional Council motion (Item No. 11.1.5):

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

*THAT Halifax Regional Council:*

- 1. Approve the continuation of annual funding of \$75,000 to the Mobile Food Market, for three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.*
- 2. Approve continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions, for four years from 2021/22 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.*

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The MFM is a well-established, community-based food access program that embodies the core principles of the *JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region*, recognizing that collaboration, dignified access, and social inclusion are key to improving food security and community resilience. As a founding partner and long-time supporter, the Municipality has a continued role to play in ensuring the sustainability and adaptability of the MFM.

2025/26 marks a decade of HRM's role as founding partner and champion of the Halifax Mobile Food Market (MFM), which brings healthy and affordable food to HRM communities with food access challenges. This support has evolved from the founding partners (HRM, NSHA, & EAC) collaborating to pilot a market on a Halifax transit bus to long-term funding for the stand-alone, not-for-profit MFM with its own home, vehicles, and equipment serving communities across HRM. As the MFM has evolved to serve more people and offer new services to meet need and maximize impact, the focus of municipal support has shifted from establishing the MFM to providing funding for equipment and staffing to create a solid base for long-term sustainability and responsiveness of the service.

Rising costs, soaring rates of food insecurity, and growing interest in community-based, welcoming, and dignified ways of accessing food has resulted in unprecedented demand for MFM services. Since the last round of municipal support was approved at the start of 2021/22, MFM has increased the amount of food distributed into communities by 2.5-fold, and increased distribution six-fold since 2019/20. This dramatic increase has challenged MFM's ability to expand programming and respond to communities and organizations in need of the MFM's services.

Staff are recommending that municipal annual support be increased from \$75,000, to \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) with inflationary increases per annum until Year 13 (2028/29), per Table 1 of this report. This funding will be used to continue supporting a senior leadership role (the Executive Director role has been funded by HRM for the past four years), an additional FTE, and a small amount of program funding. As the MFM expands its services, particularly into rural communities, rising fuel costs, climate control issues and size of the current market truck are presenting challenges. Staff are also recommending exploration of options for the MFM to access an HRM fleet vehicle for interim use and options to support a capital campaign towards an additional hybrid/electric truck.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Regional Council:

- 1) Direct funding in the amount of \$175,700.00 for Year 10 (2025/26) of the Mobile Food Market (MFM), as identified in the financial implications section, to be funded with a one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421, subject to approval of an unbudgeted withdrawal from the reserve by the Audit and Finance Standing Committee.
- 2) Approve continued support for the Halifax Mobile Food Market for Years 11-13 (2026/27 to 2028/29), as outlined in Table 2 of this Report; and,
- 3) Direct the CAO to:
  - i) work with the MFM and other partners to develop a capital campaign for the purchase of a new hybrid or electric market vehicle and bring potential funding options to Regional Council for consideration;
  - ii) explore the feasibility of the MFM's use of an HRM fleet vehicle in the interim period until a new vehicle is purchased; and,
  - iii) explore funding options for the next iteration of long-term support for the MFM and report to Council in Year 13 (2028/29) with a recommendation for Regional Council's consideration.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Origins and Evolutions**

The concept of a mobile food market in HRM was originally raised at Mayor Savage's 2013 *Conversation on Healthy and Livable Communities*. Recognizing the need to work together to get the market rolling, this resulted in a "project team coalition" between HRM, the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) and Public Health (Central Zone, Nova Scotia Health Authority- NSHA). The Leadership Team was supported by host administrative partners, originally Partners for Care and then MetroWorks, who supported the movement of funding, human resources, and other administrative functions of the service.

The Mobile Food Market (MFM) was founded on a mission to increase dignified access to healthy and affordable food to communities with food access issues, which still holds true today. In addition to increasing access to healthy and affordable food, the MFM strengthens local capacity to address food security and creates opportunities for community connections and the development of food skills (recipe sharing, cooking classes, communal meals, etc.) and other work/life skills for a range of ages and abilities.



**Attachment 2 provides more detail on the MFM's Mission & Values.**

**Attachment 1** outlines the evolution of municipal support for the MFM, including links to the relevant staff reports. Highlights of this support and key milestones/evolutions of the MFM are as follows:

- 1) **SUMMER 2016 Pilot** (2015/16): August 2015 Council approved Project Team Coalition to have access to Halifax Transit bus for a 21-week Summer Pilot, which launched May 2016.
- 2) **YEARS 1-2** (2016/17-2017/18): January 2017 Council approved extending use of bus plus access to fleet vehicles and ongoing in-kind support for a Winter Pilot in 2017 and year-round markets in Year 2 (2017/18)
- 3) **YEARS 3-5** (2018/19-2020/21): July 2018 Council approved three more years of in-kind support in form of access to vehicles, staff support on Leadership Team, and on-site market support. Also directed exploration of HRM vehicle donation.
- 4) **YEAR 5** (2020/21): March 2020 the CAO approved diversion of 2-3 YouthLive staff to support the MFM's as they shifted and expanded services to respond to increased demand at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The *JustFOOD Action Plan* was also soft launched through a \$10,000 contribution to the MFM for distribution of emergency food hampers that included surveys and information on how to become involved.
- 5) **YEAR 5** (2020/21): April 2020 Council approved a one-time contribution of \$75,000 for purchase of a dedicated truck for the Mobile Food Market, this custom-built food delivery truck went into service in March of 2021.
- 6) **YEAR 6-9** (2021/22-2024/25): April 2021 Council approved three years of four years annual funding (1<sup>st</sup> year pre-approved in 2021/22 budget due to timing of report) for \$75,000 towards the hiring of a senior manager to support sustainability and strategic planning capacity
- 7) **YEAR 6** (2021/22): Consultants retained (funded by Province) to guide the Leadership Team in evolution of the governance model. **YEAR 7** (2022/23) January 2023 the MFM registered as a not-for-profit society, new Board stood up and the Leadership Team governance model and MetroWorks hosting dissolved.
- 8) **YEAR 9** (2024/25): MFM approaches Municipal Councilors seeking commitment to use discretionary funding to support the municipal funding component required for their application to the Federal Local Food Infrastructure Fund for a hybrid market truck. To date, 16 Councilors have committed approximately \$40,000 to support the application, contingent on the MFM being successful in receiving the grant to purchase the new market truck.

### **Governance & Operations**

The governance and operation of the MFM has evolved and matured to address the growing needs and complexity of the service:

- **Collaborative Leadership Model: from 2015 to 2023** the MFM was governed by a Leadership Team and a partnership agreement between **NSHA, HRM, and EAC**, providing strategic guidance and access to in-kind resources like vehicles, staff and administrative support.
  - Operations support was provided by staff (growing to a team of two and a half FTEs) and a team of volunteers.
  - Partners for Care and then MetroWorks acted as the host organization, responsible for human resources, banking, and other administrative functions, and were compensated for these contributions.
- **Independent Not for Profit Society: since incorporation in January 2023**, the MFM has been

operating as a not for profit. Currently the MFM has a **12-person Board of Directors and two committees** (Governance/Strategy and Communications/Fund Development) who work together to provide perspectives, input, and support for the ongoing development of the program, as well as ensuring that the program's development aligns with the organization's values, vision, and mission.

- o estimated that **Board members have contributed 400+ volunteer hours in the first eight months of 2024/25.**
- o Community Safety staff sit on the Board to provide organizational knowledge and a connection to broader food systems work of the JustFOOD Action Plan. A representative from the Mayor's Office sits as a non-voting "Observer" member.
- o current staffing of the MFM is **three FTEs with short term contracts for other positions or contractors as grants and funding permits.**
- o volunteers continue to be a vital part of the MFM, with 743 volunteer hours contributed by community members in the first 8 months of 2024/25. This is a 33% increase from the entirety of 2023/24, extrapolated to 1,100 hours for 2024/25 **the MFM could see a potential increase of almost 50% in volunteer hours if this trend continues.**

The services that MFM provides have evolved as capacity has grown, impact has been evaluated, and community relationships have flourished. Currently the MFM offers **three core services**, with other services provided in response to urgent needs like distributing free COVID hampers or to opportunities like the piloting of frozen meal distribution. MFM has also **partnered with HRM to provide emergency food distribution** in response to prior hurricane events and has committed through JustFOOD's Emergency Food Planning work to support future events.

Figure 1: MFM Services



The MFM serves the following HRM communities, with continued outreach and interest from other communities seeking services. As new markets and deliveries requires significant administration and

**South End Halifax   North End Halifax   Spryfield**  
**North Dartmouth   Fairview   Eastern Shore/Musquodoboit Valley**  
**Cole Harbour**

relationship building, staffing capacity limits the MFM's ability to serve new communities.

### Financials

**Figures 2 and 3** chart the broad categories of projected incomes and expenses for 2024/25. **Actual budget numbers** at eight months into 2024/25 **have significantly higher program revenues (+50%) and program food costs (+58%) than projected** due to the unprecedented demand for MFM services, escalating need for access to affordable food, and rising food costs.

As the MFM is built on a mandate of providing affordable food in a dignified manner, with participants consistently preferring “a pay what you can/reduced” cost model versus free food, the service is reliant on grants and funding beyond program revenues, which account for approximately 36% of incomes. As margins are so slim and the MFM prioritizes dignity and community leadership in programming, provision of affordable food is unlikely to ever be fully covered through cost recovery programming and ongoing subsidization is necessary. In terms of income and expenses, the following is of note:

- the Province of Nova Scotia has been a steady funder of the MFM, contributing \$100,000 annually to support operations and two FTE's.
- the Province regularly provides grants to support programming and strategic initiatives such as the \$200,000 grant awarded in 2023-2024 and program revenue projected for 2024/25 (Figure 2).
- the MFM is currently engaging with the Province to explore options for more sustainable support.
- **currently, Municipal funding represents approximately 9% of the MFM's projected income of \$805,000 for 2024/25 and Provincial funding is 42%.**
- **product (mainly food) at 42% and staffing at 36% are the biggest expense categories of the \$802,000 projected for 2024/25**, highlighting the significant people power required to provide services.

*Figure 2: 2024/25 MFM PROJECTED INCOME*

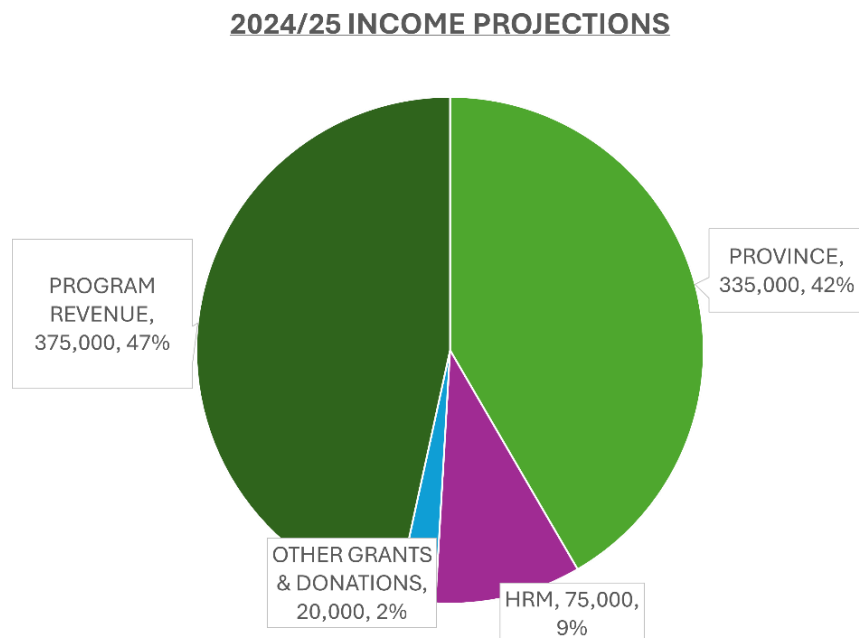
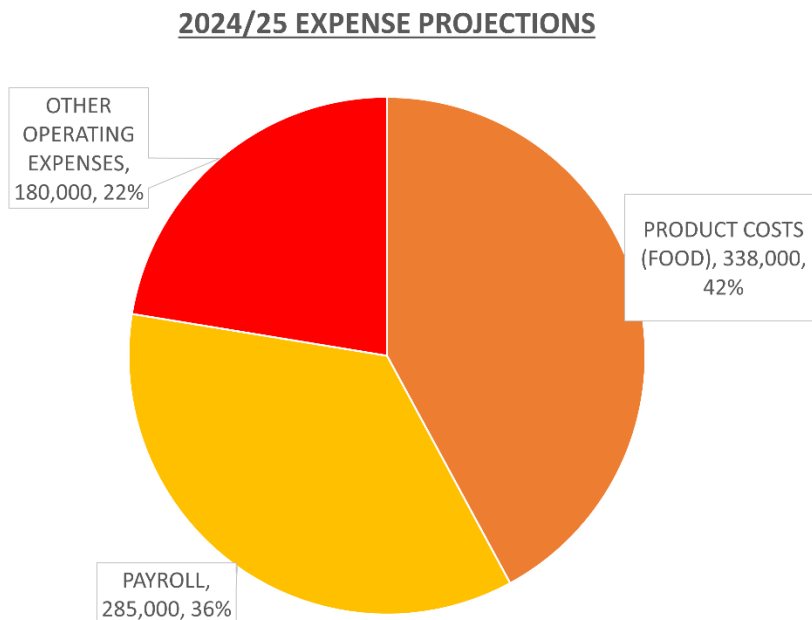


Figure 3: 2024/25 MFM PROJECTED EXPENSES



### **DISCUSSION**

[The JustFOOD Action Plan for the Halifax Region](#), as approved by Regional Council in March 2023, recognizes the important contribution of the Mobile Food Market in providing community access to affordable food in a dignified manner that builds community resilience. The Action Plan recommends ongoing and increased support for the MFM, as follows:

**RECOMMENDATION 14. Support community-based programs and grassroots initiatives** that provide dignified access to good food, create social inclusion, and offer choices that respect the culture and traditions of diverse communities.

a. Increase ongoing support to the **Halifax Mobile Food Market** and other food-delivery programs to expand their reach and bring affordable, quality food to communities with limited access to healthy and culturally preferred food

The MFM has submitted a request to the Municipality to increase the previous annual funding of \$75,000, which supported a senior management position and strategic planning capacity, to the proposed four-year annual contributions in Table 1. The proposed municipal funding of \$175,700.00, with annual increases indexed at 4.8% to cover inflation, would be used by the MFM to support the Executive Director position and one additional staff member, providing secure funding to support MFM's ability to meet the growing demand and unprecedented expansion of services. The Executive Director would continue to lead the mission, direction, and strategic growth of MFM, with the additional full-time, permanent staff member providing capacity to maintain and expand services.

The increased municipal funding would enable MFM to:

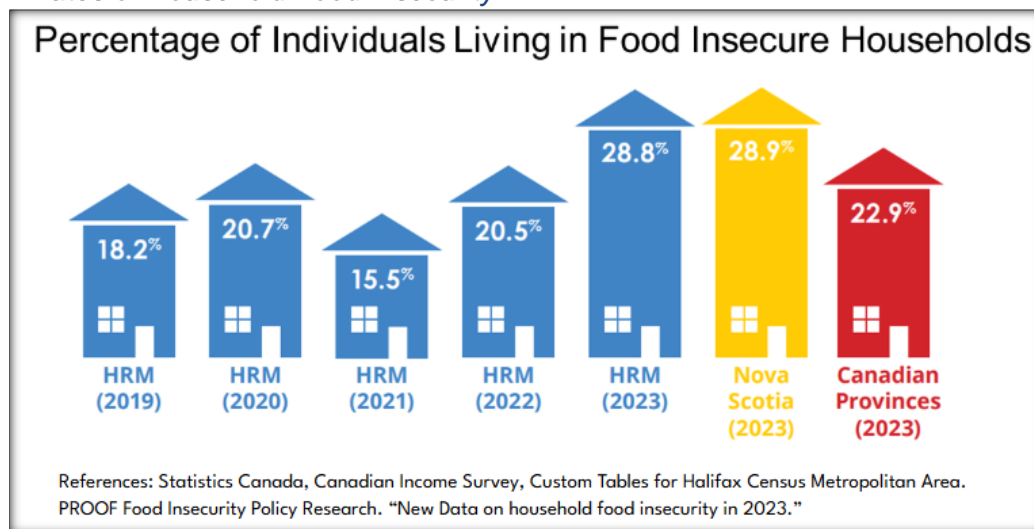
- Strengthen the team with key staff positions.
- Expand community markets and bulk food deliveries.
- Enhance operations to serve more people.

Table 1: MFM Proposal for Annual Municipal Funding

	YEAR 10 2025/26	Year 11 2026/27	Year 12 2027/28	Year 13 2028/29
<b>Staffing</b>				
Market Assistant	\$57,876.00	\$60,769.80	\$63,808.29	\$66,998.70
Executive Director	\$94,350.00	\$99,067.50	\$104,020.88	\$109,221.92
	<b>\$152,226.00</b>	<b>\$159,837.30</b>	<b>\$167,829.17</b>	<b>\$176,220.62</b>
<b>Program Supplies</b>	\$7,500	\$7,575.00	\$7,650.75	\$7,727.26
<b>Program Admin</b>	\$15,972.60	\$16,741.23	\$17,547.99	\$18,394.79
<b>Total Request for Funding from HRM</b> (rounded up to nearest \$100)	<b>\$175,700.00</b>	<b>\$184,200.00</b>	<b>\$193,100.00</b>	<b>\$202,400.00</b>

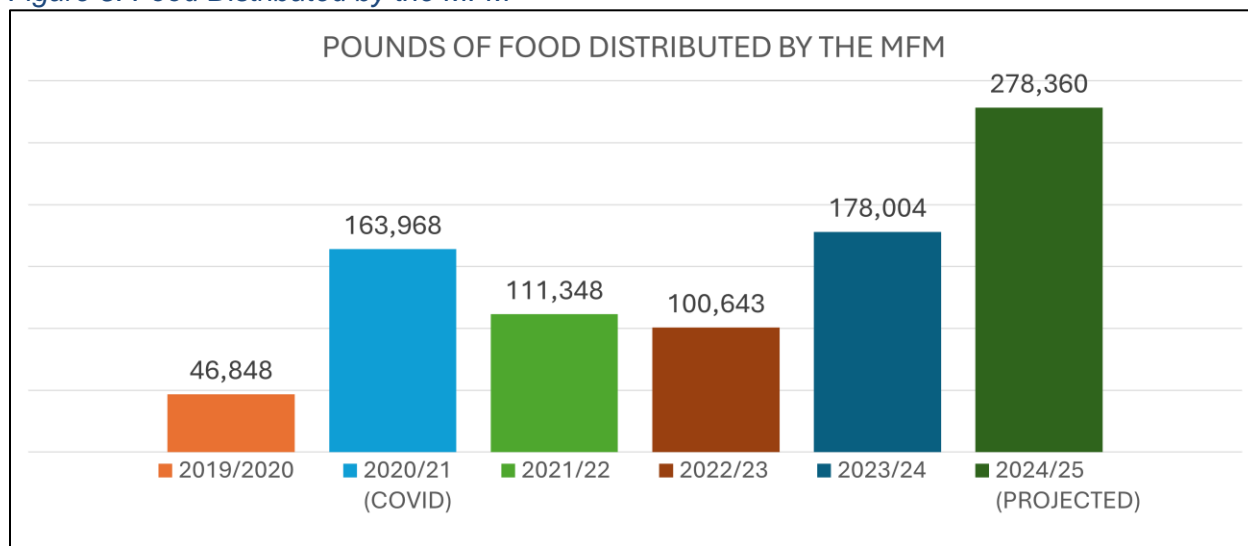
As rates of food insecurity continue to climb in our Region, with HRM and Nova Scotia having record high rates across Canadian Provinces in 2023, the demand and need for MFM's services will continue to grow (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Rates of Household Food Insecurity



As rates of food insecurity have risen in our Region and the Mobile Food Market has become established as a critical actor in community food access, there has been a dramatic increase in the volume of food distributed and number of residents served by the MFM. Since Regional Council approved the last round of four-year funding in April 2021, **MFM has increased the weight of food delivered into communities from 111,348 pounds in 2021/22 to a projected 278,360 pounds in 2024/25, 2.5-fold increase in four years. MFM is distributing six times as much food since 2019/20, prior to COVID-19, and has steadily increased since this time, with one spike in 2020/21 fueled by the short-term increased funding for COVID relief (Figure 5).**

Figure 5: Food Distributed by the MFM



While Provincial funding and grants from other agencies are invaluable to MFM operations, this funding typically only supports short-term staffing positions and programming. As with many non-profits, the MFM is consistently working to build capacity to meet growing needs and attain additional funding, but without sustainable funding there's a risk of interrupted, reduced, or cancelled programming, which could damage relationships and hinder ability to address food insecurity.

The MFM has identified the following barriers to expansion of existing programs and reach into new communities, which could be addressed through provide MFM with reliable funding for people power:

- Limited staffing capacity to manage additional markets and deliveries.
- Financial sustainability to support long-term growth.
- Availability of suitable locations and partnerships in new communities.
- Logistical challenges in reaching more rural or remote areas with limited infrastructure.

Stable funding for operations could also enable the MFM to better navigate external forces that impact food access and affordability such as the proposed US tariffs which would significantly raise produce and transportation costs<sup>1</sup>. This security would better position the MFM to support HRM in emergency food responses. Additional capacity would also enable MFM to continue its work to develop and possibly co-locate with the [Halifax Regional Food Hub](#), strengthening the local food system and local food access as well as other strategic explorations to improve the impact, resilience, and range of the Mobile Food Market.

Another barrier to expansion, particularly for rural and remote areas that need services the most, comes from the limitations of the current market truck. As fuel costs have risen<sup>2</sup> and increased temperature extremes resulting in food loss/waste due to lack of climate control, the current truck is a high-cost component and challenge to MFM operations. MFM has been exploring options for acquisition of a hybrid

<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that Nova Scotia relies on the United States for 80% of its fruit and 60% of its vegetables during the winter months.

<sup>2</sup> The price of gasoline rose 7.2% from 2023 to 2024. Source: [Nova Scotia Department of Finance - Statistics](#)

mobile food truck to lower operating costs and reduce food loss. A fully-electric, task-specific vehicle is not currently available but would be the preferred option if the opportunity arises. Staff are recommending that Regional Council consider directing the CAO to direct staff to explore options to support the MFM in a capital campaign to acquire a new electric vehicle. MFM is also actively seeking grants such as the recent federal Local Food Infrastructure Funding to fund a new electric truck. Should it be determined that municipal funding is required to leverage other funding or fill in funding gaps, a staff report with options would be presented to Regional Council for consideration.

In addition, staff are recommending exploration of options for the MFM to have access to an HRM vehicle, if available, providing an interim option of a lower cost and nimbler vehicle to better serve rural/remote trips and smaller orders. Conditions, risk/liability coverage, prioritization of municipal operations, and other considerations would be negotiated through an agreement of use, with MFM. The **JustFOOD Community Food Distribution Pilot** (Rec 45b.ii) includes the establishment of a calendar and exploration of community partner use of HRM's refrigerated Emergency Food Truck. The Truck could be made available on a regular basis to support MFM's operations.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed cost for the Year 10 (2025/26) municipal funding for the Mobile Food Market is \$175,700.00, which is recommended to be funded with a one-time withdrawal from the Options Reserve Q421.

Should Council approve ongoing annual funding for the MFM for Years 11-13 (2026/27-2028/29), indexed for inflation and contained in Table 1 of this Report, funding would be accounted for in Community Safety's annual budgeting processes under C421-8001.

### **RISK CONSIDERATION**

To ensure a measure of control over the multi-year funding for the MFM, a contribution agreement will be utilized to disperse the funding. The Municipality's standard contribution agreement will be used as this agreement requires the recipient of a financial contribution from the Municipality to, for example, provide reports about the progress and financial position of the recipient organization, understand the contribution is subject to the availability of funds from the Municipality and agree that the Municipality's contribution may not be used for certain costs and expenses.

The lack of capacity for strategic planning and program expansion could impact the sustainability of the MFM and its ability to respond and evolve to food access issues in HRM communities. Without direct funding from HRM, the MFM will have to expend additional time seeking funding, as opposed to distributing food. Additional support is required to enable the shift from operations to expand and enrich the service. There is also the risk that if HRM does not provide direct funding, other funders may not be prepared to continue providing direct funding and that MFM will not be able to leverage municipal funding for other opportunities.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

As the MFM is operational in nature, there was no targeted community engagement associated with the preparation of this report. Municipal initiatives such as the Mayor's Conversation on Healthy and Livable Communities, 2024 Citizen Survey, HalifACT, and the JustFOOD Action Plan demonstrate strong public support for HRM's involvement in the promotion of food security, increasing access to healthy food, and continued funding for the MFM. In addition, MFM regularly engages with participants and partners through surveys and interviews, which illustrate strong support for the MFM and its ongoing importance to the communities and residents it serves.



## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

While there are no immediate environmental benefits from continuing to support the staffing and operations of the Mobile Food Market, increasing the sustainability of operations, reducing food waste & loss, as well as exploring electric vehicles and off-grid options for service delivery are high priority in the MFM's 2024/25 business plan and future planning documents and could significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions of the MFM. Furthermore, by increasing direct access to food, MFM strengthens local community resilience and fosters social cohesion, allowing residents to be more prepared to face extreme weather events and emergencies.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

Regional Council may choose to:

1. Approve funding for Year 10 (2025/26) without continuing funding into Years 11-13 (2026/27 to 2028/29)
2. Approve ongoing annual funding at a reduced value than recommended in the Report
3. Not provide annual funding for the Mobile Food Market

## **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

*Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39

7A The purposes of the municipality are to

- (a) provide good government;
- (b) provide services, facilities, and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities

- 79A (1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if
- (a) the expenditure is included in the municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the municipality;
  - (b) the expenditure is in respect of an emergency under the Emergency Management Act; or
  - (c) the expenditure is legally required to be paid.

- (2) The Municipality may expend money provided for in an operating budget or capital budget for a purpose other than that set out in the operating budget or capital budget for that fiscal year if the expenditure does not affect the total of the amounts estimated for the operating budget and the capital budget.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- ATTACHMENT 1: History of Municipal Support  
ATTACHMENT 2: MFM Mission & Values



## ATTACHMENT 1: HISTORY OF MUNICIPAL SUPPORT

DATE & REPORT	MOTIONS/APPROVALS	MODEL	MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTION
Aug 4, 2015  <u>SUMMER PILOT</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve the one-time in-kind donation of the use of a Halifax Transit bus to the Mobile Market Project Team Coalition of Public Health, Ecology Action Centre and HRM, for use one day per week, for a 21-week mobile market pilot program; and</li> <li>2. Direct staff to develop a policy lens through which to assess municipal responses and actions to social support, health and liveability initiatives.</li> </ol>	Markets on HFX Transit Bus	<b>IN-KIND</b>  <b>Staff:</b> Mayor's Office (MO), Site Support, <b>Vehicles:</b> Bus & Operator, <b>Communications</b> Support  <b>Estimated at \$8,700 in-kind</b>
Jan 24, 2017  <u>WINTER PILOT &amp; YEARS 1-2</u> (2016/17-17/18)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve an in-kind contribution of the use of an HRM fleet vehicle and other supports to enable a 16-week Mobile Food Market Winter Pilot, in partnership with the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team, as outlined in the staff report dated December 20, 2016;</li> <li>2. Approve a further extension to the in-kind contribution of the use of an HRM vehicle and other supports to enable a transition year for the Mobile Food Market (June 2017 to April 2018), in partnership with the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team, as outlined in the staff report dated December 20, 2016; and</li> <li>3. Direct staff to explore further options, and report to Council for its consideration, to support the long-term viability of the Mobile Food Market, including continuing to provide in-kind supports, and/or permanently conveying a surplus bus to the Mobile Food Market.</li> </ol>	HYBRID:  Markets on Bus in warmer seasons.  Fleet truck used year-round for bulk deliveries & cool weather markets	<b>IN-KIND</b>  <b>Staff:</b> MO + P&D Staff, <b>Site Support</b> ,  <b>Vehicles:</b> Bus & Operator, Fleet Truck  <b>Estimated at \$59,000 in-kind for 1.5 years</b>
July 31, 2018  <u>YEARS 3-5</u> (2018/19-2020/21)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve the continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions for Years 3-5 (2018-2019 to 2020-2021), as outlined in the staff report dated May 18, 2018, including the addition of a staff member to the Mobile Food Market Advisory Team in Year 3 (2018-2019);</li> <li>2. Authorize the CAO to approve and enter into agreements with Mobile Food Market partners regarding the use of HRM transit and fleet vehicles;</li> <li>3. Direct staff to evaluate the option of donation of an HRM vehicle in Year 4 (2019- 2020); and</li> </ol>	HYBRID plus additional services + COVID pivot	<b>IN-KIND</b>  <b>Staff:</b> MO & P&D on Leadership Team,  <b>Vehicle:</b> Bus & Fleet Truck,  <b>On-site Market Support</b>  <b>Estimated at \$40,000 in-kind, per annum</b>

DATE & REPORT	MOTIONS/APPROVALS	MODEL	MUNICIPAL CONTRIBUTION
	4. Direct staff to explore further options, and report to Council in Year 5 (2020-2021) with a recommendation for Council's consideration, regarding the long-term support of the Mobile Food Market.		
March, 2020  <b>COVID SUPPORT YEAR 5 (2020/21)- <a href="#">detailed in the April 20,21 staff report</a></b>	Emergency Food Distribution- CAO approval of redeployment of municipal resources to support food distribution including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-3 YouthLive staff supported the MFM through diverting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FCM funding- honorarium for 2 YouthLive participants</li> <li>Summer Student Grant- moved from YL program not delivered due to COVID-19</li> </ul> </li> <li>Soft launch of the <b>JustFOOD Action Plan</b> through MFM delivery of emergency food hampers including survey and information on how to get involved in JustFOOD</li> </ul>	COVID Emergency Food Relief	<b>DIRECT Contribution: \$10,000</b>  <b>In-kind: Estimated at \$37,000</b>
April 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2020  <b><a href="#">TRUCK FUNDING YEAR 5 (2020/21)</a></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or designate to enter into a Contribution Agreement with MetroWorks Employment Association, as the designate member organization of the Mobile Food Market, defining HRM's requirements for the contribution, as outlined in the Discussion section of the staff recommendation report dated February 25, 2020; and</li> <li>Approve an unbudgeted reserve withdrawal in the amount of \$75,000 from the General Contingency Reserve Q421 for the purchase of a food distribution vehicle in 2020, replacing HRM's in-kind vehicular contributions, pending the CAO's approval of a contribution agreement with MetroWorks Employee Association.</li> </ol>	Contribution towards vehicle purchase	<b>DIRECT CONTRIBUTION of \$75,000 towards purchase of vehicle</b>
April 20, 2021  <b><a href="#">YEARS 6-9 (2021/22 to 2024/25)</a></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve the continuation of annual funding of \$75,000 to the Mobile Food Market, for three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.</li> <li>Approve continued support for the Mobile Food Market through in-kind contributions, for four years from 2021/22 to 2024/25, as outlined in this report.</li> </ol>	Contribution towards senior management to support sustainability and expanding MFM operations	<b>DIRECT CONTRIBUTION of \$75,000 K</b>  <b>In-kind: Staff (MO &amp; GREA), On-site support Estimated at \$19,625 per annum</b>

## ATTACHMENT 2: MOBILE FOOD MARKET MISSION AND VALUES

# Mobile Food Market

**DIGNITY | AFFORDABILITY | EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**

The Mobile Food Market is dedicated to addressing food insecurity by providing dignified access to fresh, affordable produce directly to communities in need. Our goal is to increase access to healthy food and empower neighborhoods to thrive.



### Who We Are

**The goal of the Mobile Food Market is simple but powerful: to increase access to affordable, high quality, fresh fruit and vegetables in communities with limited access to healthy food.**

### Why We Do It

**Food insecurity is a growing issue in Nova Scotia, we have the highest rate of food insecurity in Canada. By creating opportunities for communities to have access to affordable healthy food that they can access in a dignified manner, we contribute to lowering food insecurity in the HRM.**

**HEALTHY FOOD GOOD PRICES STRONG COMMUNITIES**

## Our Vision & Values

### Community:



We believe in the power of community to create lasting change. By working together, we can build strong, connected neighborhoods that support each other.

### Dignity:



We prioritize the dignity of every individual, ensuring that access to food is provided in a manner that respects and honors each person's inherent worth.

### Sustainable Impact:



We strive to create lasting, positive change that not only addresses immediate needs but also builds a foundation for a healthier, more resilient food system in the long term.

### Equity



We are committed to addressing the inequalities that exist in our food system, targeting our efforts to support those who face the greatest barriers to access.

### Compassion:



Compassion is at the heart of all we do. We approach our work with empathy, understanding, and a deep commitment to supporting those in need.

