



March 1, 2024

Mayor Mike Savage and HRM Regional Councillors,

I am writing on behalf of the 1600 businesses in Downtown Halifax. As you know, it is a challenging business environment at the moment, and we wanted to make you aware of some of our top considerations, as you deliberate on the 2024-2025 HRM budget.

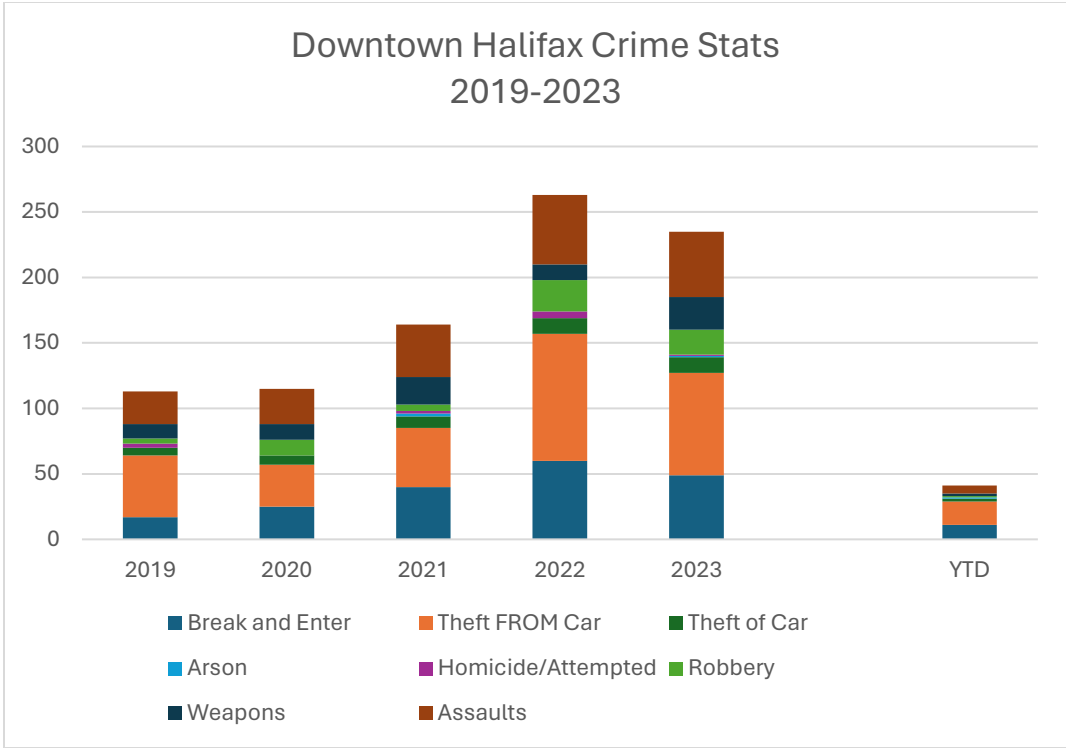
Overall tax burden remains a large concern. It is one of the primary drivers of rent, and when we recently surveyed our members, for the first time, they listed rent as one of the top two most serious problems they currently face. We understand that inflationary pressures and the costs associated with rapid growth are impacting HRM's budget. But we would ask that minimizing any increases to the downtown and main street commercial tax rate be a key consideration in your decision-making,

Safety concerns amongst our members remain very high. We believe this is being driven by both the negative perceptions driven by homeless encampments, and by statistical and anecdotal evidence of a trend of rising crime downtown since 2020. Because of this we support the increased budget being proposed to HRM's Public Safety Office, including three years' support of the BID Navigator programs. We also support an increase to the police budget, provided that funding is used to put officers on the beat. Proactive, community-based policing, has long been proven to be the most effective way to both prevent crime, but also provides an excellent training ground for police officers to know and understand the complex issues in our downtown districts.

This spring, following extensive consultation, DHBC will be launching Downtown Vision 2030. It will highlight the key initiatives and investments governments and private sector need to make over the next several years, to return Downtown to a state of vitality. We look forward to sharing the Vision with you and working together on making it a reality.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul MacKinnon, CEO
Downtown Halifax Business Commission



Source: Halifax Regional Police Department