HRM: A CITY FOR STUDENTS.
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Post-secondary students are vital to the economic stability and cultural vibrancy of the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). The six high-quality post-secondary institutions paired with the unique city landscape have made the HRM a hub for student activity, and students currently represent 1 in every 13 Haligonians¹.

Students don’t spend their time locked in a library on campus, but are rather active members of the Halifax community, interacting with municipal issues in unique ways every day. While pursuing a degree, students shop at local businesses, rent homes, use public transport, work, and give back to the city through volunteer work and civic engagement. Upon completing their degree or diploma, many will go on to call Halifax a permanent home. Targeted municipal policy is necessary to ensure that the HRM meets the needs of students and young people so that they don’t just come here, but stay here.

In the 2016 Economic Growth Plan, the Halifax Regional Council identified the attraction and retention of local talent to be a key priority. The following recommendations outline students’ vision for the HRM to ensure it is accessible, sustainable, and invested in its young people.

Improving artistic vibrancy in a city leads to a better city image, quality of life for its citizens, economic growth, and increased employment. For students, the opportunity to engage in, create, or perform the fine and performing arts is a meaningful attraction to the city, especially since the HRM is home to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University (NSCAD), the only fine arts university in the Maritimes. NSCAD currently plays an important role in supporting the arts in Halifax, providing artists in the city well-paying jobs as instructors and attracting and educating young artists.

Unfortunately, the arts sector in Halifax is suffering. In 2016, Halifax Partnership found that employment in the Arts and Culture sector decreased by 300 jobs for the second year in a row. In addition, wages have decreased by $3.00 an hour in the past year, in contrast to an average wage increase of $0.70 for municipal sector workers in the same year. Currently, 6,200 individuals work in arts and culture, in contrast to the 7,600 in the sector in 2012.

Despite the HRM 2017-2021 Strategic Plan identifying arts and culture as a priority, neither the current budget, nor the proposed 2018-2019 budget include increased dedicated arts funding. The Halifax municipality currently allocates $360,000 to the ArtsHalifax program ($0.89 per capita), which is well under the national average of municipal spending on arts granting programs ($5.71 per capita). Previously, the city has favoured a one-time funding model to support arts and cultural events, such as dedicated Canada150 funding. This sporadic funding model is ineffective as it only supports artists in the short term and contributes to the precarious nature of the sector. The HRM must significantly increase its financial investment in direct arts funding in order to create a supportive environment for emerging and established artists.

Investing in arts and culture will make Halifax a more artist-friendly city and improve the retention of recent graduates who will then help to sustain Halifax’s arts community. In order to increase access to this funding, the city should establish an arms-length council to allocate arts and culture grants via a peer-assessment jury made up of community members and city councillors. This model, which has been established by other municipalities such as Toronto and Waterloo, succeeds by allocating funding based on merit while reporting on all activities to Regional Council.
Currently, funding distributed by ArtsHalifax only supports established professional arts organizations that have been in operation for 3 years\(^9\) which fails to support smaller organizations and individuals. The city should explore amendments to the HRM Charter that would increase access to funding for independent artists, including student artists who often lack the means to participate in artistic projects.

Finally, the city should invest in physical spaces dedicated to the arts, such as purpose-built performance venues. Supporting the renovation of ageing spaces and the creation of new spaces that are accessible to independent artists are important in supporting the industry in the long term\(^{10}\).

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Immediately double grant funding for the arts to $820,000.
- Progressively increase arts and culture grant funding to the national average of $5.71 per capita through an investment of an additional $1.4 million over 2 years.
- Establish an arms-length arts and culture granting body.
- Amend the HRM Charter to allow for individual arts and culture funding allocation.

“As an emerging artist in an increasingly crowded market, I need to be able to make risky, thought provoking, resource intensive work. Increased funding for local artists will signal that Halifax is ready to invest and believes in the abilities of our creative sector.”

—Rafael MacDonald, NSCAD University

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Due to sky-rocketing tuition fees, post-secondary students are increasingly reliant on part-time work while pursuing their studies, and are more likely to work in precarious, minimum wage jobs. As a result of low wages, many students must take on multiple part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Members of marginalized communities are disproportionately represented in low-wage, precarious work. Single parents, women, racialized workers, recent immigrants, and youth are groups likely to find themselves in part-time, temporary work. In addition, the Law Commission of Ontario concluded that racialized persons, immigrants, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, and older adults are overrepresented in short term, contract, or precarious positions. While the minimum wage and labour standards in Nova Scotia are regulated provincially, the HRM has an opportunity to be a champion in offering fair wages.

The Canadian Living Wage Framework calculates an hourly wage that accounts for the costs associated with raising a family in a specific municipality, including adequate food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other basic necessities. The living wage is calculated as the hourly rate at which a household can meet these basic needs once government incentive programs and tax credits have been deducted. The living wage is intended to allow for a dignified, decent quality of life that can lift individuals and families out of poverty.

A living wage ordinance passed by city council would ensure that all city employees, contracted workers, and subcontracted workers receive at least a living wage, which is currently $19.17/hr for the HRM. As of July 6th, 2017 the HRM employs 1363 people who are paid under $19.17/h, though this number is likely larger when factoring in the number of contracted and subcontracted employees.

The city has a responsibility to create and sustain a robust economy and promote social inclusion and is, therefore, well positioned to be a champion of equitable employment. Being a living wage employer ensures that part-time workers, contract workers, and subcontracted workers have incomes that align with the cost of living in Halifax. Paying city workers a living wage creates a positive example for other employers in the HRM to also pay a living wage.

Paying employees a living wage also has economic and social benefits for the municipality as a whole. Employers that have implemented a living wage have seen lower employee turnover and improved performance and service delivery\(^{15}\). In addition, increasing the income of people with lower wages benefits the broader and local economy by stimulating consumer spending\(^{16}\).

There is precedent for municipalities passing living wage ordinances. As of May 1\(^{st}\), 2017, the City of Vancouver became the largest city in Canada to commit to paying their direct employees and contracted services employees a living wage\(^{17}\). Similarly, Cambridge City Council in Ontario voted to pay their employees a living wage as of November 2015\(^{18}\), directly impacting over 565 of their staff.

The HRM has the opportunity to implement a living wage ordinance for its employees and join other municipalities and private sector employers who have recognized the importance and benefits of being a fair-wages employer.

**RECOMMENDATION:**
- Pass a living wage ordinance at City Council mandating that all Halifax city employees, contracted and subcontracted, be paid a living wage.

“As a student in university, I have to work long hours in order to live my life at least a little bit comfortably. Having fair living wages would make this easier for others going through the same thing.”

—Tricina Morash, Mount Saint Vincent University

\(^{15}\) “How Living Wages Benefit Employers,” Living Wage For Families Campaign, n.d.


Halifax residents experience some of the highest rates of food insecurity of urban centres in Canada, with over 15% of the population living with food insecurity in 2014\textsuperscript{19}. Food insecurity is when the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain\textsuperscript{20}.

A 2015 study by Meal Exchange found that 2 out of 5 students surveyed at post-secondary institutions in Canada experienced some form of food insecurity, citing high tuition fees, cost of food, housing costs, and inadequate income supports as barriers to food security\textsuperscript{21}. Of the 5 campuses across Canada that were studied, Dalhousie University experienced the highest rates of food insecurity with 46% of respondents reporting having some level of food insecurity. Students from certain demographics experienced exceptionally high rates of food insecurity, including Aboriginal students (56.4%), racialized students (41.9%), and students relying on bank (55%) or government loans (54.7%) to fund their education. In addition, 1 in 4 food insecure students reported that food insecurity negatively impacted their physical health and 1 in 5 reported negative effects on their mental health\textsuperscript{22}.

A community’s food system is influenced by political, social, economic, and environmental systems that affect the production, processing, transportation, distribution, retail, accessibility, preparation, and disposal and waste of food\textsuperscript{23}. While poverty is the ultimate culprit of food insecurity, making sustainably produced, local food more accessible to the community is one important step to increased community food security in Halifax.

The Municipality has a role to play in improving food security and access to food. For instance, the participation of the Mayor’s Office in the creation of the Halifax Mobile Food Market is an excellent example of a collaborative approach to food systems issues, addressing accessibility and affordability in communities with limited food access across the municipality. HRM City Councillors have also expressed interest in partnering with community members to address food insecurity in Halifax. On May 18th, 2017, the Committee on Community Planning and Economic Development passed a motion recommending that the municipality, in collaboration with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance, investigate the creation of a food charter and strategy for HRM, request a study about populations vulnerable to food insecurity or limited food access, and explore policy barriers, opportunities, and enablers to support community food security.

If this recommendation were implemented, the HRM would join 20 municipalities in Canada who have implemented or are in the process of drafting food charters\textsuperscript{24}, which are an expression of a community’s vision, principles, and values for food systems. The process of creating a food charter is collaborative and the final charter can be used as a guideline for implementation of municipal food policy. The subsequent implementation of a food strategy based on the charter would encompass a detailed plan that outlines actions, sets targets and timelines, and commits resources for implementation.

\textsuperscript{19} Valerie Tarasuk, Andy Mitchell and Naomi Dachner, “Food Insecurity in Canada - 2012,” PROOF - Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity, 2014.


\textsuperscript{22} “Food Systems,” Halifax Food Policy Alliance, 2015.

\textsuperscript{23} Rod MacRae and Kendal Donahue. “Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs: A Preliminary Analysis of How Canadian Cities and Regional Districts are involved in Food System Change,” Toronto Food Policy Council, Vancouver Food Policy Council and CAP2-ICPA, 2013.

As a population that is vulnerable to food insecurity, students would benefit from a clearly articulated vision for a healthy, just, and sustainable food system in Halifax and must be an important player in any collaborative approach to achieving food security in the HRM.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**
- Create a municipal-wide food charter and strategy in collaboration with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance.
- Seek student input in the process and ensure that strategies are created to address food insecurity amongst students.

“As students, there are a variety of barriers which impact access to nutritious food, mainly how expensive it is to purchase food that makes you feel good. We shouldn’t have to sacrifice our physical well-being in order to save money.”

—Ally Lord, University of King’s College
The majority of post-secondary students live off-campus and students shape the landscape of Nova Scotia’s rental market, especially in Halifax. Lack of regulation in the Halifax housing market has resulted in substandard living conditions for many students, such as living with mould, pests, or with limited access to heat in the winter. In addition, as a result of the elimination of rent control in 1993, students are paying higher rent than ever before in an unreliable and inconsistent housing market. Just last year, rent costs increased at double the rate of inflation.25

The responsibility to challenge unacceptable living conditions currently falls on the tenant, rather than the municipality or the landlords themselves. Many students are first-time renters and, as a result, are more susceptible to being taken advantage of by landlords. Additionally, most students lack the legal experience or knowledge to know their rights as tenants and do not have the financial resources to successfully challenge their landlord in court. For international students in particular, language barriers can prevent students from exercising their tenant rights. The implementation of landlord licensing would ensure the safety and wellbeing of tenants in Halifax and provide greater accountability from landlords to the HRM. Landlord licensing would mandate annual inspections of all rental units, thus shifting the responsibility for maintaining appropriate housing conditions from tenants to the municipality. Halifax Council’s recent approval of bylaw M-20026 for minimum standards for residential buildings is a good first step toward protecting tenants’ rights; however, landlord licensing is necessary to ensure that these minimum standards are being maintained and establish mechanisms to hold landlords responsible for unacceptable housing conditions.

The City of Toronto recently approved a landlord-licensing bylaw, based on the city’s DineSafe program for restaurant health and safety regulation compliance.27 Importantly, the cost of Toronto’s new landlord licensing program is shouldered by landlords and will apply universally, regardless of the size of the rental unit. Similar regulation is possible and needed in Halifax. Students deserve safe, healthy living conditions and it is the municipal government’s duty to protect the rights of all tenants.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Introduce landlord licensing, including the establishment of an enforcement office.

“After an intrusion into my apartment as a result of landlord error, I had trouble sleeping for months and all areas of my life were affected. Occurrences like this are why I believe we should fight vigorously to implement landlord licensing in Halifax.”

—Mickayla Peters, Mount Saint Vincent University

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For most students, bicycles and public transit are primary modes of transportation and they require an efficient, affordable public transit system that includes infrastructure to protect cyclists’ safety. Unfortunately, in Halifax, students are faced with unreliable, inconsistent public transit systems with limited routes. In fact, Halifax’s transit system is so unreliable, commuting can be a barrier for finding employment in the HRM.

**BUS ROUTES**

Currently, the MetroTransit system is ridden with unreliable bus times and a lack of bus routes, particularly for those commuting from Bedford or Lower Sackville. The Halifax City Council must implement a transit model that gives public transit its own right-of-way in order to decrease travel time and improve reliability. For example, a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system or a Light Rail Transit (LRT) system serve to isolate public transit, increase passenger capacity and significantly cut down on travel times. BRT and LRT systems can be used in cities simultaneously, or developing BRT infrastructure can act as a stepping-stone for the implementation of LRT. Students are encouraged to see that the Halifax City Council has already requested a feasibility report on BRT and would welcome a move to this transit system.

**CYCLIST SAFETY**

Even though many students and commuters rely on cycling as a major mode of transportation, the lack of cycling infrastructure in the HRM can make this mode of transportation very dangerous. The best way to promote cycling and improve the safety of cyclists is to construct protected bike lanes, which are the only way to prevent cars and other vehicles from encroaching on cyclists’ space. Not only do protected bike lanes help prevent bicycle-vehicle collisions, they also make cyclists feel safer, which encourages more people to take up cycling.

“Juggling being a full time student, full time worker, and full time mother, unfortunately I can no longer use Halifax public transit. I need a transportation system I can rely on, hold to account, and that works for me. Public Transit in the HRM is none of those things.”

—Nikki Jamieson, Mount Saint Vincent University

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which result in public health benefits. Having more bicycles on the road improves cyclists’ safety by making motorists more conscious of bicycles and more familiar with how to safely interact with cyclists\(^\text{31}\).

Over the last few years, council has approved bike lanes on some of Halifax’s streets and included a network of protected bike lanes in the Integrated Mobility Plan\(^\text{32}\). Following through with this city-wide plan for connected, protected bike lanes will be an important step in making Halifax a bike-friendly city. The Halifax Cycling Coalition has also developed a comprehensive, city-wide plan for protected bike lanes that could be implemented in its entirety within the next few years\(^\text{33}\).

Improving public transit systems disproportionately benefits low-income and young people, including students, who cannot afford private means of transport. In addition, the expansion and improvement of public transit systems encourages a lesser reliance on private vehicles, which is important for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to fight climate change and cutting down on air pollution to improve health.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Develop a plan for implementing a Bus Rapid Transit or Bus Rapid Transit/Light Rail Transit system in the HRM.
- Work with the Halifax Cycling Coalition to implement a city-wide network of protected bike lanes as outlined in the HCC’s *On Track for 2020* report.

> “I’m a student in Halifax who relies on my bike to get around. I would feel safer and more comfortable biking around the city with a network of protected bike lanes.”
> —Julia Schabas, Dalhousie Graduate Student

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CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change refers to changes in global and regional climate patterns which are the result of increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels. The effects of climate change in the form of floods, droughts, forest fires and natural disasters are already a present and often deadly reality for cities and communities around the globe. Climate change disproportionately impacts people from marginalized communities, including women, people of colour, Indigenous people, and low-income people\(^{34}\). Working class people are most likely to be negatively impacted by the loss of jobs in the fossil fuel industry as a result of the transition to a renewable economy\(^{35}\). Prioritizing marginalized people and workers is essential to a just plan for climate change mitigation and adaptation. As a coastal city, young people in the HRM will inevitably experience the effects of climate change within their lifetime and we hold a collective responsibility to take immediate action to address climate change.

Municipalities have the capacity to take meaningful action to address climate change\(^{36}\). While Mayor Mike Savage has already registered a commitment with the Compact of Mayors, a global coalition committing to taking action on climate change,\(^{37}\) Halifax has yet to assess the city’s climate impact, set targets for reducing GHG emissions, or establish an updated climate action plan. At present, Halifax is only committed to reducing emissions to 80% below 2005 levels by 2050 under the 2009 Calgary Climate Change Accord\(^{38}\). More ambitious strategies are required for a rapid and just transition to a fossil fuel-free city.

Divestment, which would end all investments in fossil fuel companies, is a concrete way for Halifax to take real action on climate change. It is morally reprehensible to be profiting off the climate crisis by investing in fossil fuel companies, which are the largest contributors to human-caused climate change and perpetrators of devastating harm to land, waters, and people’s health and safety\(^{39}\). Additionally, fossil fuel extraction and transportation often infringes on Indigenous Peoples’ rights and lands and, as a result, remaining aligned with the fossil fuel industry is contradictory to the process of reconciliation.

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\(^{38}\) “Compact of Mayors,” Compact of Mayors, 2015.

The divestment movement is a global initiative. In total, 742 institutions and 58,399 individuals across 76 countries have committed to divesting a collective $5.42 trillion from the fossil fuel industry\textsuperscript{40}. While many faith and professional organizations and one university in Canada have already committed to divestment, no Canadian city to date has divested from fossil fuels. Halifax Regional Council has the opportunity to show real leadership in the region and across the country by becoming the first Canadian city to divest from fossil fuels.

While legislation prevents Canadian municipalities from investing in most corporations directly, the HRM is currently invested in banks that directly support fossil fuel companies. Today, 10\% of Halifax’s investment portfolio is invested in the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), 11\% in the Toronto Dominion (TD) Bank, and 4\% in the Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank)\textsuperscript{41}. Collectively, these banks are not only the biggest lenders to fossil fuel companies\textsuperscript{42}, but are also directly involved in the funding of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project\textsuperscript{43} and continue to advocate for greater federal funding for the Energy East Pipeline\textsuperscript{44}. In addition, all three banks provided funding for the Dakota Access pipeline in the US, which was the focus of the protest encampments led by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe\textsuperscript{45}. Many cities in the US, including Seattle and San Francisco, have already divested from banks due to their involvement in the Dakota Access pipeline\textsuperscript{46}.

Divesting from TD, RBC, and Scotiabank until these banks end their involvement with the fossil fuel industry is one way to take a stand against the human rights abuses and treaty right violations resource extraction projects and climate change have resulted in. Until governments at all levels divest from fossil fuel companies, the rapid and just transition to a renewable economy needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change will remain impossible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Commit to fully divesting from TD bank, RBC, and Scotiabank until these banks cut ties to the fossil fuel industry.
- Commit to making Halifax 100\% renewable energy powered by 2050 and develop a plan to make this happen that prioritizes a just transition for workers and marginalized peoples.

“As a young person, I’m part of the first generation to feel the effects of climate change and the last one to be able to do something about it. I feel that we can’t not act on climate change because we owe it to ourselves, the other species on this planet, and future generations.”

—Lily Barraclough, University of King’s College

\textsuperscript{40} “Divestment Commitments,” Fossil Free, n.d., https://gofossilfree.org/commitments/
\textsuperscript{43} Geoffrey Morgan, “Royal Bank of Canada CEO Touts Pipelines as Key to Transitioning to a Greener Economy,” Financial Post (2016).
\textsuperscript{44} John Tilak and David French, “Exclusive: Kinder Morgan Starts Talks with Investors for $5.2 Billion Canada Pipeline Project - Sources,” Reuters (2017).
\textsuperscript{45} Alexandra Posadzki, “Scotiabank CEO Calls on Feds to Boost Infrastructure Spending,” Maclean's (2016).
After the release of the final report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Halifax City Council unanimously passed a statement in support of reconciliation. To move beyond a simple statement of support, the Halifax City Council must begin to take steps to decolonize the HRM.

A small, but absolutely necessary step toward reconciliation in K’jipuktuk/Halifax is the removal of the name Cornwallis from public infrastructure, including the Cornwallis statue in Cornwallis Park. The Mi’kmaq community and their allies have been calling for this for several years and, if the City Council is committed to reconciliation, it is time to take action to address this issue.

By not removing the Cornwallis’ statue, the Halifax City Council is choosing to defend Cornwallis’ racist colonial policies, including his scalping proclamation. The continued presence of this statue serves to bolster racism in Halifax. Removing the Cornwallis’ statue and the Cornwallis name from Halifax’s public spaces is an important first step in ongoing reconciliation efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Immediately remove the statue of Cornwallis from Cornwallis Park.

• Commit to removing the name Cornwallis from all municipal assets including Cornwallis St and Cornwallis Park within a year.

“Due to past relationships between Cornwallis and the Indigenous peoples, the statue is a constant reminder of Colonial violence and must be removed.”

—Kehisha Wilmot, Mount Saint Vincent University