

# Councillor Sam Austin

DARTMOUTH CENTRE

## DISTRICT 5 NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2026



### DEAR RESIDENTS,

Hello Dartmouth! I'm writing this at the beginning of March and it's been a very busy season at City Hall. Unless there is some sort of last minute surprise, Council will finalize the municipal budget in just a few weeks. It's been

a very grueling process this year that has taken much longer than normal and that's because Council's choices have been pretty stark: raise the tax bill significantly more than we would normally or deeply cut into municipal services. A third option of having stuff but not paying for it was unfortunately not on the table!

Throughout the budget process Council received a lot of feedback from residents. I want to thank everyone for sharing their input in this difficult year! The budget process isn't complete yet and there is a lag time for printing this newsletter so the best way to keep up to date is to sign up for my electronic newsletter at [samaustin.ca](http://samaustin.ca).

I'm always open to feedback, positive or negative, so reach out with any concerns or ideas.

### HALIFAX ALERT SYSTEM

Sign up for hfxALERT, the Halifax Regional Municipality's mass notification system, to receive critical and non-urgent alerts, as well as municipal winter parking ban notices.

Visit [halifax.ca/hfxalert](http://halifax.ca/hfxalert) to learn more.

### CONTACT US

Contact 311 to reach the 311 Municipal Contact Centre or visit [halifax.ca/311](http://halifax.ca/311) to report a municipal issue. Please call 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday and 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, except Christmas and New Years Day.

### CALL MY OFFICE

For assistance with municipal issues, you can also contact the Council Support Office at **902.490.4050**

### CONTACT ME

You can reach me at **902.579.6814** or by email at [sam.austin@halifax.ca](mailto:sam.austin@halifax.ca)

### OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Police, Fire and Emergency: 911

Police (non-emergency): 902.490.5020

Fire (non-emergency): 902.490.5530

Halifax Water Customer Service: 902.420.9287  
or [customercare@halifaxwater.ca](mailto:customercare@halifaxwater.ca)

NS Power Outage Line: 1.877.428.6004

24-7 Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team:  
1.888.429.8167

### SIGN UP FOR MY MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER

To stay up to date on things that are happening in our community, please consider subscribing to my monthly e-newsletter. Visit my website [samaustin.ca/news/](http://samaustin.ca/news/) to sign up.



## EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

On December 1, extended producer responsibility (EPR) became the law in Nova Scotia. EPR assigns the responsibility for recycling to industry. A national non-profit, Circular Materials, is managing EPR in Nova Scotia and operations are being overseen by Divert Nova Scotia to ensure compliance with Nova Scotia's regulations. Although HRM is no longer responsible for the cost of recycling, the municipality has been retained to provide collection services for Circular Materials.

As a result of EPR, what is recycled in Nova Scotia is now consistent throughout the Province. Here in HRM, the result is some items that previously weren't recyclable now are including:

### Multi-layer Paper Containers

- Paper cups (including disposable paper hot and cold beverage cups)
- Paper bowls
- Ice cream cartons
- Cookie dough spiral cans
- Frozen juice spiral cans
- Potato chip spiral cans

### Plastic Tubes

- Toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Hand cream containers

### Small item plastic packaging

- Bottles/pumps
- Candy/gum containers
- Pails
- Garden pots
- Seedling trays

On the other side, two items that HRM use to recycle are no longer accepted:

### Items no longer accepted

- Books
- Pots and pans

## DARTMOUTH NORTH LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Progress is slowly being made on repairs at the Community Centre and Library in Dartmouth North. The library was devastated back in March 2025 when a sewer backup flooded the space. The damage was extensive, particularly in the library space. The work to reopen the community centre and the library is considerable and issues with the roof have been identified since that need to be addressed as well. HRM has made some progress though and the community centre, where damage was less extensive, has reopened. The library will be getting an upgrade from the trailer in the parking lot to new temporary space inside the building in the multipurpose space. The library doesn't have an opening date yet, so for now stay tuned.



## LAKE BANOOK COORDINATION PLAN

Lake Banook is a special place. It's both a prized community recreational hub, and an international sporting venue. It's a spot that large numbers of people enjoy for walking, swimming, and paddling, and it's a place that puts HRM and Nova Scotia on the world stage. Making sure there is clear direction for its future that works for both uses is important. In December, Council approved a new plan for Lake Banook. The Lake Banook Coordination Plan is an update of past work and a bringing together of various plans and strategies in one place. The new plan for Lake Banook makes recommendations for all the public spaces that ring the Lake. Some of the highlights are:



- Shift the playground in Henry Findlay Park towards Banook Canoe Club so that open space towards Hawthorne Street can be used during events. By closing Hawthorne Street during events, HRM believes there is enough space for both uses
- Close Hawthorne Street during special events to accommodate sporting needs
- Add a washroom at Lion's Beach (uncertain when this could be funded)
- Expand the path network in Oakwood Park so that the public can still access the space during special events
- Consider building a sidewalk along Brookdale Crescent and Crichton Avenue to better facilitate the loop around the Lake
- Shoreline naturalization along Prince Albert Road and at Grahams Grove
- Finish the plaza at the bottom of Silver's Hill Park

The plan also emphasizes the need to address environmental issues, particularly around stormwater and runoff that negatively impact the Lake.

## CARE TEAM EXPANDS

HRM's new Crisis Assistance and Response program (CARE) is expanding to 24/7 service. CARE launched in October and was initially offered between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m., Monday to Friday. Those hours have now been expanded to 24/7.

CARE is a pilot program that provides in-person support for people 16 years and older experiencing non-emergency, non-violent crises related to mental health, substance use, and personal well-being. The service offers a safe, trauma-informed alternative to calling police or other first responders when they may not be the best fit.

CARE staff are specially trained in trauma-informed care, harm reduction, mental health first aid, suicide prevention and cultural humility. The team provides in-person support and will help to connect people to other community supports after the crisis.

The CARE team is available in most of Dartmouth and can be accessed by calling 211. A trained navigator will assess the situation and, if required, dispatch the mobile team for in-person support.



## STUDENT BUS PASS PROGRAM

You might have caught the news that, as part of the Provincial budget, the Province is eliminating funding for HRM's student bus pass program. This will impact up to 30,000 junior high and high school students.

For the last several years, HRM and the Province have partnered to provide junior high and high school students with bus passes. The program launched in 2021 with four schools as an initial pilot and expanded to include all schools in HRM in 2024. To evaluate the program, HRM completed surveys of students and parents in 2024 and 2025, which generated over 8,100 responses. Survey results show an increase in usage. The number of students who reported that transit is their primary means of getting to school increased from 12% to 33%. Parents and kids both independently reported that about 75% of students were using transit on a weekly basis and were making trips for other non-school related purposes too. The HRM survey data suggests the program is well used, helps reduce congestion (parents not having to provide rides as often), provides young adults with more independence, and potentially creates a life-long culture of transit ridership.

The main cost of the program is lost fare revenue. By providing students with free passes, HRM doesn't collect as many fares as the municipality normally would. To offset the fare revenue losses, the Province contributed \$1.2 million and HRM agreed to absorb the remaining \$600,000. HRM hasn't been charging the Province on a per student basis, the cost of the program has been fare replacement. Besides the small incremental cost of printing passes, there has been no cost for students who don't use their bus pass.

So what happens next? Current passes will remain valid until September. I know the student pass program is important to many families in Dartmouth. I continue to hope that the Province will take a second look at this and restore funding.



## NORTH WOODSIDE PARK PLAN

Lake Banook isn't the only District 5 greenspace that has had a park plan completed this year. The North Woodside Community Centre also has a new Park Plan. The plan was prompted by a resident survey carried out by the Pleasant Woodside Residents Association. HRM took the survey and completed engagement work and consultation to produce the plan. Some highlights of the work are:

- A reorganized and expanded parking lot for the community centre
- New pedestrian spaces around the community centre
- New sports courts along Pleasant Street opposite Chadwick Street
- A new path network through the undeveloped wooded space
- A more organized lawn and playground space, possibly with some sort of water feature

HRM envisions phasing in work over time in concert with other projects.

## VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Congratulations to these amazing 2025 Volunteer Award Winners from District 5. Your selfless commitment to the organizations you serve make our community an even better place to live, work and play:

**Ronnie Harris (Youth)** | Ronnie has been an active and dedicated volunteer at The North Grove since he was seven and continues to make a significant impact at seventeen. His leadership, passion and commitment to community-building inspire others, proving that you can make a meaningful difference regardless of age.

**Sinclair Dewis** | Sinclair has been a dedicated volunteer at Ronald McDonald House Charity (RMHC) for over 10 years, contributing more than 1,300 hours to maintaining and improving the House and the IWK Family Room.

**Temitope Fawole** | Temitope has been a dedicated volunteer at Winners Chapel International Halifax since 2017, leading the church's finance department while mentoring newcomers in both accounting and community integration.

**Kevin Forbes** | Kevin has been a devoted leadership volunteer with the Emera Blue Nose Marathon since 2012. His leadership, positive attitude and passion for community-building have left a lasting impact, inspiring volunteers and fostering inclusivity.

**John Holm** | John has been a passionate advocate for affordable housing in the Halifax region. John's dedication and compassionate approach not only improves the well-being of his clients but also inspires others to get involved, setting a standard of service and humanity that strengthens our community.

**Marty Zelenietz** | Marty has been a steadfast leader at Shaar Shalom Congregation for over two decades, profoundly shaping the Halifax Jewish community. From serving as lead gabbai, chairing the education committee and mentoring future leaders, Marty's dedication spans all aspects of Jewish life.



## CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

Citizenship awards recognize youth, for leadership, academic excellence, volunteerism, and fostering inclusive communities. The award recipients for District 5 were Charlotte Green from Bicentennial School and Jannatul Jasim from John Martin Junior High. Congratulations Charlotte and Jannatul!



### Delivery Note:

Due to the delivery routes followed by Canada Post, it is possible that some of these newsletters may appear in other Districts. If you receive it in error, I apologize for any confusion and hope you find its content useful.