A River Runs Under It: Daylighting Sawmill River

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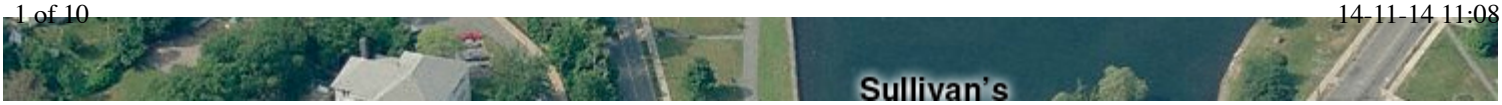
Dartmouth's Sawmill River. Photo CBCL

Dartmouth – From the harbour to its lakes, Dartmouth is a city shaped by water. Flowing through Downtown, the half-kilometer long Sawmill River connects Sullivan's Pond and the Shubenacadie Lakes to Halifax Harbour. Named for the sawmill that was built on its banks a year before Dartmouth was founded in 1749, the river has played a key role in the city's history. It served as a Mi'kmaq canoe route, provided settlers with freshwater, was an important part of the Shubenacadie Canal and enabled industrial development, notably Starr Manufacturing. If you went looking for the Sawmill River today though, you would have hard time finding it. After Hurricane Beth caused major flooding in 1971, the Sawmill River was channelled into a steel pipe and buried underground. Now, 45 years later, the pipe that entombs the river is deteriorating and needs to be replaced. This presents Dartmouth with a rare opportunity to bring its lost river back to life.