



*"for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Halifax as Common forever" (1763-2024)*

April 15, 2024

Dear Ms. Phillips,

**RE: NS Government request to pave the Garrison Grounds for parking**

A sincere thank you to you and your colleagues for the Friday meeting.

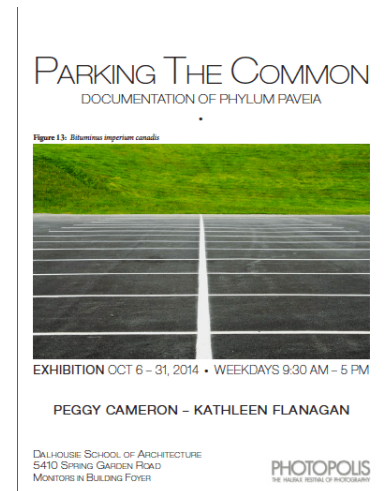
FHC concerns are:

- Continuing permanent loss of public green space on and around the Common; ~20% of the 240 acre grant remains as public open space.
- Ever increasing conversion of public space to permanent parking: ~25 to 30% of the Halifax Common is parking, mostly for hospitals.
- Paving/privatization of green space trumping long established evidence of the [Importance of green space for public health](#)
- Providing parking trumping evidence that this increases [reliance of single-vehicle transportation](#) and thereby traffic pollution, GHG emissions and negative health impacts.
- Status quo acceptance of reliance on private vehicles trumping long-known, well-documented impact/cost of vehicle emissions on air quality, human health, disease, life expectancy. A [2020 UK coroner's report](#) certified road traffic air pollution and failure to reduce it as a significant factor in a 9-year old child's death from Asthma.

FHC is very disappointed that Capital Health and the Nova Scotia government resist action to curb their appetite for more parking on the Halifax Common. Since 2007 much of FHC effort to protect public open space has focussed on reducing parking on the Halifax Common. The goals committed to by the city in the 1994 Halifax Common Masterplan to

protect existing green space, recapture and not give up more green space are once more side-lined.

My work with photographer Kathleen Flanagan to create [Phylum Paveia, the 2014 photographic exhibition of parking lots and parking garages on the Halifax Common](#) was to draw attention to the increasing disappearance of green space on the Halifax Common due to parking. Then parking/parkades occupied an estimated 25% of the Halifax Common. This has substantially increased since. Please take an on-line tour to help understand the scale and scope of the parking problem.



**Solutions exist:** [A 2015 review of the strategy and success of the sustainable transportation initiative undertaken by the Seattle Children's Hospital in 2008 gives both hope and direction.](#) It is part of an initiative to be carbon neutral by 2025. The hospital has >10,000 employees yet had reached 50% of its 2028 car reduction goal by 2015. Success is on-going.

Relevance of the Seattle Children's transportation program to Halifax are:

- the hospital is in a residential area with poor public transportation
- the driving reduction programs are viewed as perks that help retain and attract employees
- the hospital's ultimate goal of a 30% car commuting rate by 2028, will avoid constructing 500 parking spaces. That will save 225,000 square feet, enough to support 56 patient beds.
- at a (2015) construction cost of \$40,000 US per structured parking space the hospital will save an estimated \$20 million US (2015).
- the hospital's driving reduction programs do cost money to administer, much of that is offset by revenues from parking fees.

Highlights of Seattle Children's employee transportation program include:

- Deeply discounted unlimited public transit pass
- A daily commute bonus on days staff do not drive alone
- Free, premium vanpool parking
- Free use of a bike for employees who bike to work twice a week
- On-site, full-service bike shop, offering discounts on bicycles, gear and accessories plus two free annual bicycle tune-ups
- Pay-per-use parking rates that differ by location and time of day

Based on a meeting with Capital Health executives in 2000 to discuss 'modal shift' or ways to reduce staff and patients' reliance on private vehicles, they have had a long time need to plan for better options. The QEII redevelopment began in 2016. Again, despite sufficient lead time the team seems intent on ignoring the health, social, cultural, economic value of protecting and expanding green space. The economic expenditure of \$30m health care dollars on the most aesthetically unpleasing and unpopular 8-storey parking garage installed on the Nova Scotia Museum lawn is a clear signal that providing parking is not a sustainable, healthy, necessary or economically sensible choice. Yet the Province remains reliant on private automobiles rather than promoting modal shift. The QEII is moving ahead with building more parking on its site--so there is no apparent need for more parking in the immediate area even if it is assumed that people will continue to drive cars

As that's the case perhaps they ought to reconsider rather than [revoke and explicitly write off the benefits of building a robotic parking garage](#) as was the case with the 2020 parking garage RFP. This option is compact, cheaper, faster and as its fully automatic, more efficient and reduces emissions. It would fit on an exiting hospital parking lot and remain within the system's overly-large parking footprint. This would avoid any need to pave Parks Canada green space.

In any case, Parks Canada as an agency of the federal government's Minister of Environment and Climate Change must determine if agreeing to paving green space would cause significant adverse environmental effects. health, social or economic conditions. I hope FHC's letters, our discussion along with other evidence on the impact of the climate crisis on each of these will help you to reject the ask from the Nova Scotia government to pave public green space for parking.

I urge you to please work to ensure that the plan to pave public open space does not proceed. While it is important for governments to cooperate and be helpful, an overall objective should be to reduce harm (and GHGs). This is a great chance to demonstrate the real leadership our city and country needs.

Best wishes,

Peggy Cameron  
Friends of Halifax Common,  
[www.halifaxcommon.ca](http://www.halifaxcommon.ca).

Cc: Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Andy Fillmore, MP  
FHC Directors

*Friends of Halifax Common is a registered society working to protect, recapture and retain the 240 acre Halifax Common. FHC regularly updates over 3,000 citizens.*