



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

April 7, 2024

Dear Minister Guilbeault,

**Re: Do Not Pave Halifax Citadel National Park's Garrison Ground for Parking**

Friends of Halifax Common (FHC) is informed by Parks Canada that they are working with the Nova Scotia government to pave green space on the Garrison Grounds at Halifax Citadel National Historic Site. This is to expand existing parking lots at the corner of Sackville and Bell Road for healthcare. The province will pay for this, 4 EV chargers and new lighting.

FHC recognizes that the Citadel is not a part of the Halifax Common, but what goes on in lands immediately adjacent does have an impact on the Common--in this case a very direct impact.

Loss of public green space on the Halifax Common is already extensive. Less than 20% of Halifax's 240 acre Common remains as public open space. Approximately 25% of the Common is used for parking/parkades, most of this by health institutions such the QEII hospital system.

As part of the on-going QEII hospital expansion at its Infirmary location, the provincial government intends to demolish its Robie Street parking garage which is less than 20 years old, an already questionable idea. In 2020, Premier Stephen McNeil's provincial government built an 8-storey parkade on the Halifax Common on the north lawn of the NS Museum of Natural History on Bell Road ostensibly as a replacement for the Robie St parkade.

This new parkade was and remains extremely unpopular. Almost 3,000 citizens signed a petition against it within 10 days. It was built in any case at a cost of \$30 healthcare dollars but the local MLA Labi Kousoulis and Minister responsible, Lloyd Hines lost their seats in the next election.

When this parkade was first proposed and since, FHC has made every effort to have the province and the city work together for better transportation solutions. FHC suggestions included:

- build a robotic parking garage (cheaper, more efficient, smaller, modular, reduced GHGs and contained on existing hospital grounds);
- make better, more rational use of the acres and acres of existing hospital parkades and parking lots on the Halifax Common;
- develop an integrated transportation strategy with transit passes, car share, e-bikes, park and ride and top most improve public transportation;
- adopt strategies such as at the Seattle Sick Kids hospital to work with patients and healthcare workers to promote and achieve real modal shift.

There is no evident uptake on any of this. News from Parks Canada that the intended expansion of the Garrison Ground parking lot is meant to be for health care workers confirms this. **“Temporary” is not credible.**

The Nova Scotia government and HRM government seem not to understand the impact of climate change on health; the role that private automobiles play in GHG emissions, pollution, public safety, health or congestion; the health and safety impact of noise, congestion, pollution for the walkers, cyclists, players who use the Halifax Common and nearby streets. Nor is there evidence they understand, support or value the role of green space in citizen mental and physical health.

To read the recent email from Parks Canada informing FHC of the paving plan leads one to fear that this same level of lack of awareness or acceptance of the status quo permeates even your organization. Here is an excerpt:

[“The proposed expansion would mutually benefit all organizations involved and provide a variety of benefits to Halifax Citadel National Historic Site including an](#)

increase in parking for special events and site visitors, new and improved lighting, and four new EV chargers. It would also provide additional revenue to Parks Canada and Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, which would be re-invested to support operations such as visitor programs, services, and facilities.”

Ten days ago, on a weekend **the NS government cut down ~20 beautiful, mature Elm and Linden trees along Bell Road as part of the QEII redevelopment.** There are no words.

Almost 3,300 citizens signed a petition against these trees being removed and asking that the new hospital building be set back so the design would not impact the roots and save the trees.

There will be political fall out from this and from any further loss of green space on the Halifax Common or paving of the Garrison Ground, an historic green space to gather, relax, hear music, play, walk, recreate or chill.

It is completely unacceptable that you as Minister of Environment and Climate Change, or a department of your government would contemplate such a thing as paving green space for expanding parking given its health, social, cultural, historic, environmental importance and negative impact on these. Or support the on-going destruction of our environment. Do not permit the paving of the Garrison Ground. Please work to ensure that this plan does not proceed.

Best wishes,

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

Cc: Andy Fillmore, MP  
Alannah Phillips, Parks Canada  
FHC Directors and Supporters

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