Friends of HALIFAX COMMON

"for the use of the inhabitants of the town of Halifax as Common forever" (1763-2025)

July 23, 2026

Attention: NS Minister of Education, the Honourable Brendan Maguire

Dear Mr. Maguire:

Re: protect public green space and trees at Citadel High; use available unfinished floor space instead of modular classrooms.

We understand that the NS Department of Education may place modular classrooms on the front yard at the Citadel High school to accommodate its increased student population. You may be unaware that the high school is located on the 240 acre Halifax Common of which only an estimated 20% remains as public open space.

Instead of buying and installing temporary modular units and taking up public open green space or cutting trees, we ask you to make better use of existing space within the building that has been under-utilized by HRM Parks and Recreation for the past 19 years.

HRM pays 7% of the Citadel High operational fee since 2007 for two floors of recreational space inside the North end of the building. The upper ~9,500 ft2 remains unfinished and under-utilized because HRM has not budgeted to complete it. This would accommodate ~8 classrooms.

Due to governments' financial constraints it is an ideal time to negotiate a new lease agreement with HRM allowing the province to finish and use this space for classrooms to accommodate the increase in student population for a defined period (5-10 years). As typically school populations fluctuate the need can be then reassessed based on student population projections.

The province could offer HRM incentives with the new lease:

- rent savings commensurate with the reduced space;

- increased access to Citadel Facilities for recreation programmes;
- alternative storage space for HRM's recreational equipment (i.e. containers on site or storage at nearby HRM facilities)

Additional classroom space within the existing edifice could also allow the reversal of some changes made in the last few years to accommodate the population growth at Citadel. For example, there used to be more Science labs and all but one has been repurposed to be classrooms. Also, a single edifice offers better safety protocol for students and recreational users served there rather than in a number of buildings, especially after dark.

This 2015 CBC story says HRM's rent was $91,000 back then. Using that as an average value since 2007, finds a total of ~$1.73 million for both floors and an estimated $850,000 for the top unused space.The CBC story suggested that it would be "up to five years" before HRM would finish the upstairs space. In this time nothing has happened although they have prioritized building two new buildings elsewhere on the Halifax Common.

Modular classroom's may cost ~$300,000 each including washrooms, HVAC and site installation. Finishing the unused recreational space should not be seen as too expensive as the outcome ensures that the underused space is permanently available for either the educational or recreational users of Citadel High. It also keeps the Halifax Common green space available for their health and enjoyment and for city residents and guests.

We look forward to hearing back from you at your earliest possible convenience. The Halifax Common was granted "to and for the use of the inhabitants of the Town of Halifax as Common forever," in 1763. With the increasing population on the Peninsula, public green space and trees are ever more precious. We hope that you can respect their protection.

Thank you,
Peggy Cameron, for
Friends of Halifax Common

Cc: HRM Mayor and Council
Joe Morrison, Principal, Citadel High
Steve Gallagher, Executive Director, Halifax Regional Centre for Education
Claudia Chender, NDP Leader Iain Rankin, Liberal Leader