

GRAND PARADE

A HALIFAX CITY HALL NEWSPAPER



MONDAY THE 30TH OF MARCH 2026



caption Librarians and supporters protest HRCE funding cuts at city hall
credit Gabrielle Drapeau

Council cuts school librarians in secret vote

by G. Drapeau

Librarian calls libraries "The Great Equalizers"

Staff, students, and parents have been left in tense limbo since they learned city council may cease funding school librarians as soon as April 1.

The word spread like wildfire amongst families that on March 18 council had recently voted (In Camera) to remove library support specialists (LSSs), i.e. school librarians, from the Supplementary Education Funding. Municipal Supplementary Education Funding is currently the only funding for school librarians. Changing the scope of the fund would move money that was paying librarians' salaries and redistribute it.

City council has not made any indication that they are changing the amount they're putting in the overall supplementary fund this year (they're

only allowed to lower it 10% per fiscal year). By removing LSSs from the scope of the funding, money would be freed up to put towards arts programming like music, dance, drama, and visual arts classes.

HRM has funded LSSs since amalgamation in the '90s through supplementary funding collected from municipal property taxes. This is in addition to the mandatory funding that every municipality in the province has to contribute to local education. While originally meant to support arts programming in public schools, the supplementary funding expanded soon after its creation to include LSSs, school social workers, additional teachers, and other staff.

Council pulling funding would threaten the jobs of 98 librarians across 137

schools in the HRM.

Supplementary funding began in the 1995-96 fiscal year at about \$17 million, and has since decreased to under \$14 million, despite Halifax's population growing by over 100 thousand between 1996 and 2021.

Tammy Jakeman, an educational programme assistant and member of CUPE 5047, said this conversation has floated in and out of city hall in previous budget talks, but "sure enough, this was the year."

Jakeman organized a rally in front of City Hall on March 24 to protest city council's secret decision.

Cheers and cowbells rang out over Grand Parade as dozens of protesters rallied on the freezing evening to speak out against the cuts.

"I work three jobs, I don't have time to take my children to the public library anymore," said one parent at the rally. "The school library helps my child find her needs and her interests."

Another speaker, LSS Deb Copeman, spoke about the importance of library programming, from DnD to chess clubs, for kids.

"School librarians are so much more than book shepherds, and the library is so much more than a room full of books [...] a school library is a platform for learning and community. A school librarian has an impact not only on students' literacy, but also on the trajectory of their lives, connecting readers to resources and students to each other through programming"

Kristine Welbourn, another LSS, spoke at the rally and to Grand Parade.

"Libraries are what I like to call the 'Great Equalizers,' bridging the poverty gap and giving all students access to information, technology, and opportunity."

Councillor Tony Mancini also spoke

at the rally, saying he couldn't comment on whether voting on funding had occurred during council's In Camera time, but that "there is some feeling from some of my colleagues that we should not be in the supplemental funding world because that is a fundamental responsibility of the province [...] But if we don't fund it, it's not gonna happen."

Jakeman was also wary about expecting the province to pay, citing the lack of school librarians in other regional school boards.

Others at the rally agreed they would like to see education money coming from the provincial government, but that this decision came too quickly.

"Do it further down the road. Not April first," said one speaker, to cheers from the crowd.

An LSS, who we will be referring to as Montgomery because they feared reprisals, said they've seen this coming for some time.

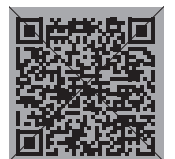
"It's hard, on a personal level, to have people weigh in on what you do—you feel like you have to prove your worth."

Montgomery said while teachers often have their own resources like books, having a librarian to find and keep track of books for the school means more consistent access to age-appropriate and varied reading. It also means saves HRCE money in the long run through maintenance and proper bookkeeping.

Montgomery pointed out that in a time of falling literacy scores and rising screen time, encouraging kids to read consistently from a young age is critical. They said that, unlike screentime, reading requires stamina.

"It's work. The older [kids] get, the more difficult it is for them to have their attention held by a book [...] you just hope that if they have a strong foundation, they'll come back to reading later in life."

SCAN FOR ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD @ WWW.GRANDPARADE.NEWS!



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IMP updated after 9 years of failure

by M. Stickland

When passed in 2017 with much fanfare, Halifax's Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP) had one job: reduce the number of drivers on Halifax's roads.

Every year since Halifax adopted the old IMP in 2017, the IMP has failed at

its one job. It failed every. single. year. from 2017 to today. The Transportation Standing Committee approved an IMP overhaul last Thursday, which is a condensed version of the 2017 plan.

The IMP was first passed in 2017 because the city was concerned about the increased volume of cars on city streets. This is a concern because cars physically cannot scale as mass transit. Because cars are so very big and getting bigger, when too many people drive all at once, they get in each other's way which clogs up the road causing congestion.

And the requirement to stop the flow of traffic to let other drivers into the main road network places a hard

capped and very low upper limit on the car network's peak flow efficiency.

The city has approximately 4,211 kilometres of road. In 2006, the city's modal split had 75% drivers, which, with 2006's population, was approximately 279,643 cars moving about the city every workday. At an average of 5 meters long, if all those drivers took to the road all at once, their cars would take up approximately 1,400 km or 33% of Halifax's 4,211 available kilometres of road. With today's population and estimated modal split, Halifax has approximately 422,551 cars moving about the city every workday. If all of Halifax's drivers went and parked their

cars on Halifax's roads today, those cars would take up approximately 2,112 km or roughly half of Halifax's available lanes.

But in reality, not all of Halifax's 4,211 km of lanes are used by all people. A lot of those kilometres are local roads used by a dozen people and a lot of those kilometres are actually parking.

And that 4,211km total from last year's municipal capital budget documents, does not include rural roads that the province maintains.

So in reality, Halifax's daily 422,551 drivers and their 2,112 km of car are all trying to squeeze into less than 500 km of road.

All at the same time.

Every single work day.

This underlying physics is also why Halifax Cycling Coalition president David Trueman spoke to the Transportation Standing Committee about the IMP at last Thursday's meeting. He pointed out that if the IMP succeeds as planned "the best case scenario [is one] of moving to 30% sustainable mobility. As is in the IMP update, between [2026 and 2050] we go from approximately 350,000 to 605,000 vehicles on our roads." This is approximately 3,025 km worth of parked cars or 71% of Halifax's available 4,211 km of car lane. "Do you want to be the ones who approved the plan that subjects us to this nightmare of congestion?"

Trueman told the Committee that if the city wanted to reduce congestion, it would need to set far more aggressive modal shift targets.

For example, if HRM wanted to plan to go back to 2006 levels of congestion by 2050, the IMP should aim for drivers to make up no more than 28% of transportation demand instead of our planned 70%.

The solution either way is more space for more transportation. However, with the amount of road widening required to accommodate today's volumes of cars, nevermind the planned future volumes, it is prohibitively expensive. Each lane of road costs about \$1 million per km, not including the cost to the city to buy land for widening or the increased cost of maintenance.

Luckily there are more efficient transportation lanes available to a city. Bike lanes max out at about 7,500 people per hour. Bus Rapid Transit lanes top out at about 8,000 people per hour compared to car lanes' max of about 1600 people per hour.

And the good news here is that a lot of Halifax's public right-of-way is already big enough for a bike and bus and car lane, and doing that is far more affordable than widening roads. This is why the Halifax Cycling Coalition, a March 31 motion from District 5 councillor Sam Austin, and the IMP itself are all strongly advocating for lane reallocation.

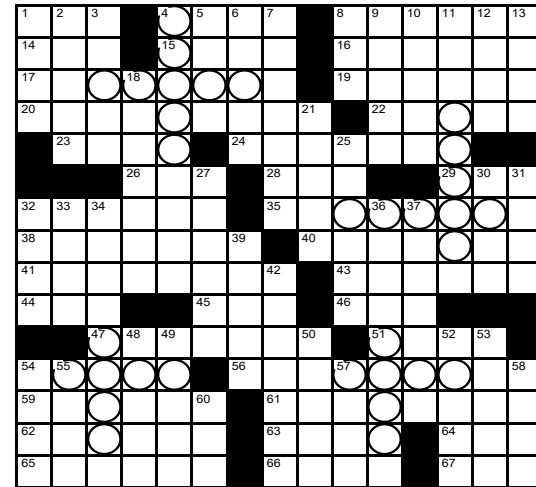
"Thank you for being honest," said District 4 councillor Trish Purdy of the new IMP. "Because we have been vilified for saying that some bike lanes don't actually reduce traffic flow." Critics of the IMP have been vilified because in every major study on the subject bike (and bus) lanes have either decreased drive times, or in rare cases, had no real impact on drive times. Because even if some drivers can't imagine a world where they ride a bike or take a bus, for every driver that does, they free up a massive amount of road space for the remaining drivers, which in turn massively reduces congestion.

Halifax's unambitious new IMP and its plan to increase congestion to 605,000 cars by 2050 was sent to council for final approval and subsequent implementation.

Crossing paths by B. Olson

Across

- 1 TV co. that produced "Lou Grant"
- 4 Outspoken Mair of '80s talk radio
- 8 Marked a bingo card, in a way
- 14 XXX alternative
- 15 April's creepy "Parks and Recreation" friend
- 16 Former Conservative leader Erin
- 17 Had a growth spurt
- 19 Become focused (on)
- 20 Take to lambasting
- 22 Itching for action
- 23 Fairy tale beginning
- 24 One during REM stage
- 26 Eur. dominion until 1806
- 28 Old French penny
- 29 President Lincoln
- 32 Speedy Gonzales cry
- 35 Innards
- 38 Like a warty croaker
- 40 Shiny varnish
- 41 Bread bag closer
- 43 Praiseful poets
- 44 Initials in French fashion
- 45 Breakfast drinks, for short
- 46 Record time?
- 47 Simulate, as a crime
- 51 Word in many Valentine cards
- 54 ___ jump (field event)
- 56 Make a simple breakfast, say
- 59 Intro
- 61 Weather metaphor for a time of need
- 62 Curious thing
- 63 Leaves' home
- 64 Top naval off.
- 65 Most Solomonic
- 66 "Milk" director Gus Van ___
- 67 Steam kettle sound



© ClassiCanadian Crosswords

Down

- 1 Rolling stone's lack, it is said
- 2 ___ bottom (entirely)
- 3 "Happy Days" actress Erin
- 4 Carpentry insert that gets in the groove
- 5 Beginner painting course
- 6 Crazed superfan
- 7 Back, as a candidate
- 8 No-___ caffeine pills
- 9 "It was ___ effort" ("We did it together")
- 10 Carried, as by wind
- 11 Saloon patrons' foot rests
- 12 Wallace and Whitney
- 13 Say "Not !," say
- 18 Common corsage flowers
- 21 Bold highlighter hues
- 25 Giller Prize nominee, say
- 27 Scottish singer Sheena
- 30 Harsh note from a trumpet
- 31 F1 neighbours
- 32 Wiggled worker, once: Abbr.
- 33 Garden divisions
- 34 Four Monopoly properties
- 36 Mars, as it's called, with "the"
- 37 Support from an ex
- 39 Islamic headscarf
- 42 Ushers
- 48 Title lady in an Ethel Merman tune
- 49 Tidies up text
- 50 Half crown
- 52 Hindu scriptures
- 53 "Zounds!"
- 54 Totally flub
- 55 ___-whip (whipped cream brand)
- 57 Security for a debt
- 58 School assembly spots
- 60 "All the News That's Fit to Print" sloganeer, for short

Notes: