



Ecology Action Centre – Candidate Survey 2024

Candidate for Councillor, District 5 – Dartmouth Centre

Name of Candidate: Sam Austin

1. The [Halifax Green Network Plan](#) (HGNP) should be used to guide the region's growth, but full implementation of the plan requires resources and enforceable rules to protect important greenspace and wildlife corridors. Will you support the full implementation of the HGNP to protect the Green Network? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. The Green Network is tied to HRM's future in many ways. Economically, it's a selling point that in 20 minutes you can be in wilderness. Financially, HRM needs to densify and that means an end to endless sprawl into the wildlands. Recreationally, a lot of people make use of our near wilderness to walk, hike, swim, kayak, bike, etc. Environmentally, the connection is obvious. We need to preserve our wild spaces and tread much more lightly on this planet. Climate change is real and protecting the carbon sinks we have is important for doing our part of address this critical issue. The Green Network is about being much more sustainable in HRM.

2. Will you commit to ensuring Halifax Transit attracts and retains enough staff to implement the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network and ferry routes in the [Rapid Transit Strategy](#)? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I brought a motion to Council when staffing hit critical lows with the ferry and that is now being addressed. Although the bigger issue with delivering on rapid transit isn't employees, it's that HRM needs federal and provincial funding for more than a new ferry line, we need funding to build out the bus network and redesign streets for transit priority.

3. Will you commit to implementing the [Road Safety Strategy](#) and achieving its vision of zero injuries and fatalities across all modes of transportation? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. Road safety is fundamentally a design challenge. We need to redesign our streets to be safer for vulnerable users such as cyclists and pedestrians. No one should end up with lifelong injuries or lose their life simply by trying to move around our municipality.

4. Are you committed to ensuring the continued implementation and full funding of the [JustFOOD Action Plan](#) as the municipality's first comprehensive, long-range food strategy, which will increase collaboration across levels of government and among community

partners, strengthening our collective capacity to build a just, healthy, and sustainable food system. Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. Absolutely! Poverty rates are high in HRM and there are many folks who are struggling. HRM can't fix food security issues alone. We need to help where we can and play a role in convening and coordinating a broader response.

5. With climate change wreaking heat waves even in temperate climate zones, and the price of home-heating fuel spiking due to global conflict, access to affordable home energy efficiency has become a human right crucial to comfort and standard of living. Cities across Canada are seeing tenants mobilize for these rights. As an elected official, would you support a "right to efficiency" by-law supporting tenants' rights to affordable energy efficiency support? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. I like the idea. I'm not sure if we have the legal power though. The HRM Charter can be, unfortunately, limiting! HRM is working on scaling up energy efficiency measures, through the new navigator program. In addition to that, offers such as Solar City should be enhanced to make them an offer that's too good to refuse. HalifACT identifies about half of our emissions as coming from buildings and that energy poverty is a real danger for our most vulnerable. I'm in favour of any measure that will help make our buildings more efficient and ensure that the most vulnerable aren't left behind as we adapt to a changing world.

6. There are multiple stressors on local freshwater quality and quantity such as increased development and an increase in water-related climate events (e.g., floods, droughts, storms). Do you commit to advocating for and supporting watershed level management in municipal planning? Explain why or why not (optional).

Yes. Absolutely! Watershed management is a core plank in my campaign platform. Dartmouth is the City of Lakes. We need to take care of them. We've done a series of one-off projects around Banook such as the pigeon netting under the Circ, the rain garden on Prince Albert Road, tracking down sewer connections in Halifax Water's infrastructure, and the new naturalization project at Birch Cove. These have been good projects, but there hasn't been a comprehensive plan or set of goals to measure efforts by. I'm very excited to start watershed level planning with Dartmouth's lakes as the pilot project.

7. Will you, in the absence of a provincial Coastal Protection Act, advocate for and work towards passing municipal by-laws designed to address development on vulnerable coastal properties and infrastructure? Explain why or why not (optional).



Yes. It's unfortunate that the Province has downloaded coastal protection to the municipalities as the result will be a patchwork of rules across Nova Scotia. Some municipalities are better able to handle the challenge than others. HRM is well equipped to lead because we have a lot of capacity in our planning department. I support measures such as increasing the setback distance in the draft Regional Plan and reassessing the minimum elevation above the high watermark. Sea levels are rising, and storms are intensifying as we feel the effects of climate change. We need to plan accordingly.

