

Halifax Student Alliance Survey (2008.10.01)

Tera Gault,

Thank you for your email of Thursday September 25, 2008. An attachment to the email included the six (6) Candidate Survey questions, and a request to keep all answers to within 150 words.

- Cameron Ells
HRM Regional Council Candidate - Downtown Halifax (District 12)

Halifax @ ExCELLS.ca
www.ExCELLS.ca

1) Please give descriptions of Past Community Involvement

I have never belonged to, contributed to, campaigned for, or been affiliated with a political party.

My "Lucky" Paradise Cinema membership #0013 shows that not everything works out as desired. My membership number is #5571 in the Association of Professional Engineers of Nova Scotia (APENS) or Engineers Nova Scotia. I am a Life Member of the Nova Scotia Institute of Science (NSIS), and the elected President of the Environmental Services Association of Nova Scotia (ESANS). I was a founding member (to 2000) of the Atlantic PIRI Committee (www.AtlanticRBCA.com), ClimAdapt and Climate Canada Atlantic (www.ClimAdapt.ca).

In March 2008 I was the Steering Committee Chair for the Atlantic Climate Change Conference (March 2008). The committee included the Environmental Services Association of Nova Scotia (www.ESANS.ca), Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia Energy (now Environment), and Environment Canada. The event was noted in the "Get Inspired" section of the Green Halifax Guide by The Coast.

Cameron Ells for Councillor - Downtown Halifax

2) How can HRM reach out to students more effectively?

Or, how can HRM and students more effectively reach out to each other? A four year time frame can be associated with both students and HRM Councilors. The general themes of student interests are seemingly timeless. However, there are specific goals that can be achieved in the short term. Students and HRM Councilors are both often trying to find the most practical and time sensitive means to achieve a desired performance goal. Students and HRM Councilors know that there can be multiple ways of achieving the same performance goal.

The recent initiatives of the Halifax Student Alliance are useful. Consolidating, prioritizing, and communicating performance goals in a "Student Voices" PDF is effective. Opportunities have been created to exchange thoughtful opinions, perspectives, insights, and experience. Communications and "networking opportunities" are forms of reaching out to each other.

The most achievable performance goals (ie. Demonstrate a night bus service) are always possible.

3) What steps would you take to work towards improving Halifax's transit system for students?

Student transit options include Metro Transit buses, ferries, and bikes. Taxi's are typically not commonly used. Rail and airplane travel are infrequent.

I support incremental improvements in the bike associated infrastructure, such as more bike lanes, bike racks on buses, and bike spaces for parking.

The business case for fast ferries is not yet proven. Metro Link bus services are a self evident success. There will be more busses after constructing the approved new maintenance garage.

I would work with others in navigating through government and advocating for practical changes in existing bus routes, the frequency and extent of bus service, and for additional bus routes.

I would work with interested student representatives to see if a persuasive business case exists and can be presented, for a pilot demonstration of a downtown night bus service, and a service to link the Halifax airport to the main Metro Transit hubs.

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4) Transportation and safety are key issues for students and the Halifax Student Alliance is calling for the implementation of a late-night transit service to address safety concerns. Please share your thoughts on a late-night transit service and how you would move forward on its implementation.

I think an objective business case would prioritize a late night transit service over a fast ferry or some other options for limited HRM resources. This would take into account a growing capacity of Metro Transit and its contract arrangements with staff. Assuming this is so, as Councillor I would persuasively seek the support of other Councillors for a late night transit service.

This may be a mix of more frequent servicing of routes, altering some routes, additional routes, Metro Link, and the growth of supporting infrastructure capacity.

A first step might be a limited extension, over a limited area, of transit service to 2:00 am. If passenger numbers are initially relatively low, perhaps there is room for some mix of premium pricing, or revenue from advertising or sponsorship. The free daytime downtown FRED bus, sponsored by local business, might be a useful working model.

5) Violence is increasingly becoming a concern across HRM. Please explain how you would address issues of crime and violence within the community, particularly as they affect students.

Encourage available, useful information; community engagement in confronting crime and violence in local crime causes.

I would encourage easy to obtain, accurate information so people can make more informed decision making. This includes expanding the police information sessions to involve more students, and highlighting useful information such as the pinpoint crime map on the web site of The Coast.

We have new police officers. We seek engagement in local policing efforts. To do so, improvements are needed in community perceptions regarding police response times. If you think you are on your own, why get involved? I would seek to have objectively demonstrated trends in police response times. Working to make this a positive trend should result in greater community engagement against crime.

I would encourage more downtown development as livable mixed use neighborhoods, and transit system improvements to reduce some of the local root causes for crime and violence.

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6) As a councillor, how would you improve access to affordable housing for students across HRM?

We can influence the potential quantity, availability, and quality of affordable housing.

There is more housing in Halifax now, than ten years ago, including the peninsula and downtown areas. I would encourage more housing developments, especially by recycling the land of former military - commercial - industrial brownfields sites.

The availability of student housing could be increased with further development of transit options such that “30 minutes from campus” would effectively cover a larger geographic area.

The quality of housing could be improved through a real time internet based rating system by the student consumers. Imagine something like Amazon.com, with landlord participation, being applied to local student housing. I am sure this concept is being applied somewhere in North America, and think it is more effective than having an HRM employee providing a “gold seal” approval. As Councillor, I would encourage HRM outreach efforts to include advertising on this platform.

Cameron Ells for Councillor - Downtown Halifax

On Thu, 25 Sep 2008 16:55:08 -0300, "Tara Gault" <tara@halifaxstudentalliance.ca> wrote:

> Good Afternoon,

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> The Halifax Student Alliance is pleased to release its first edition of
> Student Voices, a regular publication highlighting student issues within the
> HRM community. Attached you will find key policy recommendations from
> the Halifax Student Alliance, event updates and a brief candidates' survey we
> are kindly requesting all candidates to fill out. Survey responses will
> be posted on our website and distributed in an effort to educate student
> voters.

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> We ask that all surveys are completed by Wednesday, October 1, 2008
> (please send as a Word document). They may be emailed to
> tara@halifaxstudentalliance.ca

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> If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me.

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> Best wishes,

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> Tara

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> Tara Gault

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Cameron Ells for Councillor - Downtown Halifax

Candidate Survey: Your Thoughts on Student Issues

All candidates are encouraged to fill out the following survey no later than Wednesday, October 1st.

Responses may be emailed to tara@halifaxstudentalliance.ca

The Halifax Student Alliance will be publishing candidate profiles on its website in order to provide students with information as they decide how to cast their vote. Responses will be published on the website and Facebook group as they are received (with the exception of any responses cut off for exceeding the maximum length). The Halifax Student Alliance is not responsible for information taken and distributed from our website by third parties.

Please feel free to send us a profile picture to post on our website along with your responses.

Please give us a description of your past community involvement (we ask that you limit your response to no more than 150 words per question).

How can HRM reach out to students more effectively?

What steps would you take to work towards improving Halifax's transit system for students?

Transportation and safety are key issues for students and the Halifax Student Alliance is calling for the implementation of a late-night transit service to address safety concerns. Please share your thoughts on a late-night transit service and how you would move forward on its implementation.

Violence is increasingly becoming a concern across HRM. Please explain how you would address issues of crime and violence within the community, particularly as they affect students.

As a councillor, how would you improve access to affordable housing for students across HRM?