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Letter from the Editor

Gym memberships are purchased, water bottles are full, vision boards are assembled — and Donald Trump has bombed another sovereign nation. Happy New Year, everyone.

Like the Magic 8 Ball on this issue's cover, many of us are looking for a glimpse of what the year ahead may hold. For me, one question is looming: it may be a new year, but is it the same shit?

I like to think of myself as a glass-half-full person, but it's hard not to look around and wonder.

Sometimes, it's hard to feel like it isn't. Where's that new rink Dal keeps talking about? What about our tuition refunds for the three weeks of class we missed? Is King's going bankrupt? Why did our school just sign on to a natural gas project — I thought we cared about the environment? Our hockey team still sucks. There are no sports bars in Halifax. They're selling bomb shelter condos in our province. Heck, we should've called this the *Dalhousie Gazette's* doom and gloom issue.

And that's just our little corner of the world.

The Marion McCain building construction is looking better — we'll give them that.

When it feels like we're always waiting for the other shoe to drop, picking up a newspaper can feel daunting. That's why, at the *Gazette*, we'd like to start the year by acknowledging that we're happy you're here. It might be a new year, and *it might be the same shit*, but the fact that we're even concerning ourselves with these issues — about our university and our city — matters.

It means we're watching. That's hard; it's easier to look away.

This year, as difficult as it may be, I urge you not to turn off the news just because it's uncomfortable. Ignorance can feel like bliss — but it's a privileged kind. If we want a year that looks different from the last, we need to look up, wake up and act up.

Last semester's tuition won't refund itself. Our school won't stop signing onto fossil fuel projects if we stay quiet about them.

Our goal is to bring you a newspaper that isn't all "doom and gloom," but one that tells the stories that need to be told. If you need a break from the news, look in the arts and culture section for Heated Rivalry and New Year's resolutions, or the sports section for coverage of your favourite Tigers and the death of Halifax sports bars — but don't skip news.

Be informed. Be engaged. Be active. Let's not make this another year of the same shit. We've got this.

Hannah Schneider

Managing editor, the *Dalhousie Gazette*

Hannah Schneider

NEWS

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

King's needs \$95 million for a new campus building. No one's agreed to pay for it

Student union says the project "doesn't make financial sense,"

By Dylan Follett

The University of King's College says its current budget deficit will not impact the construction of its first new building in more than two decades.

The Southeast Corner (SEC) project — promised to cost \$95 million — would replace the school's current gymnasium and border Dalhousie University's campus. The new building will contain residence rooms for 100 students, a new gym and the journalism school.

William Lahey, the president of King's, says a third of the price tag will come from government funding, a third from private donations and a third from the university itself.

But the government said they haven't promised any funding.

"We are pleased to see the University of King's College moving forward with plans for a new building that will support students and strengthen its campus," said Chloe Sampson, the communications advisor for Nova Scotia's advanced education department, in an email to the *Dalhousie Gazette* on Dec. 18. "At this time, there are no commitments in place for provincial funding."

King's has met with the federal and provincial governments about the project throughout the process, but according to Lahey, the university's application for a provincial grant to fund the building's new residence rooms was denied. Lahey declined the *Gazette's* request to access the application document.

Lahey was unable to predict how long it will take to reach the



A concept design shows the exterior view of the SEC project from the quad. (Image courtesy of Diamond Schmitt/Abbott Brown)

\$95 million target.

Current financial struggles

King's has a projected \$1.8 million deficit for the current fiscal year, over \$1 million more than the \$750,000 deficit projected in June. The university attributes the increased deficit to the loss of revenue from a federal cap on international students.

The financial crisis has led to cost-saving initiatives across the school, including a current hiring freeze and an upcoming salary increase freeze beginning June 30, 2026, according to a letter sent by Lahey to King's students on Dec. 5.

Lahey says the financial crisis and construction of the SEC are "separate from each other," but that "the credibility of the project would be greatly assisted

by the university making substantial progress on its current financial challenges."

Ellie Anderson, president of the King's Students Union, says she believes that the building won't be built "while any of us are here" due to the school's current "financial crisis."

"It doesn't make financial sense," says Anderson, who is also a member of the King's board of governors. "It's going to be \$95 million. We don't have \$2 million [to cover the deficit]. "Kings as an institution is going to have to survive the next however many years, and if we do that, then we can talk about building a new building."

In an email to the *Gazette*, Adriane Abbott, the director of the King's advancement office, said the university's financial

situation is "being well managed" and is similar to "most other Canadian universities."

Where will the rest of the funding come from?

Lahey said it's likely that the third of the building paid for directly by the school would come from loans and financing rather than the operating budget, and that it would be "highly advantageous" to have a balanced budget when considering financing.

Lahey hopes major contributions from "someone who identifies with the academic mission behind this building, which is journalism," will kickstart the third of funding expected to come from private donations.

Abbott said she is "confident" that the school will find donors for the building, describing the

project as "aspirational and very timely."

"This is a tough project, it's difficult, it's challenging, but it's also a huge opportunity," says Lahey.

Construction timeline remains uncertain

While the project is still in its early stages, there is currently no established timeline for the construction of the SEC.

"It would be wonderful to imagine us breaking ground no later than two years from now and cutting the opening day ribbon six years from now," said Abbott.

She said trying to predict a timeline before securing funding is "like looking into a crystal ball."

Lahey, who is retiring at the end of this academic year, hopes the next president sees the project as important to the future of King's and a priority for the university's long-term well-being.

The King's board of governors will review and modify the existing design of the project as it progresses to the construction stage. The board will have to vote on these modifications and whether or not to continue with the project, which will likely be in June, according to Anderson.

"King's is confident that this project will move forward and equally confident that the conceptual drawings will undergo modifications as the project proceeds through the next design stages," said Abbott. "We aim to fund the next phase of design this year."

Dalhousie given \$30 million to research onshore natural gas drilling

University won't comment on whether students will perform research

By Isabel Duque

Dalhousie University received \$30 million from the province to research onshore natural gas drilling in Nova Scotia, leaving students and faculty questioning the university's commitment to its environmental goals.

The university administered program, announced 10 months after the provincial government lifted a decade-long fracking ban, provides funding for companies to explore Nova Scotia's "natural gas potential" through geological evaluations — includ-

ing exploratory drilling and flow testing — according to a Dec. 22 provincial press release.

The program is "designed to understand the potential to explore Nova Scotia's onshore natural gas resource while ensuring environmental stewardship and transparency," according to the province's statement.

The university will be responsible for determining the criteria for selecting companies, evaluating applicants, helping the chosen applicants navi-

gate regulations and managing communications between the government, stakeholders, in-

ties across the province. The first steps include the university creating an "oversight

"It's really disheartening and a step in the wrong direction."

industry partners and communities, including Indigenous communi-

committee" of people with energy development backgrounds.

This committee will include representation from academics, the public, the Department of Energy, First Nations and the energy industry.

"The university's role is to ensure that any exploration is approached with transparency, scientific rigor, and community input," said Janet Bryson, Dalhousie's director of media relations in an emailed statement to the *Dalhousie Gazette*.

"The university will provide clear, evidence-based
Continues on page 4

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information so that future decisions are made with the highest level of public trust and accountability.”

Dalhousie is expected to produce a final report by the end of this year.

Dalhousie's role as the administrator and research facilitator of the project has students questioning how the initiative aligns with both the university's sustainability policies and what they're learning in the classroom.

“Dalhousie is disinvesting in my education because they are supporting things that their institution has taught me is not good,” says Adlie Leviten-Reid, a fourth-year student organizer with Divest Dal, a student organization lobbying the university to divest from fossil fuels.

According to Dalhousie's sustainability policy, the university is committed to “prevent[ing] pollution by reducing harmful emissions and discharges to air, water, and land” and “draw[ing] people to Dalhousie because of sustainability activity.”

“This kind of partnership is contrary ... to many of the activities that Dal has signed on to, has spoken about and invested in,” said Daniel Rainham, a health promotion professor at Dal, who holds a master's de-

gree in earth and atmospheric sciences.

Natural gas produces less carbon dioxide emissions than other fossil fuels, such as oil or coal. But it is a significant source of methane, a greenhouse gas. Fracking can contaminate the surrounding environment and ground water supply with toxins.

The program aims to reduce high energy costs — Nova Scotia currently imports natural gas from the United States at an “inflated cost” — according to a Dec. 22 statement from Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston, who is also the province's minister of energy.

“No matter what, if the cost of natural gas comes down (by using local gas), you will benefit,” Houston said in the statement.

More than half a dozen faculty members from Dalhousie's environmental science and sustainability faculties declined to speak with the *Gazette* about the natural gas program.

Julia MacFarlane, a fourth-year environmental science student and co-president of the Environmental Science Program Student Society, says one of the main topics in first-year environmental science courses is the negative impacts of non-renewable energies.



A building pumps exhaust into the air on Dalhousie University Campus in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Friday, Jan 9, 2026. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

“It's really disheartening and a step in the wrong direction to have the university partner with the province on this,” she says.

“We talk a lot about how our program is already very depressing and how you can face a lot of eco-anxiety,” says MacFarlane.

“Here we have our very own school, the people that we're supposed to look up to and trust to help us through these environmental problems saying,

‘Hey, we're actually not going to do anything that we're teaching you.’”

The university did not respond to the *Gazette*'s multiple requests for comment on whether students will be involved in the research program, prior to publication.

“This would say to me, as a potential student, ‘Dal does have some educational amenities and research amenities that

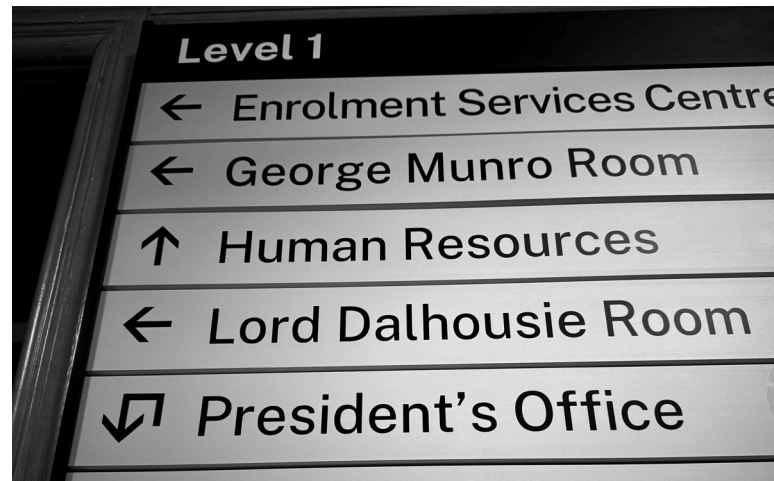
are focused on the climate issue, but its behavior would dictate otherwise,’ said Rainham. “It's conflicting. It's contrary.”

He says it could also hurt faculty who are working on climate and sustainability.

“They've underestimated the impact that it can have on people who work for so long and are trying to promote sustainability at the university.”

Students surprised at Kim Brooks' Order of Canada appointment

Two members of Dalhousie were appointed to the Order of Canada on Dec. 31



Henry Hicks Building on Dalhousie University's campus in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Friday, Jan. 9, 2026. (Jonas May/The Dalhousie Gazette)

By Jonas May

The appointment of Kim Brooks to the Order of Canada has drawn mixed reactions from Dalhousie University students.

Brooks, president and vice chancellor of Dalhousie, was inducted into the order alongside Dr. Patrick Croskerry, the director of Dalhousie's critical thinking program in the faculty of medicine. They were two of 80 new appointments announced by Gov. Gen. Mary Simon on Dec. 31.

Brooks is the third Dalhousie president to receive the Order of Canada, joining Tom Traves and Henry Hicks.

The *Dalhousie Gazette*'s multiple requests for comment from the university regarding the appointments went unanswered by Brooks and Croskerry prior

to publication.

Rose Silvestru, a first-year law student, created the @dal-lockedout Instagram account to platform student perspectives during the university's lockout of the Dalhousie Faculty Association.

Dalhousie students missed the first three weeks of most fall semester classes after the university locked out nearly 1,000 faculty members on Aug. 20. The university's board of governors and its faculty ratified a collective agreement ending the lockout on Sept. 17. Suspended classes resumed on Sept. 23.

Silvestru says she's happy to see Nova Scotia and Dalhousie be represented at the federal level with these appointments, characterizing Brooks as a lawyer with strong work in tax law

who has supported minority communities within Canada.

“She's done really wonderful things for Canada, and that shouldn't be discounted because of one event in her life,” says Silvestru. “However, it does seem suspect to me that you would give her the award following one of the most substantial events of her recent career history, which is so anti-labour, so against the values present in Nova Scotia communities.”

“That, to me, indicates that you are not taking it seriously.”

She says the context of the faculty lockout makes the appointment feel “out of place.”

“[Either] the work that went into deciding who was going to be appointed was not done very thoroughly because this information was very available, or, it was done very thoroughly, but it was done before the lockout, and nobody thought to double-check before these appointments went out,” Silvestru says.

“Or, they're well aware of what happened with the lockout, and they still think that Kim Brooks deserves this award for other reasons.”

The Order of Canada Appointees announcement, released on Dec. 31, 2025, states that Brooks “has advanced equity, accessi-

bility and freedom of gender expression in higher education. As president of Dalhousie University, she champions Nova Scotia and is a thoughtful voice for inclusive leadership, transformative education and research that builds Canada's future.”

Ingrid Wasuek'jij (Little Flower) Kassem is a member of the

“It doesn't do much to inspire confidence in students when their experiences are at odds with some of the reasoning for this award.”

Sipekne'katik First Nation and an engineering student at Dalhousie. She's the co-president and co-founder of the Dalhousie Indigenous Student Society.

She was “surprised” when she heard that part of the reason for Brooks' appointment was because she “advanced equity” in

higher education.

“Being one of only a handful of Indigenous students in engineering, I myself have found it [to be] a huge struggle,” says Kassem. “The consensus is that [Indigenous people] still don't have equal access to STEM or higher education in general.”

Maren Mealey, president of the Dalhousie Student Union, says Brooks' appointment showcases a disconnect between how students and the public view university administration.

“It doesn't do much to inspire confidence in students when their experiences are at odds with some of the reasoning for this award.”

Mealey says the appointment shows the difference between students' expectations and the university's national reputation.

“We measure it by if the leadership is benefiting us as stu-

dents, if they're listening to us, if they're taking care of us, that's not necessarily what's happening at the moment,” she says.

“We feel like student needs are being swept underneath the rug.”

International enrolment continues to decline, putting financial strain on Dalhousie

Federal enrolment adds pressure to university's budget deficit

By Jonas May

Dalhousie University over projected international student enrolment for the 2025-26 academic year by over 600 students.

“It's going to have a really multi-layered negative effect on Dalhousie,” says Ajay Parasram, an international development studies professor at the university.

Dalhousie had 2,713 full-time international students enrolled as of Oct. 1, according to a preliminary survey released by the Association of Atlantic Universities on Oct. 15. The figure represents a 20.9 per cent decrease from the previous year's 3,429 enrolled students.

The university's active operating budget projected that 3,382 international students would be enrolled for the 2025-26 academic year.

“If the university is trying to paint international students as the much needed and coveted cash cow that's going to solve our financial problems, it's wrong, that's not the case,” says Parasram.

“It was never a good strategy.” During the Dalhousie Faculty Association lockout at the beginning of the fall semester, a statement released by Kim Brooks, president of Dalhousie, said the university's “revenue model has changed” due to the international student cap.

“Just four years ago, one in four of our students was an international student; last year, it was close to one in six,” Brooks said.

Projections in the budget go as far as 2027-28, when the university estimated it would have



Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Sunday, Nov. 23, 2025. (Rachel Bass/The Dalhousie Gazette)

3,052 international students enrolled.

“Dalhousie takes a coordinated, data-informed approach to international recruitment that aligns with government policy, institutional priorities, and long-term sustainability,” said Mike Fleury, the senior manager of strategic communications and media relations at Dalhousie in a statement to the *Dalhousie Gazette*.

“We continue to work collaboratively with the Province on issuing [provincial attestation letters] to eligible international applicants to Dalhousie programs, and on delivering programs that equip graduates with the knowledge and skills to support our region's needs.”

Federal cap impacts international enrolment

In January 2024, Canada's federal government capped the number of study permits it issued, reducing the number of

incoming international students by 40 per cent in its first year.

In January 2025, the federal government decreased the number of permits by an additional 10 per cent. A statement posted to the federal government's website said the cap was introduced to strengthen Canada's international student program and reduce strain on the housing market.

The cap was expected to result in 360,000 approved permits for 2024, a 35 per cent decrease from 2023. The federal government issued just 267,890 new permits over the calendar year. The cap has since been extended through 2026.

The Canadian government projected it will issue 155,000 study permits for international students in 2026 in the recently passed federal budget.

“The changes to international student study permits for 2026 are a federal policy decision,”

said Chloe Sampson, the communications advisor for Nova Scotia's department of education, in an emailed statement to the *Gazette*. “It's important to note that in 2025, post-secondary institutions in Nova Scotia were well under the federal cap that was set for international student study permits.”

Sampson says the department works with universities to create “long-term international student sustainability plans” that help them recruit and support students from abroad.

“In recruiting international students, we encourage institutions to prioritize students who will make valuable contributions to our province including areas of high labour-market need, such as, healthcare, defence, natural resources and the skilled trades.”

Computer science sees declines

According to Dalhousie's most recent enrolment reports, published using information up to Dec. 1, 2024, the university's computer science faculty had the highest international student enrolment of any faculty, with 696 students. 884 international students were enrolled in the program in Dec. 1, 2023.

Andrew Rau-Chaplin is the dean of the faculty of computer science at Dalhousie. He says that while the international student cap does factor into the department's declining enrolment, he does not expect the decrease to negatively impact the program's future.

However, he says that both Canada and Nova Scotia need to be strategic in attracting the

“very best talent in areas of need.”

“What does it mean to say we want to support healthcare?” says Rau-Chaplin. “A significant number of [computer science] graduates end up in healthcare.”

Who's to blame? Within Dalhousie's active operating budget, 43.7 per cent of the university's projected revenue for 2025-26 comes from the tuition it receives from total student enrolment. The university projected that international students would contribute to 29.6 per cent of the net revenue from tuition fees.

Parasram says that university workers and students at Dalhousie are being blamed for a lack of provincial funding that Dalhousie receives. If this continues, he says there could be an increase in labour disruptions around the university.

“That's not what we want for our students.”

While he understands that provincial funding is outside of the university's control, he says there are alternative options for Dalhousie to recoup some of the losses from international student tuition revenue.

“I understand, appreciate and empathize deeply with the fact that the province has been not fulfilling its obligations in terms of keeping up with adequate funding for the universities,” says Parasram.

“But to think that international students are the way to make up that difference, that's totally unacceptable to me.”

New Spanish language certificate opens the door for other language programs

Language profs hope certificates will boost class enrolment

By Charlotte Wood

Professors hope a new Spanish certificate will boost enrolment in language courses that have faced “a lot of pressure” from Dalhousie University.

On Dec. 10, the university announced a new certificate in Spanish language and culture. It's specifically designed to be accessible for students in any program, according to Magali Dam-Mazzi, the certificate's coordinator and a teaching fellow in the Spanish and Latin American studies department.

She wants to have a similar certificate available in all of Dalhousie's language programs for the upcoming fall semester.

“We are finishing German ... and then we hope in the future we will do Chinese, Italian and Arabic, so you become a part of this community of language programs together,” she says. “In 2026-27, we [aim to] be a united force with five language departments.”

Following a projected \$18 million deficit for the 2024-25 fiscal year, the university implemented a hiring freeze on Sept. 4, 2024 and suspended its Russian studies program in winter 2025. Dalhousie's German, Italian and Chinese departments, which primarily employ temporary and limited-term faculty and staff, have previously expressed concern about the impacts of the hiring freeze.

Dam-Mazzi says the new certificate creates hope for a “stronger” future for all of Dalhousie's language programs.

“We have not been expanding, we have been contracting, but still our spirit is up,” says Dam-Mazzi.

The certificate is not only designed for current students, there is also the option for non-degree students or members of the community to enroll in the Spanish language and culture certificate.

“We wanted to give the stu-

dents more flexibility to finish school with another degree in a way that would make it easier for them,” says Dam-Mazzi.

Brigid Garvey is the acting co-chair of the Spanish and Latin American, German, Italian and Chinese programs at Dalhousie. She says the language departments have been under continued pressure from the university.

“The higher level classes are very small ... in the current fiscal environment, they're really coming down on small enrollment classes.”

Credits from first-year courses will count toward the completion of the certificate. Garvey hopes this will result in students wanting to go further into the university's language programs.

“This will be really good for our retention in the language programs,” says Garvey. “It's really exciting if we can get more people to go a little further with



Brigid Garvey, acting co-chair of the Spanish and Latin American Studies department, is photographed in the McCain Building at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2026. (Charlotte Wood/The Dalhousie Gazette)

the [programs] than just the first year language requirement ... that momentum will be good for each of the language programs.”

OPINIONS

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

Why are there two conservative parties in Parliament?

Carney's right-leaning policies have changed the equilibrium of Canadian politics



(Rachel Bass/Canva)

By Dylan Follett
The 2025 election contained two of the biggest reversals in Canadian political history. The Conservatives went from more than a 25 percentage point lead in polls last January to losing the election outright in April, a stunning implosion. But there was a more interesting reversal: the Liberal Party, which inverted not only its fortunes, but its policies as well.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal government looks almost nothing like the one before it. Carney has reversed or stalled several core Justin Trudeau-era policies. His first ever act was to remove the carbon tax Trudeau implemented, and he's already publicly given up on hitting climate targets for the next decade. He's slashed immigration from its record high under Trudeau, added \$81.8 billion to defense spending and cut \$2.3 billion from Indigenous programs.

Carney's government is "liberal" in name only. Pundits and analysts often describe his government as "progressive conservative." Carney himself is compared more often — and more accurately — to Stephen Harper than Trudeau. Harper had even asked Carney to join his cabinet as finance minister in 2012.

The result: the Liberals have become a second conservative party in Parliament. Suddenly, 91 per cent of MPs belong to a "conservative" party, between

the "capital C" Conservatives in opposition, and the progressive conservatives (named the Liberals) in power.

Carney's overhaul of the Liberals was reasonable — Trudeau's policies were despised — but it was also decidedly spineless. If what the Liberals stood for could be completely inverted in a matter of months, do they really stand for anything at all?

The caucus that rejected Trudeau's policies was largely the same group that ushered them in shortly before. Carney himself was a financial advisor to Trudeau and previously a vocal champion of policies like the carbon tax.

The Liberals' election-time rejection of their past decade of policies marked the start of their turn toward opportunism. The party has always been ideologically flexible, and Carney's Liberals have adapted to the moment with almost no apprehension.

For lack of a better metaphor, Parliament is a see-saw. Opposing ideologies sit on opposite sides, and the see-saw is mainly balanced as it rises and falls between both sides. But when the Liberals tip to the conservative side (and the NDP aren't even on the playground), there's no longer a back-and-forth. This is not to say that the policies of the two parties are identical, there

are still big gaps in their beliefs, but the most notable differences — that define Conservative attacks on Trudeau's Liberals — have largely eroded.

Take the climate, for example. Conservative Party Leader

Carney's government is "liberal" in name only.

Pierre Poilievre was relentless and unsparing in his attacks on Trudeau's carbon tax, alleging that the Liberals were hamstringing the economy by not building enough oil and gas infrastructure.

But since then, Carney has removed the carbon tax and recently issued a memorandum of understanding with Alberta's far-right premier, Danielle Smith, to build an oil pipeline to the Pacific.

The agreement is opposed by multiple First Nations Chiefs in British Columbia and Alberta, goes against a decade of Liberal policy, and goes against Carney's past life as an international environmentalist. He was the UN Special Envoy on Climate Action until just before entering politics last year, where he described

climate change — the kind accelerated by pipelines — as an "existential threat."

The point is not whether a pipeline is good or necessary. The point is that nothing — neither precedent, outrage, nor suppressed personal morals — will stop the Liberals from adapting to what they believe is politically necessary to win. In the current political landscape, that "necessary" will almost certainly be further right.

While the Liberals may have dropped everything they believed in as soon as it was politically convenient, they are largely doing fine with their new (conservative) policies. The real losers are the real Conservatives, who've had their most popular, centre-right policies absorbed by the Liberals. Poilievre describes them as practicing "counterfeit conservatism," while concurrently losing his most successful topics to attack — the Liberals' old leftist policies.

Poilievre's posturing on these topics since has been uncharacteristically weak and toothless. He still rails against the less relevant industrial carbon tax (Carney only got rid of the consumer one). He argues that Liberals won't build the new infrastructure they've promised fast enough — or actually build it at all — but his opposition has felt largely pedantic, whinging about details and specifics that

voters aren't particularly moved by, while Carney upstages him on his own policy. As the Conservatives lose their previous edge on the Liberals, they turn to further right policies that the Liberals won't touch, and employ Poilievre's favourite tool: division.

Conservatives are leaning into identity politics, fueling outrage and viciously tearing down their opponents — something Poilievre excels at, particularly in his attacks on Trudeau. But when Trudeau was the target, there was at least a purpose: dismantling his policies along with him.

Now, with Carney adopting many of those same Conservative policies, Poilievre can no longer attack the agenda without undermining his own position. The result is criticism that turns acrimonious, stripped of substance, focused on tearing down for its own sake rather than offering anything to rebuild in its place.

You can argue that Carney is what's right for the country, or that Poilievre is — but the combination of the two is not.

Parliament isn't at its best when politics become separated from policy. Debate cannot be constructive, because there are no differing policies to see-saw between, or strike a balance on. Now, both "conservative" parties cause the other to fall into partisan politics, completely divorced from bettering the country.

In the end, the only losers are Canadians, who no longer have a Parliament fighting over important policy issues that could better their lives. With the parties' politics becoming too aligned to define the discourse between them, discourse goes from productive to mud-slinging, solely focused on being the last conservative party standing.

Carney and Poilievre have more similar values than Liberals and Conservatives have had in a decade, and now that they believe similar things, they no longer argue about what they believe in. Increasingly, fights are focused on the Liberal and Conservative party banners, not what they stand for.

Right-wing politics are in, and unless one of the leaders grows a backbone or voters begin to demand substantive debate rather than bitter quarrelling, Canada's two conservative parties will continue to spiral into meaningless quarrelling and further away from honest debate that serves Canadians.

Dear Dal, I don't want this

Researching fracking for the province is a mistake

By Amelia Penney-Crocker
Dear Dalhousie University,
Not cool.

Accepting \$30 million from the provincial government to research onshore natural gas may have been your worst idea of the school year — and that's saying something.

Dal, you've agreed to do this research in the face of several glaring warning signs.

1. Not even a full year after the provincial government lifted its ban on fracking, it passed Bill 12, legislation that gives the provincial government more control over university funding and research.

Bill 12, passed in March 2025, mandates Nova Scotian universities to "align research funded by the Corporation with the key research priorities determined under subsection (3)" — in other words, by "the Minister, in the Minister's sole discretion."

For a school that claims "sustainability is woven into everything we do," you've easily abandoned your principles the second the province came knocking with a \$30 million offer. It's particularly disappointing that you chose to collaborate with an overbearing government that recently inserted itself into your previously autonomous research decisions.

Let's face it, Dalhousie, you already know this is ridiculous. The debate on fracking in Nova Scotia was settled — over a decade ago. The topic does not need a \$30 million revival.



The sign outside of the College of Sustainability in the Mona Campbell Building at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Friday, Jan 9, 2026. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

2. Our climate crisis is worsening, urgently requiring innovative research into green alternatives to our current sources of fuel. The research you'll be conducting won't be innovative; it won't help us address the climate crisis, it will only worsen it. This research is nothing more than a poor investment in our future and your reputation.

I've been here before
Like many in my generation, I have repeatedly found myself begging public and private institutions to listen to young

people's concerns about our future.

When I was 12, I wrote letters to the federal government. When I was 15, I campaigned for HalifACT — Halifax's plan to achieve a net-zero economy by 2050 — to be approved by the municipal government. When I was 18, I advocated for the provincial government to implement the Coastal Protection Act.

I've faced disappointment before, but there's something

"We're rolling the dice on people's lives."

different about this letdown. Though I've learned not to take pride in my government, I'd like to be proud of my school. I choose to attend this institution and trust it with my future. I want to believe that it wants me to have a future.

Don't play dumb with me
Let's face it, Dalhousie, you already know this is ridiculous. The debate on fracking in Nova Scotia was settled — over a decade ago. The topic does not need a \$30 million revival.

anything," he said. "There was no disputing the research. The risks are there."

Langdon explained that the only significant change since that report is that fracking has become more automated — meaning it will create fewer jobs.

Fracking can still lead to tremors or earthquakes. The methane gas released by fracking contributes to the climate crisis even more than CO2 emissions — and the risk of pollution from what Langdon terms a "cocktail of chemicals" to the water supply that so many rural Nova Scotians depend on hasn't changed either.

"We're rolling the dice on people's lives," Langdon said.

Fracking is bad. We don't need more research to tell us that.

Bill 12 is unabashedly politicizing university research. The "research priorities" Dalhousie has to follow align with the plans of the provincial government, not the wishes of paying students or the best interests of Nova Scotians.

Dalhousie, I am beyond disappointed that you are happily holding hands with a government that lifted the fracking ban without public consultation and against the wishes of Indigenous leadership. You don't have to skip with glee down a road that leads to a possible return of fracking in Nova Scotia.

I'm not mad... just disappointed
Dalhousie, you've also been showing incredible resistance to your students' calls for divestment from fossil fuels and weapons manufacturing for years. Your utter disregard for your students and for the world we are creating is clear.

Moreover, the deal conflicts with the very notion of free, independent research. "This is government-commissioned research that is being contracted to Dal to do," Langdon said. "It's not independent research. It's not true research. [The government] has answers they want, and they're trying to get Dal to get those answers," he said.

I'm dismayed that the dilution of independent research is celebrated by my university. We could be moving forward — instead, you chose to go backward, and you're putting your reputation as an independent research institution on the line.

As a Dal student, I don't want your reputation to be damaged. As a young person, I don't want the damage that will be inflicted on our planet because of a minister's agenda and a university's greed.

I wish you luck, Dalhousie. Trying to work with the provincial government is not easy — I know from experience.

Sincerely,
Amelia Penney-Crocker

Don't make your holiday dinner tense

Take the radical approach: listen instead



(Rachel Bass/Canva)

By Sarah El-Chaar
The holiday season: a time of joy, community and lots of food. Also, a time when we are back in our homes and around family members whom we may not be the fondest of — but we suck it up and get in the holiday spirit. Until one uncle blurts out something problematic at the dinner table, and another aunt agrees.

It sometimes feels like "keeping the peace" is actually doing more harm than good — it's unfair to be expected not to speak up when someone says something harmful or misinformed.

But beneath the loud voices and exaggerated gestures, people just want to feel heard. Being raised in a Middle Eastern household, I've had first-hand experience of being surrounded by people with completely different views. Most of the Middle East leans conservative, with values that often clash with those in the West.

Growing up, I was raised among family who believed one thing, and friends who believed something else entirely. Having close proximity to views that may be considered "extreme," depending on where I was standing, helped me see the nuance in each side.

More importantly, it humanized everyone involved. These beliefs came from people whom I loved. I may have completely disagreed with an opinion, but I learned to see the person first, and the opinion second. When an audience is involved, the goal shifts from wanting to understand the other side to a race to get the last word, even if that last word doesn't prove anything. Your uncle doesn't want to feel stupid in front of his family. So if prompted, he'll fight to win.

There's a time and place for productive conversation, and it's not surrounded by family members at the dinner table. It's easy to get sucked into a dogmatic ideology — especially when there's such a yearning for community — and since ideology is so intertwined with identity, it's hard to remember that people are more than their

politics. People say "I'm conservative" or "I'm liberal," rather than what it really is: having liberal or conservative views.

When political discussion arises, it feels like your identity is being attacked, though it's only your opinions being challenged. On top of that, no one thinks they're in the wrong. What villainizes the other side is assuming they want to hurt others with their beliefs, which is rarely the case.

When political parties become sensationalized, and echo chambers are constantly present in our pockets, it's dangerously easy to dehumanize the other side — everything becomes "us versus them." To counter our increasingly divided world, we need to create unity, not separation.

And let's be real: your problematic family member's mind is not going to be changed in one evening. Calling them out in front of an audience will only make them double down.

Instead of inciting a widespread argument, I try to speak to a family member the next day. That way, I can listen to them without making assumptions or jumping to conclusions — understanding their opinion, sans charged statements lobbed to stoke reaction. We may not end in complete agreement, but we aren't resentful either.

Letting go of the need to start an argument doesn't have to mean agreeing with what's being said.

Maybe it simply means choosing a better moment — having a one-on-one conversation without the audience or the pressure to win. Create an environment where you can respond rather than react.

It's a much better alternative to sending the kids to the playground so you can engage in a full-blown stand-off at the dinner table.

Just this once, don't make your holiday dinner tense. Listen to understand, rather than respond, and you might actually make a difference.

Supremacist survivalism: coming to a bunker near you

The new luxury doomsday bunkers near Halifax are not a good sign

By Zach Taylor

The recently announced luxury doomsday condos being built near Halifax are a signifier of the wealthy's anticipation of an inhospitable future, and based on how the elite are behaving, I doubt there's much moral consideration when investing in doomsday plans.

Halifax-based entrepreneurs recently refurbished what was once a Cold War bunker into a luxury doomsday shelter an hour north of Halifax. The Diefenbaker — described on its website as a tribute to former Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker — is a self-declared “elite sanctuary” launching this year. The price isn't even revealed to interested buyers until they pass a vetting process.

Unfortunately, with a stated goal of bringing “great minds” together “to shape a more certain and prosperous future,” the developers are sending a message that the elite are counting out the 99 per cent from their future plans.

“The bunker business is booming globally,” Paul Mansfield, the co-owner of the bunker development, told CTV News.

Entrepreneurs like Mansfield are banking on the wealthy to focus their attention — and spend an undisclosed amount of money — on a bunker that includes a cigar lounge and spa. Why prevent the end of the world when you can make it enjoyable instead?

The fact that these condos are being built at all feels like eerie foreshadowing.

“The most powerful people in the world are preparing for



A rendering shows planned renovations for apartment units. (Image courtesy of The Diefenbaker)

the end of the world, an end they themselves are frenetically accelerating,” climate justice professor Naomi Klein (*The Shock Doctrine*) and activist As-tra Taylor (*The Age of Insecurity*) wrote for *The Guardian* in 2025.

A burgeoning bunker business proves that the powerful are investing in an inhospitable future in more ways than one. “War against a foreign country only happens when the moneyed classes think they are going to profit from it,” wrote George Orwell in his book of narrative essays, *Facing Unpleasant Facts*. Similarly, the potential to profit from apocalyptic anxiety will surely incentivize negligence with our current reality.

Relentlessly, the wealthy trade the survival of humanity for capital, knowing they can invest in a subterranean backup plan. The most affluent human grubs are beginning to occupy

the underground, while maintaining, as the local option's brochure says, “an elevated lifestyle no matter what happens outside.”

The success of the doomsday market also validates the dysto-

ty. The world's most powerful couldn't be more shamelessly imperial and at the service of corporate oligarchy.

Those influential corporate leaders, who are economically glazed by politicians like Donald

accumulating profit from a war overhead, or rolling in the cash gained through the environmental abuse that caused the very natural disaster that traps them.

As Klein told *Rolling Stone*: “The people who are advancing this agenda are also building their luxury bunkers and their spaceships to Mars.”

The ideologies of American venture capitalist Balaji Srinivasan — who is already advocating for humanity's exit — is a prime example.

“A company or a country is in decline, you can try voice, or you can try exit,” Srinivasan said. “Voice is basically changing the system from within, whereas exit is leaving to create a new system.”

This view shows just how willing the one per cent are to reject civilian responsibility. They are advocating for Earth to be as easy to exit from as one of their companies.

But not every average Joe needs to worry about being left behind. Soon, the market will catch on, and the upper-middle-class will be battling for the honour of investing in a second-rate doomsday bunker. For those less liquid who still want to follow the trend, get yourself a good shovel and start digging.

Those leading the way seem unburdened by criticism, so don't worry about how your friends will feel about your lack of hope in maintaining a livable Earth. Just trust in the elite as the captains of our collective ship, and disregard that none are willing to go down with it.

Trump and Mark Carney, surely have an astral escape plan or luxury doomsday bunker built right into their business plan.

They'll sit in their bunkers

A burgeoning bunker business proves that the powerful are investing in an inhospitable future in more ways than one.

politicians on the left, like the leader of the B.C. Green Party Emily Lowan, who argues that oligarchs have given up on Earth's natural prosperi-

Drunk driving is for losers

Impaired driving in Nova Scotia significantly increases during the holidays



A car drives through campus at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Monday, Jan 12, 2026. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

By Alyson Moncur-Ber

Over the holidays, people often find themselves drinking more alcohol than at other times of the year.

The noise of visiting relatives may lead to one too many glasses of champagne, and that awkward purgatory between Dec. 25 and 31 may have necessitated skipping the wine glass and heading straight for the bottle.

But we're all adults here. Shouldn't we know not to reach

for the keys?

Somehow, the most wonderful time of the year has become one of the deadliest. 62 per cent of Canadians surveyed say people in their community drive impaired “a lot more” or “a bit more” during the holidays compared to the rest of the year, according to a 2025 national survey from research firm Liaison Strategies.

Drunk driving is a disgusting selfish offence. Alcohol may

affect decision-making faculties, but the choice to drive impaired is not an unavoidable force of nature. This choice shows a concerning lack of care for those on the road who are sober and innocent.

Halifax recently witnessed the horrible consequences first-hand: on Dec. 27, 2025, a man was killed in a head-on vehicle collision in Dartmouth. Shaquille David Skinner was charged with four charges related to impaired driving causing death and bodily harm.

With Uber at our fingertips, I'm baffled that this offence continues to happen. People can't truly believe the inconvenience of getting your car in the morning, or the cost of an Uber, is enough to put lives at risk.

I'm fortunate enough to have never been in the car with a drunk driver, but I have been unfortunate enough to know people who have driven impaired.

There are always excuses as to why they got behind the wheel — “I only had a little bit,” “I drive

better tipsy,” “I hadn't had any for a while, so it wore off.”

These casual attitudes seem to be on the rise.

The percentage of Canadians who self-reported having driven impaired jumped from 5.9 per cent in 2024 to 9.2 per cent in 2025, according to the Traffic Injury Research Foundation.

From speaking with friends about drunk driving, I've discovered people do think there's a grey area.

While driving to get hangover food the morning after a night out, my friend and I realized we were in this grey area. With the few hours we'd slept, it's possible our blood alcohol hadn't reached zero yet.

Over bagels, I mentioned that if we got pulled over for any reason, we could be in trouble — even if we were nowhere near impaired — and she agreed it wouldn't be a fair case.

Licenses, depending on your age and where you are in Canada, allow you to be behind the wheel with a low blood alcohol level, drawing a line between

acceptable and unacceptable.

The definition of “impaired” might vary person to person, but I hope we're smart enough to know that definition for ourselves — and if not, to follow the law.

Halifax has taken steps to reduce impaired driving.

During the holiday season, Halifax Regional Police handed out free bus tickets and set up roadside checkpoints to remind people of the impacts of drunk driving. These checkpoints, called Operation Christmas, were championed by Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

As we enter the new year, it's essential to remember that it's one thing to let yourself go a little wild — it's another, all-too dangerous thing, to let your morals go.

This new year, let's commit to not getting behind the wheel impaired. Let's stick together and stick to Uber. Nothing is so important that you need to drive drunk.

Will's coming out scene is what society needs right now

Critics review bombing of *Stranger Things* Season 5, Episode 7 shows exactly why LGBTQ+ representation matters



A poster promoting the show *Stranger Things*. (Image courtesy of Netflix)

By Georgia MacDonald

Stranger Things season five is getting some flak. *Chapter Seven: The Bridge* has quickly become the lowest-rated episode of the entire series.

The entire season's rating has been hovering around 53 per cent on Rotten Tomatoes based on audience scores, as of Jan. 13. Before the second part of season five — which contained *Chapter Seven* — was released, the Rotten Tomatoes audience rating was 73 per cent.

The episode contained a long-awaited scene, with character Will (Noah Schnapp) coming out to a crowd of his friends through a lengthy monologue.

Since the episode aired, negative reviews have flooded social media platforms like Instagram, Reddit and X, with comments calling the scene “ridiculous” and “performative.”

Unlike the many vocal reviews, I enjoyed this tender scene, which served as a break from the stressful supernatural-horror show's suspenseful final season.

Will's coming out was a long time coming. Since the first season, his sexuality has been instrumental to the show's plot. From the show's beginning, *Stranger Things* establishes the social context in which Will is growing up. He could have easily been targeted and hurt because of his queerness.

When Will went missing in season one, his mother Joyce (Winona Ryder) says to Police Chief Hopper (David Harbour), “He's a sensitive kid. Lonnie used to say he was queer.” To which Hopper replies, “Is he?”

Later in season one, schoolyard bully Troy (Peyton Wich) says, “Will was probably killed

by some other queer.”

Yet some people on social media still argue that the storyline about Will's sexuality was “unnecessary, cringe and actually derailed the entire show,” according to one tweet with six thousand likes. These viewers have clearly not been watching closely enough.

Will's coming-out is the culmination of his character development built through the show's five seasons. It's ultimately about reclaiming authority over his identity so that it can no longer be used against him — either by bullies, parents or Vecna, the otherworldly monster that Will and his friends fight against.

The show's creators, Matt and Ross Duffer, told *Variety* that “Vecna, in so many ways, represents all the dark thoughts and the evil of society. And for our

characters to overcome that, it's really about embracing themselves and then embracing one another.”

This scene had to happen, and it had to be in front of everyone. While most don't come out in front of an audience, Will needed to so he could move forward and fight Vecna. Secrets gave Vecna something to prey on.

Despite the crowded room, the Duffer brothers and Noah Schnapp still managed to create a moment that felt immensely intimate, human and endearing. This makes it difficult to understand how this gentle scene drew so much hate.

I can understand how the characters echoing “and me,” in support of Will might have felt cheesy, but I was mostly grateful for a feel-good moment. So much of modern media is negative, so it was refreshing to see a wholly positive scene.

While the group's compassionate reaction to Will's announcement may not have been realistic in the 1980s, I don't see why that's so bad. This is a show with shadow monsters, aliens and alternate dimensions, yet no one complains about realism there. It's important to consider where these complaints come from and the possible homophobia that could be behind them.

Beyond my enjoyment of this scene, I think it has an especially important message for North American viewers right now.

As censorship increases in the United States, it becomes in-

creasingly necessary for popular media to represent marginalized voices, such as those in the LGBTQ+ community.

PEN America, an anti-censorship and press freedom advocacy group, states that local governments and school boards enacted 6,870 book bans in the U.S. during the 2024-25 school year. The majority of books that were targeted explore themes of race, gender identity and sexuality.

While bans are a direct form of censorship, bad ratings and review bombing can discourage streaming platforms and creators from producing inclusive media.

It's powerful, especially for young LGBTQ+ individuals, to see how accepting Will's family and friends were of his sexuality.

Stranger Things has always been a show about outcasts finding each other. If viewers want to put limits on what “different” is allowed to look like, the show was never meant for them.

As actor Noah Schnapp shared in an interview, “I hope it touches everyone — not just queer people — and makes them emboldened and empowered to be who they are and proud of who they are.”

As *Stranger Things* viewers move on to other shows, I encourage them to be kinder than they were to Will's coming-out scene. Our responses carry weight. You never know what these scenes may mean to someone else.

Everyone should watch Heated Rivalry

The Canadian-made show brings hope to Canadians and queer audiences around the world

By Kate Link-Horvath

The end of 2025 brought an early Christmas gift: the Crave TV show *Heated Rivalry*.

Chronicling the 10-year relationship-turned-romance of fictional hockey players Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storie), the show was heartfelt, sexy and highly intoxicating.

I've already rewatched the entire season, and plan on doing so again. The lead actors were new to me, but boy, did they ever deliver.

It seems I wasn't the only one who felt this way: the show received international acclaim and has already been greenlit for a second season.

Heated Rivalry's popularity has been off the charts, becoming Crave's number one original series debut on record in the first seven-day streams. HBO Max quickly hopped on board, picking up the show's international distribution rights in light of its meteoric popularity.

HBO's support brought a wider audience, a larger platform, and hope in the form of a gay,

Canadian, hockey romance.

Heated Rivalry as hope for queer stories

One of the more obvious impacts of the show is that this is queer art, a piece of LGBTQ+ media.

The fact that *Heated Rivalry*, an unabashedly LGBTQ+ show, has been so successful proves there is a hunger for queer media.



(Rachel Bass/Canva)

ing their stories told.

But the show doesn't deny the reality of being LGBTQ+. Both protagonists face difficulties because of their queerness, having careers as professional hockey players in an environment of toxic masculinity. And by the end of season one, there is an openly gay hockey star, and the main couple winds up

the same reach as American content, and a lot of home-grown shows I've tried to watch are simply uninteresting. But *Heated Rivalry* is different.

The show piqued my interest and far exceeded my expectations. The song selection was on point, the cinematography was emotionally moving, and the acting was everything I could

directly funded by tax dollars.

Its popularity proves that the world wants more of what Canadian media has to offer, which could further national funding towards the arts.

Rachel Reid's success: hope for the English major

The show is based on a book series by Nova Scotian author Rachel Reid, and as an English and creative writing student myself, with the semi-secret dream of publishing a book, this adaptation inspired me by proving that Canadian authors can make it big.

It can be difficult to believe in yourself as a young writer. Submitting pieces to contests is daunting, and being published is a dream that few achieve.

Reid's success is an important reminder that Canadian authors matter, their stories are worth telling, and that there is an audience ready for their art. *Heated Rivalry* is one of many pieces of Canadian content with the capacity to make it big.

I can't wait for next season.

together in the end. Love wins, even in the face of struggle.

Heated Rivalry as hope for Canadian media

I mostly watch American TV. Canadian shows rarely achieve

ever want in a show.

Heated Rivalry is not only set in Canada, but it's also filmed and produced in Canada, with help from the Canadian Media Fund, meaning the show was

ARTS & CULTURE

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

Quake Matthews hits the Marquee stage

Following his collaboration with Ice Cube, Halifax rapper celebrates with local show



Quake Matthews performs at the Marquee Ballroom on Gottingen Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

By Jack Wolkove
"Tonight is a celebration, ladies and gentlemen, a celebration of one of the city's finest," fellow musician and long-time collaborator DJ Kayo told the crowd before Halifax rapper Quake Matthews took the stage at the Marquee Ballroom on Jan. 10.

Quake Matthews began his set by telling the crowd, "Make some noise for yourselves."

For an audience of roughly 300, Matthews' concert celebrated the release of his fourth album, *PHANTOM*. The project was produced by Grammy-winning producer STRETRUNNER, who has worked with Eminem and Jay-Z.

The performance also featured a rendition of his collaboration with Ice Cube. Matthews was selected to fea-

ture on Ice Cube's song "It's My Ego" after winning a contest hosted by the American rapper. The contest invited anyone to submit a verse for the track.

Basel Sabri, a Halifax-based

"Quake is probably the top dog in all of Halifax."

Palestinian rapper who performs under the stage name BASYL, opened for Matthews.

"Quake is probably the top dog in all of Halifax," Sabri said after his set. "He's been here for a long time." Sabri has opened for Matthews several times and

met him through the Halifax rap community.

"[He] was always showing support from day one," Sabri said. "The scene here is pretty tight. If you're good, people will know you."

Luke Pompa, a long-time fan, found Matthews' music around 15 years ago through YouTube.

"I like watching him grow," Pompa said. "I loved his first album, but he was very young. Every album he puts out, I enjoy his new stuff every time."

Over the course of the night, Matthews brought BASYL and Kayo back on stage to perform with him.

Matthews' final song was a tribute to the children of Pat Stay, a Nova Scotian rapper who was murdered in 2022.



BASYL incites excitement from the crowd at the Marquee Ballroom on Gottingen Street in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

You are what you post? Productive rest, performative interests and placative procrastination

If a hobby happens in isolation, and you don't post about it, did you even do it at all?

By Ellie Garry-Jones
If you asked me what my hobbies are, I'd tell you I love to paint. I haven't touched a paintbrush in over a year, but I'd sooner lie than admit I spend my free time horizontal on the couch binge-watching a show, while scrolling through a lifetime's worth of TikToks about that same show.

Don't think I haven't cycled through the usual excuses: I'm tired. Not now. Maybe tomorrow. But somewhere between "just a few minutes before bed" and desperately needing to know what type of cheese represents my birth month, I blinked and realized it's been "tomorrow" for a year.

I know I'm not the only one guilty, so all I'm wondering is: When did we all get so lame?

Hobbies used to leave evidence: a half-finished scarf, a recipe book, sore muscles after one too many attempts at mastering a backflip. Tangible proof that time had been spent doing something. Now, our idle moments dissolve into pixels as we scroll through reels, tutorials and day-in-the-life videos, emerging with little more than the ability to say "I saw this," "I heard this" or "I watched someone do this."

Walk into almost any room and you'll see it: the sea of glowing screens, each person locked into their own algorithmic leisure. It raises the obvious, mildly panicked question, is media consumption the new hobby? Or worse, are we witnessing the

be eliminated altogether is just a recycled form of moral panic.

"Before we had smartphones, we had TV. Before we had TV, we had radio," Radice says. "There's been some form of media consumption available to people with varying degrees of ease of access since the early 20th century — and the same moral panic. Whenever a new technology comes in everyone's like, 'Oh no, this is going to ruin social life as we know it.'"

While hobbies themselves may not be disappearing, Chris-

audit how others spend their time, what reels they like and what movies they watch — people didn't have to justify their downtime. Now, media consumption, masquerading as a hobby, is tangled in cultural pressures around productivity and self-optimization.

Posting your interests, logging books and sharing what you're doing or watching, De Virj says, "has become a way to signal competence, discernment or productivity."

Welcome to the ultimate couch-potato competition, where I prove my thumbs have superior liking capacities to yours.

The constant awareness of being watched reshapes how people present their tastes, media consumption and, by extension, themselves.

"The appeal of these platforms is that you can demonstrate that you're spending your leisure time well," De Vrij says. You read serious books. You watch interesting films. You cook creative meals. Anything, as long as it's proof that you didn't just rot.

Leisure, once the opposite of work, now performs suspiciously like it.

In the race to appear productive, there's also a parallel race to appear distinct. How are we not exhausted yet? It's not enough to be perceived as different, but different in the right way. You can't simply like music or films; you have to like the right artist, the correct foreign film, the podcast no one else has "discovered yet. There's a word for this social currency that I'm sure has already surpassed its underground expiry date, and that's "niche."

Earlier periods of civilization offered fewer visible markers of intelligence, says De Vrij. Today, those markers are everywhere, so taste has stepped in to do the heavy lifting. The media you read, watch, listen to and post about has become the Coles Notes version for who you are and how seriously you should be taken.

"Our sense of identity becomes something that we co-produced with our imagined audience," he says.

Maybe hobbies aren't dead. Maybe they've just been absorbed into the performance economy where even rest has to prove it was done productively, intelligently and uniquely.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a painting I should get back to. Or at least a TikTok about painting.

How many people would run a marathon if they couldn't post about it?

tian De Vrij, a sociology PhD candidate at Queen's University, argues that the digital arena we exist in has fundamentally changed what hobbies are.

"It's not that people have stopped doing things. People still swim, people still bake, people still crochet," he says. "What's changed is how these practices are increasingly mediated through platforms where visibility, documentation and audience feedback become a part of the hobby itself."

In other words, the point of knitting is no longer the scarf or even the quiet satisfaction of finishing the scarf. In fact, who cares about the scarf anymore! What matters is the performance of making it, the proof



Hobbies depicted being neglected as doomscrolling takes over. (Lukas Kohler/The Dalhousie Gazette)

death of traditional hobbies altogether?

Martha Radice, a sociology and social anthropology professor at Dalhousie University, says the shift from *doing* to *consuming* is not cause for concern.

The amount of time people are spending on passive media consumption may overpower time spent on real-world hobbies, but this anxiety that hobbies will

of competence and the demonstration of good taste. As De Vrij says, "Doing the hobby and being seen doing the hobby become intertwined."

How many people would run a marathon if they couldn't post about it?

Before the tsunami of apps like Letterboxd, Goodreads, Substack, Instagram and TikTok — platforms that let us publicly

Does greatness make you terrible?

A review of Timothée Chalamet's new movie, *Marty Supreme*



A poster promoting the film *Marty Supreme*. (Image courtesy of A24)

By Martha Cope
Spoiler alert for Marty Supreme

If Timothée Chalamet has mastered anything, it's being antagonistic. From his character in *Lady Bird* (2017) to *The King* (2019) and now *Marty Supreme* (2025), he's very good at being bad.

Marty Supreme is a sports drama based on the life of American table tennis champion Marty Reisman. The film follows Marty (Chalamet) on a tumultuous saga around New York, hustling to earn enough money to compete at the World Table Tennis Championships in Japan.

Yet, unlike in *Lady Bird* and *The King*, essentially every character in *Marty Supreme* is unlikable.

A film with no redeeming characters is typically difficult to enjoy, but Chalamet's portrayal of Marty's obsession with greatness makes enjoying the film easy.

Marty is selfish and arrogant. He stole from friends and family, put loved ones in danger and refused paternal rights to his unborn child.

I initially struggled with deciphering the meaning behind the film. After I sat through two-and-a-half hours of violence and seedy characters, capped off by the infuriating ending in which Marty (after very little character development) finally assumes the responsibility of fatherhood, it was hard to find anything remotely commendable about any of his actions. Yet he did it all in the name of greatness.

In a time that could be described as a nonchalance epidemic, I think his obsessive, and in a sense corrosive, effort is somewhat aspirational and a novelty for viewers.

The method acting didn't stop when shooting wrapped. Chalamet continued to channel

his *Marty Supreme* character off-set during the film's whirlwind of a press tour.

In October, almost two months before the film's release, Chalamet invited fans from Instagram to join him at New York's Regal Times Square cinema, where the first 30 minutes of the film would be previewed. Hundreds of people packed the theatre, with many crowded outside.

On Nov. 15, the actor "leaked" an 18-minute Zoom call in which a boisterous Chalamet pitched absurd marketing ideas to the bemused staff of A24, the film's distributor. In the video, he suggests painting the Eiffel Tower and Statue of Liberty orange, in honour of the film's now iconic colour.

Chalamet went on to create *Marty Supreme* merchandise jackets. The jackets, limited edition and now a collector's item, were sold at a pop-up store in New York City. Jackets were also sent to Bill Nye, Michael Phelps, Kid Cudi and other celebrities whom Chalamet considers great.

The press tour and film depicted greatness as a virtue. Not something ingrained into someone's DNA, but rather a reward for hard work, dedication and a dash of daring.

The lengths that Chalamet went to promote the film were unorthodox. He proved to possess a great passion for the film and for his work as an actor. Like Marty, Chalamet is in "pursuit of greatness," according to his speech at the 2025 Screen Actors Guild Awards. In terms of

His obsessive, and in a sense corrosive, effort is somewhat aspirational and a novelty for viewers.

the current nonchalance epidemic, I think it's refreshing to witness such obvious passion.

When I consider my own life, I admire the way my friends and family are consumed by their goals. I love and cherish these people, in part, because I admire their aspirations to follow their dreams. That's why *Marty Supreme* was so successful. In both the film and the press, we saw Chalamet and Marty doing the most for what they believed in.

Why do women love *Heated Rivalry*?

Canadian hit offers women romance without power dynamics

By Mia Phillips

When I finished watching *Heated Rivalry* over the break, my first thought was, “How soon can I watch this again?”

I spent the drives to family gatherings glued to my phone, scrolling through scenes from the show posted on social media. Texts with friends didn’t mention holiday travel itineraries or sibling drama; there was simply no time for menial updates when a gay hockey romance was taking over the television universe. Catching up with my gay uncle didn’t involve sharing special moments from the past year, but rather sharing our favourite moments from the show and our excitement for the second season, announced by Crave and HBO Max on Dec. 12.

The fixation brought me back to a state of adolescent fan-girl I thought I’d long outgrown. Memories resurfaced of staying up until five or six in the morning watching and rewatching the Isak and Even plotline from the Scandinavian TV series *Skam*. I was reminded of my middle school self, who spent lunches obsessing with friends over Yuri and Victor from the show *Yuri on Ice*. Now that I’m older, I’ve noticed a pattern. As a straight woman, why was I so enthralled by romantic stories between two men?

Mathew Gagné, a sociology and social anthropology professor at Dalhousie University who researches queerness, sexuality and digital media, says it has to

do with how sex is portrayed in fiction.

“When you look at a lot of depictions of heterosexual sex between men and women, they are often steeped in a power dynamic that is about submission and domination,” he says.



(Rachel Bass/Canva)

“Women are objectified in the representation of heterosexual sex because it’s often coming from a male perspective.”

When it comes to fictionalized gay sex, he says that depictions written or consumed by straight women allow them to engage in their heterosexual desires for men in a way that doesn’t position women as passive or subordinate.

Heated Rivalry follows Shane (Hudson Williams) and Ilya (Connor Storrie), two professional hockey players playing for rival teams. The players compete against each other over several years, forming a public feud. They are each other’s biggest competition on the ice, and

skillful almost equal.

Their similarities intensify their off-ice romance, but it also diminishes the possibility of a problematic power dynamic because the two characters share an equal level of fame, skill and strength. Unlike romances be-

coming to Paul.

Despite being about gay men, some of *Heated Rivalry*’s appeal lies in how it depicts seemingly straight men, says Gagné.

He explains that Shane and Ilya are still portrayed in a way that relates to women’s heterosexual desires, allowing them to “indulge in the fantasy of heterosexual masculinity, but in a way that isn’t steeped in intense power, submission and objectification.”

Shane and Ilya, in the eyes of the public, are straight men who play hockey. For discretion, they use feminine pseudonyms to contact each other.

In the locker room, at the gym, watching hockey with family, ‘Jane’ and ‘Lily’ text throughout the summer, making plans for when they inevitably end up in the same city, drawing attention from nosy parents and teammates alike.

When Ilya is caught by his teammate texting ‘Jane,’ he defends himself by insisting he’s never blushed in his life.

Ilya and Shane, despite belonging to the masculine, heteronormative world of men’s professional hockey, are written to possess emotional traits not often associated with fictionalized men.

In the safety of their relationship, Shane and Ilya can let go of their heteronormative personas. With their guards down, they show vulnerability, provide emotional support and ultimately fall in love.

Dalhousie Film Society creates community among campus cinephiles

Eight new short films premiered at Joseph Strug Concert Hall

By Alyssia Halvorsen and Jack Wolkove

The Dalhousie Film Society premiered eight short films starring and produced by students to a sold out audience of 300 at the Joseph Strug Concert Hall on Nov. 27.

Since its inception four years ago, the film society has ballooned from three people screening a short film in a dorm room to an operation of 72 members.

Connor Scida, the society’s co-president and a fourth-year commerce student, says high demand from Dalhousie University students is to blame for the quick growth.

“I think there’s a lot of people who are super passionate about film and want to make films,” Scida says. “As we continue to grow, word of mouth keeps spreading.”

The audience at the premiere wasn’t just Dalhousie students. Attendees also included staff from the Atlantic International Film Festival and William Lahey, the president of the University of King’s College.

Deniz Mutlu, one of the society’s founders, says a higher-up in the film industry posted a video on LinkedIn about the premiere and made a “very generous” donation to the society.

She says it’s special that “industry professionals come and see how much we’re trying, and how we really care about this.”

SUB: Getting started
Deniz Mutlu and Allie Vahramian, fourth-year commerce students, founded the society in their first year. Three years later, they say they’re surprised how far the society has come.

“The thought of a sold out show at Joseph Strug was something everyone always dreams of and envisions, but it wasn’t the goal of ours at the beginning,” Vahramian says.

What started out as a creative outlet for the two commerce students became a space for students to come together and collaborate.

“I think what people find so special about this society is we have people from all different degrees,” says Vahramian. “We have someone from almost ev-



Members of the Dalhousie Film Fest Society pose at their premiere at Joseph Strug Concert Hall, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Thursday, Nov. 27, 2025. (Alyssia Halvorsen/The Dalhousie Gazette)

ery program at Dal.”

SUB: Student filmmakers

John Ashworth, a third-year finance student at Saint Mary’s University with a film studies minor at Dal, says he couldn’t have produced and directed a short film without the society.

Ashworth says creating films “with people your age who want to also do that ... it’s probably the best experience.”

Film production began at the beginning of the semester:

society members formed teams and produced projects alongside weekly film society meetings.

Ashworth had to find a balance between school and filmmaking, often working on his film’s post-production into the night.

“I would have to finish my work at midnight and then edit for like two hours ... you have to love it if you’re going to put the time into it.”

The society receives op-

erational funding from the Dalhousie Student Union, which pays for renting the concert hall and submitting films to festivals, but the films are produced without society funding.

Vahramian says creating a film with no budget seems like an “impossible task,” but the society comes together to bring members’ ideas to life.

“You ask a friend to borrow equipment one day, you make your own tripod with cardboard boxes ... you figure it out,” Mutlu says.

SUB: Membership accessibility
The society welcomes students of all skill levels.

“We want every single person with every single level of experience because we truly feel like [that is] the heart of this society and why we feel like it’s become what it is today,” says Mutlu.

“I don’t get fulfillment if I see a shot that’s extremely cinematic, you know? I get fulfillment when I see a returning member, or when I see a group get really close and hang out outside of the society.”

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SPORTS

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

An ode to HFX Sports Bar & Grill

Downtown sports bar issued permits for demolition

By Ethan Hunt

It’s the day of the big game, so you and your friends decide to catch the action at a bar downtown, but the options are limited.

You could go to Dirty Nelly’s Irish Pub or the Pint Public House and hope the game is on, or do the same at the Maxwell’s Plum or Oasis Pub and Eatery.

But there used to be a place where it was guaranteed that sports were always on. There was nothing quite like HFX Sports Bar & Grill. The bar boasted a massive two-storey wall of LED panels, a private lounge to rent if you’re feeling introverted and over 90 televisions spreading across the bar, even in the washroom.

The Brunswick Street location served as a sports lover’s haven from when it opened in the fall of 2013 to when it shut its doors for good in 2024.

Controversial closure

The final days of the bar were



Groups of people take in a game at the HFX Sports Bar & Grill on Brunswick St. in Halifax. (Image courtesy of HFX Sports Bar & Grill website)

rife with controversy.

On Christmas Eve 2022, Halifax police officers found 31-year-old Ryan Sawyer unresponsive on Prince Street, outside the Halifax Alehouse. Sawyer later died at the hospital. He was from Ajax, Ont. and studied business management at Dalhousie University. In August

2023, Alehouse security guard Alexander Pishori Levy turned himself in to the Halifax police in connection with Sawyer’s death.

Levy was found guilty of manslaughter and criminal negligence on Nov. 26, 2025.

In addition to the criminal cases and civil lawsuits, both the

Alehouse and the HFX Sports Bar & Grill — under the same ownership — were ordered to close for 45 days after facing penalties under the Liquor Control Act following Sawyer’s death. The bars never opened again and were sold to a commercial real estate development company.

Since the property was bought, the Alehouse was issued a demolition permit in November 2025. However, according to Coun. Laura White, the owners are working to preserve the historic building that has been at the corner of Brunswick Street and Sackville Street since 1895.

Where’s a Halifax sports fan supposed to go?

It remains unclear what will happen to the space, but what is clear is HFX Sports Bar & Grill was a casualty of bouncer violence, and there is now a sports bar vacancy in downtown Halifax. Oasis claims to be the city’s “undisputed #1 sports bar,” and

the Pint says they are “Halifax’s go-to sports bar,” but they’re just not the same. There are no distinct sports bars.

Soccer fans probably have it the best in the city because you can watch any Halifax Wanderers game at Kai Brady’s, and the Wanderers opened The Footie Den this year. They throw watch parties for footie games, but what about the non-soccer fans? You may even have a hard time trying to watch a regular season Mooseheads game on a TV downtown, and that’s a local team.

HFX Sports Bar & Grill was purely sports. The Pint and Oasis are beyond that, with arcade games and dancing taking up most of the attention. The HFX bar was sports at its core — no distractions.

Even when you went to the bathroom, you couldn’t avoid the game.

An individual and team sport

Balancing an unselfish and competitive nature isn’t always easy for Dalhousie’s top female cross-country runner

By Jake Piper

In the Atlantic University Sport conference, cross-country competitors wear their team logo on their chest, but run their own race — Dalhousie University’s Molly Pert has a tough line to run.

Tigers cross-country and track coach, Richard Lehman, says that in running, you either put in hard work and get the results you want or find out you don’t have the natural ability.

“It’s an unfair reality of our sport,” Lehman says. “But it happens... Molly Pert is someone that put in the work and got the results.”

The fifth-year environmental science student tried out for the track and field team in her first year but didn’t crack the roster. She tried out and trained for the middle-distance events, like the 800 and 1,500-metre — which were events she ran for her high school in Ottawa. On the practice squad, Lehman says Pert brought positivity and an exceptional work ethic. Still, she just wasn’t fast enough.

Pert tried out for the Dal cross-country team at the start of her second year. She made the roster but wasn’t a top runner in the eight-kilometre category; in her third year, she didn’t crack the top seven. Lehman

was surprised to see what she accomplished in year four.

Placing fifth at the AUS championships in 2024, Pert led the female team to a silver medal and earned first team all-star honours for finishing in the top seven. According to Lehman, due to budget constraints, when a plane ride is needed to reach nationals, only select players go. In 2024, Pert was one of two Dalhousie runners picked to travel to Kelowna, B.C., for the race. She placed 29th out of about 200 runners.

Although she placed sixth in the 2025 AUS championship race — a spot behind her 2024 finish — it was sufficient to earn Pert another first team all-star nod for the second year in a row. The team, however, came in third and failed to repeat as silver medalists.

“I felt really selfish afterwards,” Pert says.

If she won the race, Dalhousie would have tied the University of New Brunswick for second — a sixth-place finish for Pert meant a bronze medal for the team. Pert says while the rest of her team eased the intensity of their training leading to the AUS championship to be race-ready, she continued running hard.

“It may have made my legs a bit more tired...I felt like that



Molly Pert leads the way for the Dalhousie Tigers at the Atlantic University Sport cross country championship in Wolfville, Nova Scotia on Oct. 25, 2025. (Image courtesy of Peter Oleskevich/Dalhousie Tigers)

could have impacted the way we did as a group,” she says.

Pert in her community

Coach Lehman wouldn’t use “selfish” to describe Pert.

Coaches across the AUS nominate a player from their team for the AUS Student-Athlete Community Service Award. Lehman says many players ask to be nominated. With no one stepping forward in 2025 and having no knowledge of Pert’s efforts in the community, Lehman had to go searching for his nominee. He asked one of Pert’s teammates, Eva Kriebel, who she thought should be chosen.

Kriebel asked Lehman if he

was serious.

Pert frequently volunteered growing up, especially at the Salvation Army. “Growing up, my parents were adamant about helping around the community,” Pert says. Over the winter break, Pert and her parents spent time cleaning and prepping cabins at Ottawa’s Waupees Family Farm, a country getaway experience for lower-income families, according to its website.

Now that she’s back in Halifax, Pert goes to St. Joseph’s-Alexander McKay Elementary School on Mondays to help children with their reading and spends Friday afternoons at the YMCA help-

ing with after-school childcare. Molly also organizes shoe drives, makes meals at the Ronald McDonald House and organizes environmental clean-ups.

“This doesn’t seem like a person who is willing to have a heart attack to be third instead of fourth,” Lehman says. The coach says people in the community might be shocked at how deeply she cares about winning.

A new approach

Set to graduate this May, Pert isn’t sure if she’s done running at Dalhousie. “I’m thinking about coming back for my master’s to run again,” she says.

If Pert returns, she says she’ll dial back her training leading up to the AUS championships, hoping to go for gold with her teammates. Pert says her favourite memories at Dalhousie are hugging her teammates at the end of races while waiting for the next Dal runner to cross the finish line. She says this year’s squad was the closest she’s been a part of.

At the 2025 nationals, Pert finished 32nd — three places back from her 2024 position. In addition to her team goals, Pert says she hopes scoring better in the 2026 AUS championship would give her confidence to perform better at the national level.

Student athletes to watch this winter semester

Seniors gear up for their final term, freshmen look to make their mark

By Ethan Hunt

The fall semester at Dalhousie University brought championship-winning moments, broken records and Dal students coming out to cheer on their Tigers. But winter is coming. The *Dalhousie Gazette* has you covered on the Tigers, whose play and passion will keep students excited about athletics through the cold winter months.



Leah MacSween
Women's hockey

Nobody racked up more points in AUS women's hockey this season than Leah MacSween ahead of the winter break. She is one point ahead of a four-player hodge-podge tied for second, including former Dal standout Olivia Eustace, but is the only player above a point per game.

MacSween is as pure a playmaker as it gets. She's totalled 13 assists this year, two more than she had last year, in 12 fewer games as a second-team all-star. She uses her skating ability and puck skills to dance around defenders, using her breakaway speed in open space. Before becoming a Tiger, MacSween played south of the border at Cornell University.



Giovanni Ajiamah
Men's basketball

Athleticism, athleticism and more athleticism.

Giovanni Ajiamah made his mark on the men's basketball team in the final games of the fall semester. The Winnipeg native found his footing on Nov. 14 in a game against Saint Mary's University when head coach Rick Plato gave him his first start of the season.

He finished the game with eight points before breaking out the next day against the University of New Brunswick, dropping 18 points, including two three-pointers and a signature chase-down block. Ajiamah earned Dal's PepsiCo Athlete of the Week and started each of the remaining games before the break. The six-foot-three sophomore guard has positioned himself as a key option for the Tigers' future. The team is currently fighting for a playoff spot after not making the dance last season for the first time since 2014.



Jacob Oyler
Men's volleyball

Jacob Oyler is a major bright spot on the men's volleyball team that has struggled out of the gate this season.

The Tigers started 0-8, but regardless, Oyler's brilliance is on display in every match. The fourth-year senior has the second-most kills in the Réseau du sport étudiant du Québec this season. He is top 20 in hitting percentage, blocks, and digs and is virtually unhittable on the serve, sitting in the top three in the league.

The Tigers women's volleyball team are hungry to clinch the top title this year. The team won 10 of the last 12 AUS championships, but hasn't been on top in two years.



Madelyn White
Women's basketball

Before the women's basketball season started, the *Gazette* questioned who would handle the team's scoring duties. The unequivocal answer has been Madelyn White.

And she isn't just handling it; she's flourishing. The forward is averaging 17.5 points per game, ranking second in Atlantic University Sport as of the winter break.

Before she was a Tiger, White spent four years and a cancelled 2020 season playing at Wilfrid Laurier University. In her first season at Dal, she won Dalhousie Tiger of the Year for the women's basketball team and has emerged as one of the most dynamic forwards in the AUS.



Jane Maillet
Figure skating

In April 2018, then-12-year-old Jane Maillet shared the ice with Olympic gold medalists at a Stars on Ice show in Halifax. Eight years later, she's having an undefeated competition season with Dal's figure skating team.

The Kentville, N.S., figure skater is a second-year medical sciences student at Dal. This season, Maillet skated to two gold medals at the Skate Nova Scotia FallSkate in October and the Robert McCall Memorial Competition in November. No biggie for someone who's competed nationally twice.

She now has her sights on the provincial championships, held in Amherst, N.S., from Feb. 27 to March 1. The top six skaters in each category will advance to the 2026 Atlantic Canada Skating Championships in Paradise, Nfld.



Quinn Nolan
Men's swimming

When a team has won the last 23 AUS championships, it's hard to decide who to pick as a standout. How about we go with Emma Carrier Clarke, who — as a sophomore — became the 14th Tiger in a row to win the AUS women's Swimmer of the Year. This year, she started the season undefeated, winning four individual events and two relays. She also won three solo events at the Dalhousie Invitational.

In his fifth year of AUS eligibility, the swimmer warmed up for the season by winning five events at the first swimming invitational of the year. Then, at the Kemp-Fry Invitational, he swept all four 50-metre sprint events, finishing each race with personal best times. Each of those swims ranks him inside Dal's all-time top 10 finishes. He set not one, but two Dalhousie records in 50m breaststroke and butterfly. He also set a Nova Scotian record in the 100m individual medley at the AUS #2 Invitational.

Though he's in his fifth year, this won't be the last you hear about a Nolan in AUS swimming. Nolan's brother Declan now swims in the same lanes for the Dal team.



Caleb Hominick
Track and field

The Dal Tigers don't even have the track and field roster on their website yet, but thrower Caleb Hominick has already qualified for the U Sports championship.

Hominick only needed one throw to do so. The second-year athlete threw a weight of 17.64 metres at the Moncton Blue and Gold Meet in November. He's in a one-meet wonder either. Last season, Hominick won AUS men's Rookie of the Year and earned a silver medal in weight throwing.



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Women's swimming

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In 2025, she won four individual gold medals at the AUS championship, and with this year's event circled on her calendar for Feb. 13-15, Tigers swimming fans should expect her streak to continue.



Jack Harper
Men's hockey

The 2025-26 campaign hasn't been kind to the men's hockey team. They secured their first win just before the break, but despite their record, some players have still managed to shine. One of them is Jack Harper.

Harper is a third-year defenseman who has racked up nine points in 12 games this season, tying with Luke Johnston for third on the team in points, just three behind forwards Ethan Wongus and Brody Fournier. He's the quarterback of the power play, scoring three goals on the man advantage this season.

Harper played in the CHL prior to becoming a Tiger, spending four years between three teams, including his hometown team, the Guelph Storm.

Dalhousie swimming: a living dynasty

Swim team wins first two meets of the season

By Ethan Hunt

Since 2000, only two other East Coast university programs have won the Atlantic University Sport swimming championship besides Dalhousie University.

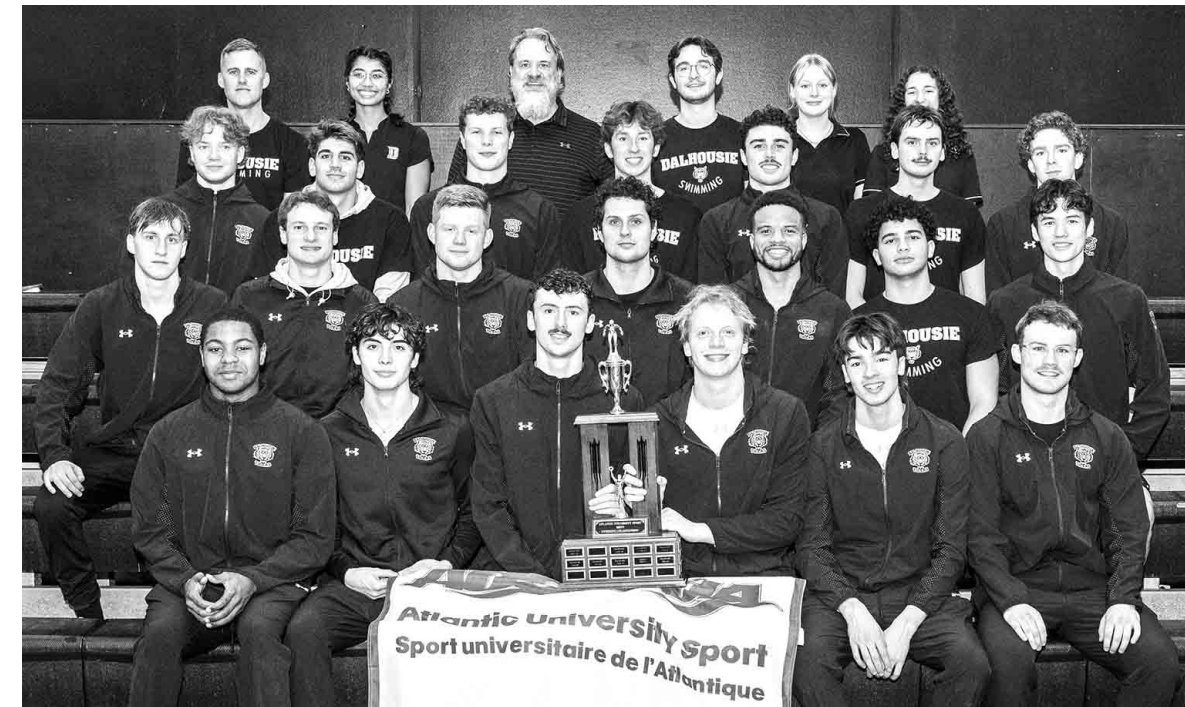
That's 48 Atlantic banners hung up in the Dalplex.

David Fry and Lance Cansdale are the architects of those winning teams. The coaches racked up 38 AUS Coach of the Year awards for Dal since the turn of the century. The men's coaching award is now called the David Fry Award. The legacy goes back even further to Nigel Kemp, the first coach in Dalhousie swimming history, who won 27 Atlantic Universities Athletic Association championships, before it was called AUS.

"I think it's the consistency of programming we've had," Cansdale said, reflecting on why the Tigersexcel. "People know what they're getting here in the last two coaches."

Just as Kemp did to Fry, the more than 40-year coaching veteran passed the torch to Cansdale in 2012. Fry left behind 30 AUS championships before passing away in 2015 after a battle with cancer. He had just completed the first year as the interim head coach at one of his four alma maters, Acadia University.

Fry and Cansdale coached at the Halifax Trojan Aquatic Club together. Then, when Cansdale was in a management role with Swimming Canada, Fry called to



The 2023-24 Dalhousie University swimming team poses for a photo with an Atlantic University Sport banner and trophy. (Image courtesy of Dalhousie Tigers website)

ask if he wanted the Dalhousie job.

"You never want to think about trying to follow a legend," Cansdale said. "His ability to coach was great, but his ability to develop young adults and teach was probably his greatest strength."

"For me, I felt comfortable sort of stepping into that role. I mean, we're different personalities: he's a little soft, I'm a little goofier."

Cansdale said the team developed a winning culture and tradition that has been "passed down from group to group to group." Since swimming is a

training-intensive sport, with athletes training all year-round for a handful of swim meets, rather than weekly games, Cansdale says it is different from other sports.

"There's a lot of uniqueness around swimming," he said. "Having a bunch of like-minded people that want to go in a positive direction, it's contagious."

Emilie Schofield, a fifth-year kinesiology student and a team captain, said that the team's culture and dynamic have gotten them where they are.

"The culture has been pretty similar," Schofield said. "But it's also been adaptable to a lot of

changes, especially when COVID hit. That was a big fluctuation, but our team dynamic has always been pretty positive and supportive of each other."

Schofield is just one of the Dal swimmers demonstrating excellence at the U Sports level. At the Tigers' most recent meet, the AUS Kemp-Fry Invitational, she earned four individual gold medals and had three races rank inside Dalhousie's all-time top 10. She already won the 2024-25 women's swimming team's Most Valuable Person the year Dal swept the AUS championship.

Outside of swimming, Schofield organizes Hear Me Roar, a

program built by Dal swimming coaches and players to motivate underprivileged youth to join sports.

Cansdale said other swimmers do similar activities in the community, including volunteering at the Ronald McDonald House Charities, participating in the Women's March and facilitating youth activities, such as Tigers PLAY. The team even had its first Rhodes Scholar in November. Isaac Bahler earned a fully funded graduate education at the University of Oxford for his work on climate innovation projects.

"They get to experience something that's maybe totally different than something that they would experience if they were just a normal student attending the university," Cansdale said.

He says that extra work outside of the pool has been a real part of their excellence and one that can carry throughout the student athletes' lives.

"Learning how to win and how to be successful in the things that you do is something that if you can spread it to the other parts of your life, you can really find a path for yourself going forward," Cansdale says. "Find your success in life and find your fulfillment and your contentment and stuff like that."

"That's what sports does, and that's what, you know, we try to teach here."

Brody Fournier: Arts student athlete bringing experience to a rebuilding Tigers team

Tigers are searching for a new spark leader during a devastating season



Brody Fournier takes a wrist shot versus the Université de Moncton at the Halifax Forum on Oct. 22, 2025. (Image courtesy of Shawn Wyzrub/Dalhousie Tigers)

By Dylan Buckman
Hockey requires skills, determination and leadership throughout its ups and downs. Brody Fournier brings all of this and more to the Dalhousie University men's hockey team.

The five-foot-ten winger from Perth, Ont. began playing professional hockey in the Maritimes in 2022, after signing as a free agent with the Hali-

fax Mooseheads of the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League. Prior to playing in the QMJHL, Fournier was drafted by the Ontario Bulldogs of the Ontario Hockey League in 2020, but never suited up for the team. He played for the Smiths Falls Bears of the Canada Central Hockey League before joining the Mooseheads.

Fournier was traded after his

second season with the Mooseheads to the Saint John Sea Dogs during a season when he rattled off 26 points in 35 games. Fournier watched as the team that traded him, the Mooseheads, made the 2023 QMJHL finals but lost to the eventual Memorial Cup champions, the Quebec Remparts.

Fournier says that it was a big jump from his U18 AAA career to the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League. "It was definitely quite the difference going from about 2,000 fans to 8,000, and in Halifax, it's quite the crowd there and environment," Fournier says.

Eligibility to play in the QMJHL is restricted to players aged 16 to 20. Once Fournier's junior career ended, he committed to staying in Halifax and joined the Tigers' organization. Fournier said he had offers from teams in Ontario and the Maritimes after his stint with the Sea Dogs, but ultimately chose Dalhousie as the next challenge in his career.

"I wanted to live in the city, and I knew that the hockey

team was kind of in a rebuild," Fournier says. "I was interested in taking a step to be the guy to

“Waking up in the morning and just having the right mindset every day, going to the rink.”

try to help regroup and rebuild the program."

Last season, the Tigers posted only three wins in the 30 games played, and Fournier notched 14 points in 27 games.

This season, Fournier has already produced more points than last season, but Dalhousie only won one game before the

winter break. This year, he's focused on going into each game with the right mentality.

"It doesn't matter the record, but just having the right mindset and wanting to show up and put in the work every day."

Fournier, a bachelor of arts student, is taking in every moment of his collegiate career, even the long and grueling road trips.

"You're definitely making a lot of good stories and memories with your teammates," Fournier says. "Just being in the hotels and the bus, the card games and being in the hotel for hours with each other and having the same roommate all year."

With wins hard to come by, 22-year-old Fournier brings professional experience to the Tigers' locker room.

"[It's a] great group of guys to have in there, with a lot of experience, and it's nice to always have guys who you can feed off each other with and have conversations with," he says. "We help each other out along the way."

COLUMN

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

How are all these people getting together? ... When everyone's broke

Even our dating lives aren't safe from inflation



How are all these people getting together? columnist Hannah Nekkers. (Rachel Bass/The Dalhousie Gazette)

By Hannah Nekkers
In April of first year, I sat in a ball of stress on a couch in the Shirreff Hall lobby. Unlike the other students coming and going around me, I wasn't nervous over exams, finding housing or our first year coming to a close. I was about to meet up with a guy and go on my first date in Halifax.

Nathan asked me out to dinner, a move that shocked some of my friends. It was rare to be asked to do something as serious as dinner for a first date. They were used to coffee dates, friend-group hangouts or the classic "Wanna come to my room to watch a movie?" to only get — at most — halfway through.

He took me to Antojos Tacos + Tequila in downtown Halifax. We had great food, drinks and a genuinely good time.

When the waitress came to ask about the bill, I was about to start my first-date routine of offering to split — just to gauge their reactions.

Before I could begin my ritual, Nathan immediately asked for two separate bills.

The waitress glanced at me and made fleeting eye contact. She looked surprised, and I was too.

Maybe it's my fault for not expecting to pay, but I didn't know what to make of this awkward decision. Did he believe dates should be 50/50? Did he have a bad time and didn't see this going anywhere? Or maybe he was just running low on cash? Inflation and the cost of living crisis are hitting Canadians' wallets, and university students certainly aren't immune — overwhelmed with tuition fees, skyrocketing rent and student loan payments.

When even a full cart of groceries seems like a splurge, dating has become just another financial stress.

How are all these people getting together when everyone is broke?

The feeling that dating is more expensive than it used to be isn't just in our heads.

In February 2025, BMO released its Real Financial Progress Index, a report on the finances of dating. It found that consumer prices are, on aver-

age, 17 per cent higher than they were four years ago, and food costs are now 22 per cent more expensive.

This has forced people to cut back on extra costs, including dating.

Fifty-six per cent of Canadians say they've planned fewer and/or less expensive dates and activities because of the rising cost of living, according to the BMO survey. Many even admitted to changing date plans or cancelling them completely to save money.

You don't have to be a statistician to realize fewer dates means fewer chances to get to know people and find meaningful relationships. Shifting time and money away from dating has even been linked to increasing this generation's loneliness epidemic.

The same report found Canadians spend an average of \$173 on one date. What used to be considered a casual first date, like dinner and a movie, now seems to cost an arm and a leg.

As a result, more casual activities like going for coffee or a hike have become popular first date options.

This adds a feeling of extravagance and pressure when traditional dates actually happen. Dinners out now feel like once-in-a-while special occasions that must be perfect. A disaster date not only results



How are all these people getting together? columnist Hannah Nekkers and friends. (Rachel Bass/The Dalhousie Gazette)

in a wasted evening, but also a waste of money.

Nathan and I kept seeing each other for a few months before ending on bad terms. A year later, we became somewhat friends, and I brought up that first-date gaffe. He responded

with suspicious disbelief and said he must've been broke.

If that was true, I wish he'd said something. I would've been happy to find a cute and cheaper date idea, or I would've been prepared to split the bill. At least I wouldn't have been left wondering why.

I did wonder if that *really* was the case with Nathan because after we stopped seeing each other, I noticed a pattern.

Our first dinner, we split the bill. Next time, when things were

The amount of effort someone invests in a date can also reflect how invested they are in you.

seemingly becoming more serious, he paid. The final time we had dinner, he had just told me a few days before that he realized he wasn't ready for a relationship, but still wanted something casual. When the waiter came — surprise! — another awkward splitting-of-the-bill moment came along with him.

A rise in casual dates brings a rise in casual dating.

The amount of effort some-

serious relationship, that can be great. Getting to know people is a fun part of dating, and even if it doesn't result in a relationship, it could bring fun experiences and lasting friendships. It can also just be more practical in today's economy.

But if a relationship starts with a casual vibe, it's often easier for it to stay that way and get stuck in a grey situation area. Then, when it ends, someone's left wondering if they even dated at all. What seems like a casual low-commitment date to one person, could be an exciting first step in a relationship for the other.

I'm not saying a meaningful date requires breaking the bank. In fact, when someone spends an extreme amount of money on a first date, it can sometimes come off as love-bombing and show-boating.

What is a meaningful investment is the amount of effort and thought put into an activity, like a picnic on Citadel Hill or cooking someone's favourite food.

Suggesting a low-budget date can also be a good way to gauge who actually wants to spend time with you versus who wants a free night out.

When it comes down to it, like with almost every aspect in dating, communication is key. If you get a couple of these casual dates in, have a conversation about why you're on them. Only wanting something casual is fine, as long as it's said early enough to avoid hurtful misinterpretations. If it is just about money, many agree it's helpful to discuss that too.

Eighty-eight per cent of Canadians find being able to discuss finances with partners as one of the most attractive financial traits — and who doesn't want to seem more attractive? Around the same number of people also believe finances should be discussed in the early stages of a relationship.

We're in university — it's rare to find partners flush with cash. So why not talk about it?

With so much financial stress nowadays, the stress of relationship uncertainty doesn't need to be added. Open, honest conversations also come with another upside: they don't cost a thing.

If someone is only interested in casual activities and not a

EDITORIAL

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

Editorial: The Dalhousie Gazette's 2026 ins and outs

We've combined our editorial team's opinions into one very cohesive list

Ins:

Condoms, cotton socks, spending the appropriate amount of time on things, eating breakfast at home, being informed, calling instead of texting, eating before drinking, tunnels, water at the bar, sleeping naked, wearing an appropriate coat, gloves, wearing heels, failure, civil disobedience, calling it a night, chest bumps, effort, open communication between university administration and students, complimenting strangers, ranking things, hosting, criticism, going to class, reacting to your own text message, keeping the fire going, Ed Sheeran [our editor is forcing us to include this], CanCon, posting on your story, handwritten to-do lists, lying about your major, doing hard things, being a villager, asking questions, dressing up, tuition refunds, slightly self-destructive habits, morning routines

Outs:

The Dal Pisser, gentle parenting, photo dumps [no one cares], gender reveals, AI anything, RStudio and computer programming [the computers have been programmed already], dating apps, the new iPhone, being late, large running groups, situationships, talking about Geese, the Wardy, sweatpants in public, the word "artisanal," Uggs, looksmaxxing, minimalism, subscriptions, Taylor Swift, typing in lower case, hiding behind press release statements, reboots, hangxiety, pulling out your phone in the middle of conversation, getting engaged, notifications, soft-launching, half-marathons, full marathons, ultramarathons, exclamation marks, "boundaries" that are actually just killing community, self-care, going on your phone right when you wake up, avoiding the news just because it's depressing, bare walls, being late for our printing deadline

Streeter: What's your New Year's resolution?



"Get better with finances"

Kalifa Clark
2nd-year science



"Not smoke weed"

Will Carmichael
4th-year computer science



"Start doing more yoga"

Georgia Middleton
1st-year FYP



"Go to the gym more"

Alejandra Machado
3rd-year English



"Not fail my classes"

Ryan Budwill
2nd-year science



"Start meditating"

Isabel Jaarsma
1st-year FYP



"Be more productive in life and school"

Nafisa Ahmed
2nd-year biology



"Nothing, to be honest"

Sriram Sundar
Master's in applied computer science



"Stay clean"

Nidhya Thirumuru
1st-year Master's of engineering



"Push myself out of my comfort zone"

Abbey Lisle
4th-year sustainability and political science

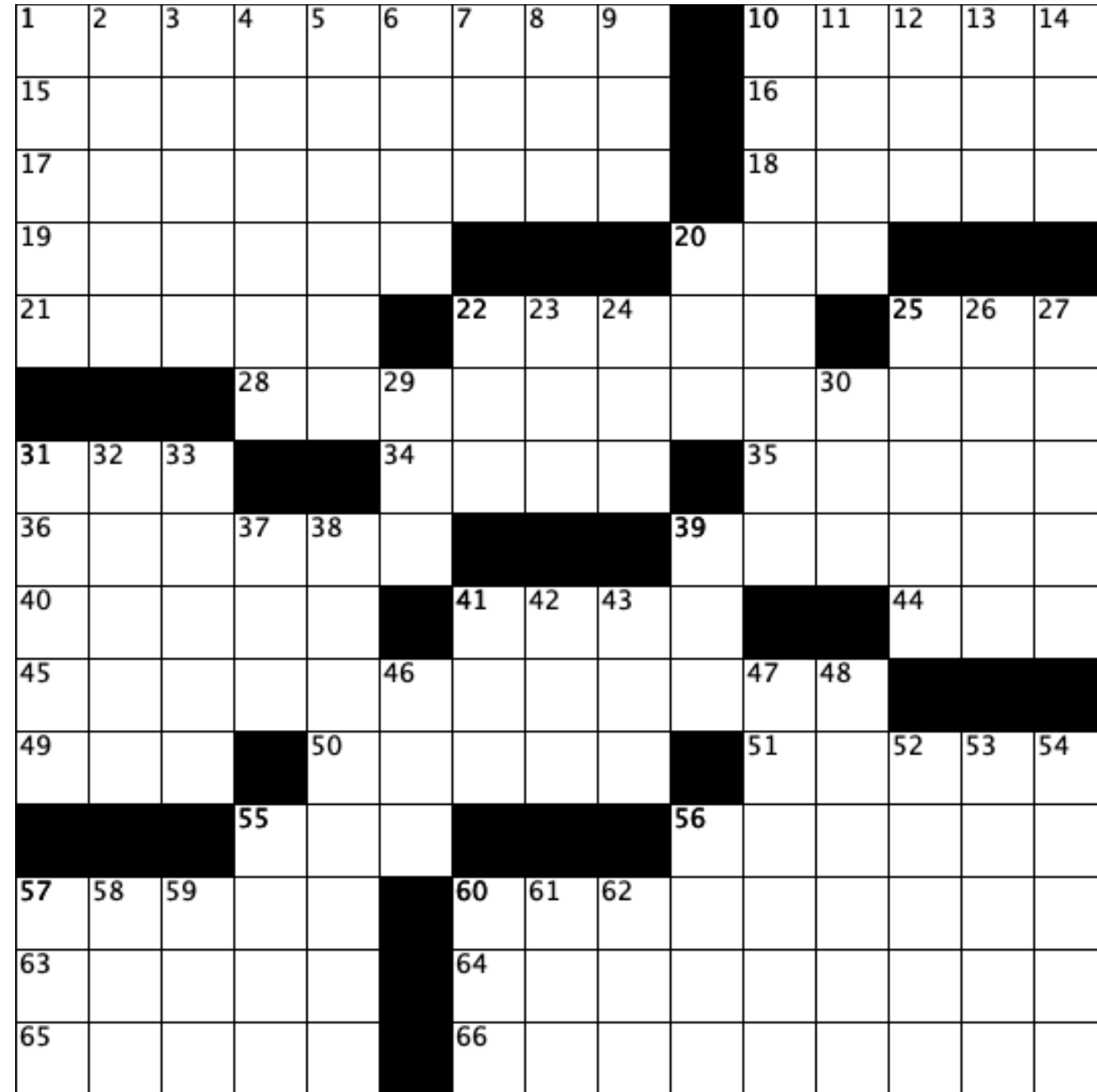
THE CROSSWORD

THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

Soy Boy

Across

- 1 Cast Jake Gyllenhaal as the Prince of Persia, for example
- 10 Fibre ___ cable
- 15 Speakers' fees
- 16 Norman Bate's mother
- 17 Trusted associates, to a mobster
- 18 Negatively charged particle
- 19 Meat replacement with a devilish name
- 20 Singer who's video first reached 1 billion views on YouTube
- 21 Pay for someone else at dinner
- 22 Rare mushroom with a honeycomb-like cap
- 25 It can be green or split
- 28 Hummus or falafel ingredient
- 31 Days ___ (motel chain)
- 34 Large containers of liquid
- 35 Third section of an exam question
- 36 Coffees that won't make you jittery
- 39 Block of fermented soybeans
- 40 "but to no ___"
- 41 "Later!"
- 44 ___-cone (frozen dessert)
- 45 What you can do when it's very, very quiet
- 49 Where surgeries are done; abbr.
- 50 Places to cross, as it would be written on a sign
- 51 You hope they aren't herniated
- 55 How old Pokemon Go turns this year
- 56 Benefit that many jobs offer
- 57 Car that could get you punched; abbr.
- 60 Month-long diet/challenge with a portmanteau name
- 63 Ship driven by the rebels in Star Wars (not in the shape of an X)
- 64 Excess water
- 65 Upside down sixes
- 66 "It's ___ my dudes"



Down

- 1 Card game that is a predecessor of Bridge
- 2 Knife sharpener
- 3 Your average belly button
- 4 Identifier put on a body in a morgue
- 5 Printing errors
- 6 Tip off ahead of time
- 7 Eddington director Aster
- 8 One of seven deadly ones
- 9 Witch, to Shakespeare
- 10 Where a skier wants to be
- 11 Animal that has a hairstyle based on its tail
- 12 Prefix meaning three
- 13 Two cents, to a texter
- 14 Soda container
- 20 Candy with collectable dispensers
- 22 Degree for many managers; abbr.
- 23 Morsel in granola
- 24 They help you in ERs
- 25 What cops call criminals
- 26 "No thanks, I've already ___"
- 27 Dried poblano chile
- 29 Campers; abbr.
- 30 Sound of a punch in a comic
- 31 The potato state
- 32 Word said twice in the title of a Justin

Answers from issue 7: Jet Lagged



THE MACKEREL



Dalhousie taps RuPaul for fracking exploration



Sam Creighton/Canva

By Sam Creighton
Dalhousie University has recently faced scrutiny for accepting \$30 million from the Nova Scotia government to explore the potential for onshore natural gas projects, but another move by the university has stirred up even stronger feelings in the student community.

Labelled by critics as "misguided," "dangerous" and "fierce," is Dalhousie's recent announcement that drag queen Queen of Drag, RuPaul, has been hired as a special consultant for the proposed fracking sites. Following a land acknowledgement at a recent press conference, RuPaul deathdropped in front of reporters and indicated her intent to "frack the house

down." While bold, the choice was not immune to controversy, with several social media users speaking out about how they feel. "Ruple has no environmental background. This is Ludacris," wrote rapper-turned-actor Ludacris, on Instagram Threads. "We could have at least hired a local drag artist..." wrote u/Militant-Sponge on r/Halifax. Some,

however, had positive feedback for the university. "Dal hiring RuPaul is kind of cunt," said one Redditor. One university spokesperson defended the controversial choice by vouching for RuPaul's charisma, uniqueness, nerve and talent. "When drilling for oil, you are really trying to unleash that power source that lies hidden beneath the surface,"

said the spokesperson. "And isn't that what it means to be a drag queen? Who would understand the innate transformative power of fracking better than RuPaul?" RuPaul's plans include reading environmental impact assessments (to filth), judging of extraction sites based on polish and creativity and bringing "werk" to unemployed Nova Scotians. The *Mackerel* secured a brief interview with RuPaul about her collaboration with Dalhousie.

This interview has been edited for clarity, grammar and length.

Mackerel: What made you feel ready for this project?

RuPaul: I've known for a long time that I've been interested in the industry, but I always thought, "If you can't frack yourself, how in the hell are you going to frack for somebody else?" So I decided to finish the extractions on my own land first before expanding. And I just finished.

M: Ru, when was this?
R: We just finished last month. Now I'm ready to sashay away to the world of Canadian oil.

The announcement overlaps with the debut of the 18th season of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, where one challenge will see competitors give coal miners sickening drag makeovers.

The most "wonderful" time of the school year

By Matt Macdonald
Ah yes, the holidays — that magical season when students briefly escape the carefully managed chaos of student housing and return to their homeland for the year's final, unavoidable family showdown. Fresh off exams, spirits are high. Everyone is thrilled to reconnect with their roots, eat free food and pretend adulthood is still a distant concept. But by week two, something shifts. The novelty wears off. Suddenly, your mom has decided you live there rent-free again, so resting turns into chores, and all you really want is to sit on the couch, unwrap gifts and drink something that isn't judgment-flavoured.

At the same time, your dad initiates his annual "talk," a carefully rehearsed monologue about jobs, life plans and what you're doing after graduation, delivered as if LinkedIn personally asked him to intervene. You nod, smile and internally book a one-way flight back to campus. Eventually, you snap.

You pack your bags, race to the airport and feel genuine joy at the thought of returning to your friends and independence. That joy lasts exactly until the baggage-drop screen flashes its cruel verdict: your bag is 0.2 kilograms overweight. "What the fuckkkk," mutters a Dalhousie University student, spiritually and financially defeated.

The airline, demonstrating its commitment to fiscal responsibility, charged extra for luggage, carry-ons, a seat and — according to one confused commerce student — "the vibe." These fees, passengers were assured, were essential to maintaining affordable airfare, a claim supported by the fact that the base ticket costs less than a night out in Halifax but everything else requires a small loan.

Flights to Halifax from nearly every airport in Canada are full of Dalhousie students during the holiday season. The students can be identified by three characteristics: oversized backpacks containing exactly



(Unsplash)

one laptop charger, the wide-eyed optimism unique to those who still believe a boarding time is a legally binding agreement, and the quiet panic of realizing

that tuition is already due, but whatever I need this overpriced burger in the airport.

The average flight to Halifax, initially advertised as "on time,"

will be delayed 10 minutes due to maintenance. Airline representatives will later announce that the flight is delayed an hour because a new aircraft is needed. And as the delay stretches into its third hour, a snowstorm will magically appear to grant itself priority boarding.

Meanwhile, the gate evolves into a temporary Dalhousie campus. Students form study groups they later abandon, complain about the Howe Hall's dining hall they aren't currently experiencing and debate whether they're about to miss the first week of classes due to this flight. As evening approaches, morale dips. Phones die. Chargers become currency. A student is seen trading half a granola bar for 10 per cent battery life. Another tries to sleep across three chairs, only to be gently nudged awake by the sound of yet another delay announcement.

This article may or may not be written by a frustrated *Mackerel* writer in the Toronto Pearson International Airport.

THE MACKEREL



Killam Library to be transformed into luxury disaster shelter

By Sam Creighton

Following news of a Cold War bomb shelter in Nova Scotia being repurposed into a high-end community for the doomsday prepping elite, stakeholders at Dalhousie University came to a realization: the bunker business is booming.

On Jan. 7, Dalhousie's board of governors met with Eve L. Planne, the owner of the luxury shelter in Debert, N.S., to discuss the possibility of converting Dalhousie property into yet another luxury bunker. After having the Dalhousie Commerce Society run the numbers, the board of governors quickly decided that, in today's climate, doomsday prepping is more profitable than nurturing the minds of the next generation.

Once it was discovered that the Killam Memorial Library meets all the prerequisites to be legally declared a doomsday bunker, the board's vote was unanimous.

Members of the board were overheard saying: "The end times are near," "Climate change is out to get everyone... below my tax bracket," and "Fuck them kids." The quotes are anonymous, not for privacy but due to board members meeting while dressed in dark cloaks and animal masks.

Once the deal was finalized, a timeline was proposed. Students will be able to finish the 2025-26 school year using



Sam Creighton/Canva

the Killam as a library, and construction will begin in June 2026. In the event of delayed construction, the space will be used for nuclear fallout-themed escape rooms, esports and laser tag.

Once construction is complete, the shelter will be renamed the *Can't Killam: Stylish Survival Centre for the One Per Cent and the One Per Cent ONLY (Sorry*

Kim Brooks) or the CKSSCFTOPCATOPCO(SKB) for short.

"It is a bit wordy, but we really had to make it clear," said Maxime Power, the project's head architect. "Some people," *cough* "Kim," *cough,* "were way less stoked about the deal once they realized 'university dean' is below the line of those who can afford the CKSSCFTOPCATOP-

CO(SKB). I mean, we are looking for a clientele that is Mr. Beast level."

A-listers currently rumoured to be on the short list for a spot in the high-class bunker include *Dance Moms* star Abby Lee Miller, Andy Fillmore and the author of *Heated Rivalry*, Rachel Reid.



Sam Creighton/Canva

Heated bribery: Dalhousie introduces gay solution to low hockey turnout

By Lauren Sooksom

Following the immense success of Crave's LGBTQ+ romance show *Heated Rivalry*, many brands and institutions have capitalized on the hype, all striving to proclaim, "Hey, we're cool! We watched the softcore gay porn show too!" Over the last month, Dalhousie University's marketing team has workshopped ways to hop onto the trend.

"All sorts of ideas were thrown around," said Topper Bottomson, head of the university's promotional team. "We thought about milking the fact that the author, Rachel Reid, is from Bedford. We thought she could maybe be a writer in residence for the English department. Then we realized that the school has stopped replacing English profs who retire, so that idea was a bust."

Bottomson went on to share several other unsuccessful ideas, including reopening applications to study Russian as a major, in celebration of *Heated Rivalry* character Ilya Rozanov's background.

"Again, if we had a penny for every hockey scene in *Heated Rivalry*, we'd still have more money than the faculty of arts and social sciences' budget. That's when we thought of the appropriate, adequately funded idea."

The Dalhousie hockey teams are not on many students' radars, which may be to the teams' benefit, as the men's team

has lost almost every game this season. In addition, the low spectator turnout at games has been a major concern for the Dalhousie Tigers, who fear there aren't enough fans to justify the new \$37 million Oulton-Stanish Centre, set to open early this year.

"Look, our men's hockey team is more ass than those boys on *Heated Rivalry* have. And that's saying a lot," said Jack Cummings, the team's head coach. "We hope this new marketing plan can spice things up and get more people excited for our teams."

As part of the *Heated Rivalry*-inspired promotional initiative, players will now be paid \$50 each time they kiss each other, \$100 for touching below the belt and \$200 for shooting yearning glances across the rink.

"It's all consensual, of course," affirmed Cummings. "This will just be a fun way to give people what they really want to see and hopefully distract them from the poor playing. Plus, this new arena has gone way over budget anyway, so what's a few thousand dollars more?"

When the *Mackerel* asked the Dalhousie marketing team why they couldn't have just collaborated with DalOUT, Bottomson stated, "That would be ridiculous, there are no gay people at Dal. That's what King's is for."