



A portable classroom appeared behind Dartmouth South Academy during the summer of 2024. (Jeremy Hull/South Dartmouth Post)

South Dartmouth housing solution could be a classroom problem

By Jeremy Hull
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

There’s a portable classroom behind the Dartmouth South Academy (DSA). A vinyl-clad trailer like a temporary office on a construction site. The classroom’s tiny size would make it quaint in another setting; a modern, one-room schoolhouse in a town without a post office in one of the county’s quieter corners.

From the outside, the classroom looks like a comfortable enough place to study, but it’s sitting a few metres away from an enormous P-9 school that’s less than a decade old, raising questions about planning in a city that’s experiencing record growth.

The portable classroom appeared during the summer of 2024, after the province approved an 875-unit housing development marketed for its walking distance to the school’s front doors. When the new classroom was announced, HRCE’s director of operations wrote school families to explain that the move was “required to help ease enrolment pressures.”

DSA was built with room to grow. The school operates with capacity for 690 students, down from the 730-student capacity cited by the building’s architect when it opened in January 2018. The neighbourhood enrolled 457 students at the beginning of that school year, before the academy opened, according to the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE).

Enrollment peaked in 2024 at 99.4 per cent when 686 students enrolled at DSA, less than six years after opening. Student numbers dropped back to 639 in September of 2025.

Dartmouth’s population grew from 114,724 in 2021 to 125,210 in 2025, an increase of 9.1 per cent in four years, according to the Halifax Partnership’s 2026 Halifax Index.

Halifax Regional Municipality grew 3.3 per cent between 2011 and 2016, then accelerated between July 2021 and July 2022 when the city added 20,713 new residents. The 4.5

per cent increase surpassed previous record highs for the growth rate and absolute growth, before slowing to a 1.5 per cent annual rate over the most recent 12-month period.

As three levels of government scramble to address the housing crisis plaguing the growing region, Claudia Chender, MLA for Dartmouth South and leader of the Official Opposition, said there is no clear mechanism to ensure school capacity keeps up with these numbers.

“I have been advocating for a more transparent system so communities can see how these decisions are being made and have confidence that school infrastructure is keeping up with growth,” Chender told the *Post*. “This is even more important with the introduction of Special Planning Areas which allow fast tracking of housing without regards for social infrastructure like schools, grocery, and healthcare.”

HRCE works with government partners as part of long-range planning, said Lindsey Bunin, a representative with the centre.

“While we consider planned residential growth in our enrolment forecasting, decisions related to land-use planning, development approvals, and Special Planning Area designations fall outside HRCE’s mandate,” Bunin said.

More than 60,000 new homes have been fast-tracked in Nova Scotia, including two developments in Chender’s district: the 875 units at Mount Hope Village near DSA, and a second project with 905 units at Opal Ridge.

When Nova Scotia announced four new schools in September 2024, Chender said she was disappointed her riding was omitted despite HRCE having flagged the area as a growth priority in 2022, before the school almost reached capacity in 2024 and ahead of the current wave of construction.

The province added two more schools for “high-growth areas of Dartmouth and Bedford” to its five-year capital plan in February 2025. No site or catchment has been named. □

STAYFOREVER: Community continues to honour memory of battle rapper Pat Stay, the ‘Sucka-Free Boss’

By Amy Ward
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Pat Stay’s legacy continues to bring together friends, family, and community. Stay was fatally stabbed September 2022, and every year since then his community has gathered at this time of year to remember the late rapper’s life and career.

“The purpose of it is to keep the name alive of a close friend and not only, you know, a city legend, a legend worldwide,” said Quake Matthews, a local rapper and friend of Stay. He helps to organize the event each year.

“This is just a way of us as his close friends to keep his name alive and raise a little bit of money for his family as we do,” he told the *Post*.

For Matthews, the day is chance to catch up with others who knew Stay and reminisce together.

“He was a world-class talent. But not only that, because that gets talked about a lot, he was an incredible friend, an incredible father, and just really a genuine, genuine human being,” said Matthews.

Matthews said that the event is the result of people volunteering to make it happen.

“Everyone volunteers their time from the barbecue to the DJ to whatever you see here,” he said. “We all kind of just come together for the one cause. So yeah, it’s a beautiful thing.”

A new addition to the event this year was an outdoor wrestling



Around 100 people gathered to remember esteemed battle rapper Pat Stay on August 29, 2026. “Stay Day” has fun for all with a bouncy castle, barbecue, and new this year, a wrestling match. (Amy Ward/South Dartmouth Post)

match.

Corey Good has been wrestling for a while and putting on shows throughout the Maritimes over the summer. He put together the wrestling show for Stay Day as his gift to the community.

“Pat was one of my best friends,” he said. “He left my wedding the night he died.”

For her part, Stay’s spouse Malysa Burns is keeping Stay’s memory alive through merch.

Burns said that Stay sold clothes before he “took off with battle rap and rapping.” After Stay’s death, Burns decided to continue selling his merch by registering a business and making it more official.

Burns said they have about 40 different logos that Stay created, dating back to the early 2000s. Each year at Stay Day, she releases a new logo.

Many people gathered were wearing Stay Day shirts from previous years or other Pat Stay merch.

Stay’s son, Calvin, created some of the T-shirt designs. “We’re hoping that this is maybe a direction he might want to take,” said Burns.

Burns said that people love to get Stay merch and want to honour his memory. “I’m happy to help,” she said. “Hopefully everybody continues to show love and come down once a year for Stay Day, celebrate him.”

Burns wants the day to continue and worries that the memorial might lose momentum one day.

“My biggest fear is for this day to slow down and then see people come less and less,” she said. “I feel like one day that’s going to break my heart.”

Added to this fear is the potential demolition of the building that houses Stay’s mural. Burns said the murals are on that building because it’s a place in Dartmouth where Stay’s name could be seen from afar — even from across the harbour.

“Because Pat loved Dartmouth like nobody else loved it,” she said. □



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Tariff uncertainty brewing for coffee entrepreneur

By Jeremy Hull
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Federal ministers announced Canada’s counter-tariffs on products amounting to \$27.6 billion against the United States in Ottawa Tuesday. In Nova Scotia, Sonny Adamski is still waiting to see what all of it means for his businesses.

“What really affects us is not knowing what can happen,” says Adamski, the owner of Have Fun Coffee and Café Good Luck in Dartmouth and the Dairy Bar in Halifax.

“We have coffee in the States again right now, and we’re not sure what’s going to happen, because we’ll have to bring it across the border and it seems to be genuinely up in the air what gets tariffed. It changes. One day it’s on, then it’s off.”

The coffee business follows growing and harvesting cycles, says Adamski. During the first round of tariffs, he ordered coffee from Ethiopia eight months in advance that had a tariff added after the contract was signed.

“My importer had to pay 10 per cent on his entire container of coffee, that’s 250-plus bags, hundreds of thousands of dollars, otherwise he’d lose money,” Adamski says, “And then he had to turn around and charge us that 10 per cent to recoup his cost.”

The United States doesn’t produce much coffee of its own, but most of what Sonny buys, from

Africa to South America, gets stored in American warehouses on its way to Canada, he says. In response, Adamski has been trying to redirect his orders to avoid the U.S. and replace partners who aren’t able to transport coffee direct to Canada.

“Some were able to move it directly to Canada but it went all the way to the west coast to the seaport,” Adamski says. “It actually ends up being more expensive to move here than it would have been from Continental, like in New Jersey.”

Adamski says they are trying to switch most of their importing to come in through Montreal while navigating a challenging market.

“The prices have already skyrocketed,” he says. “Go look at the five-year chart. From 2023 to now. Even though there are moments it dips, that doesn’t mean coffee is actively being bought at those low points.”

Coffee prices reach their highest point during times tied to harvest and the highs are influenced by speculative buying, so it can fluctuate a lot in a month, but Adamski says the overall trend is clear.

“In 2023, the low was around \$1.50 in September and the high was around \$1.91,” he says. “Our average buying price in 2026 has been around \$3.50. It’s roughly doubled, or more.”

Coffee blurs the line between staple and luxury good. The Joads counted it among their meager provisions in The Grapes of Wrath, but

higher prices are making it less accessible.

Have Fun is a specialty coffee brand, but it impacts people who rely on coffee the most.

“We try to buy coffee in a way that’s equitable for producers,” Adamski says. “We work with buyers who are very transparent about pricing, because it’s actually really common in the coffee trade to have zero transparency.”

Adamski bucks the trend by publishing the price of his coffee at every stage of purchase, from farm to cup.

Since Tuesday’s announcement, escalatory rhetoric has continued between the United States and Canada. The full measure of the impact of new tariffs on small businesses and their communities remains to be seen.

“Families stop buying coffee because the tub of Folgers that used to cost \$8 is now \$16,” says Adamski. “My partner Marley works at The North Grove. We partner with them to give people more affordable coffee.” The North Grove Community Food Centre is a Dartmouth non-profit that helps people access subsidized food programming and family planning.

“She’s noticed people specifically asking for it because it’s the only affordable coffee available, even though it’s a luxury,” says Adamski. “We don’t need it to survive, but it’s a cultural and emotionally relevant product for a lot of people.” □



Pastor Elias Mutale stands inside the South Baptist Church, where he has been pastor since 2022. (Lynnette Alford/South Dartmouth Post)

African immigrants finding home in Dartmouth — along with jollof rice

By Lynnette Alford
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

When the Rev. Dr. Elias Mutale first arrived in Nova Scotia from Zambia in 1988, seeing another African person on the street was unusual enough to prompt a wave. “If you walk on the road and see one, you’re going to wave because that was the nature of the isolation,” Mutale told the *Post*.

Nearly four decades later, the landscape around him has changed. At Foodeal, at the corner of Portland Street and Prince Arthur Avenue, Edetanlen introduces customers to Nigerian culture one plate at a time.

Her menu includes jollof rice, grilled beef suya, and sauces based on recipes she brought with her from Nigeria. Her family has long been involved in the food industry, and she previously ran a restaurant in Nigeria.

When she arrived in Canada, she found Nigerian restaurants, but saw an opportunity to introduce people to another part of the country’s food culture: street food.

“I always tell people if our music can go viral, our food should go viral,” Edetanlen told the *Post*. “Because we have flavours.”

At the heart of their menu is a dish that Edetanlen said is inseparable from Nigerian celebrations: jollof rice.

The rice is a staple at birthdays and other gatherings.

“It’s a meal that just brings people, makes people excited, gets people to have conversations and all around the table,” Edetanlen said.

While Foodeal builds community through food, a few blocks over at the South End Baptist Church on Hastings Drive, Pastor Elias Mutale is doing the same thing through faith and fellowship.

When Mutale arrived at the church in 2022, there were fewer than 30 people attending.

The congregation was predominantly white, with one Jamaican family and one woman of Chilean origin.

Last Sunday, there were 62 people, with several African families now part of the congregation.

The church building itself has become another example of how different cultures can share the same space.

The Church of Jesus Christ Disciples also uses the building. The congregation is made up almost entirely of African people, primarily from Congo. Some members came to Canada as refugees; others are professionals who have settled in the region.

For Mutale, that contrast reflects the reality of the church in today’s Dartmouth – a shared space where different expressions of worship and culture meet under one roof. □

SMALL BUSINESSES, BIG COMMUNITY: Young Dartmouth entrepreneurs embrace civic life

Independent Portland Street shops aren’t just selling goods — they’re offering new third spaces



In-depth reporting from Lynnette Alford, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter, featuring interviews with **Meg Gellaty** (*Stitch & Knit*), **Dallas Hendricks** (*Curious Goose*), and **Bailey Vernon** (*Churned*). Read online now at southdartmouth.ca/sb26

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Publisher (Admin): Brian Foster (publisher@southdartmouth.ca)
Advertising Inquiries: Brittanie Tanner (ads@southdartmouth.ca)
Events: Christian Ensslin (southdartmouthpostevents@gmail.com)

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Cricket in Dartmouth: If you build it, they will come (to the crease, that is)
Lynnette Alford, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Dartmouth Comic Arts Festival brings a lineup of local heroes to the waterfront
Jeremy Hull, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Break-in adds to pressures facing Dartmouth Heritage Museum
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