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The Dalhousie Students' Union calls for on-campus Homecoming and action-oriented, proactive responses to yearly unsanctioned gatherings

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia - On October 1st, 2022, students studying at Dalhousie University and other universities in the area attended unsanctioned street parties within the neighborhoods surrounding the university in honour of Homecoming.

Large unsanctioned gatherings during late September and early October in honour of Homecoming first began affecting the Dalhousie community in 2017 and have become a yearly occurrence since. For those who attend, the parties are a cultural staple that reinforce their sense of identity and belonging. For those in our impacted neighborhoods, the parties are disruptive both to their peace & quiet as well as their property. For all, the parties result in significant community safety concerns and breakdowns in community relations. It is worth noting the role of social media influencers like Canadian Party Life in fueling the extremes we have seen. We also want to emphasize that these yearly unsanctioned gatherings are part of a broader issue affecting other university communities across the country.

Given the impact these events have had on the community, we would like to outline some of the discussions we have had with Dalhousie University and community stakeholders leading up to October 2022. We continue to **advocate for a proactive and action-oriented response that includes an on-campus sanctioned Homecoming celebration hosted by the Dalhousie Students' Union in collaboration with Dalhousie University.**

During the summer, the DSU participated in several consultations to discuss the last unsanctioned street parties that occurred in 2021, and outline a plan for mitigating community impact in future years. This space consisted of key stakeholders including student leaders, neighbours, representatives from *Keep it Social*, members of Dalhousie Administration and staff, and members of the Dalhousie Student Union. Representatives from Halifax Regional Police and Halifax Regional Municipality were notably absent.

In early August, Canadian Party Life announced the date for the off-campus Homecoming party on their social media account. Not long after, the DSU reached out to Dalhousie University to propose co-hosting an on-campus sanctioned Homecoming celebration that would feature an outdoor concert, licensed drinking area, and on-campus harm-reduction supports. However, due to funding restrictions from the university, we were unable to host this event.

In response to the announcement, Dalhousie University sent two campus-wide emails discouraging students from attending the event. This email was intended to warn the campus community of the event, but instead students reported it served as free publicity to those who were unaware of the unsanctioned party and Canadian Party Life prior to these notices.

Although we recognize the programming organized by the university during the day on October 1st, we strongly believe that given the amount of notice both Dalhousie University and the City of Halifax had

regarding the event, more comprehensive actions could have been taken. Sending emails to deter students from gathering, as well as implementing city bylaws to prevent small BIPOC family-owned businesses from operating after 11:00pm, are not constructive solutions. As we move towards Fall 2023, we hope both the City of Halifax and Dalhousie University will work directly with students and neighbours to develop proactive solutions to mitigate the harms of unsanctioned street parties and

provide students with safe spaces to gather on campus to minimize disruptions to the surrounding community.

About the Dalhousie Students' Union (DSU)

The Dalhousie Students' Union (DSU) represents the collective voice and supports the diverse interests of over 20,000 students at Dalhousie University. The DSU supports over 250 student societies, builds community on campus through events, provides a range of essential student services and advocates for student rights to all levels of decision-makers within and beyond the University community.

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