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Halifax, Nova Scotia  
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**Item No. 7**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**November 23, 2021**

**TO:** Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed by   
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacques Dubé, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** November 16, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Emergency Supportive Housing and Shelter Accommodation update –  
November 2021

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

August 31, 2021 Regional Council motion (item 14.1):

Moved by Mayor Savage, seconded by Councillor Mason.

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to implement a range of emergency supportive housing and emergency shelter accommodations for those who are unhoused in collaboration with and based on feedback from community-based social services providers and the Province of Nova Scotia to address immediate and emergent needs including measures such as the fit-up of spaces for temporary accommodations, renting of hotel and other spaces and further, and to coordinate and collaborate with community-based social services providers and the Province of Nova Scotia in that respect;

Direct that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to \$500,000 from Fiscal Services in respect of addressing these needs, and report on the use of said funds through monthly public updates as an information report at Regional Council meetings until the end of the fiscal year and then quarterly at a minimum; and,

Further direct the Chief Administrative Officer to work with Department of Community Services and community service providers on a needs-analysis including determining how many people are unhoused, how many of them are currently tenting or occupying other forms of shelter within parks and other public lands in Halifax Regional Municipality and how many can be accommodated in a safer manner.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

November 9, 2021 Regional Council motion (Item 15.1.9)  
MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Blackburn

THAT Halifax Regional Council

Direct that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to \$3.2 million from Fiscal Services to purchase, install and maintain modular units at two sites and to address suitable temporary housing to address needs of unhoused residents. Regular updates to Regional Council will occur monthly until the end of the fiscal year and then quarterly at minimum.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

The *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39 provides:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

...

(b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and

(c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

### **BACKGROUND**

As noted in the Origin section, in August Halifax Regional Council identified \$500,000 for use in addressing urgent and emergency needs related to homelessness and directed the Chief Administrative Officer to work with the Province of Nova Scotia and community partners to explore use of this funding. On November 9, Regional Council further directed that the Chief Administrative Officer be authorized to spend up to an additional \$3.2 million for this purpose.

The number of people sleeping rough in Halifax has more than doubled in the past year. According to the Affordable Housing Association, as of August 10, 2021, 400 people are homeless in the municipality. The situation with homelessness is dynamic and changes frequently. Therefore, monthly updates provided to Regional Council will be reflective of a specific period, up to the point of having a report prepared in time for review and distribution on the Council agenda. This is the third monthly update report requested by Council and covers the period up to and including November 18, 2021.

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Modular Units**

The municipality has finalized a location at Flotilla Lane / Alderney Drive / Church Street in Dartmouth for modular units to accommodate clients of the Out of the Cold shelter, currently housed at the Gray Arena, and potentially other individuals sleeping in municipal parks. Previous updates to Regional Council indicated that the municipality had purchased 24 modular units. Following an inspection, the purchase was rejected in accordance with the terms of the purchase order, after it was determined that none of the units were deemed to be suitable for the municipality's use.

Work is underway for the emergency accommodations site in Dartmouth, with a proposed site location plan in place. Municipal staff from across several business units are meeting daily to advance the initiative and coordinate with utilities, including Halifax Water and Nova Scotia Power, to facilitate connection of services once the modular units are onsite.

Municipal staff continue to engage with the province, service providers, engineering, and utility providers to identify and secure a Halifax site to install modular units, with confirmation of the location and number of units able to be placed yet to be determined. In working with the province and Out of the Cold, the Halifax site will need to accommodate a minimum of 40 people.

The Province of Nova Scotia has announced funding for Out of the Cold to deliver the services required for the clientele moving from Gray Arena to the Dartmouth site. HRM is purchasing the units, providing all normal municipal services (i.e. garbage pick-up, snow removal, etc.), and covering the cost of utilities and maintenance on site.

As noted in the November 9 report to Regional Council, estimated costs to purchase and maintain the modular units for the remainder of this year are as follows:

- Dartmouth site purchase and installation is estimated at \$1,410,000, with operating costs of \$20,000 in 2021/22.
- Halifax site purchase and installation is estimated at \$1,690,000, with operating costs of \$20,000 in 2021/22.

### **Status of Encampments**

An ongoing priority has been to work with those sleeping on municipal park lands to identify suitable temporary housing options. In coordination with multiple service providers, hotel rooms and shelter placement has been occurring regularly. Staff are aware of nine (9) encampments within the municipality. Staff from the municipality and partner organizations are visiting each of these sites daily. Due to the transitory nature of the occupants of homeless encampments, the number of individuals onsite can vary daily. For the period from November 8 to 15, fourteen individuals were transitioned from encampments to alternative accommodations.

### **Staffing**

To assist in responding to homelessness issues, Regional Council approved a Social Policy Strategist position in the 2021/22 budget which has been filled. In addition, a hiring process has recently been completed for a full time Housing and Homelessness Coordinator for a term of 12 months. A review will be conducted prior to the end of the term to evaluate the success of this position in helping to house those experiencing homelessness, in coordination with community service providers. Estimated spending on these positions for the remainder of 2021/22 is \$88,000.

### **Service Providers**

HRM has completed an agreement with a coalition of service providers to provide \$60,000 in emergency funding for a period of 8 weeks, as well as an additional \$10,000 to fund an administrator to coordinate referral of those experiencing homelessness to the appropriate service provider. The intention is to assess this initiative after the initial 8-week period and determine further funding that may be required to continue this agreement. If results are as expected, further funding will be provided from the allocation approved by Regional Council to support this agreement on an ongoing basis.

### **Reports from the Public**

From August 20 to November 14, 208 calls were placed to 311 regarding homeless encampments. The majority of these reports are noise complaints, requests to remove the temporary structures being built on municipal property, and safety concerns. Emergency Health Services has responded to 101 calls to encampments since August 20, with the majority at Victoria Park.

It is expected that homelessness will continue to be a significant social issue in the municipality and a gap analysis has shown that the municipality will continue to require facilitation for those sleeping in parks and other locations. Therefore, a budget estimate and request will be developed for inclusion in the 2022/23 budget.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Of the \$3,700,000 approved by Regional Council, total expenditures as of November 14 are \$184,355. The majority of expenses are for hotel rooms and down payment for the Dartmouth modular units. Additional costs include security and supplies at Gray Arena.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In addition to the Province, staff have contact and/or meet regularly with several community-based service providers including: Adsum for Women and Children, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, North End Community Health Centre / MOSH Housing First, Out of the Cold Community Association, Phoenix Youth Programs, Welcome Housing, YWCA Halifax, Elizabeth Fry Society, Coverdale Courtwork Society, the John Howard Society, Shelter Nova Scotia, Outreach Street Navigators, and Mainline.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

No attachments.

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at [halifax.ca](http://halifax.ca) or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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