

# HALIFAX

P.O. Box 1749  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 3A5 Canada

**Item No. 14.1**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**January 11, 2022**  
**January 25, 2022**

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

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

**DATE:** December 10, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Public Safety Strategy Annual Update

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## **INFORMATION REPORT**

### **ORIGIN**

October 31, 2017 Halifax Regional Council motion:

MOVED by Councillor Hendsbee, seconded by Councillor Mancini

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the attached document, Public Safety Strategy 2018-22 (Attachment 1 of the staff report dated October 23, 2017), for use as a strategy framework for municipal decision-making regarding public safety; and
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide an annual progress report to Regional Council.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

#### **Purpose of HRM Charter**

Section 2 of the *Halifax Regional Municipality Charter*

*“The purpose of this Act is to*

*...*

*(c) recognize that the functions of the Municipality are to*

- (i) provide good government,*
- (ii) 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*
- (iii) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.”*

## **BACKGROUND**

On October 31, 2017, Regional Council approved the “Public Safety Strategy 2018-22” for use as a strategy framework for municipal decision-making regarding public safety and directed the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide an annual progress report to Regional Council, with this report comprising the third annual update. The Strategy guides the process to achieve a safer city, encompassing the deliberate, intentional actions to move us from where we are now, to where we want to be in the future. Importantly, the Strategy frames our collective capacity to achieve a vision of communities where everyone is safe to live, work and play.

### **Municipal Leadership in Community Safety and Wellbeing**

The municipality made a commitment to developing a more holistic understanding of, and approach to, the root causes of crime, criminalization, and victimization in Halifax in 2006, convening a Mayor’s Roundtable on Violence. The result was the 2008 publication of the Clairemont Report, formally titled: “*Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality: A report to the Mayor as a result of the Roundtable*”.<sup>1</sup> Acting on a key recommendation of the report, the municipality established a Public Safety Office (PSO). In 2013, Council recommended a review of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2008 report, resulting in the 2014 Roundtable Review, and the subsequent relocation of the PSO from Halifax Regional Police (HRP) to HRM, and reporting to the CAO and Council, rather than HRP Chief of Police and Board of Police Commissioners.

In October of 2017, Council approved a 2018-2022 Public Safety Strategy, which charts a path to a more holistic, coordinated approach to community safety. In 2018, implementation planning commenced, and involved four stages (exploration, focusing and sequencing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). The first stage, exploration, documented precisely *how* the municipality is implementing the actions contained in the strategy. A key outcome of that report was to demonstrate that HRM’s greatest investments in community safety lay in the work underway to build resiliency and enhance social cohesion at the individual and community level, remove barriers and enhance outreach to existing programs and services; and invest in programs and policy development to improve housing affordability, food security and mobility. The report afforded the municipality, its partners and citizens an opportunity to map our collective capacity to enhance community safety across the spectrum of prevention in Halifax.

Key implementation priorities were identified based on strengths and needs identified in Year 1 review and implementation. These priorities include: enhancing community-based crisis response; building capacity to address gender-based violence; improving relationships among HRM business units and marginalized communities; and, advancing the strategic development of social policy and substance use issues. Advances in each of these domains along with other key implementation highlights are detailed in the sections that follow.<sup>2</sup>

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Overview of Community Safety: Scope and Approach**

The overall scope of the Public Safety Strategy pushes the municipality and its partners to think upstream, or systemically and holistically about the complex, multiple, and interconnected roots of social problems such as crime. Upstream thinking calls for collaborative, comprehensive and sustained efforts to transform these underlying conditions rather than focus solely on the symptoms. The long-term goal is to prevent

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<sup>1</sup> Clairemont, D. 2008. “Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality: A report to the Mayor as a result of the Roundtable”. Halifax Regional Municipality.

<sup>2</sup> Annual Public Safety Strategy Updates to Regional Council document previous years’ progress on implementation: <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/190115rci04.pdf>, <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/about-the-city/regional-community-planning/Public%20Safety%20Strategy%20Annual%20Report%202019.pdf>

crime and victimization from occurring by building a municipality that supports the safety and wellbeing of everyone.

Most actions in the strategy can be distinguished from traditional criminal justice approaches to improving community safety in three important ways. First, they are proactive and aim to positively influence individuals, communities or physical environments to better protect them from crime, victimization and insecurity. Second, they are centred on the participation of community, including individuals, local agencies and organizations, and the private sector. Third, their success is highly contingent on successful partnerships and collaboration.

The actions can further be stratified based on where they sit on the spectrum of approach. **Promotional prevention (PP)** is geared toward the general population, aimed at skill development, well being, and social integration. A **developmental prevention (DP)** is designed to alleviate pressures associated with social and economic risk factors.<sup>3</sup> A **situational** approach (SP) aims to change the specific circumstances or situations to prevent opportunities for crime to occur in particular places or times.<sup>4</sup> This approach typically involves changes to the management, design or manipulation of the physical or human environment. A **targeted** crime prevention approach (TP) can be directed toward either a specific population or community. This approach would target a population (i.e., youth), or community with a higher probability of involvement with the criminal justice system, either as victims or offenders. It focuses on building resiliency, strengthening informal social controls, and changing norms at an individual, family and/or community level. Finally, **indicated** prevention (ID) is geared to individuals at a very high risk of contact with the criminal justice system due to previous involvement, and aims to prevent recidivism. Prevention research has also turned to the concept of '**primordial prevention (PR)**', or approaches that target structural factors that impede the effectiveness of established prevention approaches by identifying and removing barriers through changes in legislation and policy.

### Implementation highlights by Public Safety Strategy Areas

To date, 71 of the 76 actions of the strategy are in flight (see Attachment A). What follows highlights municipal initiatives that fall within each of the strategy's four areas and identifies how these initiatives align with the Strategy's spectrum of intervention outlined above.

#### Build Resident Resilience

Resiliency is the capacity to recover from adversity, and the 18 actions in this priority area aim to support resident resilience by increasing protective factors at individual, family, community and social levels. The municipality is addressing all four scales within these protective factors, through a broad range of programs, policies, plans and initiatives. Activities range from Recreation and Library programs that focus on **development prevention** for children and youth, municipal partnerships that foster economic inclusion, and **targeted** support for communities to better prepare and respond to critical and traumatic incidents. The Women's Advisory Committee, mandated to support a gender plus based lens (GBA+) to HRM policies and programs will help the municipality identify and remove systemic barriers for women and girls, is an example of a **primordial** approach to prevention. Advancements in this area include:

- **Community Mobilization Teams (CMT):** Comprised of a partnership among residents, community organizations and the municipality, CMTs support community response and recovery from the experience of a traumatic incident. After a violent or traumatic incident, CMTs mobilize existing local and city-wide resources to address individual/group needs, coordinate community debriefings, and facilitate timely information sharing. The goal of CMTs is to prevent violence by reducing distress and trauma, restoring social cohesion, and building resiliency.

In April 2020, the Public Safety Office received additional funding from the Department of Justice to enhance CMT development for fiscal years 21/22 and 22/23. This grant has enabled continued support of the CMT initiative with a full-time temporary staff resource and expanded training, crisis

<sup>3</sup> Weisburd, D. D. Farrington and C. Gill, .2017. What Works in Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation. (New York: Springer-Verlag).

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, R. 1980. Situational crime prevention: Theory and practice. *British Journal of Criminology*, 20(1), 136–147.

response and capacity building initiatives (see Attachment A and B). CMTs are active in Central North Halifax (including Uniacke Square), Mulgrave Park, and the Prestons (East and North). The CMT initiative continues to grow, and the relationships developed among resident team members, HRM staff, and community partners helped facilitate the sharing of information and distribution of resources during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Two key achievements this year include:

- Launch of a [CMT Story Mapping Project](#). The Mulgrave Park CMT worked with 17 residents to develop a digital project titled: “Our Community, Our Stories”. It captures stories about community as told through the voices of experts - the residents themselves - and builds on training in community storytelling by Bill Carr, completed with CMTs in 2019. Through the broad themes of place and identity, residents shared a short story about a meaningful place in their community. Viewers can visit the story map and learn about the community through the experiences of those who live there.<sup>5</sup>
- **Community Garden at George Dixon**. Public Safety staff worked with the CMT and other key stakeholders to identify actions that could help bridge cultural divides between newcomer and longtime residents in the community. In summer 2020, CMT members worked to transform the horseshoe pit at George Dixon into a community garden. Twenty plots have been established, with additional plots being constructed to meet demand.
- **Hiring and Community Engagement Strategy**: To enhance HRM's ability to secure talent and increase diversity to meet current and future operational needs, Human Resources successfully launched a Hiring and Community Engagement Strategy. Human Resources has been engaging with local communities and partners to foster and encourage inclusivity, accessibility, and transparency around employment. These efforts are helping establish talent pools, promote job opportunities, influence recruitment processes, and promote HRM as an employer of choice. The Strategy further supports HRM's diversity, inclusion and equity goals as well as gender parity and identifies specific goals, benchmarks for a 24-month delivery timeframe with these key components: (1) Community Outreach and Engagement; (2) Job Fairs and Employment Partnerships; and, (3) Employer Branding, Communications and Social Media.
- **The Youth Services Plan** was created by youth to ensure that municipal programs and services are meeting the needs of youth aged 13–24. Building on successes of the first plan (2016-2020), engagement surrounding the second plan commenced in 2021. Staff are currently working on the new plan, goal of being complete in early 2022. Public Safety and Diversity and Inclusion, along with Libraries have supported this process, led by Recreation’s Youth Division.
- Launched in 2021, the **Road to Economic Prosperity Action Plan (REPAP)** is a five-year economic development strategy developed and owned by the African Nova Scotian Community to address systemic issues and improve economic and quality of life outcomes for African Nova Scotians. It reflects and remains committed to ongoing community efforts and provides a space for defining and realizing future opportunities for all people of African descent. The Plan is being delivered in partnership with the Halifax Partnership and the Halifax Regional Municipality, supported by private and public sector sponsors.

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<sup>5</sup> Plans are underway for story maps in other CMT communities.

### Ensure Safe Spaces

The objective in this area is on augmenting physical infrastructure through strategic improvements to housing affordability, cultural assets, resident mobility, and the natural environment. Many initiatives are geared toward a **situational** approach, by working to change the management, design or manipulation of the physical or human environment. Some also embody a **targeted** approach, reflecting the reality that marginalized residents are in greatest need of safe spaces, and thus focus not only on enhancing the safety of spaces, but creating programs that enhance access to these spaces. Highlights include:

- Through its participation in the **Halifax Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces (SCSPS)**, Public Safety Office staff worked with community stakeholders and trained volunteers to conduct three Women's Safety Assessments (WSAs) in HRM. These assessments have helped inform realized and potential changes in the design and management of public spaces in HRM. The WSA originated in Toronto in 1989 as a participatory action tool to build safer communities. It incorporates culturally competent, community development, and gender-based approaches to identifying safety assets and concerns. Research demonstrates that by involving women in the process and working with them on developing potential solutions, public spaces are made safer for everyone. WSAs are different than other safety audits, as they recognize women and girls' expertise from their daily lived experience. This expertise is harvested through the WSA tool to provide insight on how women and girls perceive their safety, while also identifying features of the built, social and natural environment that could be modified to improve safety.
- The demand for equity measures is growing as a means toward and measure of safer and more inclusive public spaces and infrastructures. Public Safety provided guidance on an equity measurement tool for sidewalk prioritization in the proposed amendments to the Administrative Order on traffic calming. These amendments were presented to the Transportation Standing Committee in Fall 2021. In addition, Public Safety staff sat on the steering committee for the **Shared Micro mobility Readiness study** to support the inclusion of equity and safety considerations into the proposed framework and plan.
- Problems associated with the **longstanding crisis of homelessness** grew exponentially during the pandemic. Public Safety supported the municipality's role in addressing homelessness by crafting a human-rights approach to addressing encampments,<sup>6</sup> partnering with Halifax Libraries on increasing access to public washrooms, working with ICT to get HRM's public washrooms available on Open Data to increase access, increasing staff resources and community connections for the Mobile Food Market, and operationalizing a Mobile Shower pilot partnership with Mainline Needle Exchange.
- Planning and Development continues to move forward on a wide range of initiatives in this area including the **10-year Regional Plan Review**, with a focus on social policy and planning, oversight of Centre Plan approvals process, improving the regulatory framework governing affordable housing, and implementing a suite of improvements related to data management and reporting.
- **HRM Accessibility Strategy** received Regional Council's approval in 2021. A critical advancement in inclusion and access to HRM services and greater equity in mobility across the municipality, the strategy contains 31 recommendations with a target date for completion of 2030.

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<sup>6</sup> The approach was grounded in research evidence from the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing's A Human Rights Approach: A National Protocol for Homeless Encampments in Canada <https://www.make-the-shift.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/A-National-Protocol-for-Homeless-Encampments-in-Canada.pdf>

### Strengthen Communities

While the previous area, 'Ensuring safe spaces' hinges on enhancements to the physical environment, the Public Safety Strategy's third area focuses investments in social infrastructure to transform these spaces into places that provide opportunities to enhance social cohesion and sense of belonging. While social infrastructure exists at a local scale, for it to thrive, this local infrastructure must be embedded and supported by municipal policy and practice. Accordingly, work here leans toward **promotional** prevention, to strengthen skill development, well being, and social integration.

- The **Social Policy Framework** was approved in Spring 2020 and has begun to set a coordinated approach to social policy. Social policy extends beyond the delivery of traditional social services by focusing on the social determinants of wellbeing. Three focus areas have been identified in the framework: Food Security; Housing; and Connected Communities and Mobility. A Social Policy Team has been established that brings together representatives from various Business Units. During Covid-19 this team guided the identification of projects and the administration of funding to support marginalized groups. Funding was used to stand up outdoor washrooms, prevent evictions, enhance food security, and expand wireless access, among other initiatives.
- **Food planning in 2021 and beyond:** HRM has partnered with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance to develop [JustFOOD](#), an action plan for the Halifax region. JustFOOD is a collaborative effort to increase food security and strengthen our local food system, through the lens of food justice. Engagement began in 2021 and will continue into 2022/23, moving from ideas for action to developing strategies and capacity to achieve the actions. Engagement and ongoing research will lead to an action plan and commitments across sectors to realize positive change.
- Affordable access to **good food and emergency planning** to strengthen the vulnerable food system are crucial. Support will continue for the Mobile Food Market, bringing affordable, quality food to communities at risk for food access issues. Work continues to incorporate food planning into emergency management and climate change mitigation/adaptation, such as capitalizing on HRM's new refrigerated truck. Halifax Public Libraries are key partners, increasing food literacy programs and access to food infrastructure to improve food security and the health of community members especially those experiencing poverty.

### Prevent and Reduce Crime

This priority area leans toward the **targeted** and **indicated** spectrum of prevention, working with those at higher risk of being involved in the criminal justice system, either as victims or offenders. It includes developing laws and policies to support better responses to incidents of violence, harassment or harm.

- **HRP** trained **CMTs** and Public Safety staff in **Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST)**. This intensive two-day training is the world's leading suicide intervention training program. Extensive research evidence demonstrates that successful completion of the program reduces suicidality in communities and increases general counselling and listening skills for trainees.
- Facilitated through Public Safety, HRSC, HRM Parks and Mainline Needle Exchange worked together to install the municipality's first **needle drop box** on the parkland surrounding Harbour View Elementary School. Mainline collected 290 needles from the box between June 21, 2021 to Nov 20, 2021.<sup>7</sup> With support of Nova Scotia Health's Harm Reduction specialist, an educational briefing note was created and circulated to stakeholders to help build understanding and acceptance of this evidence-based approach to addressing substance use in public spaces.

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<sup>7</sup> Mainline operates other needle disposal boxes in HRM in partnership with other agencies and organizations. These include Brunswick St Mission; Central library; North End library; Metro Turning Point, and the Friendship Centre shelter

- **HR Corporate Training Modules:** HR has redesigned some of its core training to better equip municipal staff to respond to violence, neglect, harassment, harm and self harm. Some of the new and existing offerings are: Addressing Inappropriate Workplace Behaviours; Workplace Violence Prevention; Dealing with Difficult Behaviour in the Workplace; Employee & Family Assistance Program - Key Person Orientation; Rethinking Gender: Gender Identity and Expression; Non-Violent Crisis Intervention; Skills for Resolving Conflict; and, Mental Health First Aid for Adults who Interact with Youth.

### Building on Strengths

This annual report demonstrates that the centres of responsibility for public safety are embedded across the municipality, far beyond the traditional realm of policing, to encompass the full range of preventative approaches. Accordingly, implementation of the Strategy will continue to focus on growing its sphere of influence by:

- **Leveraging Partnerships** for a more collaborative, integrated, systems-level approach to community safety and wellbeing;
- **Building Capacity** among residents and stakeholders to develop locally informed, culturally competent pathways to community safety and wellbeing;
- **Research and Innovation** to develop a robust evidence-base and creative approaches to better understand and address community safety and wellbeing, and to evaluate existing approaches; and,
- **Knowledge Exchange and Communication** to enable access to new expertise, information, build awareness and understanding of innovative approaches to community safety and wellbeing.

### Leveraging Partnerships

Building and leveraging partnerships enables the Public Safety Office to expand its sphere of influence both internally and with external stakeholders. Key developments include:

- Public Safety led strategic consultation with 37 key stakeholders (Attachment D) to advance planning for the development of a municipal drug and alcohol strategy<sup>8</sup>. Out of this consultation seven partners (HRM, Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre, Canadian Association of People Who Use Drugs, Nova Scotia Health Mental Health and Addictions, Nova Scotia Public Health Central Zone, the NS Brotherhood, IWK, Halifax Public Libraries) submitted a funding proposal to Public Health Canada's Intersectoral Action Fund. The proposed project will foster conditions necessary for developing a cross-sectoral, community-led, **Municipal Drug and Alcohol Strategy**. It will provide necessary social infrastructure for a systems-level, evidence-based approach to substance and alcohol use health. It will begin to build a unified, strategic intersectoral approach and gain community trust needed to address substance use health from a person centred, social determinant perspective.
- The Public Safety Advisor is a participant in the formation of a cross-sectoral **Nova Scotia Alcohol Policy Coalition**. While still in development, the purpose of the coalition is to bring key stakeholders and community leaders together to share resources and information related to alcohol policy and advocate for healthy approaches to alcohol policy and consumption. This coalition will support recent direction from Council to examine potential changes to existing alcohol policies and regulations at the municipal and provincial levels to reduce harmful patterns of alcohol consumption.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This work advances direction given by [Regional Council in December 2019](#).

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/210629rc1115.pdf>

- Recognizing how racism impacts safety and wellbeing, Public Safety participates on the **Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee** and working groups for Anti-Black Racism Strategy and African Nova Scotia Advisory Committee development. The Steering Committee presented its progress report to Regional Council in June 2021 and public consultations are underway to ensure a community-led approach.
- **Ongoing Covid response** – Since the onset of the pandemic Public Safety has leveraged partnerships to better support marginalized communities through the pandemic. This work has involved creating pandemic asset maps to help communities and service providers access available community-based resources, collaborating with public health and marginalized communities on culturally appropriate messaging related to covid measures; with the Mobile Food Market on supporting food security through food delivery and garden starter packs; and across several business units and Halifax Public Libraries to increase awareness and access to public washrooms across HRM. In the fall of 2021, Public Safety also partnered with Mainline Needle Exchange to pilot a mobile shower unit for people experiencing homelessness.
- Regional Council approved the creation of a full-time coordinator position for the **SCSPS program** in the 21/22 budget giving Public Safety a full-time resource to finalize the Scoping Study (Attachment E) to guide program implementation. The **Scoping Study** was endorsed by the Women's Advisory Committee in Dec 2020, and the internal implementing committee in Fall 2021. Priorities currently underway include investigating a third-party reporting system for sexual violence, creating an inventory of how the municipality and other partners collect race and gender-based data to better monitor program outcomes, working with community stakeholders to better understand and identifying ways to address the impacts of racism in public spaces.

As noted in Clairmont's Roundtable Report and Roundtable review, the municipality, as the level of government embedded across the communities it serves, with strong relationships with other levels of government, business and non-profit sectors, is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in creating a culture of collective responsibility for community safety and wellbeing.<sup>10</sup> The establishment of a multi-sectoral advisory board can synthesize these relationships to create a collaborative approach toward closing the gaps between services and to identify innovative directions for reducing and preventing crime, victimization and fear of crime.<sup>11</sup>

The PSA is initiating the process to renew the Public Safety Strategy for 2023. This process includes engagement with other HRM business units, communities, and key external stakeholders (Public Health, Justice, Community Services) to:

- Formalize a structure for collaboration and partnerships;
- Bring community leadership to the process;
- Provide input and advice during for Strategy renewal;
- Guide implementation of new actions through working groups; and,
- Communicate results of the process and building multi-stakeholder consensus for action.

### Building Capacity

A core component of capacity building from the perspective of the PSO is strengthening networks and relationships between the municipality and communities. Public Safety acquired additional resources to better support this work.

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<sup>10</sup> Clairmont, D. 2014. 'The Roundtable Review'. Halifax Regional Municipality. Clairmont, D. 2008. "Violence and Public Safety in the Halifax Regional Municipality: A report to the Mayor as a result of the Roundtable". Halifax Regional Municipality.

<sup>11</sup> Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention, 2017, Municipal Crime Prevention Offices: Importance, Role, Function, and Models, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KT2oOsSq-n8piDgasFFkXNZ-YcDGAWla/view>; Upshaw, T. and S. Sheffield. 2016. Response to Clairmont Report: Executive Standing Committee. <https://www.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/regional-council/160920rc1442.pdf>



The PSO created a **Manger of Programs and Engagement** position whose role is to lead the community-capacity and engagement dimensions of Public Safety Strategy implementation, including overseeing the CMT initiative and Halifax Safe Cities and Public Spaces for Women and Girls program.

The PSO acquired a new, full time **Program-Coordinator** lead the development and implementation of the Halifax Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls Programme. This position was designated for members of HRM's employment equity groups.

### Research and Innovation

Starting upstream enables us to link aspects of wellbeing such as safety, health, food security, income, housing and belonging, so we can address multiple issues at the same time, with potentially fewer resources. There has been significant work in this area, including:

- Public Safety is leading a staff information report that aims to understand how **race and gender-based data** is collected within the municipality (including by external partners) to help track and monitor experiences that impact women's safety in public spaces. This work supports the implementation of the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces program and stems from a motion passed by the Women's Advisory Committee in August 2021.
- Public Safety is leading the **Police Transformation Study**, an independent evaluation of the dual HRP/RCMP approach to policing in HRM. The study will identify how to improve the quality and effectiveness of police service, standards, and delivery in the municipality and better integrate policing with the broader community safety and wellbeing ecosystem. A competitive Request for Proposals has been issued to procure consulting services for the study, with results of this Study anticipated to be delivered to Regional Council in Winter 2023.
- Public Safety is leading a **Reimagining Public Safety Study** to examine potential alternatives for shifting or creating programs for civilian delivery of non-core police functions. The outcome of the Study will be the creation of a new 3-year Public Safety Strategy (2023-25) that identifies key public safety civilian programs and service delivery transformations that could reduce demand on police services through and/or provide more appropriate service delivery and response models an alternative to policing services.
- Public Safety is leading the development of a business case and cost model for **Sobering Centre(s)** in HRM. Sobering centres provide safer space for intoxicated persons to: become sober; connect them to appropriate services; reduce pressures on emergency response services; and, avoid criminalization for behaviours related to substance use, mental health and addictions. This work is expected to be delivered to Regional Council in time for the 2022/23 budget deliberations.
- The partnership with Dalhousie University toward the development of **Safety, Wellbeing and Equity Index** resulted in the creation of a prototype using police calls for service and demographic census data. Feedback on the prototype was generated through an internal review with key stakeholders and from this a successful funding application to MITACS was secured. This funding created a paid internship for a PhD student in Computer Science to advance the prototype over the next 18 months. Additional datasets are being added for analysis including data from 311 (Cityworks), and a partnership with 211 to access data from their call centre. Interim results of the prototype will be presented to stakeholders in February 2022.

- With supervisory support of the PSA, a Master's student of Criminology at Saint Mary's University completed his thesis on an **evaluation of CMT implementation** in Mulgrave Park. This research provided an independent, rigorous process and impact evaluation of the pilot and evidence that can be used to strengthen the initiative. The title of the thesis is: *Towards a Productive Relationship between Police and Community Safety Leaders in Racialized Socially Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods: Measuring the Impact of Formal, Partnership-based Community Crime Prevention Organizations*, and is available at the [Patrick Power Library](#) of Saint Mary's University.

#### Knowledge Exchange and Communication

The Public Safety Strategy requires a paradigm shift in the way the municipality, key stakeholders, and residents think about community safety because addressing the root causes of crime and victimization means investing our resources differently. Building buy-in for such innovation requires equipping our leaders with the knowledge to believe change is possible.

The PSO is expected to be a repository for expert knowledge and innovative approaches to community safety. Over the past year, the Public Safety Advisor continued to provide input and advice to municipal decision-makers on a range of issues—from administrative orders and by-laws to park design and crime prevention programming. In addition to sitting on the Anti-Black Racism Steering Committee, Public Safety participates in the Data and Analytics Community of Practice to advance data literacy and data-driven decision making. The Public Safety Advisor regularly participates in knowledge exchange opportunities through active participation as an Executive Board member on the Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention (CMNCP) and the Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Society (NSCJS). The Safe City Coordinator also sits on the newly formed Trafficking Exploitation Service System and National Safe Cities Network. Public Safety also delivers and develops a module on Crime Prevention for the Seniors College of Nova Scotia course on the Criminal Justice System.

Halifax has been selected as the site for the next in person **Canadian Municipal Network on Crime Prevention Conference and Annual General Meeting**. This event will convene a national community of practitioners, community and political leaders to exchange knowledge on evidence-informed crime prevention approaches, learn from national champions for upstream, collaborative approaches to community safety and wellbeing, and enable Halifax to showcase its own impactful community safety initiatives.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

#### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

No community engagement was required.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment A – Public Safety Strategy inventory of actions
- Attachment B – Community Mobilization Team 2021
- Attachment C - Community Mobilization Team 2020
- Attachment D - Municipal Alcohol and Drug Strategy Key Stakeholder Consultation Findings
- Attachment E - Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Scoping Study

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.

Report Prepared by: Amy Siciliano, Public Safety Advisor, Government Relations and External Affairs,  
CAO's Office, 902.210.0102

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Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>1. Build Resident Resilience</b>			
<b>1.1 Connect Residents to Quality Jobs</b>			
<p>1. Promote municipal job opportunities and volunteer positions to residents, particularly groups at risk of exclusion.</p>	<p><a href="#">Youth Services Plan (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Youth Advisory Committee (DP)</a></p> <p>HR position Business Partner - Recruitment</p> <p><a href="#">Youth Leadership Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Step up to Leadership Program (PP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Bridging the Gap (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Diversity and Inclusion Framework (PR)</a></p>	<p><b>Economic Development</b></p> <p>Human Resources</p> <p>Parks and Recreation</p>	<p>The <b>Youth Services Plan</b> was created by youth to make sure that municipal programs and services are meeting the needs of the youth aged 13–24.</p> <p><b>Human Resources Business Partner - Recruitment</b> targeted recruitment strategy into the marketplace, develops and execute HR's community engagement project and deploys a new hiring process which will improve the hiring and on-boarding experience.</p> <p><b>Youth Leadership</b> is for youth aged 13+ (or completed grade 7) who want to develop leadership skills through fun &amp; challenging learning experiences, organizing and taking part in special events and assisting staff with children's programs.</p> <p><b>The Bridging the Gap Internship Program</b> program provides 18 month training and development internships with the municipality for qualified candidates interested in the public service.</p> <p><b>The Youth Advisory Committee</b> is a two year pilot (commenced Sept 2018) to increase youth participation and engagement in municipal governance. The pilot is complete and staff are currently writing the report to wrap up the pilot.</p> <p><b>Step up to Leadership Program</b> is a free, 9-session "Step Up to Leadership" course that covers a wide range of topics to develop leadership skills and build strong communities.</p> <p><b>Racially Visible Employee Caucus (RVEC) &amp; African Nova Scotian and Visible Minority Women's Network</b> As part of its support to the group, <b>The African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO)</b>, in partnership with the YMCA Nova Scotia Works and HR Client Services, delivered a resume/cover letter and Interview workshop for members of these groups. Eighteen staff participated in this session. ANSAIO will continue to work with HR and other business units to provide professional development opportunities to RVEC and the African Nova Scotian and Visible Minority Women's Network.</p> <p>The <b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion Framework</b> is designed to assist the entire organization in our continued efforts to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and provide programs and services to our residents by using a diversity and inclusion lens. This Framework identifies key priorities to move these efforts forward, both in our organization and communities, and provides a focused lens on how we can address these priorities going forward. The Framework comes to life through implementation and evaluation plans created by individual business units and divisions. Comprised of senior leaders from across the organization, a Diversity &amp; Inclusion Leadership Table and Champions Working Group have been formed to champion issues related to employment equity, workplace behaviour and respect by embedding diversity and inclusion into municipal business units. Their role is to advise the Halifax Regional Municipality on the impact of policies, programs and services on diverse employees and communities through the monitoring and implementation of the Diversity &amp; Inclusion Framework.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<p>2. Expand and enhance work experience, mentorship, and apprenticeship opportunities in municipal services and divisions.</p>	<p><a href="#">Anti-Black Racism Strategy Development</a></p>	<p><b>Economic Development</b> Human Resources Parks and Recreation GREA</p>	<p>The development of the <b>Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan</b> included the formation of the ABR Steering Committee. This ten-person Committee includes representatives from across the organization including Public Safety, Halifax Regional Fire &amp; Emergency and Halifax Regional Police. They are led by a new ABR Program Coordinator. Together they have been tasked to manage the development and implementation of a multi-year Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan – one of five key deliverables under the Charter.</p> <p>HR in collaboration with the African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office has implemented two designated cohorts for <b>The Foundations for Aspiring Leaders</b> program to target employees of African Nova Scotian/African Descent.</p> <p><b>Youth Live</b> is a program for youth, aged 16-24, facing significant employment barriers, that provides employment and life skills training.</p> <p><b>Bridging the Gap</b> - see Action 1</p> <p><b>Diversity and Inclusion Framework</b> - see Action 1</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
3. Connect local and international graduates, young professionals and immigrants to the labour force.	<a href="#">Atlantic Immigration Partnership (DP)</a> <a href="#">Connector Program (DP)</a>	<b>Economic Development</b> Legal and Risk Management	<p>The <b>Connector Program</b> helps local businesses and organizations connect with immigrants, international students and recent and international graduates interested in starting and growing their careers in Halifax. Community leaders known as Connectors meet with talent interested in opportunities. The Connector gains access to a wealth of diverse, pre-qualified talent and Connectees access a professional network and are exposed to career opportunities.</p> <p>The Halifax Partnership partnered with other levels of government through the <b>Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP)</b> to help companies hire international graduates and immigrants. The pilot will be a <b>permanent program</b> starting January 2022, attracting immigrants to fill skilled positions in Atlantic Canada by giving them a pathway to permanent resident status.</p> <p><b>Local Immigration Partnership</b> - In November 2013, Halifax Regional Municipality and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) entered into an agreement to take on a Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) initiative. The Halifax Local Immigration Partnership (HLIP) works with partners from many different sectors related to help newcomers to settle in Halifax to ensure that Halifax welcomes all newcomers. We take pride in the collaboration that we foster amongst our partners, who come together with the same objective: to keep making Halifax a welcoming place for all newcomers to live and thrive, a place in which all belong and can call home. The LIP launched its new website for newcomers in December 2020, which means to host all relevant information for immigrants and other folks new to Halifax. Both a directory and a guide, this platform is also meant to help you connect with other service providers as well as promote your services and programs, or any other information you think would be relevant for newcomers to the city.</p>
4. Assess the feasibility of promoting a living wage for all residents	<a href="#">Fair wage/living wage and social value framework</a>	<b>Economic Development</b> Finance Legal and Risk Management	<p>In 2020, Regional Council approved a social procurement and living wage policy for contracts. Staff is monitoring progress related to <b>basic income programs</b> provincially and internationally.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>1.2 Help Children and Youth Succeed at School</b>			
5. Encourage early literacy and reading readiness.	<a href="#">Learn English Program (DP)</a> <a href="#">Literacy Help and Upgrading Program (DP)</a> <a href="#">Adult Literacy Program (DP)</a> <a href="#">Paws to Read Program (DP)</a>	Social Development Libraries	<p>The Library focuses on early literacy and preparation for school by offering a number of Preschool programs for ages 0-5. These programs include Baby's First Books, Tales for Tots, Songs &amp; Stories etc..</p> <p>The <b>Paws to Read</b> program gives kids a chance to build literacy confidence by reading to a dog.</p> <p>The Library has an <b>Adult Literacy Program</b> in partnership with the Halifax Community Learning Network. This service is free to all adults over 19 years of age who have not completed a high school diploma, and have been out of school for 1 year.</p>
6. Expand positive-school-climate efforts, including restorative practices and violence/bullying-prevention initiatives	<a href="#">HRP Bullying Hotline (TP)</a>	Social Development HRP/RCMP	<p>HRP's <b>bullying hotline</b> provides advice and support to address bullying.</p>
7. Promote culturally sensitive opportunities for social support, school connectedness, and youth development.	<a href="#">Youth Services Plan (DP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Live (TP)</a> <a href="#">Connect the Dots (DP)</a>	Social Development Parks and Recreation Libraries	<p>The Library partners with many community organizations to provide space and programs related to social support, and youth development. For example the Library, in partnership with the Youth Project, offers <b>Connect the Dots</b>, a social support group for youth 18 and under, around sexual orientation and gender identity.</p> <p><b>Youth Services Plan</b> - See Action 1</p> <p>The <b>Youth Advocate Program</b> helps prevent youth, aged 9-15, from engaging in anti-social and criminal behaviors.</p> <p><b>Youth Live</b> is a program for youth, aged 16-24, facing significant employment barriers. It provides employment and life skills training.</p>
8. Close the achievement gap between students of different races, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds.	<a href="#">1-on-1 Technology Training Program (PP)</a> <a href="#">Library tutoring services (PP)</a> <a href="#">Leading Readers Program (DP)</a> <a href="#">Learn English Program (DP)</a>	Social Development Libraries	<p>The Library offers <b>tutoring services</b> and homework help to youth throughout the system. In particular, the Library has a strong partnership with Shine Academic who offers free tutoring in math and science at their Halifax North location.</p> <p>The Library's <b>1-on-1 Technology Training Program</b> offers free personal training on a variety of computer skills, with several trainings offered in multiple languages.</p> <p><b>Leading Readers Program</b> helps struggling or reluctant readers discover the joy of reading in a comfortable environment.</p> <p>The <b>Learn English Program</b> at the library offers online or in person free English lessons.</p>
9. Promote school attendance, lessen suspensions and reduce drop-outs.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Live (TP)</a>	Social Development Parks and Recreation	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program (YAP)</b>: YAP workers collaborate with school representatives to improve school performance, including attendance, behaviour, homework, and participation in extra-curricular activities</p> <p><b>Youth Live</b> builds confidence in youth</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>1.3 Improve residents' mental health</b>			
10. Adopt an anti-oppression framework that focuses on social inclusion, community engagement and anti-discrimination	<a href="#">Diversity and Inclusion Framework (PR)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> HR/Office of Diversity and Inclusion	<b>Diversity and Inclusion Framework</b> - see Action 1
11. Deliver municipal programs and services that enhance the mental health of residents, particularly youth and seniors.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Live (TP)</a> <a href="#">Navigator Street Outreach</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation GREa	<p>The Library has developed teen services that provide welcoming spaces to hang out, connect with others, study, play, create and learn during all open hours. They have devoted teen staff that are supportive adults who build relationships with youth and are often relied upon as allies and mentors for young adults experiencing challenges or in transition. They provide opportunities to contribute to the community, develop skills, connect with other youth, and lead through volunteering.</p> <p>The Library also provides space for seniors to connect with others in the community to reduce social isolation. From informal community teas to knitting circles and life long learning programs, seniors are able to connect and engage in community life at the Library.</p> <p>The <b>Youth Advocate Program and Youth Live</b> support youth mental health through customized life skills training and development.</p> <p><b>Recreation Program Delivery</b> - Delivery of neighbourhood-based inclusive recreation programs and services. Children and youth are priority target groups and programs include arts and cultural activities, dance, swimming, sport, skating, physical activity, etc.</p> <p><b>The Navigator Street Outreach program (NSOP)</b> was launched in May 2007 to address homelessness and panhandling in downtown business districts. The program is a proactive, positive lifeline for individuals who struggle with securing and maintaining housing and employment due to addictions, mental health issues and homelessness.</p>
12. Equip municipal staff to identify and respond to self-abuse and suicidal thoughts.	Corporate Training (PP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HR	<p>Human Resources offers training in Mental Health First Aid for Adults who interact with Youth(aged 12 - 24) The 2 day ASIST Suicide Intervention Skills training is offered for First Responders within the Business Units of Halifax Regional Police and Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency.</p> <p>Key Recreation staff are trained in ASIST and Mental Health First Aid.</p> <p>The Working Mind mental health awareness training is offered to staff (employees &amp; managers/supervisors) through Corporate Training.</p>
13. Provide crisis support for children, youth and adults experiencing a mental health crisis.	<a href="#">Navigator Street Outreach Program (TP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> Community Mobilization Teams Pilot (DP/TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> GREa Parks and Recreation	<p><b>The Navigator Street Outreach program</b> - see Action 11</p> <p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> workers connect participants experiencing mental health crises to support services.</p> <p><b>Community Mobilization Teams (CMT)</b> pilot program: A community led, holist approach to preparing and responding to violent or traumatic incidents. HRM staff train CMT volunteers in crisis response and restorative approaches, and HRP Victim Services respond on scene to critical incidents providing immediate crisis support to affected residents in the wake of a violent or traumatic incident.</p>



Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>1.4 Build child and youth resilience</b>			
14. Help children/youth develop skills to recognize, avoid, and deal with Inherent predators and other online dangers.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> Social Media Monitoring Tool (TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation HRP/RCMP	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> - Promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wrap around approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. YAP participants received support/counselling for sexual abuse/exploitation.</p> <p><b>Social Media Monitoring Tool</b> - HRP/RCMP - supports the HRP Crime Reduction Strategy by using software to actively or passively monitor and track open source social media data as part of the Real Time Crime Centre. This is software leveraged within HRP's Real Time Crime Centre to passively or actively mine open source social media data to augment crime reduction strategy.</p>
15. Support children/youth to develop skills to recognize, avoid, and deal with bullying and cyber-bullying	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wrap around approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to prevent bullying and its impacts.</p>
16. Help children/ youth build confidence, resistance and effective decision-making skills concerning drug and alcohol use	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wrap around approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to promote positive decision making skills concerning alcohol and drug use.</p>
17. Assist youth to develop skills to recognize, avoid, and deal with dating violence, gender violence, and unhealthy relationships	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> promotes youth resiliency through an evidence-based wrap around approach that builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to promote healthy relationships. Participants received support/counselling to avoid/deal with dating violence, gender violence and unhealthy relationships</p>
18. Help children/youth develop skills to recognize, avoid and deal with situations that may put them at risk of sexual abuse.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a>  Juvenile Prostitution Targeting Strategy (JP)  Trafficking and Exploitation Service System (TESS)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation HRP/RCMP	<p><b>Youth Advocate Program</b> - see Action 17</p> <p><b>HRP's Juvenile Prostitution Strategy</b> is a coordinated approach with stakeholders and partners to facilitate early identification of high-risk individuals and active enforcement. HRP/RCMP work jointly for early identification of human trafficking of juveniles and maintain active relationships with partners in assistance of juvenile prostitutes.</p> <p><b>The Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS)</b>, is a multi-sector inter-agency provincial partnership of over 160 community leaders and professionals working with children and youth engaged in the sex trade across Nova Scotia. TESS is the extension of groundwork laid through Canadian Women's Foundation funding from 2016 to 2021, and is currently funded by the Department of Community Services through until 2025. Public Safety Office, HRP, RCMP participate in TESS</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>2. Ensure Safe Spaces</b>			
<b>2.1 Preserve and grow the supply of affordable and emergency housing</b>			
19. Retain and grow the supply of non-market housing (public housing, non-profit housing, co-operative housing) and affordable market housing.	<a href="#">Affordable Housing Work Plan (SP)</a> <a href="#">Housing and Homelessness Partnership (TP/SP)</a> Regional and Community Policy	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development	<p><b>The Housing and Homelessness Partnership (HHP)</b> is a collaborative of nine partners from all levels of government, the private sector and non-profit organizations in Halifax. HRM staff created an <b>Affordable Housing Work Plan, approved by Council in July 2018</b>, that outlines the purpose, progress to date, and direction of several municipal initiatives</p>
20. Provide diverse, barrier-free, affordable, safe housing options to match our demographic profile.	<a href="#">Affordable Housing Work Plan (SP)</a> <a href="#">Housing and Homelessness Partnership (TP/SP)</a> <a href="#">Tax Relief for Non-profit Organizations Program (DP)</a> Seniors housing report	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development	<p><b>Affordable Housing Work Plan</b> - see Action 19</p> <p><b>Housing and Homelessness Partnership</b> - see Action 19</p> <p><b>Tax Relief for Non-Profit Organizations Program</b> helps some non-profit organizations reduce their property tax payments.</p>
21. Ensure the availability of drop-in services and warming/cooling centres for vulnerable, street-involved residents.	<a href="#">Navigator Street Outreach Program (TP)</a>  <a href="#">Library Community Navigator (TP)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> Legal and Risk Management Libraries	<p><b>Navigator Street Outreach Program</b> was launched in May 2008 to address homelessness and panhandling in downtown business districts. The program is a proactive, positive lifeline for individuals who struggle with securing and maintaining housing and employment due to addictions, mental health issues and homelessness. NSOP works on the street, as opposed to within the shelter system.</p> <p>The Library offers free access to services, programs and spaces across 14 branches from Sheet Harbour to Hubbards. Libraries are used as a warm place to go in the winter and a cool location in the summer that provide entertainment and learning opportunities for all.</p> <p>The <b>Library/Community Navigator</b> position at Halifax Central Library. Working directly with at-risk individuals from youth to adult including those experiencing mental illness, substance abuse, housing and food security issues, the Navigator will serve as a resource to Central Library staff providing, training, coaching and guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work closely with Central Library staff in the provision of library services to at-risk communities and those who experience barriers, and provide support to other Library branches.</li> <li>- Serve as a resource Library staff providing training, coaching, guidance and building awareness of resources.</li> <li>- Provide information, support, referrals and assistance to customers experiencing life challenges such as mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness and exclusion issues.</li> <li>- Develop strong, collaborative relationships with other community-based service providers and agencies (Navigator Street Outreach Program, MOSH, HRP Community Response Officers).</li> </ul>
22. Increase the supply of affordable emergency housing and transitional housing	Regional and Community Policy <a href="#">Affordable Housing Work Plan (SP)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development	<p><b>Affordable Housing Work Plan</b> - See Action 19</p>
23. Enforce residential occupancy standards and hold landlords accountable for sub-standard housing.	<a href="#">By-Law M-200 Respecting Standards for Residential Occupancies (SP)</a> Building Inspection Program	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development	<p>HRM By-law M-200, Standards for Residential Occupancies, requires building owners to maintain buildings to minimum standards. Amendments to the by-law are anticipated in the Fall of 2018 to require rental unit registration to allow proactive inspection for an enhanced minimum standard.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
24. Monitor emerging homelessness trends and support initiatives to address chronic and episodic homelessness.	<a href="#">Navigator Street Outreach Program (SP)</a> <a href="#">Community Grants Program (SP)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> Legal and Risk Management Finance and Asset Management	<b>Navigator Street Outreach Program (NSOP)</b> <b>Community Grants Program</b> contributed funding for housing initiatives for vulnerable populations

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>2.2 Enhance access to arts, culture, recreation and natural assets</b>			
<p>25. Ensure that children/youth have inviting, safe places to be during non-school hours.</p>	<p><a href="#">Youth Services Plan (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Youth Leadership Program (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Recreation children and youth programming (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Paws to Read Program (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Leading Readers Program (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Children's Reading Support Program (DP)</a>  <a href="#">The Den</a>  <a href="#">Power House</a></p>	<p><b>Healthy Livable Communities</b>  Parks and Recreation  Libraries</p>	<p>The <b>Youth Services Plan</b> focuses on development and delivery of youth engagement and employment opportunities, youth leadership development, youth diversion programs, drop-ins and special events.</p> <p><b>Youth Leadership</b> is for youth aged 13+ (or completed grade 7) who want to develop leadership skills through fun &amp; challenging learning experiences, organizing and taking part in special events, and assisting staff with children's programs.</p> <p>The Library offers free public space for all community members and has a focus on providing a safe and inclusive space for youth during non school hours. The Library engaged pre-teens and teens in 1946 free afterschool/weekend programs</p>
<p>26. Enhance access to existing, arts, cultural and recreational facilities and programming.</p>	<p><a href="#">New Fee structure for Recreation</a>  <a href="#">Welcomed in Halifax Program (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Funding Access Program (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Sharing Our Stories Accessible Collections (DP)</a>  <a href="#">1-on-1 Technology Training Program (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Administrative Order 2018-002-OP - Universal Access to Municipal Facilities (PR)</a></p>	<p><b>Economic Development</b>  GRE  Planning and Development  Parks and Recreation  Libraries</p>	<p><b>Welcomed in Halifax</b> provides refugees and asylum seekers with one year of free access recreation facilities and programs.</p> <p><b>Affordable Access Program</b> provides recreation opportunities to children, youth and adults in financial need. Individuals are eligible for support for one program per season, pertaining to Fall/Winter/Spring seasons. During the summer months, additional financial support may be requested to enable children/youth to attend summer camps/programs.</p> <p>Administrative Order 2019-010-ADM outlines overarching principles for how user charges within P&amp;R will be determined. HRM recreation service delivery includes providing bookings for arenas, sport fields, sport courts, all-weather fields, ball diamonds, facility rooms, gymnasiums along with registered programs, memberships drop ins and vouchers. It was developed with the aim of promoting participation, increasing transparency and consistency, while providing affordability for all participants.</p> <p><b>Sharing Our Stories</b> originates from the 2014 Regional Plan and develop clear priorities for municipal investment and decision-making relating to culture and heritage. Our culture and heritage includes many different components and perspectives that make this region unique. The municipality supports culture and heritage in many ways including festivals, public art, heritage buildings, natural landscapes, archives, and museums just to name a few. The 2014 Regional Plan identified the need to create a plan to assist the municipality in clarifying its vision, principles and priorities to more effectively guide investments and decisions related to culture and heritage. Also known as the Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan (CHPP), the Sharing Our Stories project will clarify the municipality's role in supporting culture and heritage by: Analyzing the municipality's current support for culture and heritage by reviewing existing programs, policies and complete best practices research; Completing targeted stakeholder and rights holder engagement, youth engagement, and provide opportunities for broader public input; Developing and prioritizing a set of actions with timelines to improve how the municipality supports culture and heritage.</p> <p><b>Accessible Collections</b> in Libraries offer a wide range of materials in accessible formats for persons with print disabilities. The library also has increased opportunities for creative and skill-development through accessible, hands-on learning experiences in the arts, cooking, and technology.</p> <p><b>Administrative Order on Universal Access</b> is to ensure that principles of universal access are incorporated into the design, construction and major renovation of municipal facilities.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
27. Facilitate and fund community festivals and events that reflect Halifax's diversity	<a href="#">Community Grants Program</a> <a href="#">Culture and Heritage Priorities Plan (PP/SP)</a> Libraries (various programs and supports)	<b>Economic Development</b> Finance Planning and Development Parks and Recreation Libraries	<p>The Diversity category of the <b>Community Grants</b> program funds organizations and projects serving individuals who face barriers to full participation in community activities.</p> <p><b>Cultural and Heritage Priorities Plan</b> - The Culture and Events division has refined their programming framework to encourage diverse perspectives to engage with programs and processes and to ensure that those perspectives are valued in all aspects of program administration.</p> <p>The Library works with community partners and organizations to support many different <b>festivals</b> and events throughout the year. The Library has participated in Halifax Pride, Mi'kmaq Heritage Month, Asian Heritage Month, Nocturne, Word on the Street, Symphony at the Library, International Day of Peace, etc.</p> <p>The Library is also a founding member of the Black History Month Association and is one of the main hosts of African Heritage Month. In February 2018, the Library, in partnership with community organizations, hosted 83 programs with over 4,800 participants.</p>
28. Improve public access to lakes, coastal areas, beaches and water routes and trails.	<a href="#">Green Network Plan (SP)</a> Framework (PR) <a href="#">Integrated Mobility Plan (SP/TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation Planning and Development	<p><b>Green Network Plan:</b> The 2014 Regional Plan directed the creation of the Halifax Green Network Plan (HGNP) to “protect and preserve connectivity between natural areas and open space lands, to enable their integration into sustainable community design, to help define communities, to benefit the Municipality’s economy and the physical health of its people, and to reflect and support the overall purposes of this Plan”. The HGNP was completed in three phases. Phase 1, Foundations, focused on understanding existing assets and values and was completed in Winter 2016. Phase 2, Planning Directions, focused on developing implementation directions and was completed in Winter 2017. Phase 3, Final Plan, was focused on developing the final Priorities Plan. The Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) Standing Committee considered the final HGNP on July 19, 2018 and forwarded a positive recommendation onto Regional Council. Regional Council approved the HGNP in August 2018.</p> <p><b>The Integrated Mobility Plan (IMP)</b> creates a vision for moving around the Halifax region and help to direct future investment in transportation demand management, transit, active transportation, and the roadway network to improve the links between residents and their communities. The IMP expands the scope of municipal transportation planning beyond its traditional focus on commuting to consider the relationship between mobility and active, healthy communities. Since being approved by Regional Council in Dec 2017, 84 of the 137 actions are underway. These include the distribution of 6,000 transit passes to qualified residents through Nova Scotia Department of Community Services; the development of a complete streets toolkit for road designers, and transitioning the low income transit pass program from pilot to permanent.</p> <p><b>The Parks and Recreation Framework</b> The Framework identifies the vision, values and strategic pillars for Parks and Recreation as well as the Decision Making Model and the Lifelong Participation Model.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
29. Preserve and create urban green space and urban outdoor gathering places.	<a href="#">Green Network Plan (SP)</a> Acquire and Develop Parkland Halifax Common Master Plan Review Dartmouth North's Outdoor Library <a href="#">Urban Forestry Master Plan (SP)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development Parks and Recreation Libraries	<p><b>Acquire and Develop Parkland</b> - Parks &amp; Recreation will increase its focus on achieving Regional Plan parkland objectives, as well as Regional Council's direction to acquire specific parkland such as Blue Mountain Birch Cove, Purcell's Cove Backlands (Shaw Wilderness Park) and several other properties. Priority focus will also be given to a review of the Halifax Common Master Plan as well as development of bare parkland received through development /acquisition.</p> <p>The Library is also undertaking a renovation to the outdoor space at <b>Keshen Goodman Library</b> to provide more community space in a neighbourhood that has high density with limited access to green spaces.</p> <p>The <b>Urban Forest Master Plan</b> promotes awareness of the benefits of urban forests and guides the sustainable management and growth of the municipality's urban forests.</p>
30. Locate and design parks and open spaces to connect with complete streets, greenways, active transportation routes and other networks.	<a href="#">Green Network Plan (SP)</a> <a href="#">Integrated Mobility Plan (SP/TP)</a>	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development Parks and Recreation	<p><b>Green Network Plan</b> - see Action 28</p> <p><b>Integrated Mobility Plan</b> - see Action 28</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>2.3 Improve mobility so that people can learn, play, and work more effectively</b>			
<p>31. Continue to enhance public transit connections to municipal programs, facilities and places of employment.</p>	<p><a href="#">Integrated Mobility Plan (SP/TP)</a>  <a href="#">Moving Forward Together Plan (SP)</a>  <a href="#">Halifax Transit Annual Service Smart Trip Program</a>  <a href="#">Metro Transit Universal Accessibility Plan (TP)</a>  <a href="#">Integrated Mobility Plan (SP/TP) (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Access-A-Bus Service (DP)</a>  <a href="#">Accessible Transit Service (SP)</a>  <a href="#">Halifax Transit Technology Program (SP)</a>  <a href="#">Accessible Low Floor Buses (SP)</a>  <a href="#">Travel Training Program (DP)</a></p>	<p><b>Transportation</b>  Planning and Development  Transit</p>	<p><b>Integrated Mobility Plan</b> - see Action 28</p> <p><b>The Moving Forward Together Plan</b> is intended to initiate the restructuring of the transit network and guide the implementation of service improvements. It proposes new service types, service guidelines, and performance measures, along with a network redesign.</p> <p><b>Smart Trip Program</b> supports sustainable, flexible transportation options for residents through subsidies and partnerships.</p> <p><b>Integrated Mobility Plan</b> - see Action 28</p> <p><b>Rural Transit Funding Program</b> - reduces the cost of transit for rural residents by subsidizing rural transit service providers.</p> <p><b>Accessible Low Floor (ALF) Buses:</b> ALF buses offer mobility-impaired customers greater freedom and flexibility when travelling on fixed-route bus service by offering many options and features including: no step entry and exit; bus can be lowered to curb level; entry and exit ramp for quick and safe mobility device access; two wheelchair and/or safety seats per bus; extra wide doors and aisles; easy to read electronic exterior destination signs; and features the international accessibility symbol on all four sides of the bus.</p> <p><b>Accessible Transit Routes:</b> Over 96% of Halifax Transit's fixed-routes are designated as accessible for mobility impaired customers with the following features: (a) only ALF buses are used on these routes; (b) accessible bus stops with concrete landing pads (minimum size 1.5 m x 2.5 m), leading to a sidewalk to continue travel; and(c) ability to deploy the accessible ramp for mobility-impaired customers.</p> <p><b>Access-A-Bus Service:</b> Access-A-Bus is a shared ride, door-to-door, transit service for persons who are unable to use the conventional transit system due to physical or cognitive disabilities. Access-A-Bus is available to provide transportation to medical appointments and to allow users to participate in social, personal, and recreational activities. Access-A-Bus users are charged standard rates to ride the conventional transit system (i.e. fee parity). In September 2017, Council directed Halifax Transit to restrict Access-A-Bus service eligibility to those who cannot use the conventional transit service. Demand for the Access-A-Bus service has experienced consistent growth year over year.</p> <p><b>Para-Transit Fleet:</b> The current Access-A-Bus fleet total is 41 vehicles, with 32 required for daily service. The remaining nine vehicles are used as spares, to allow for on-going preventative maintenance and to ensure service reliability in the event of in-service failures.</p> <p><b>Travel Training Program:</b> The Travel Training, or Mobility Training as it is sometimes called, is a program design to assist eligible riders how to ride public transportation safely and independently. Halifax Transit provides the Travel Training program to train seniors and/or those with disabilities how to use fixed route transit so that they are not completely dependent upon paratransit services and can enjoy the freedom conventional transit and ferry services has to offer.</p> <p><b>Automated Stop Announcements:</b> Stop announcements help hearing and visually impaired transit users through audio and visual cues; users no longer need to rely on the bus operator or other passengers for information during their trip. Tourists and passengers who may be unfamiliar with a route also benefit from advanced notice of upcoming stops. And operators who are new to Halifax Transit or have been introduced to a new route can quickly and easily become familiar with route-specific stops.</p> <p><b>Annual Pedestrian Safety Action Plan:</b> HRP partnered with Transportation &amp; Public Works (TPW) and Corporate Communications to implement approved recommendations from the Pedestrian Safety Action Plan</p>
<p>32. Ensure that our transportation network provides safe, inclusive mobility for all users, including transit riders/operators, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.</p>		<p><b>Transportation</b>  Halifax Transit  Planning and Development  TPW</p>	
<p>33. Connect more people by foot and bicycle to major destinations through key corridor links within and between major settlement areas.</p>	<p><a href="#">Integrated Mobility Plan (SP/DP)</a>  <a href="#">Green Network Plan (SP)</a></p>	<p><b>Transportation</b>  Halifax Transit  Planning and Development</p>	<p><b>Green Network Plan:</b> Through land management and community design direction, the Green Network Plan defines an interconnected open space system, highlights ecosystem functions and benefits, and outlines strategies to manage open space.</p> <p><b>Integrated Mobility Plan</b> - see Action 28</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>2.4 Make places beautiful</b>			
34. Shut down residential and commercial buildings regularly used for illegal activities.	By Law Standards Enforcement Program (SP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Planning and Development	Reviews are undertaken on discretionary site development proposals.
35. Improve streetscape and park lighting.	LED streetlight conversion project (SP)	<b>Transportation</b> TPW	In 2018, TPW completed a \$40,000,000 project converting all of our streetlighting to LED (except for ornamentals). Part of the project scope was to design lighting levels to comply with IEEE RP-8 design standards (this is the industry standard and a requirement of provincial legislation).
36. Design built spaces to ensure users can observe and monitor activities around them (natural surveillance and natural access control).	Planning Applications Program	<b>Social Development</b> Planning and Development Legal and Risk Management Corporate and Customer Services	Reviews are undertaken on discretionary site development proposals.
37. Promote community policing and police partnerships with community safety networks and organizations.	Community Relation Officers (DP/TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	<p>HRP developed a Joint Partnership Plan that outlines the objectives and commitments of those involved, and addresses gaps identified in the 15/16 Partnership Analysis.</p> <p>CRO (Community Relations Officers) Work with various youth and Boys and Girls Clubs to contact youth and educate them about the dangers of certain behaviours – socio economic issues are critical in this area.</p> <p>CROs attend various community residents and landlords meetings meets once a month and discuss ways to help people who are affected by poverty, drugs, violence and prostitution.</p> <p>Dartmouth North Family Centre – discussions with clients regarding safety for their young children regarding drugs, domestic violence and recruitment of youth into prostitution.</p> <p>Dartmouth North Community Kitchen – Police mingle with the community and discuss safety and quality of life related issues. People feel comfortable speaking with police in this environment and there is a sharing of important information.</p>
38. Conduct regular community safety audits and implement a tracking system for community safety audits	CPTED Audits (SP) Women's Safety Assessments	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP Public Safety Office	The Public Safety Office conducted three WSA's in public spaces across HRM resulting in several recommendations for change
39. Enhance maintenance of the urban environment and address derelict and distressed properties	By-law and licencing standards enforcement program (SP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Planning and Development	<p><b>By Law and licencing standards enforcement programs</b> respond to public safety complaints related to taxi's, parking, dangerous properties and animal services.</p> <p>The Enhanced Maintenance Area section with Transportation &amp; Public Works regularly assesses parks/green spaces/ROW anomalies for focused, budget friendly improvements in landscaping, litter/junk removal, painting projects, power washing, street scaping, to improve the general appearance and upkeep of HRM assets. The focus in the downtown core of both Dartmouth and Halifax is improving public spaces relating to accessibility, safety, and community engagement.</p>



Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>3. Strengthen Communities</b>			
<b>3.1 Support residents in parenting and mentorship</b>			
40. Facilitate parental education focused on building existing parenting skills and promoting positive interactions with, and behaviour toward, children.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> Daddy and Me P/R program Parent and Tot P/R programs (PP) Libraries site visit program	<b>Social Development</b> Parks and Recreation HRP/RCMP	The <b>Youth Advocate Program's</b> evidence-based wrap around approach builds constructive relationships and support networks among youth and their families to build protective factors to promote healthy relationships. Parents/guardians in the program attend parenting support programs.  HRP: Dartmouth North Family Centre located at 107 Albro Lake Rd – discussions with clients regarding safety for their young children regarding drugs, domestic violence and recruitment of youth into prostitution.
41. Support mentoring of children and youths, particularly at-risk individuals.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a>  <a href="#">Youth Live (TP)</a> <a href="#">Step up to Leadership Program (PP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Leadership Program (PP)</a>  Library Youth Volunteer program (PP) HRP Youth Program (PP)	<b>Social Development</b> Parks and Recreation HRP/RCMP Libraries	The <b>Youth Advocate Program</b> case workers provide mentorship to youth at risk of exclusion.  <b>Youth Live</b> participants are mentored to develop life and employment skills.  <b>Youth Leadership</b> is for youth aged 13+ (or completed grade 7) who want to develop leadership skills through fun & challenging learning experiences, organizing and taking part in special events and assisting staff with children's programs.  <b>Step up to Leadership Programs</b> - see Action 1  The Library supports <b>Library Youth Volunteers</b> with development and leadership opportunities HRP delivers a <b>youth program</b> for approximately 30 youth beginning in the fall. They meet weekly and learn various aspects of policing and also do team building activities together.
42. Facilitate tailored, parenting-focused home visitation programs.		<b>Social Development</b> Complementary role (other stakeholders share most responsibility)	
43. Expand the availability and accessibility of family resource centres.		<b>Social Development</b> Complementary role (other stakeholders share most responsibility)	

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>3.2 Improve access to healthy, affordable food</b>			
44. Encourage urban agriculture, including edible landscaping, community gardening, green rooftops and farmers' markets.	<a href="#">Community Grants Program</a> <a href="#">Community Gardens Program (DP/SP)</a> <a href="#">Mobile Food Market (DP/SP)</a> <a href="#">Green Network Plan (SP)</a> <a href="#">Centre Plan (SP/PR)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Finance Parks and Recreation Planning and Development	<p>The <b>Community Grants Program</b> provides annual project or capital cash grants to registered non-profit organizations and charities. Several eligible categories can encourage urban agriculture, including edible landscaping, community gardening, green rooftops and farmers' markets.</p> <p>There are <b>20 Community Gardens</b> operating on HRM land through the Community Gardens Program. Administrative Order #2014-009-OP was adopted in 2014 to streamline the application process, create standards and enable social enterprises to reinvest profits back into the gardens. In addition to increasing demand, many community gardens have expanded beyond simple plots to offering value added features like a community oven, an urban orchard, accessible beds and youth beekeeping.</p> <p>The Mobile Food Market (MFM) operates in six communities in HRM, and aims to increase food access to the following populations: low income residents, seniors, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities, lone-parent families, and people experiencing food insecurity. It also provides opportunities to enhance food literacy skills through on site preparation/cooking demonstrations.</p> <p>The <b>HGNP</b> recognized agriculture as a crucial working landscape in our region. It highlights a number of Actions (21-25) to further agriculture, including limiting development in Agricultural Designation; encouraging agriculture and supporting uses in agricultural areas; support community gardens and food production in parks and municipally owned land; encouraging small scale agriculture on private land; and considering gardens and food production when planning public open spaces.</p> <p><b>Centre Plan</b> provides for increased food production, processing and retail opportunities.</p>
45. Incorporate food production and food access into the design of municipal programs, facilities and parks/open-spaces	<a href="#">Mobile Food Market (DP/SP)</a> <a href="#">Community Gardens Program</a> Just Food Back to Our Roots Urban Farm (SP/PP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation Planning and Development	<p>HRM partnered with NS Health Authority and Ecology Action Centre to pilot a mobile food market utilizing a Halifax transit bus. Today the <b>Mobile Food Market</b> operates in twelve sites, across seven communities. The goal of the MFM is to increase access to affordable, high quality, fresh fruit and veggies in communities with limited access to healthy food. The MFM also functions as a catalyst for creating community gathering spaces and hosting community events, an opportunity for social cohesion, learning food skills and creating meaningful connections within communities.</p> <p>On July 31, 2018, Regional Council approved direction to continue support for the Mobile Food Market through 2018/19 to 2020/21. The MFM is using the next few years to focus on sustainability and offering richer services to communities.</p> <p>In 2017, Council approved the use of the parking lot at the Woodside Ferry Terminal for a farmer's market hosted by <b>Back to Our Roots Urban Farm</b>, a community farm located at the NS Hospital which uses gardening to promote physical, mental and environmental health.</p> <p>Just FOOD The JustFOOD Action Plan will work with residents and stakeholders to develop "grown in Halifax" solutions. As the first food strategy in our Region, it will create a comprehensive plan to guide actions to improve food security and strengthen our local food system, with clear roles for all and the resources needed for positive change. JustFOOD is centered on food justice and building on the Halifax Food Charter, a call to action for us to work together towards a Region with a just and sustainable food system, where no one is hungry, and everyone has access to healthy food that they enjoy.</p> <p>The Library provided the following food related programming and access to food at the following programs and initiatives:  - <b>Seed libraries, Soup &amp; Stories, Young Moms</b> (supporting teen parents); Homework Help; Teen cooking program; and the purchase of equipment for safe food storage.</p>
46. Help local food banks to offer healthy, fresh, culturally appropriate foods and food for special diets	Participation in Food Policy Alliance Support for 211	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b>	<p>The <b>211 service</b>, which is supported by the municipality, is a resource for accessing food banks.</p> <p>FeedNova Scotia sits at the <b>Halifax Food Policy Alliance</b> table, alongside HRM.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<p>47. Support student nutrition programs that provide nutritious meals to children and youth.</p>	<p>Food programming initiatives (PP/TP)            Healthy Snack program (DP)            Food Literacy Specialist (PR)            Food Smart Project (PP/TP)</p>	<p><b>Healthy Livable Communities</b>            Libraries</p>	<p>The <b>Library</b> has been the recipients of multiple grants to promote <b>food programming</b> in the libraries. Access to food and increased food literacy for their patrons has been a significant and growing focus over the past few years. They have been successful in multiple grants which have enabled conversations, programs and partnerships that promote food in the libraries. Food programming is becoming an important consideration in all branches.</p> <p>The Library developed a <b>healthy snack program</b> which provides pop-up snacks in 7 communities at risk for food insecurity, recognizing that hunger is a barrier to participation. This program also hires youth to act as food literacy assistants.</p> <p>Library hired a <b>Food Literacy Specialist</b> to provide leadership and expertise in planning and delivering food initiatives at the Library. Their job is to create a food programming model for the Library, establish best practices for providing food literacy programs to diverse audiences of all ages, and develop and deliver training for library staff. The goal of this position is to help the Library play a meaningful role in addressing food insecurity, and connecting community members to essential food resources and learning opportunities.</p> <p>The Library includes health snacks and food literacy programming for youth at 4 branches and social snacks programs at 3 locations targeting vulnerable adults.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<b>3.3 Make programs and services more inclusive</b>			
<p>48. Ensure users fees for municipal programs and services do not create barriers for low income residents</p>	<p>Community Access and Inclusion (PR)</p> <p><a href="#">Welcomed in Halifax Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Community Services Transit Pass Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Affordable access transit pass program</a></p> <p><a href="#">Rural Transit Funding Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Epass/Upass program</a></p> <p><a href="#">Funding Access Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Emera Oval Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Equipment Loan Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Try-A-Ride Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Open Gym Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Rec Van Program (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Accessible Collections (DP)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Assistive Technology (DP)</a></p>	<p><b>Service Delivery</b></p> <p>Halifax Transit</p> <p>Parks and Recreation</p> <p>Libraries</p>	<p><b>Community access and inclusion</b> refers to reducing barriers toward participation in healthy, active lifestyles. Examples currently occurring in HRM include: community outreach; inclusion support; equipment loan programs; equitable facility scheduling; welcoming, accessible spaces; opportunities for youth; and, engaging marginalized and underrepresented groups to develop strategies that promote access and inclusion. Parks and Recreation strives to reduce barriers so that anyone regardless of age, ability, income, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and sexual identity has the opportunity to participate. Halifax citizens have opportunities to enjoy low cost/no cost access to programs, events, facilities and natural assets that enable a range of choices for structured and unstructured leisure and recreation activities.</p> <p>Low cost/no cost</p> <p><b>Welcomed in Halifax Program</b> - see Action 26</p> <p><b>Community Services Transit Pass Program</b> In May 2018, Council directed staff to amend By-Law U-100 to permit the establishment of the Department of Community Services (DCS) Pass program and provide transit service to DCS clients at a reduced monthly fee. The establishment of qualifying criteria, as well as all program administration, is undertaken by the DCS. The introduction of a DCS pilot program will mean up to 16,800 adult clients and their dependents directly receive the benefit of unrestricted access to Halifax Transit service, rather than just the 5,900 who were previously receiving some form of allowance for transit service.</p> <p><b>Low income Transit Pass</b> provides free transit for low income residents.</p> <p><b>Rural Transit Funding Program</b> - see Action 32</p> <p>Travel on Halifax Transit is free for children 12 years of age and under.</p> <p>The Library continues to pursue reducing barriers to accessing library materials through initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- elimination of fines for overdue books</li> <li>- Pop-up Libraries in communities where staff work with community members to ensure existing library accounts are barrier free.</li> </ul> <p>Aquatic Strategy - Parks and Recreation</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
49. Deliver municipal programs and services in an inclusive and age-friendly manner.	<a href="#">Diversity and Inclusion Framework (PR)</a> <a href="#">Community Access and Inclusion (PR)</a> <a href="#">Community Access and Inclusion (PR)</a> <a href="#">Multilingual 311 Help Line (DP)</a>  Building inspection, licensing and enforcement programs	<b>Service Delivery</b> HR Libraries Parks and Recreation	<b>Accessible Collections</b> - see Action 26  <b>Assistive Technology</b> - All library desktop computers have NVDA Screen Reader programs. Also large-print keyboards and optical trackball mice are available.  <b>See Community Access and Inclusion-</b> see Action 48
50. Provide barrier-free access to public places, outdoor spaces, municipal buildings and public transit.	<a href="#">Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy</a>	<b>Service Delivery</b> Planning and Development	The Accessibility Strategy consists of 31 recommendations, the goal being to complete them by 2030 as prescribed in the Accessibility Act. Each recommendation includes a list of strategic actions, the estimated time to complete the actions, the business unit(s) responsible for completing the action(s), and the measures of success for each action.  The recommendations are categorized by the five key goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Framework: Inclusive Public Service; Safe, Respectful, and Inclusive Work Environment; Equitable Employment; Meaningful Partnerships; and Accessible Information and Communication. They also address five of the key areas in the Accessibility Act: Built Environment, Employment, Public Transportation and Infrastructure,
<b>3.4 Enhance community cohesion and engagement</b>			
51. Ensure municipally owned/operated spaces and facilities are available for community agencies to deliver relevant programs and services.	<a href="#">Multi-District Facility (MDF) Project Plan (PP)</a> <a href="#">Community Facilities Master Plan 2 (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Volunteer Conference (PP)</a>  <a href="#">Step Up to Leadership Program</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation Libraries	Parks and Recreation will implement <b>new and updated partnership agreements with Multi-District facilities, the Halifax Regional Centre for Education</b> (formerly the Halifax Regional School Board), and community groups to better align access to programs, increase resource efficiency, and improve accountability. Focus will also be given to working with Cultural and Sport Organizations to better align programming and infrastructure development. There are 12 maintenance agreements being renewed to improve community pride, ownership.  <b>The Community Facilities Master Plan 2</b> gives direction for a clustered approach to community facilities management that will provide a more cohesive infrastructure and will encourage more integrated and universally accessible programming.  The Library offers community meeting rooms available to community organizations, individuals and groups at many locations. In 2017/18 these rooms were booked a total of 10,344 times.  The Library also partners with community organizations to provide relevant programs to our community.  Parks and Recreation's support for social development in marginalized communities will continue, such as participation in Between the Bridges, mobile food market, community gardens, etc.
52. Provide community development training for residents to build local capacity.	Community Mobilization Teams	<b>Social</b>	<b>Step Up to Leadership Program</b> - see Action 1
53. Expand opportunities for citizen engagement, consultation and participation on decision-making bodies.	<a href="#">Women's Advisory Committee</a>	<b>Governance/Engagement</b>	A Women's Advisory Committee was established to support the creation of a gender inclusive municipality and provide advice to Council on matters relevant to the municipal mandate. The WACH is the community advisory committee to the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces program

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<p>54. Support community hubs for co-located and coordinated community services (arts hubs, youth hubs, health hubs, cultural hubs, etc.).</p>	<p>Library Shared facilities (4) (PP) Library Kiosks (PP)  Power House  <a href="#">Sackville Youth Centre (DP/TP)</a></p>	<p><b>Social Development</b> Parks and Recreation Libraries</p>	<p>In Spring 2018, Regional Council approved a one-year pilot project to establish a collaborative, multi-agency, multi-service Youth Centre in Sackville. This centre, now permanent, aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Remove barriers of access to mental and physical health</li> <li>*Provision and implementation of drop-in programs</li> <li>*Creation of youth services that are inclusive for all youth</li> <li>*Design of physical spaces that are open and welcoming for youth</li> <li>*Policies and best practices for service delivery of youth programs</li> <li>*Use of partnerships to deliver on non-HRM programs and services</li> </ul> <p>Four of the Library's branches are located in <b>shared facilities</b> that create facilitate easy access to recreational, library and other services.</p>

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
55. Foster positive interactions between residents and police, particularly in communities where there is mistrust or lack of respect for police.	HRP Block Training (TP) HRP Community Response Officers (DP/TP)	Healthy Livable Communities HRP/RCMP	<p><b>Community Mobilization Teams</b> support positive community-police relations by working in partnership to develop protocols for responding to a critical incident, and encouraging open communication and dialogue in the wake of a critical incident.</p> <p>HRP, through consultation with the Board of Police Commissioners, HRM, the Province of NS, and other police agencies, re-established the <b>community survey</b> to ensure HRP has an understanding of community expectations and attitudes toward police and policing services.</p> <p><b>Block Training</b> - HRP provides ongoing training specifically targeting to issues facing support communities such as "Fair and Impartial Policing", " Verbal Judo".</p> <p><b>Community Response Officers</b> participate in ongoing initiatives such as (but not limited to):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Neighbourhood Watch meetings monthly where we involve the community in education regarding drugs, prostitution and other related issues in their community.</li> <li>2) Dartmouth North Association which involves many community based groups and government agencies in an attempt to stay connected with each group and the many issues which are identified. This enables HRP to tackle issues such as illegal drug sales, prostitution and other community related events.</li> <li>3) Stairs Memorial United Church has a food bank on Wednesday mornings where police meet with community residents and address their concerns about many issues.</li> </ol> <p>Dartmouth North Community Kitchen - Police mingle with the community and discuss safety and quality of life related issues. People feel comfortable speaking with police in this environment and there is a sharing of important information.</p> <p>HRP continues to implement its <b>Joint Partnership Plan</b> that outlines the objectives and commitments of those involved, and addresses gaps identified in the 15/16 Partnership Analysis. A gap analysis was done in 2018 to intentionally develop stronger relationships with target populations.</p>
			<b>4. Prevent and Reduce Crime</b>
<b>4.1 Decrease violent crime and criminal involvement</b>			
56. Shut down or suppress the illegal secondary market in firearms.	Gun Safety Strategy (TP) Firearm Amnesty Sessions (IP)	Healthy Livable Communities HRP/RCMP	<b>Gun Safety Strategy:</b> HRP, in partnership with Halifax District RCMP and the Public Safety Office, researched, reviewed and consulted on gun crime in HRM.
57. Reduce the likelihood of firearms being stolen from a legal owner or legal owners diverting a firearm to an unauthorized user	Gun Safety Strategy (TP)	Healthy Livable Communities HRP/RCMP	Firearm Amnesty Sessions for HRM to reduce the number of firearms in communities.
58. Encourage safe gun storage in the home, including storing guns unloaded and away from ammunition.		Healthy Livable Communities HRP/RCMP	<b>Gun Safety Strategy:</b> HRP, in partnership with Halifax District RCMP, are implementing the strategy developed in 2018 - Operational priorities will be identified annually.
59. Support youth-at-risk to avoid, or disengage from, criminal involvement.	<a href="#">Youth Advocate Program (TP)</a> <a href="#">Youth Live (TP)</a>	Healthy Livable Communities Parks and Recreation	<b>Youth Live</b> - see Action 7 <b>Youth Advocate Program</b> - see Action 7

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
60. Provide counselling and support to communities in the immediate aftermath of violent crimes.	Community Mobilization Team (DP/TP) <a href="#">Victim Services (TP/IP)</a>	<b>Healthy, Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP Parks and Recreation	The <b>Community Mobilization Team</b> pilot program ensures Victim Services is available to support communities with immediate counselling in the wake of a critical incident. Residents are connected to counselling services and other support services.  The <b>Victim Services Unit</b> provides a quality of service of information, referral and emotional support to HRM residents impacted by criminal and traumatic incidents.
61. Target hotspots to disrupt criminal activity.	COMSTAT (SP/IP)	<b>Healthy, Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	<b>COMSTAT</b> is an internal process undertaken by the HRP and RCMP, where crime statistics are collected and spatially analysed on an ongoing basis, with information shared among patrols to target and deploy resources to target hotspots and disrupt criminal activity. This crime reduction tool builds on external partnerships which encourages information sharing and community problem solving.
<b>4.2 Divert and reintegrate offenders</b>			
62. Support responses to crime that focus on restoring the losses suffered by victims and communities and holding offenders accountable.	Community Mobilization Team Victim Support Plan (DP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation HRP/RCMP	<b>Community Mobilization Team</b> pilot adopts a Restorative Approach to community development, providing restorative training to CMT members to encourage a victim and community centred, trauma informed approach to restoring harm.  HRP, in collaboration with Halifax District RCMP, proceeded to implement and address the issues and recommendations from the 15/16 <b>Victim Support Plan</b> . Reduction in victimization - reinforcement of VS team, additional resources, better front line response to VS, trauma-informed approach. Higher capacity in trauma-informed response from patrol team and CID as well.
63. Increase the availability and awareness of services for perpetrators (such as advocacy, support, accommodation, skill development and counselling)	Book club for inmates (IP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Complementary Role (other stakeholders share most responsibility)	
64. Augment exit planning for youths and adults leaving custodial institutions	Partnership with Public Safety Office and John Howard Society	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Libraries	The Library partnered with the John Howard Society to bring a <b>book club into the Central Nova Scotia Correctional Facility</b> . This provides an opportunity for individuals to connect with Library staff, set up library accounts and learn more about programming and services they can access upon release.  The Public Safety Office partnered with John Howard Society on a research project to better understand the housing barriers male inmates face upon release and to document stories of the struggles faced by previously incarcerated men in accessing housing in a supportive environment
<b>4.3 Reduce the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol</b>			
65. Promote responsible sale and use of alcohol and cannabis to curb harmful patterns	HRM Alcohol Policy (SP) Nuisance and smoking by law (SP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP Human Resources	<b>HRP Sexual Assault Awareness Campaign</b> - A plan is in place to develop an education awareness campaign for Frosh week events in partnership with universities. HRP continues to partner with Alcohol and Gaming (Service NS) on all matters dealing with licensing, regulating and responsible alcohol service.
66. Address underage drinking, fake ID, violence, vandalism and sexual acts connected to licensed establishments.	HRP Sexual Assault Awareness Campaign (DP) Patron Accountability Safety and Service (SP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	HRP Liquor enforcement unit is part of a partnership called Patron Accountability Safety and Service, a province-wide bar suspension program to address underage drinking, fake ID, violence, vandalism, sexual acts, thefts or problematic drug use. There are currently 26 participating licensed establishments taking part in the program in the HRM core. HRP continues to partner with Alcohol and Gaming (Service NS) on all matters dealing with licensing, regulating and responsible alcohol service.



Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
67. Reduce youth exposure to alcohol and cannabis promotion in municipally owned and/or operated facilities and at municipal events.	HRM Alcohol Policy (SP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Parks and Recreation	Alcohol promotion and consumption on municipal property is governed by Administrative Order 53, the Municipal Alcohol Policy.
68. Intervene at early contact points with health, criminal justice and social care services to prevent escalation of drug use	Opioid Misuse Strategy (TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Complementary Role (other stakeholders share most responsibility)	
69. Suppress existing and emerging markets of dependence-inducing drugs.	Opioid Misuse Strategy (TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	<b>Opioid Misuse Strategy</b> - HRP, with Halifax District RCMP, HRM, and the Province of Nova Scotia, developed an Opioid Misuse Strategy targeting at-risk populations and to reduce harm.
70. Improve drug users' access to treatment and harm reduction support (particularly entrenched, long-term opiate users).		<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP Legal and Risk Management	<b>Opioid Misuse Strategy</b> - HRP, with Halifax District RCMP, HRM, and the Province of Nova Scotia, developed an Opioid Misuse Strategy targeting at-risk populations and to reduce harm.  Regional Council approved a recommendation for the co-development of a municipal drug strategy with key stakeholders, including the province.
<b>4.4 Decrease interpersonal violence, abuse and neglect</b>			
71. Facilitate services and supports for gendered violence survivors and perpetrators that are flexible, responsive, and timely.	Safe Cities and Safe Public <a href="#">Victim Services (TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	<b>Victim Services</b> - see Action 60
72. Equip municipal staff to identify and respond to interpersonal violence, abuse and neglect	Training available through HR and other BUs (TP)	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Human Resources Parks and Recreation	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, Workplace Violence Policy Training, Applied Suicide Intervention Training, Critical Incident Stress Management Training Mental Health First Aid for Adults who Interact with Youth: This program focuses on understanding mental health problems and providing first aid for youth ages 12 to 24.
73. Identify and reduce barriers to reporting interpersonal violence, abuse and neglect and enhance survivors' access to the justice system.	HRP Trauma Informed Response Strategy (TP)  <a href="#">HRP Victim Services (TP)</a>	<b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP	HRP continues to employ an enhanced <b>Trauma Informed Response (TIR) strategy</b> when dealing with vulnerable community members. The TIR model, in conjunction with enhanced Victim Services engagement, and the operational prioritization of investigations aims to assist in the identification and reduction in barriers to reporting interpersonal violence, abuse and neglect and enhance survivors access to the justice system.

Action	Municipal Activities (Strategies, Plans, Programs, Services)	POT + BU	Notes
<p>74. Work to change environmental factors and social norms known to contribute to gendered violence (sexism, media and marketing practices, technology, harmful use of alcohol, etc.).</p>		<p><b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> Complementary Role (other stakeholders share most responsibility)</p>	
<p>75. Support initiatives that encourage bystanders to act to prevent gendered violence, abuse and neglect</p>		<p><b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP</p>	<p>HRP Public Relations actively supports through public messaging.</p>
<p>76. Employ victim-centred approaches to the sexual exploitation of youth and children and facilitate exit strategies for victims of the sex trade and human trafficking.</p>	<p>HRP Trauma Informed Response Strategy (TP)  <a href="#">HRP Victim Services (TP)</a></p>	<p><b>Healthy Livable Communities</b> HRP/RCMP</p>	<p>HRP continues to employ an enhanced <b>Trauma Informed Response strategy</b> when dealing with vulnerable community members. The TIR model, in conjunction with enhanced Victim Services engagement, and the operational prioritization of investigations involving youth and children whom are or could be victims of the sex trade and/or human trafficking is in place.</p>

# HALIFAX


## Community Mobilization Team

### Actions and Initiatives: April 2021-November 2021



*Community Volunteers working together to support Families and Communities by bridging the gap with Service Providers during times of Critical incidents. Through healing and Spirituality, we facilitate meaningful connections to ensure community Safety.*

## There are 3 areas of action that guide the CMT:

An illustration featuring a central light gray circle containing text. Surrounding this circle are several hands of various colors (orange, red, brown) reaching out towards the center, symbolizing community support and collaboration.

*Community volunteers working together to support families and communities by bridging the gap with service providers during times of critical incidents. Through healing and spirituality, we facilitate meaningful connections to ensure community safety.*

### **Crisis Preparation**

Developing local safety networks which can provide cohesive and collaborative responses to critical incidents. This is done through mapping resources, education and training, conducting needs assessments, and protocol development sessions.

### **Crisis Intervention/Response**

Working with communities after a violent or traumatic incident to determine the level of support needed for recovery and identifying appropriate interventions (such as opening of a comfort centre, community debriefing, healing circles, etc).

### **Crisis Prevention**

Supporting community by helping develop strategies and methods for crisis prevention, while making systemic recommendations that may prevent future violent incidents.

Community members identify and implement local capacity building initiatives, healing activities, and safety audits.

# Crisis Preparation

## ASIST RETREAT

**Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) - all CMTs (16 attended) Sept 10-12, 2021**

Facilitators: Cst. Alisa King, EFAP Coordinator for Halifax Regional Police  
Rev. John DenHollander, ASIST Trainer

As part of an ongoing effort to support the work of the Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs), the Public Safety Office hosted a two day interactive workshop on suicide first aid.

Participants were taught how to safely intervene with individuals who may be suicidal, how to recognize signs of suicide and how to work with the individual to create a plan that will support their immediate safety.

**Outcomes:** Participants are trained in ASIST. Members were able to bond through story sharing.



ASIST Participants at Tatamagouche Centre

# Crisis Intervention/Response

## CRISIS RESPONSE MOBILIZATION

### Mulgrave Park CMT

#### **April 27, 2021 – Shooting in community**

A community member was shot by a neighbor on April 26, 2021. The victim's children were taken away from the house and placed with their grandmother. CMTs focus was to have the children placed back with their mother and support for the suspect's grandmother. PSO set up a meeting with Victim Services to discuss services and resources available in these circumstances, and were informed that the victims were contacted.

#### **May 21, 2021 - Police Investigate Weapons Call (Shooting)**

Halifax Regional Police responded to a report of gun shots at the intersection in the 1200 block of Barrington Street, Halifax. Multiple officers responded to the scene and located an adult male with life threatening injuries consistent with a gunshot wound. The CMT was contacted and determined we should not activate in this situation as it was handled by police and there was no threat to community.

#### **September 27, 2021 – Shooting in community**

A shooting took place in Mulgrave Park on September 26th. After this incident, the CMT discussed having a community meeting in the future with some stakeholders to explore adding lighting and cameras in the area.

### Preston CMT

#### **July 5, 2021 – Three shootings in community**

RCMP contacted PSO about three shootings that happened in community over the weekend. They stated that no one was hit/injured. PSO spoke to CMT members and they decided it was best not to activate because nobody was hurt. On July 7, 2021 RCMP provided CMT with information regarding recent shootings and a community debriefing session.

#### **August 7, 2021 - Shooting in community**

There was a shooting in North Preston. Two people were injured and received medical treatment. Gangs and Guns Unit took over the investigation. CMT felt there was no need for a full activation and debriefed at the next CMT meeting.

## Oct 27 - Missing Child

A young boy went missing on October 26th in North Preston. CMT members reached out to the Public Safety Office to check in and see if there was anything we should or could do. We were instructed by Search and Rescue to stay put as they had trained search teams looking for him. We connected with the recreation centre and grief councillors in case support was needed. We also circulated emails and information on how to support community. The young boy was found that night.

# Crisis Prevention

## COMMUNITY CIRCLES/ENGAGEMENT

We hosted 2 Community Circles where service providers attended CMT meetings to share information on their work and resources:



### **Victim Services - Mulgrave Park CMT - April 28, 21 (7 participants)**

CMT members asked to have someone talk about the services provided to victims as there was a shooting in their community on April 26th and they were unsure of the connection that was made with the family. Dolly Mosher, Victim Services Coordinator with HRP did a presentation to CMT members about the services and supports available for victims of violence. She also gave her contact information for future concerns or questions and confirmed that Victim Services did reach out to the family to provide support.

### **IWK engagement session - all CMTs - May 31, 2021 (19 participants)**

The IWK Mental Health and Addictions Program contacted Public Safety Office as they wanted to provide CMTs with information on their programming and ask for suggestions on how the IWK can meet the needs of the ANS community. IWK set up a virtual engagement session with CMTs, in which they asked question, gave information, and received feedback.

Outcomes: CMT members are more aware of programs and services the IWK offers in regards to mental health.

# OPENING OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN APRIL 2021



The community garden is a CMT initiative that stemmed out of a meeting regarding cultural conflicts in community. Central North (Uniacke Square and surrounding) is a community that has a large African Nova Scotian population, displaced from Africville and recently an influx of newcomer refugees. Also, due to COVID-19, community had concerns about food security. We decided to use the old George Dixon horseshoe pit as a community garden to build relationships and learn about gardening together.

The garden is 100% free to those who have a plot. This space is a partnership between the CMT and several supporting agencies. We provided:

- Space, clean up and maintenance of the old horseshoe pit
- 20 garden beds were donated by the Housing Authority
- Irving Shipbuilding provided soil, mulch, tools, and 10 garden beds
- PSO/CMT provided soil, tools, coordination and engagement

**Outcomes:** Relationship building, food security, sharing of resources, cross cultural interaction, family and community bonding



***"I have met more people from my community this summer at the garden than I have met in the last 30 years I have lived here"***  
***- Missy Ross, garden participant***



## ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

### **Harm reduction - July 13, 2021**

The Central North CMT had concerns around drug use and selling in the community. Our office organized a meeting with several service providers including: Housing, Mainline, HRP, and Halifax Public Libraries to discuss possible solutions and how we can work together.

**Actions:** Everyone agreed to gather information on calls or complaints they have received. This will help us see if there are any trends and will help us identify where gaps are in this work.

Mainline Needle Exchange also agreed to send staff out to check the sites for used needles.

### **Newcomer service providers round table meeting - August 24th, 2021**

The CMT in Central North as well as HRP expressed concerns around Newcomer conflicts. There have been fights happening in community between newcomer families and with other community members. HRP specifically asked for this meeting to help figure out a more holistic way of dealing with the conflicts. Our office set up a round table meeting with organizations and community leaders that support newcomers: ISANS, HPL, YMCA, and Housing.

**Outcomes:** Information gathering and sharing of programs and services for newcomer families. Another meeting will be held in the future with school board and newcomer leaders.



# WOMEN'S SAFETY ASSESSMENT

## Findlay Park - April 15th 2021 (12 participants)

Human remains were found in the park on March 12th. The Public Safety Office was asked to conduct a Women's Safety Assessment of the park for recreation programming and community use.

**Recommendations:** Improved lighting and signage, especially at the North and Northwest end of the park, more maintenance of the park, A Community Debriefing Session with Counsellors



## Simmonds Rd. North Preston - June 23rd 2021 (9 participants)



RCMP contacted The Public Safety Office to ask that a safety assessment be done on Simmonds Road. There were specific concerns around the area surrounding the recreation centre. This area, including the road, becomes quite congested with cars when there are big events. This creates access barriers for first responders, transit, and residents. Simmonds road has only one entry and exit point, therefore barrier free access to the road is essential for emergency purposes. Other concerns that have been raised are around lighting and no sidewalks in the community.

**Recommendations:** Sidewalks and cross walks, better signage on recreation centre, find space for overflow parking.

# HALIFAX

## Community Mobilization Team Actions and Initiatives 2020-2021



*Community Volunteers working together to support Families and Communities by bridging the gap with Service Providers during times of Critical incidents. Through healing and Spirituality, we facilitate meaningful connections to ensure community Safety.*

# Background

Community Mobilizations Teams (CMTs) in HRM have been active since 2017, stemming from community recommendations within the 2016 Mayors Round Table on Violence. The first CMT was established in Mulgrave Park and has grown to include the communities of Central North Halifax, and North and East Preston. Public Safety Office staff realize that each community operates in different ways and that relationships are unique and take time to build trust. CMTs build on community strengths to develop and implement practical solutions that increase safety and empower residents and community-based organizations. An essential step in establishing an effective crisis response is ensuring the community has the necessary capacity to support itself.




Working Cross Culturally Retreat in Tatamagouche

## **Guiding Principles:**

- Community Ownership and Self-determination
- Social Justice and Equity
- Service Integration, Collaboration and Coordination

CMT's are made up of partnerships among residents, community organizations and the Municipality. They mobilize local and city-wide resources to address individual/community needs, coordinate community debriefings, and to assist in the delivery of resources and services. CMTs strengthen community access to resources and networks while working toward preventing violence by reducing distress, restoring unity, and building resilience.

## There are 3 areas of action that guide the CMT:

An illustration featuring a central grey circle containing text. Surrounding this circle are several hands of various colors (orange, red, brown) reaching out towards the center, symbolizing community support and collaboration.

*Community volunteers working together to support families and communities by bridging the gap with service providers during times of critical incidents. Through healing and spirituality, we facilitate meaningful connections to ensure community safety.*

### **Crisis Preparation**

Developing local safety networks which can provide cohesive and collaborative responses to critical incidents. This is done through mapping resources, education and training, conducting needs assessments, and protocol development sessions.

### **Crisis Intervention/Response**

Working with communities after a violent or traumatic incident to determine the level of support needed for recovery and identifying appropriate interventions (such as opening of a comfort centre, community debriefing, healing circles, etc).

### **Crisis Prevention**

Supporting community by helping develop strategies and methods for crisis prevention, while making systemic recommendations that may prevent future violent incidents.

Community members identify and implement local capacity building initiatives, healing activities, and safety audits.

# Crisis preparation

## Asset Maps

In April of 2020, we completed our first draft of Community Profiles/Asset Maps for Mulgrave Park, Central North Halifax and North Preston. These documents have helped guide the CMTs efforts by gaining more knowledge of the communities, how they are made up and what assets are available. They have helped identify each community's existing resources as well as to identify gaps in services.

## Training

During Covid-19, we offered four training opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge of CMTs and community members.

### **1. Emergency Management - North Preston (11 attended) August 20, 2020 Halifax (15 attended) August 24, 2020**

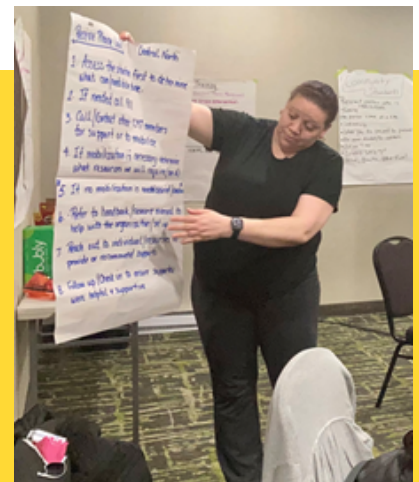
Facilitator: Erica Fleck, MMM, CD - Assistant Chief- Emergency Management.

The 2020 Hurricane season was expected to be a near-record-breaking season, and we wanted to ensure that community was prepared. Erica spoke about the essentials you should have and what to do in an emergency. CMTs were informed on what an emergency is and the importance of having an emergency plan in place to be prepared for situations such as hurricanes, floods, fire, heavy snow, etc.

Topics covered included:

- Emergency Kits - what you should have in your kit
- Shelter - when to shelter in place
- When to evacuate
- Do's and don'ts in crisis situations
- Signing up for hfxAlerts.

**Outcomes:** People reported back at their next CMT meeting that they have started filling their emergency kits with the suggested supplies and are better prepared to respond to emergency situations. Participants thought it was a great session with lots of valuable information and tips.



CMT member Holly at the planning retreat in Dartmouth

## **2. Working Cross Culturally - all CMTs (22 attended) September 19-20, 2020**

Facilitators: Robert Wright, MSW, RSW - Executive Director - The Peoples' Counselling Clinic  
Raytia Turney, M.A., M.Ed, C.C.C- Canadian Certified Counsellor, Private Practice

Working cross culturally is difficult for everyone but especially challenging for people who represent a diversity, including but not limited to: African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+ people. This retreat gave participants the opportunity to discuss the nature of working cross culturally, the structural hostility that exists in institutions, and how persons can navigate these work spaces. The desired outcome of the weekend was that workshop participants would leave with a better foundation for maintaining their wellbeing in the face of hostility at work or while volunteering. The feedback from the evaluations was overwhelmingly positive, with participants writing that they were happy to have participated and felt like they were leaving the retreat feeling better equipped to work on their wellbeing.

Many people wrote that they chose to attend the workshop because they believed the topic would be beneficial and that it would help them learn new skills and coping strategies that could be useful in everyday life and interactions.

**Outcomes:** Relationship building, leadership, coping skills, and self-care strategies.

Participants wrote that they formed and strengthened connections with other CMT members, that they would make more time for meditation, and would share the coping strategies they learned with their families, coworkers, and fellow community members.

## **3. Mental Health First Aid - all CMT's (16 attended) March 20-21, 2021**

Facilitator: Adam Huffman BA- Youth Advocate Worker

Participants were educated on the many different types of mental health crises and taught how to intervene appropriately. Topics covered: substance-related disorders, mood-related disorders, anxiety and trauma-related disorders, as well as psychotic disorders. Through this training, participants were shown how to properly assess a mental health incident through active listening and empathy. They gained knowledge and understanding of the stigma surrounding mental health and how it can affect your daily life if untreated.

One participant was able to learn about their battles with mental health and how it affects them. It is because of this training that they found the courage to reach out for help from the Public Safety Office.

**Outcomes:** In the evaluations, many people wrote that they chose to attend the training to become educated on how to help family and friends who struggle with mental illness. Others wrote they wanted to gain an understanding of mental health to educate their community and end the stigma surrounding these subjects. Participants also received a certificate in Mental Health First Aid.



CMT at mental health first aid training in North Preston

#### **4. CMT Planning Retreat – all CMT's (23 attended) March 27-28, 2021**

Facilitators: DeRico Symonds, Community Builder - Problem Solver - Connector

Vanessa Thomas - Public Safety Office

Lillian Ash - Public Safety Office

Kimberly Richard-Hirsch - Victim Services Coordinator/ RCMP

Sargent Trevor Allen - RCMP (NCO i/c Street Crime Enforcement Unit)

Sargent Joe Taplin - RCMP (NCO o/c of Community Policing Programs)

As part of an ongoing effort to support the work that Community Mobilization Teams (CMTs) do to enrich their communities, the Public Safety Office hosted a planning retreat at the Best Western Plus in Dartmouth. CMT members planned the session to reconnect with each other and get to know new members. Public health regulations due to COVID-19 had prevented the teams from meeting in person for over a year. We decided that CMTs would benefit from developing a mission statement as a group to guide our work. Other activities included a session on self-care and members from the Guns and Gangs Task Force speaking to participants about their roles, challenges, support services and suggestions on what we can do as community. In the evaluations, many people wrote that they valued their time together and really enjoyed sharing CMT success stories.

**Outcomes:** During the retreat we developed a shared mission statement, shared community stories and projects, developed action plans and worked on community protocol development. Participants also learned about trauma and self-care.



# Crisis Intervention/Response

## **Covid-19 Response**

During Covid-19 the PSO have been communicating with the CMT members through email, phone check ins and Microsoft Teams. We share information in relation to resources such as: information on Nova Scotia Health guidelines, food provisions, mental health supports, and translation services. CMTs remained committed to attending meetings with an average of 33 people attending monthly virtual meetings from Preston, Mulgrave Park, and Central North Halifax. Below are some of the initiatives directly related to information sharing regarding Covid- 19

- Pandemic Map – We worked with Emergency Services to develop a Pandemic Asset Map for North End Halifax. This document lists available community resources that are pertinent to Covid-19 such as health, shelter, and food.
- Reached out to EMS with concerns from Arabic speaking community members about lack of translated Covid-19 messaging. We were able to get all materials in translated languages and send to service providers to distribute to residents.
- Worked with East Preston Daycare and Parent Resource Centre on social distancing contest in the Prestons' as well as sending out information on COVID-19 testing sites.
- Worked with Shaquille Smith from North Preston to do a messaging campaign asking Preston residents to stay home to protect community from exposure to COVID-19.

## **Food Security**

CMT worked with the Mobile Food Market, the North End Parent Resource Centre, and the George Dixon Centre to help with distribution of food baskets and garden Packs. Also, in response to concerns brought to the CMT regarding relationships and conflicts between Syrian and ANS residents in Uniacke Square around food security and community gardens, we initiated a garden in the George Dixon horse shoe pit to try to build relationships.

- 60 food baskets were distributed to Mulgrave Park and Uniacke Square (30 each),
- 100 Garden (soil, seeds, pots) were distributed in North End Halifax.
- Community Garden has 20 boxes currently assigned and 10 people on the waiting list for the Spring. Two clean ups were held in September and October with 15 community members participating each day.



CMT members in Mulgrave Park handing out food in community after Hurricane Dorian



CMT members in Mulgrave Park handing out food in community at a celebration of life event.

## Crisis Response Mobilization – 2 activations

- **August 2020 – Mulgrave Park Fire - Partial Activation** - Our office received a call from CMT members in regards to the fire and several people being displaced. We reached out to Emergency Management and were able to have Red Cross connect with CMT and community members. Also received call from family displaced from fire for longer- term housing. Was able to work with Housing, EMS and Red Cross to get accommodations until September 1st.
- **Febuary 2021 – North Preston – Full Activation** - CMT lead a community response working group with representatives from community and organizations such as: St. Thomas Baptist Church, North Preston's Future, Leave out Violence, RCMP, Blxck House Life Studio , Frontier College - North Preston Learners, ABSW, HAAC, and Parks and Rec. A community lead vigil was held by church and ANS counsellors were available at the recreation centre for those who wanted counselling.

# Crisis Prevention

## Story Mapping Project

The Public Safety Office and Mulgrave Park CMT worked with 17 residents from Mulgrave Park to develop a Story Mapping project titled “ Our Community, Our Stories”. This project captures stories about community as told through the voices of experts—the residents themselves. Through the broad themes of place and identity, residents share a short story about a meaningful place in their community. Their stories were audio recorded and include a picture or photo to illustrate the subject. Viewers will be able to visit the story map and learn about the community through the experiences of those who live there.



Picture from Storytelling project of community member Nykell standing in front of his favorite place.



Picture from Storytelling project of community member Connie.

## **Community Circles**

We hosted 4 Community Circles where service providers attended CMT meetings to share information on their work and resources:

1. **Halifax Regional Police** – Mulgrave Park CMT - June 2020 (8 participants)  
Mulgrave Park CMT members had concerns around how community members were being treated by HRP and wanted to express their concerns. Inspector David Boon attended a special meeting to hear their concerns and to provide information on HRP procedures.

**2. Traffic Control** - Central North CMT - December 2020 - (11 participants)

CMT members had concerns about the speed limit on Uniacke St., as there are a lot of children in the area and cars speed up the street to get to Gottingen St. They also had concerns about the parking on Brunswick St. as it becomes one lane if people park on the side. Jody DeBaie from Traffic Management came to our CMT meeting and spoke about traffic calming measures and the upcoming reduced posted speed limit. She provided information on who to call for complaints. The speed limits were lowered from 50km/h to 40km/hr in March 2021.

**3. Akoma Holdings** – North Preston CMT - December 2020– (12 participants)

Veronica Marsman from AKOMA holdings came to speak to the Preston CMT about the development on the AKOMA property. She asked for community input on what they would like to see on the site and shared the upcoming plans for the site.

**4. SuperNova** - Mulgrave Park CMT - January 2021 (11 participants)

Alexandra Fenton from Dalhousie Universities SuperNova program spoke to Mulgrave Park CMT members about their programming for girls as well as their take home tech kits. They also provided information on their summer camps and possible financial assistance for those in need.

**Women's Safety Assessment - (8 attended) December 10th, 2020**

Central North CMT members expressed the need to do a Safety Assessment on Craig Avenue, the George Dixon Field and the MacDonald building parkade off of Gottingen St.

There were several complaints from community members of people openly using drugs on the steps of Harbour City Homes as well as on the benches in the George Dixon garden. They thought we should be looking at the lighting and safety of the area as there are many families, newcomers and children in the area. We met at the Parent Resource Center with Erica Fleck from Emergency Management to do the assessment.

**Outcomes:** Parks and Recreation has changed lighting in areas where bulbs were not working, unnecessary signs were taken down, garbage was cleaned up in the park. Mainline Needle Exchange also did a sweep of the areas for used needles.

Phase 1 Deliverable

# HRM Municipal Drug and Alcohol Strategy Proposal Development –Stakeholder Consultation Summary

July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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PIER LABS

PIER LABS

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# Executive Summary

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Within Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), there are a wide range of community, government, and private organizations that both contribute to preventing and responding to problematic substance and deliver resources and supports to, and for, people who use substances. Unfortunately, some organizations within HRM are currently either offering duplicate resources or using approaches that conflict with each other due to a lack of a unified vision for how Halifax Regional Municipality aims to collectively address substance use. While many strategies to address problematic substance use in HRM have been endorsed through municipal and provincial strategies and frameworks, there is a lack of structure to cultivate shared accountability, evidence, or action within the Municipality. As a result, it has been recommended that Halifax Regional Council direct the CAO to formalize discussions with the provincial government, community partners, and other stakeholders to co-develop a Municipal Drug and Alcohol Strategy (the Strategy).

In response, the Halifax Regional Municipality (the Municipality) has contracted Pier Labs to support with the development of a proposal for a Municipal Drug and Alcohol Strategy. To inform the development of the proposal, a 2-phase approach consisting of stakeholder consultations (Phase 1) and a review of existing evidence and research (Phase 2) has been proposed. The purpose of Phase 1 of this work is two-fold, first to identify with community an appropriate process for the development of the Strategy and second, to understand the unique challenges providers face when attempting to address problematic substance use within HRM, particularly for under-represented marginalized communities.

Phase 1 findings highlighted that the HRM community was happy to see willingness from the Municipality to take on the complex work of developing a community co-led Drug and Alcohol Strategy to better support individuals living in HRM who use substances. When reflecting on *what is currently working in HRM* to support individuals who use substances and their communities, participants highlighted the slow, but noticeable change within municipal and provincial policies over past years aimed at creating the conditions to better support provider and organizations providing supports for people who use substances. These policy changes have allowed for the expansion of access to treatment for substance use disorder, the establishment of a supervised injection site in HRM, and the establishment of a funded Street Outreach Navigator Program designed to support people who are experiencing homelessness and street-involved individuals with navigating employment, housing, and mental and physical health and addictions supports. With regards to the Street Outreach Navigator Resource, participants highlighted that the Navigator Street Outreach Coordinator position is a key and needed piece for the response to substance use within HRM and echoed that the position is not only a needed support for individuals themselves, but that this resource is also an extremely valuable resource for organizations and service providers currently providing supports for people who use substances. Although community did highlight these early successes, there are still challenges to supporting people living in HRM who use substances that require a coordinated, innovative, diverse, and supportive inter-sectoral approach.

Phase 1 findings also demonstrated that the development of a municipal drug and alcohol strategy requires a different approach, one that centres community experience, knowledge and expertise. Its foundation will begin with broad and tailored community education as well as comprehensive, purposeful, and meaningful community-led consultations that acknowledges the impact of social determinants of health. Gathering different socio-cultural perspectives on substance use must be a requirement that leads the development of the Strategy in order to ensure the Strategy is culturally informed, culturally appropriate, and community led. The development of a strategy must aspire to diverse community members, and decision makers from different sectors committing to a common vision and agenda for addressing substance use. Only through a collective, community-centred approach can we effectively meet the varying needs and aspirations of the diverse populations within HRM.

The project team would like to acknowledge and thank all the stakeholders for their participation and for sharing their valuable perspectives and insights.

# Stakeholder Consultations ---

## Consultations Process

Preliminary consultations were undertaken to both inform the development of the proposal for the Strategy and to better understand the perspectives of people with lived experience, community members, service providers, and municipal and government organizations. Through consultations, perspectives and insights were gathered from various stakeholders on their perspective on the potential benefits of the Strategy as well as the appropriate process to develop the Strategy.

The initial list of stakeholders was identified by the Municipality and Pier Labs. The project team also sought the expertise of Rhonda Atwell, Africa Nova Scotian Services Consultant with Nova Scotia Health Authority, as well as representatives from other community organizations to identify additional stakeholders to take part in preliminary consultations. Please see **Appendix 1** for an overview of the participating stakeholders.

It should be noted that due to the concentrated and time-limited nature of the preliminary consultations, Phase 2 of this work did not include consultations with every service provider, organization, and subject matter expert working with or providing services for people who use substances who are living within HRM or from the African Nova Scotian or Indigenous community. This was to be cautious of over-consulting these marginalized groups, as well as due to the complexities of conducting consultations during Covid-19 among providers and community organizations who are currently stretched very thin for resources. To ensure there is broader



representative of these communities in the Strategy, extensive and purposeful community consultation is planned to occur by, and with, African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities in the first year of the proposed development process of the Municipal Drug and Alcohol Strategy. These community-led consultations will leverage experienced facilitators and Municipal resources who are members of the community to support a safe, positive, and culturally informed consultation. Furthermore, the perspectives gathered and synthesized below are those of the people themselves, and therefore may not be representative of the official views of the organizations in which they work.

## Consultation Stakeholders

The development of a proposal for the Strategy has been informed from the insight and perspectives gained from thirty-six (36) stakeholders representing twenty-five (25) groups/individual subject matter experts. Stakeholders and their respective organizations who were invited to participate in Phase 1 of this work can be found in **Appendix 2**.

## Key Insights

Stakeholders identified the following 13 key insights. Key insights are organized into 3 different topics: 1) perceived benefits of the Strategy, 2) leveraging the Strategy to address current challenges, and 3) developing a community co-owned Strategy.

## Perceived Benefits of the Strategy

**Creating an Informed Understanding of Substance Use in HRM** There is a lack of understanding of the different cultural perspectives on substance use, the impact of social determinants of health on substance use, and the potential benefits experienced from using substances, perpetuating stigma and discrimination towards people who use substances, particularly among marginalized communities. Additionally, data related to substance use within HRM is currently captured across many different providers and systems, limiting the ability to have a clear understanding of what types of substances are being consumed and the ways in which they are being consumed within HRM. The Strategy may serve as a vehicle to both enable the establishment of centralized data collection related to substance use in HRM and serve as an educational resource to improve the understanding of substance use among both community and the system. This will both support the improved use of evidence in municipal drug-policy development and help to reduce stigma and discrimination experienced by people who use substances living in HRM.

**Supporting a Coordinated System Response.** Resources and supports for people who use substances are siloed and often housed within the acute care setting within HRM. Past experiences of discrimination, racism, and stigma within the health system, in addition to the known difficulty in navigating a siloed health system in Nova Scotia make it hard for people who use substances to access treatment and supports in a timely manner. Within HRM, treatment

options and resources for people who use substances are not widely known among healthcare providers, community organizations, and Halifax Regional Police, making it difficult to know what resources currently exist and have capacity within HRM. This creates additional burden and undue stress when trying to find adequate supports in a timely manner to support this population. Finally, the siloed nature of the mental health and addiction system in HRM service create gaps for people who are transitioning between the health and justice system. Community agencies and providers are often left unaware when people are transitioning between systems, and it is often unclear where responsibility lies for providing required supports. This lack of clear communication and responsibilities creates a risk for people falling through the cracks, leaving them without the resources and supports they need. The Strategy may enable the creation of a resource inventory and support the development of clear roles and responsibilities, improve intra-system communication, alleviate the burden experienced by providers, and supporting people before crisis hits.

## **Leveraging the Strategy to Address Current Challenges**

Based on preliminary consultations, stakeholders identified components of the Strategy that if adopted, have the potential to support positive change in the lives of people who use substances, their families, and their communities.

**Increasing Access to a Diverse Range of Low-Barrier, Community-Based Treatment and Supports.** Currently there is limited access to a diverse range of low-barrier, community-based resources for people who use substances. Those that do exist tend to be centralized within North-End Halifax, limiting equitable access to mental illness and addictions treatment and resources within other areas of HRM. There is a need for increased access to a broad spectrum of resources to better support people who use substances in order to provide diverse treatment options and to reduce the harms associated with an increasingly toxic drug supply. This includes, but is not limited to, increasing access to diverse safe supply programs, developing municipal sobering centres, developing alcohol diversion programs, and increasing access to diverse treatment-on-demand options.

**Developing a Comprehensive, Living Resource Directory and Person-Centered Navigation Service.** Currently there is a lack of what services and supports are available for people who use substances within the community or the healthcare system. Community organizations are currently forced to both identify and help clients navigate available supports with limited human resources. There is a need for HRM to support the development, and ongoing maintenance of, a living resource directory. This would better support community organizations and providers by existing resources, thereby supporting improved linkages to services and reducing the burden on providers. This directory should also include an in-person liaison service that is available 24/7 to support people who use substances to navigate supports and services, when they need help.

**Addressing Upstream Contributors to High-Risk Substance Use.** There is a need to address upstream contributors to high-risk substance use and involvement in organized crime within HRM. This can be achieved in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, the following:

- Increasing access to education on harm reduction;
- Creating additional opportunities for individuals to develop social connections;
- Creating economic opportunities for marginalized populations;
- Addressing the systematic recruitment of African Nova Scotians into drug trafficking by larger criminal organizations;
- Emphasizing the importance of social planning and understanding the community impact for future infrastructure within HRM; and
- Implementing and enforcing inclusionary zoning within HRM to address the housing crisis that is disproportionately impacting low-income and marginalized communities.

**Decriminalizing of Substances within HRM.** It is the belief of some stakeholders that the Municipality should consider applying for a Section 56 exemption to the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act to decriminalize drug possession for personal use (i.e., simple drug possession) within HRM. Supporting decriminalization within HRM would help to minimize harms associated with problematic substance use, decrease the rate of incarceration of people living with mental illness and addictions, particularly individuals who are members of marginalized communities, and overall reduce the long-term negative impacts caused from having criminal records.

**Emphasizing Community Safety rather than Enforcement.** Community organizations and providers have expressed concern that there is excessive and harmful enforcement of substance use within HRM. This has led to mistrust of Halifax Regional Police by marginalized communities, as well as discrimination, stigmatization, and increased criminalization of people who use drugs, particularly individuals from marginalized communities. There is a need to create a safe space for communities to both discuss the impact that the harmful approach to enforcement has had on their communities and to identify what is needed from HRM to help shift the emphasis from enforcement towards ensuring community safety. There is also a need further build internal capacity within the Halifax Regional Police to improve their understanding of harm reduction approaches and the community resources available in order to support them in redirecting their resources towards helping people who use substances to connect with the appropriate resources, when in crisis. Finally, there is a need for purposeful community consultation to understand what the appropriate role for Halifax Regional Police is in addressing problematic substance use in communities. Together these actions may support the development of improved relationships and increased trust between community and Halifax Regional Police.

**Addressing the Influence of Alcohol within HRM.** The advertisement of alcohol, both formally and informally, within HRM is pervasive. To encourage safe, inclusive, and healthy communities, it is the belief of some stakeholders that HRM should further explore how the Administrative Order 53, the *Municipal Alcohol Policy*, could be further used to reduce exposure to alcohol

promotion, limit the amount of alcohol licenses available in HRM, and minimize both the direct and indirect harms associated with excessive alcohol consumption experienced by the consumer, their families, and their communities.

**Creating Culturally Informed Resources for People Who Use Substances.** There is a lack of culturally informed resources and supports available across the entire care continuum, making it difficult to adequately support people who use substances, specifically those who are Indigenous or African Nova Scotian. There is an urgent need to empower communities to lead the development of culturally appropriate resources that could be made available across the Strategy to both acknowledge and support the diverse socio-cultural perspectives on substance use among different communities within HRM, which thereby may support improved well-being and experiences with the health system among these communities.

### **Developing a Community Co-Owned Strategy**

Based on preliminary consultations, stakeholders expressed the need for a transparent approach for the development of the Strategy that is designed with and rooted within the community themselves. The following are some best practices that have been identified by stakeholders as necessary to support the meaningful inclusion of community in the development of the Strategy.

**Reducing the Risk of Repetitive Community Consultation.** Communities in general are wary of additional community consultation that do not result in meaningful change for their own members. To avoid this risk for repetitive community consultation, it is the belief of stakeholders that the Municipality should complete two exercises *prior* to engaging with communities. First, the Municipality should practice an internal audit exercise to both acknowledge and consolidate previous community demands to ensure that past community consultations have been acknowledged and respected. Second, the Municipality should undergo a resource mapping exercise to demonstrate to community what is currently offered and funded within HRM, noting any initiatives that align with the preliminary challenges identified above. These efforts will support a transparent understanding of the current state, which is imperative to help reduce repetitive consultations and what is perceived as siloed communication occurring within HRM.

**Empowering Marginalized Communities and People with Lived Experience.** It is important that the Strategy is centered on the lived experience of people who use substances and experiences and expertise of marginalized communities. When developing the Strategy, it is imperative that marginalized communities, including Indigenous persons, African Nova Scotians, Immigrants, and people with lived experience are not only meaningfully consulted, but are also empowered by providing members with leadership positions. The knowledge and expertise these communities and individuals possess must be adequately compensated for, according to best practices throughout the entirety of the development of the Strategy. This may be achieved in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, establishing Drug Coordinator positions within the

communities *themselves*, having community-identified individuals lead working groups, establishing a community advisory committee, leveraging existing community organizations with long-standing relationships to lead community consultations, and by positioning key individuals from these communities as paid consultants for this work.

**Understanding How Communities Define Problematic Substance Use.** It is important that when developing the Strategy, there is dedicated time to truly understanding how different communities define problematic substance use. Within HRM, there are many different cultures and communities represented, many of which may have different socio-cultural perspectives on substance use and the role substances play in their lives. It is important to understand how different communities define issues related to problematic substance use in order to tailor resources in order to meet individual community needs.

**Supporting a Meaningful, Respectful, and Collaborative Development with Community.** It is important that the process used to develop the Strategy has clear guiding principles that outline how organizations and individuals are expected to work collaboratively to support a respectful and inclusive experience for all stakeholders. These guiding principles should be developed and agreed upon as a group at the beginning of the Strategy development process. The process used to develop the Strategy must also be reflective in nature, allowing time to acknowledge what has not worked in the past when trying to address problematic substances in order to avoid additional undue harm. This process should also include community education sessions, within accessible public spaces, to allow individuals to reflect on their own biases and views towards substance use, build community understanding, understand social determinants of health, reflect on inherent racism within drug policies, and help address stigma and discrimination towards people who use substances living in HRM. Community consultation conducted to inform the development of the Strategy must be broad, yet purposeful, and should be led by members identified by the community to ensure consultations are conducted in a way that is safe and culturally appropriate. Timelines for community consultation should not be driven by arbitrary deadlines, and instead should move at a pace that meets the needs and works for the community. Finally, although the process for developing the Strategy is yet to be determined, the process must create the conditions required for various systems (i.e., Health, Justice) and communities to work collaboratively together in order to support the development of strong relationships and achieve a shared vision for the Strategy among all stakeholders.

**Ensuring the Sustainability of the Strategy and Committing to Community.** For the Strategy to be sustainable, there is a need for ongoing commitment from both the Municipal and Provincial government. This will ensure political priority and longevity of the Strategy and will signal to community a true shift within HRM away from reactionary measures towards a sustained, long-term approach and commitment to supporting communities in addressing substance use within HRM.

# Conclusion

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With the increasing harms associated with problematic substance use among individuals, their families, and their communities within HRM, the need for a coordinated, holistic Drug and Alcohol Strategy is imperative. The demand for existing resources to support people who use substances is steadily increasing within HRM, however some organizations have expressed that the systems in which these resources operate present as a barrier for clients as they are not easily accessible, culturally safe, or inclusive, and therefore do not meet the diverse needs of all Haligonians.

In response to this, there is an urgent need for a proactive, strategic, meaningfully informed, and collaboratively owned holistic Drug and Alcohol Strategy for HRM to help improve access to culturally safe, evidence-based harm reduction approaches, reduce stigma and discrimination experienced within the healthcare system, address upstream causes of high-risk substance use linked to social determinants of health, and to improve the quality of life and well-being of people who use substances.

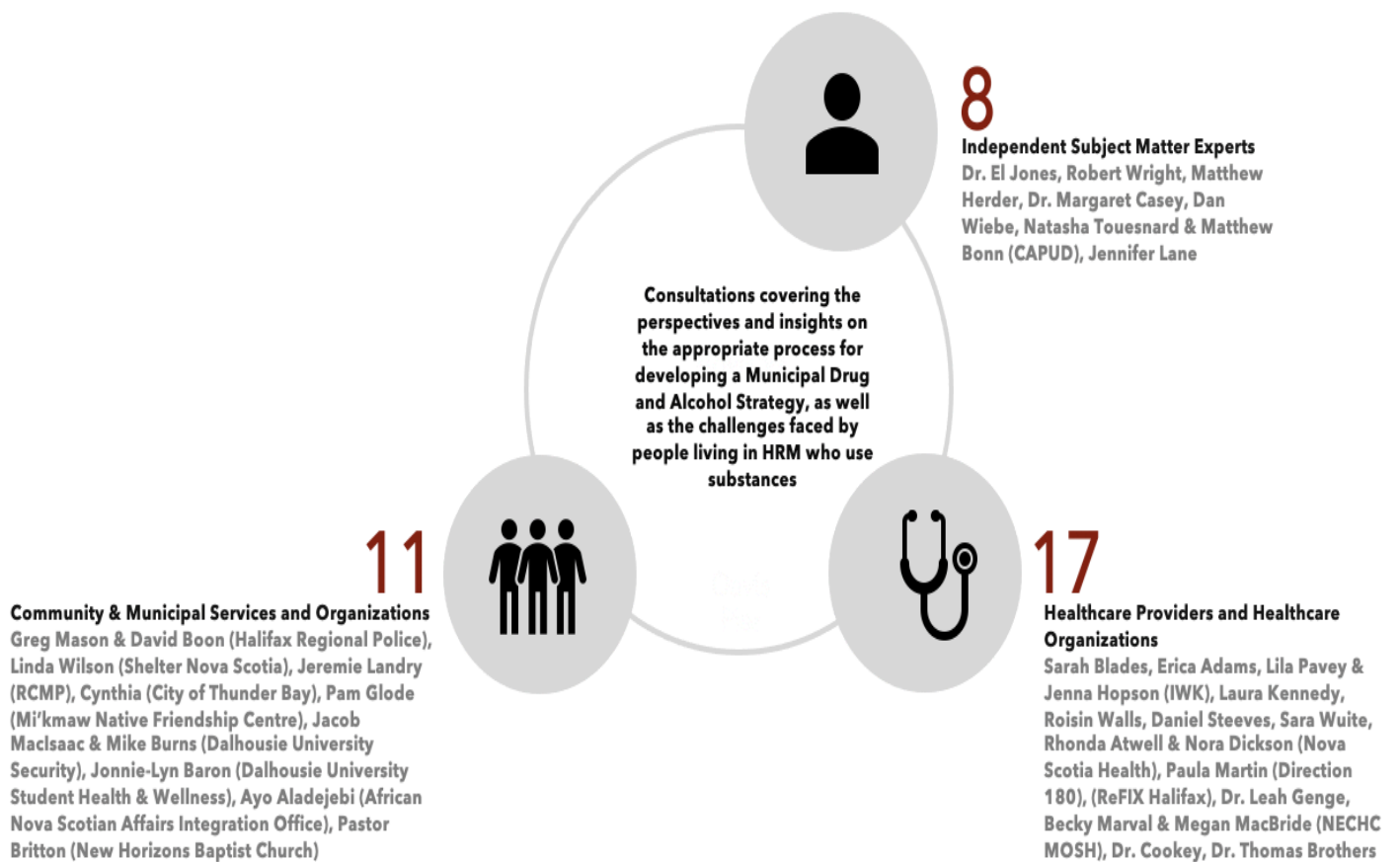
Findings from these preliminary stakeholder consultations highlight that meaningful community-led consultations that acknowledges the impact of social determinants of health is imperative. Consultation approaches that support discussions of differing socio-cultural perspectives on substance are also required to develop the Strategy to ensure it is culturally appropriate and meets the needs of diverse populations. Findings also highlight the need to better understand how previous regulation and enforcement actions related to substance use within HRM have resulted in long-lasting, negative impacts for some marginalized communities that call HRM home. Taking a holistic and inclusive approach to understanding the root causes of problematic substance use will be key to developing a community co-owned, culturally inclusive Strategy that can support people where they are at in terms of their substance use.

While this work is focused on the context of the Municipal government, it is clear from stakeholders that some challenges to addressing problematic substance use and faced by people who use substances will not be solved by simply tweaking Municipal regulations, and instead will require the support and desire for change from the Provincial government level.

The findings from Phase 2 outlined in this report will help inform the development of a proposal for funding to be used for the development of the Strategy in HRM.

# Appendix 1

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## Appendix 2

Individual(s)	Organization	Participated?
Sarah Blades Erica Adams Lila Pavey Jenna Hopson	IWK	Yes
Dr. Jacob Coockey	Independent	Yes
Dr. Thomas Brothers	Independent	Yes
Paula Martin	Direction 180	Yes
Greg Mason David Boon	Halifax Regional Police	Yes
Linda Wilson	Shelter Nova Scotia	Yes
Jeremie Landry	RCMP	Yes
Margaret Casey	Independent	Yes
Dr. Leah Genge	Independent	Yes
Dan Wiebe	Independent	Yes
Cynthia Olsen	City of Thunder Bay	Yes
Pam Glode-Desrochers	Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre	Yes
Jacob MacIsaac Jonnie-Lyn Baron Mike Burns	Dalhousie University Security & Student Health & Wellness Department	Yes
Ayo Aladejebi	African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office	Yes
Matthew Herder	Independent	Yes
Dr. El Jones	Independent	Yes
Laura Kennedy Roisin Walls Daniel Steeves Sara Wuite Rhonda Atwell Nora Dickson	Nova Scotia Health	Yes
Natasha Touesnard Matthew Bonn	CAPUD	Yes
Robert Wright	Independent	Yes
Pastor Britton	New Horizons Baptist Church	Yes
Jennifer Lane	Independent	Yes
Patrick Maubert Caroline Ploem	ReFIX Halifax	No response
North End Community Health Centre – MOSH	North End Community Health Centre – MOSH	Yes
902 Man Up	--	No response
Open Door Clinic	--	No response



Dr. OmiSoore Dryden	Independent	Sabbatical
Mario Rolle	Nova Scotia Brotherhood Initiative	Yes
Health Association of African Canadians	--	No response
Dr. Barbara Hamilton-Hinch	Independent	Sabbatical

# HRM'S SAFE CITY & SAFE PUBLIC SPACES SCOPING STUDY

The first output of HRM's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program

**Content warning: the following infographic discusses sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. Please take care in reading this.**  
For resources and help, visit: [breakthesilencens.com](http://breakthesilencens.com).

## THE PROGRAM

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) joined UN Women's Safe Cities & Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiative in 2019. This initiative supports cities in developing locally owned solutions to end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.



## THE SCOPING STUDY



The scoping study helps us better understand sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality. It will also help shape how the HRM's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program (HRM SC SPS) moves forward in response to these issues.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

**94%**

**of sexual assaults are not reported to police**

In 2019 in Canada, only 6% of sexual assaults were reported to the police (2019 General Social Survey)

**5x**

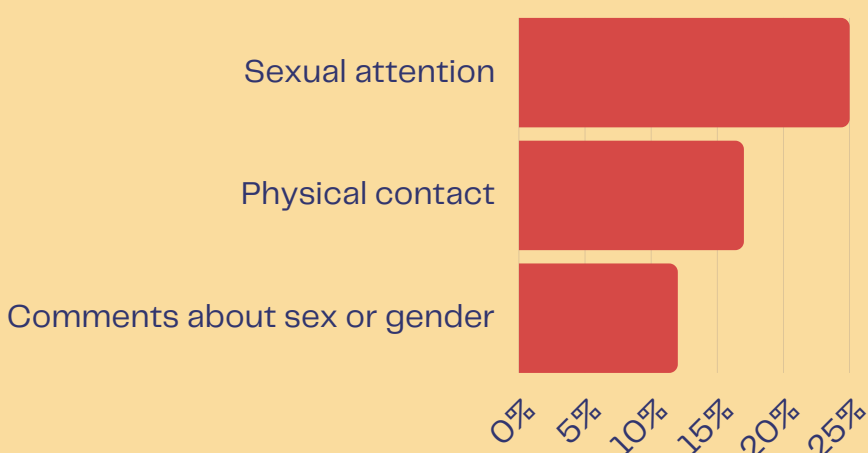
**In 2019, Canadian women were five times more likely than men to be victims/survivors of sexual assault.**

(2019 General Social Survey)



## 1 IN 3 WOMEN IN HALIFAX EXPERIENCED UNWANTED SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN PUBLIC IN 2018

The 2018 Canadian Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces asked about people's experiences of unwanted physical contact, indecent exposure, comments about sex or gender, comments about sexual orientation and sexual attention in public.



**Women who experienced unwanted behaviours in public said sexual attention, physical contact and comments about sex or gender were the most common.**

Other forms of systemic discrimination and oppression intersect with sexism, meaning women girls and non-binary people who are young, racialized, Indigenous, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ (particularly trans women and trans feminine people), who have disabilities and who are experiencing homelessness are put at higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public.



**3x**

Sexual assault is committed against Indigenous people in Canada at a rate that is three times higher than non-Indigenous people. (Conroy & Cotter, 2017)

Data shows that being younger and 2SLGBTQ+ are among the factors that most significantly increase the odds of experiencing sexual violence in public spaces (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 3).

We also know that diverse women, girls and non-binary people have long been sharing solutions to these issues. Their voices and experiences must guide and shape this program.

Limited government responses to well-documented historical and inter-generational trauma and ongoing institutionalized racism and marginalization are serious barriers to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous women trusting and accessing mainstream support services (Creating Communities of Care, 2021).

## HRM SC SPS INITIAL PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The following were identified through the scoping study as key areas of focus for the HRM SC SPS program. The program is meant to be flexible and responsive to our local context, so these priorities may shift, expand and evolve over time.



Work with and across HRM business units to support and catalyze projects, plans and services that impact women's, girls' and non-binary people's safety in public spaces.



Collaborate with grassroots and community organizations, networks and groups to ensure the program is informed by women's, girls' and non-binary people's voices, lived experiences and knowledge of solutions.



Support efforts to make transit and other important transportation methods in the municipality safer and more accessible for all women, girls and non-binary people.



Integrate a gender-safety lens into the municipality's housing and homelessness efforts.



Support work to prevent and respond to human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in the HRM.

# The Halifax Regional Municipality Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program

## Scoping Study

Prepared by:

Amy Brierley, Brandy Whitford and Amy Siciliano  
Public Safety Office  
with support from  
Kathryn Travers, Independent Consultant  
December 2021



**HALIFAX**

**Content advisory:** this document contains discussion of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as other intersecting systems of oppression in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Canada more broadly. The contents of this report may be triggering—take care of yourself while reading.

For more information about sexual and gender-based violence, resources and where to get help in Nova Scotia, visit [breakthesilencens.ca](https://breakthesilencens.ca).

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*Thank you so much to all who contributed their insights, perspectives, time and work to this scoping study, including but not limited to, those who volunteered their time to be interviewed, Women's Safety Assessment participants and facilitators, the program's Implementing Committee members, members of the Women's Advisory Committee of Halifax, Kathryn Travers and Brandy Whitford.*

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The HRM Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program operates in Kijipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki—the ancestral, unceded and present-day lands of the Mi'kmaq. The HRM Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program must be grounded in a recognition of the historical and present-day impacts of colonialism and systemic violence on Mi'kmaw Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people, women and girls and strive to work in ways that honour the relationships, rights and responsibilities laid out for us all in the Peace and Friendship Treaties.

# Executive Summary

## Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces- a Global and Local Initiative

In 2019, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) joined the UN Women's<sup>1</sup> [Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiative](#) (UN SC SPS FPI).

This initiative supports cities around the world to develop locally relevant and owned solutions to end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women in public spaces.

In the HRM, this program is coordinated by the Safe City and Safe Public Spaces Program Coordinator in the Public Safety Office. The program is supported by various partners, including: HRM's Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the program's Implementing Committee and the Women's Advisory Committee of Halifax.

## HRM's Scoping Study

One of the outputs for cities participating in the UN SC SPS FPI is to produce a scoping study—a process that explores what a municipality knows about sexual harassment in its public spaces, who is already doing work to respond to and prevent sexual harassment in public spaces, what the municipality doesn't know about the nature and extent of these issues, and, as a result, what steps it needs to take to respond. The HRM Scoping Study was guided by UN Women's Global Guidance on Scoping Studies.

Through a review of local, provincial and national data, interviews with several key stakeholders and conversations with the program's guiding committees, we have learned more about the prevalence of sexual violence in public spaces in the HRM and who is impacted by this violence. We've also learned about some steps we can take to respond to local priorities and what more we need to learn to better understand the role HRM can play in preventing and responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

## What We Learned

Sexual violence and experiences of safety in public spaces are not stand-alone issues. Historical and present-day systems of sexism, racism, colonialism and other intersecting oppressions, such as xenophobia, ableism, homophobia and

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, <https://www.unwomen.org/en>

transphobia all shape and impact how women, girls and non-binary people access public spaces in the HRM.

Statistics and the work of many individuals, organizations and networks across the HRM and Nova Scotia demonstrate that while all women, girls and non-binary people can experience harassment in public spaces, youth, Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, racialized, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, women, girls and non-binary people, as well as women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness are all made more at risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

As such, addressing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in the municipality's public spaces also means prioritizing decolonization, anti-racism, addressing other systems of oppression and discrimination and recognizing women's, girls' and non-binary people's right to safe and affordable housing. It is important that the HRM SC SPS program responds to the needs of all women, girls and non-binary people, with special attention to the intersecting and diverse ways in which women, girls and non-binary people experience these issues.

The threat of sexual and gender-based violence in public spaces greatly impacts women's, girls' and non-binary people's sense of belonging in a city, shapes their behaviours (e.g., having to change their routes home or not entering community spaces because of fear of violence) and often limits their ability to freely and safely access services that should be available to all people.

Fostering public spaces that are safe for everyone requires initiatives that aim to both prevent and respond to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. Many organizations in the HRM are doing work focused on education to shift social norms *and* directly supporting victims/survivors and perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. It became clear that it is necessary to support both approaches when designing the next steps of the HRM SC SPS program.

Finally, women, girls and non-binary people know best the solutions that will make public spaces and services safer for everyone. As affirmed by the principles of the UN SC SPS FPI, building meaningful relationships and partnerships at the grassroots level must be a central and guiding tenet of the HRM SC SPS program. The program must centre the lived experiences of women, girls and non-binary people and be responsive to the barriers and risks that women, girls and non-binary people can experience in divulging experiences of violence in public spaces.

## What's Next?

The scoping study process has made clear several priority areas that will help shape the next steps of the HRM SC SPS program. These next steps, as outlined by the UN SC SPS FPI, are establishing the program's theory of change and a project plan.

Informed by the guidelines provided by the UN SC SPS FPI, conversations with interview participants and our guiding committees, and the literature review, the following are values we will aim to apply to all the priorities we have identified:

1. Centering people who belong to communities and demographics who have been identified as being made most vulnerable to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public places. This program must aim to be informed by these communities each step along the way.
2. Considering which issues are persistent, emergent, or of a pressing nature in the HRM; responding to immediate needs but being flexible enough to shift plans and priorities as our understanding of issues changes.
3. Seeking connection and collaboration with work already being done by members of our Implementing Committee, the WACH, and other organizations and networks in HRM, considering the ways in which our participation in this program could build on, support and enrich this work.

The following were identified as priority areas for the program:

- Working across HRM Business Units to centre women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety in all plans, projects, strategies and services, ranging from transit, to parks and recreation, to planning.
- Collaborating with grassroots and community organizations, networks and groups to ensure our understanding of issues of safety and sexual and other forms of gender-based violence are informed by women's, girls' and non-binary people's lived-experiences of these issues.
- Addressing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence on public transit and other widely used transportation options, making it easier, safer and more accessible for all women, girls and non-binary people to move around the municipality. Safe and accessible transportation options are integral to women's, girls' and non-binary people's wellbeing and safety.
- Centering women's, girls' and non-binary people's right to safe and affordable housing in the work of the HRM SC SPS program and integrating a gender-safety lens to the municipality's housing efforts.
- Supporting work to prevent and respond to human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in the HRM.



- Prioritizing education as an avenue for addressing misogynistic social norms, empowering bystanders to safely recognize and respond to instances of street harassment and supporting all people, especially men and youth, in developing healthy understandings of gender, sexuality and healthy relationships.
- In response to the lack of information available about diverse women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety in public spaces in the HRM, seeking out opportunities to engage meaningfully with women, girls and non-binary people, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data that tells the stories of all women, girls and non-binary people and sheds light on actions we can take to support their safety in public spaces.

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# Safe Cities & Safe Public Spaces: a Global Response

UN Women's [Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiative](#) (UN SC SPS FPI) is a multi-stakeholder, global initiative that supports cities around the world to develop locally relevant and owned solutions to end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women in public spaces. (UN Women, n.d.).

The UN SC SPS FPI builds on over 40 years of sustained efforts by grassroots organizations, international networks, and local city governments around the world working to create safer, more inclusive, and sustainable cities for women, girls and non-binary people impacted by sexual violence in public spaces (UN Women, n.d.).

The UN SC SPS FPI was launched in 2011 in five cities in the Global South but has since expanded to almost fifty cities worldwide. Halifax is one of six Canadian municipalities involved in the initiative, along with Edmonton, Winnipeg, Vancouver, London, and Montréal (UN Women, n.d.).

## The HRM's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program

In August 2019, the Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) Regional Council unanimously approved a motion by Mayor Mike Savage and Councillor Lorelei Nicoll to join the UN SC SPS FPI. Nova Scotia Status of Women joined the HRM as a supporting partner to help align municipal and provincial interventions to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality.

The HRM SC SPS initiative is coordinated by the municipality's Public Safety Office, with key support from the Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO). The HRM SC SPS Program Coordinator is the main staff person responsible for overseeing and managing the program.

## Guiding Committees

The work of the HRM SC SPS program is guided and supported by two committees:

### Implementing Committee

The Implementing Committee consists of representatives from HRM Business Units, the RCMP and Nova Scotia Status of Women. The committee guides and supports the development and implementation of the HRM SC SPS program.

Currently, the committee includes representatives from the Office of the CAO, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Development, Transportation and Public Works, Transit, Halifax Regional Police, the RCMP and Nova Scotia Status of Women. are the HRM Business Units. As the initiative develops and evolves, other Business Units and stakeholders may be engaged in the committee.

The Implementing Committee is responsible for:

- Supporting the development of the initial scoping study
- Helping to inform the design of a locally relevant UN Women SC SPS program
- Championing the implementation of recommendations that arise from the program
- Contributing to the collection of baseline data and monitoring outcomes of implementation

In January 2020, the Implementing Committee met for the first time to develop a shared understanding of the UN Women SC SPS Global FPI, their roles as a committee and as individual committee members. The committee also identified some key partners and potential sources of information to inform the scoping study, such as existing research, programs and strategies.

### Women's Advisory Committee of Halifax

The Halifax Regional Council approved the creation of the [Women's Advisory Committee](#) (WACH) on November 26, 2019. The WACH is a committee of community members that advises HRM council and staff on gender-based+ issues, including the municipality's participation in the UN Women SC SPS Global FPI. The WACH will play a key role in reviewing the HRM UN Women SC SPS program outputs, identifying gaps and monitoring progress.

In October of 2020, the Public Safety Office delivered a presentation on the HRM UN Women SC SPS initiative at the WACH's inaugural meeting. This presentation

included information about the committee's involvement in the initiative, key milestones to date, and next steps.

On January 7th, 2021, the WACH reviewed a first draft of the scoping study and committee members contributed their insights about sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM. They provided input on the following questions:

- What do you think HRM's SC SPS program needs to address?
- Where do your priorities lie with regards to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in Halifax?
- What would you like to see come out of the HRM's participation in the UN Women SC SPS Global FPI?

The themes that emerged from this discussion informed both the content of this scoping study and the program's understanding of women's experiences of safety in the HRM.

The WACH provided feedback on the final draft of this scoping study, prior to its review by the Implementing Committee and public release.

## Alignment with other Municipal Policies and Strategies

The HRM SC SPS program is aligned with and informed by key municipal strategies, policies and frameworks including, but not limited to:

- [The Public Safety Strategy](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#)
- [Anti-Black Racism Framework](#) (and eventual Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan)
- [Social Policy](#)
- [HRM's commitment to Gender Based Analysis+](#) (and [here](#))

## Community Guidance

Designing, implementing and measuring the impacts of the HRM SC SPS program will require broad collaboration, working with various stakeholders and communities to identify and prioritize issues, develop shared ownership of the program, and implement effective responses to the causes and effects of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality.

It is crucial that the design, implementation, and measurement of the outcomes of the HRM SC SPS program are shaped by the people whose lives are most impacted

by sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality. At the core of this program is a commitment to do this work in relationship: to seek to work alongside and support residents, community members, local networks and grassroots organizations so that the lived experiences of people most impacted by sexual and other forms of gender-based violence shape and inform all elements of the program.

As a participating municipality in the UN SC SPS FPI, HRM commits to:

1. **Identify gender-responsive, locally relevant and owned interventions.** Conducting a scoping study is essential as it provides specific data to inform an initial understanding of local forms of sexual and gender-based violence in public spaces. Multiple stakeholders reflect on the findings to develop programs with a specific set of results based on the local context, fostering joint accountability.
2. **Develop and effectively implement comprehensive laws and policies to prevent and respond to sexual violence in public spaces.** Through capacity building, awareness raising, community mobilization and other strategies, stakeholders, grassroots and community partners are equipped to advocate, develop, and monitor the effective implementation of laws and policies, and to make sure that accompanying resources are in place to support this action.
3. **Investments in the safety and economic viability of public spaces.** A gender approach to urban planning ensures that gender-based analysis+ is considered across all municipal departments' planning. This includes public infrastructure (i.e. investments in safe potable water, improved sanitation, lighting, creation of market stalls, provision of training on financial literacy) and economic development.
4. **Change attitudes and behaviors to promote people's rights to enjoy public spaces free from violence.** People are engaged in transformative activities in schools and other settings to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces.

(Husain, Capobianco, & Posadska, 2017)

## What We Mean: Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Violence

Throughout the scoping study, we use the terms sexual harassment, sexual violence and gender-based violence. In Appendix B, we provide definitions that guide our use of these terms in this document.

The UN SC SPS FPI focuses specifically on local solutions to preventing and responding to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces. We do, however, understand that other forms of gender-based violence



(such as physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and economic violence committed against someone because of their gender-identity, gender-expression or perceived gender) can intersect with sexual violence, greatly impacting women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of public spaces. The work of the HRM SC SPS program will be grounded in an understanding that sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence occur in public spaces and impact women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety in public spaces.

We know that people of all genders can and do experience sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces. However, as highlighted throughout the scoping study, we also know that women, non-binary and gender-diverse people are at a higher risk of having sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence perpetrated against them in public spaces. It is important that the HRM SC SPS program includes people of all genders in shaping and implementing responses to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

## Intersectional Approach

At the UN Women's Fourth Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Leader's Forum in Edmonton in October 2018, intersectionality was established as a core value of the UN SC SPS FPI (Watanabe, Capobianco, & Soria, 2018).

Intersectionality—a concept coined by Black feminist, activist and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw—refers to the ways in which different parts of a person's identity overlap, shaping how they experience the world and how they are impacted by different systems of power, oppression and marginalization. Intersectionality also recognizes the unique knowledge and agency embedded in these intersections of identity (Watanabe, Capobianco, & Soria, 2018).

Sexual and other forms of gender-based violence intertwine with other systems of oppression, including sexism, racism, colonialism, xenophobia, ableism, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia. These systemic forces intersect, meaning that folks who are most impacted by multiple forms of discrimination are often identified as being at heightened risk for sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

The HRM SC SPS program aims to approach its work, relationships and outcomes through an intersectional lens, recognizing that race, Indigeneity, ethnicity, immigration status, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, age and income are all important factors in how a person experiences safety in public spaces, and how they resist violence, exercise power and demonstrate agency.

We know, for instance, that women are most often the targets of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. However, when a woman who is trans and Black is subjected to sexual violence, she might not only be experiencing and resisting against sexism and misogyny, but also racism and transphobia. These intersecting oppressions not only increase the risk of a person experiencing violence, but also their ability to safely report this violence and access needed supports.

To ground this program in the value of intersectionality, we must understand and respond to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in a way that honours the unique experiences of different women, girls and non-binary people. This will mean approaching this work with openness, flexibility and humility —to listen when we may not understand something from our own lived experience, to shift our approaches as we learn and to pause, re-evaluate and seek to move forward in a good way when we get it wrong.

## What is a public space?

The HRM SC SPS program considers a public space to be an area or place that is open and accessible to the public, including gathering places such as libraries, schools, community centres, squares and parks and connecting spaces, such as sidewalks, roadways and streets.

Public transit and other forms of transportation regulated by the HRM, such as taxis and rideshare services, are also considered public spaces for the purposes of this program. Places that are privately owned/operated but are frequently accessed by the public, including restaurants, bars and cafes, will also be considered within the scope of this program.

Finally, online spaces and social media have, particularly in the last 20 years, become a greater extension of physical gathering spaces. Many people socialize and build community online. Research shows, however, that online spaces have also become a key site for the perpetration of harassment and violence against women, girls and non-binary people. Because online spaces are public spaces in and of themselves, and because they are linked so closely with physical spaces in our communities, they will also be considered in the HRM SC SPS program.

# The HRM Scoping Study

## What is a scoping study?

The scoping study is one of the first requirements of a city's involvement in the UN SC SPS FPI. It is an initial step towards localizing the global program and providing insights into key local stakeholders, priority groups, pressing issues and necessary areas of focus for the partner city (Husain, Capobianco, & Posadska, 2017).

The UN SC SPS FPI identifies four key objectives for the scoping study:

- To provide a starting evidence base for stakeholders to identify next steps in program design, implementation, and measurement
- To provide valid and, as much as possible, local data to inform an understanding of the local context of sexual violence in public spaces
- To begin to build local ownership by creating multi-stakeholder partnerships through inclusive and participatory processes
- To inform the development of a local theory of change

(Husain, Capobianco, & Posadska, 2017)

The scoping study will help those involved in the program's design, implementation and measurement to better understand the nature and impacts of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality and how the HRM can meaningfully contribute to making public spaces safer for all. The scoping study serves as an informed starting point—a place from which we can better understand what we know, what we don't know and where we must go next.

The following questions guided the scoping study and are explored in this document:

- What do we know about sexual and gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM?
  - Who is impacted?
  - What are some of the most pressing local issues?
  - Who is already speaking up about these issues in our communities (locally, provincially, and nationally) and what are they telling us?
  - Who in the HRM is responding to, preventing, and educating about sexual and gender-based violence?
- What don't we know? What more information do we need to better understand the issues and solutions?
- Based on this information, what are some priority areas of focus that should shape the design, implementation, and measurement of the HRM SC SPS program?

## Methodology

As set forth by UN Women, the scoping study is intended to be completed within a relatively short time frame, making use of data and knowledge that are easily accessible. UN Women recommends focusing on information from local, provincial and national reports, with supplemental primary and qualitative data, typically gathered through interviews and focus group discussions.

As such, this scoping study consisted of reviewing existing research, particularly grey literature and statistical data from police-reported crimes and victimization surveys; conducting interviews with several key stakeholders; consulting the program's guiding committees; and gathering insights from a group of local women through a training on a participatory action research tool known as a Women's Safety Assessment.

### Semi-directed interviews

During the summer of 2020, the HRM SC SPS program conducted seven interviews with eight individuals responding to and preventing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in the municipality. In selecting interview participants, consideration was given both to their professional role, and the populations they serve.

The scoping study coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, and thus, plans for first-person data collection had to be reconsidered. Because interviews had to be conducted virtually, we could not guarantee a private space for interviewees to take part in interviews. We felt speaking with people about their lived experiences of sexual violence and/or gender-based violence without guaranteeing a private, safe space to do so could potentially cause undue harm to the participants.

For this reason, we decided to prioritize speaking to service providers who serve and work alongside survivors/victims of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, with a focus on organizations who support populations believed to be at an increased risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, including women, girls and non-binary people who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour, African Nova Scotian, 2SLBGTQ+, have disabilities, and who are young. The semi-structured interviews took approximately one hour each and consisted of 8 standard questions. (See the appendix for interview guide and consent form).

It should be noted that the questions were designed not to ask the interviewees about their personal experiences of sexual and other forms of gender-based

violence, but rather, to gain a better sense of the issues their clients or communities their organizations serve are facing.

The interviewees included representatives from the following fields/organizations:

- A law enforcement agent from the Nova Scotia RCMP
- A representative from an organization providing resources for people affected by sexual violence
- A representative from a youth-serving organization
- A community engagement coordinator at a family resource centre
- Partners on a project researching the prevalence of domestic violence faced by women with disabilities
- A social worker with experience working with both survivors and offenders
- A representative from an organization serving Indigenous people living in the urban context

While some of the organizations we spoke with have a very clear and obvious link to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, it became evident that many organizations working to address sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in the HRM are not necessarily mandated to do so.

It is often because the communities these organizations serve are affected by sexual and other forms of gender-based violence that their work necessarily intersects with these issues. For the youth-serving organization we spoke with, this often looks like empowering 2SLGBTQ+ youth to make more informed decisions about their bodies, sparking broader conversations about self-autonomy and consent. At the family resource centre, sexual and gender-based violence prevention work may come in the form of teaching youth about healthy interpersonal relationships.

It will also be important for us to consider the nuances of mandate and reality in the HRM SC SPS program, particularly when it comes to the intersections of violence happening in public spaces and private spaces. For instance, interview participants from the team researching the prevalence of sexual violence faced by women with disabilities in private spaces told us that women they spoke with often shared difficulties navigating their communities and accessing different forms of transportation upon leaving situations of domestic abuse, demonstrating the close linkages between sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in private and public spaces.

## Women's Safety Assessments

The Women's Safety Assessment (WSA) is a participatory tool used to build safer neighbourhoods, schools, campuses, workplaces, transit systems and other public spaces. It brings together community members and other stakeholders to assess and make safety recommendations for public spaces, grounded in expertise from their daily lived experience of using, or choosing not to use, the space.

The WSA is based on the belief that the design of physical environments affects people's safety. Research shows that when women, girls, and non-binary people, particularly women, girls and non-binary people who are 2SLGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, racialized, newcomers, have disabilities and experiencing homelessness are involved in the process of identifying safety concerns in public spaces and developing potential solutions, these spaces are made safer for everyone.

The safer a space feels, the more people will use it, and thus, the safer it will become due to increases in natural surveillance and community stewardship.

Safety assessments were first developed in 1989 by the Metro Toronto Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC). The tool builds on the best practices of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and incorporates culturally competent, community development, and gender-based approaches. The WSA tool has been adapted for use all over the globe and endorsed by leading organizations worldwide (METRAC, n.d.).

In January 2020, the HRM's Public Safety Office hosted a training in which twenty-five women learned how to use, and train others to use, the WSA tool. We recruited participants through community-based organizations, post-secondary institutions, libraries, recreation centres and other public spaces.

The group of women and youth who participated in the training consisted of diverse residents in terms of age (participants ranged from roughly 18 to 60+), race, income, and geography. Some participants had moved to Halifax recently, while others had roots spanning generations.

The WSA training activities included piloting the WSA, mapping specific locations based on perceptions of safety, identifying key stakeholders preventing and responding to women's safety, and training in how to apply an intersectional lens to the WSA tool.

Insights gathered at the WSA training are included in this scoping study and helped guide us in choosing which resources and issues to explore further in the scoping study process.

Although the use of the WSA in the HRM is in its infancy, the assessments the Public Safety Office has organized/facilitated have already served as a valuable tool to learn about how women perceive safety in public spaces in the municipality. So far, they have also proven to be a process through which the women, girls and non-binary people involved can contribute to and see tangible changes towards safer public spaces, which at its core, is the objective of the HRM SC SPS program.

# What We Learned

## Limits to what we know

It is difficult to understand the true extent of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces for reasons that are complex and often intersecting.

The data we have doesn't tell us the whole story. Normalization of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence, lack of police and government statistics that can be disaggregated for race, gender, disabilities and other identities, failures in systems meant to recognize and respond to violence, and the many barriers women, girls and non-binary people face when reporting sexual and other forms of gender-based violence and/or seeking help all lead to underreporting of the issues.

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre asserts there is an average of one sexual assault reported to police each day in Halifax, with only 1 in 5 sexual assaults reported to police in total (Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, n.d.). The 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) affirms this trend as well—stating that in 2019, only 6% of self-reported incidents of sexual assault came to the attention of police, with women being half as likely as men to report instances of violent victimization to police (Cotter, *Criminal Victimization in Canada*, 2019, 2021).

Perhaps one of the most significant challenges to understanding the extent of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in our communities is its normalization. One recent study noted:

Measuring gender-based violence is complex. The victims—and even the perpetrators—may not perceive the motivations for the incident as being rooted in social structures and systems, which can serve to produce and reproduce gender inequality and gendered violence across many dimensions (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 4).

Further, some forms of sexual violence are not reflected in the Criminal Code, but nevertheless can have profound impacts on women, girls and non-binary people, restricting their mobility and ability to participate in public life without fear:

Unwelcome comments, actions, or advances while in public—despite not meeting a criminal threshold—may cause individuals to withdraw or to not otherwise fully engage in their daily activities or access spaces in which they have the right to freely use and enjoy. These behaviours can



also serve to normalize, create, or support a culture where certain individuals feel targeted and discriminated against (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 4).

Further, a lack of both national and local data disaggregated for different populations and identities means we don't fully understand who is most impacted by sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces and the nuances of how they are impacted.

Many of the available data sets, for example, do not have enough information to draw conclusions about the experiences of women, girls and non-binary people in public spaces who are racialized, immigrants or have disabilities.

Notably, much of the data available through Statistics Canada is drawn from surveys that conflate sex and gender (giving survey participants the option to choose "man" or "woman" as their gender) and only provide limited options for self-identifying gender identity and sexual orientation, thereby greatly limiting our understanding of experiences of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence along gender and sexuality spectrums. In 2018, the SSPPS included questions on both sex assigned at birth and gender, making it the first large-scale Statistics Canada household survey to ask more inclusive and accurate questions around gender and sex (Cotter & Savage, 2019).

Further, most provincial and national surveys do not allow people to specifically identify as Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian in their responses and, therefore, large data sets about sexual and other forms of gender-based violence do not provide an understanding of the experiences of Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian women, girls and non-binary people in public spaces in the HRM.

Because of these limitations, it is important that, as we move forward with the HRM SC SPS program, we prioritize understanding the stories of women, girls and non-binary people that are often not captured in large-scale surveys and data collection methods. As such, it is critically important for us to value various approaches to understanding and responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces: layering data from surveys and studies upon meeting women, girls and non-binary people where they are—in conversation, dialogue and by working alongside communities and stakeholders who are experiencing these issues (and solutions) at the grassroots.

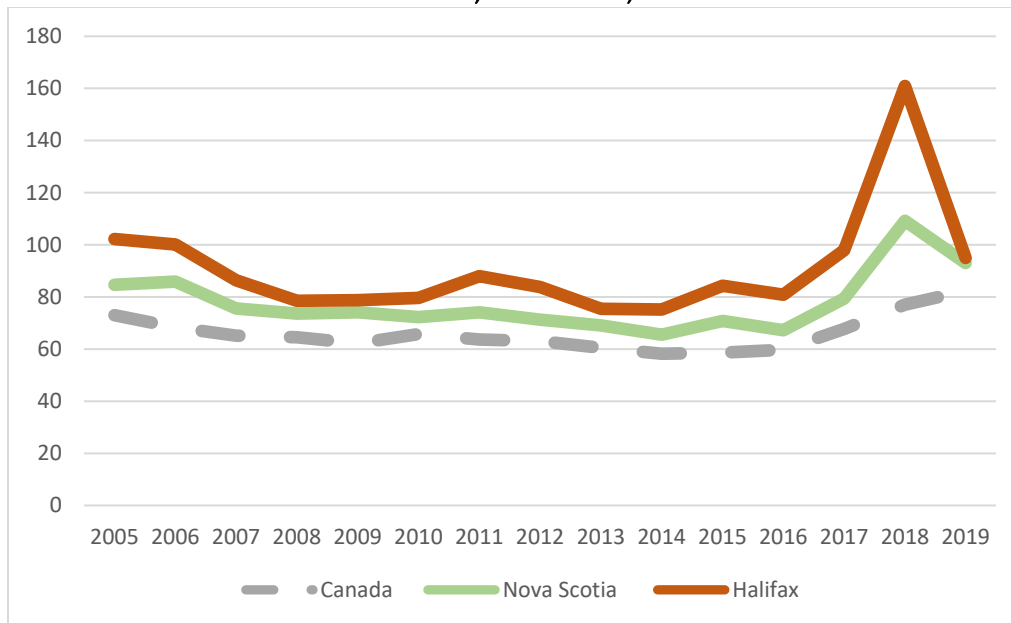
## What do we know about sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM?

### Who is impacted?

Data suggests that sexual assault rates in Halifax have been consistently higher than in Nova Scotia and in Canada. In Halifax, while rates of violent crime declined between 2005-2019, sexual assaults did not (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020). In 2018, over half (54%) of victims of violent crime in Halifax were women and girls (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020).

Table 1 below compares rates of sexual assault (levels 1-3<sup>2</sup>) for Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Canada between 2005-2019.

**Table 1: Rates of sexual assault: Canada, Nova Scotia, and Halifax 2005-2019**



While these numbers give us some important information about the prevalence of sexual assault in Halifax, it is not possible to make the conclusion that higher reported rates mean sexual assault happens more in Halifax than other Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Sexual assault level 1 involves minor physical injuries or no injuries to the victim under circumstances of a sexual nature such that the sexual integrity of the victim is violated. Sexual assault level 2 involves sexual assault with a weapon, threats, or causing bodily harm. The most serious offence, is level 3, aggravated sexual assault, which involves wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020).

As we know, there are many factors that contribute to rates of reported sexual violence—rates may be higher in Halifax not necessarily because of higher prevalence but for many other reasons, including increases in survivors/victims reporting instances of sexual violence to police.

Available data is, nevertheless, a critical piece of the puzzle in understanding who is most impacted by sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

Based on results from the 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, which measures self-reported instances of sexual assault (meaning that survey respondents have not necessarily reported these assaults to police), Canadian women were five times more likely than men to be victims/survivors of sexual assault—with a rate of 50 incidents of sexual assault per 1000 people, compared to men at a rate of 9 incidents per 1000 people (Cotter, *Criminal Victimization in Canada*, 2019, 2021).

While people from all demographics can and do cause harm, there are some commonalities among a large percentage of known perpetrators of sexual violence. For example, 94% of known perpetrators of sexual violence are men (Perreault, 2015, p. 18). Additionally, perpetrators of sexual assault were most likely to be young (under 35), more likely to work alone, and there was a perceived link between sexual assault incidents and the perpetrator being under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Conroy & Cotter, 2017).

### **#MeToo and Reporting Sexual Violence**

The term #MeToo was first used by Tarana Burke in 2006 as a means for women to share their experiences of surviving/being victims of sexual violence and to know they were not alone (Gordon, 2020).

In October of 2017, the hashtag went viral as millions began using #MeToo on social media to indicate that they too had been victims of sexual assault, violence or misconduct (Rotenberg & Cotter, 2018).

Across Canada, police-reported sexual assaults in 2017 rose higher than in any year since 1998, with reports peaking in October when the #MeToo movement was at its height (Rotenberg & Cotter, 2018). In Halifax, police-reported incidents of level one sexual assaults (by far the most common type reported to police), increased 21% between 2016-2017 (Allen, 2018).

Local data also reflected this trend. In 2016-2017, Halifax's Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program (SANE) had the highest caseload in its history—a 68% increase over the previous year (Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, n.d.).

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre continued to experience an unprecedented demand for its services in the years following the height of the #MeToo movement, and in April of 2019, had to freeze its waiting list for the first time (McPhee, 2019).

The #MeToo movement provides a striking example of how social movements that aim to shift public perception around sexual violence can have very real impacts on the number of people who disclose and report these experiences.

In 2018, 44% of women nationally who experienced sexual assault in the previous 12 months affirmed that the perpetrator was a stranger or someone who they knew by sight only, while another 44% said the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 20).

For victims/survivors of childhood sexual abuse, the offender was often a member of the immediate family (18%) or extended family (20%), though some victims identified a stranger (21%), acquaintance (12%), neighbour (8%), friend or teacher (6% each) (Perreault, 2015, p. 14).

The 2018 Statistics Canada Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) provides some of the most recent and detailed large-scale statistics regarding experiences of sexual violence in public spaces. In fact, it is the first national survey to explore safety in public spaces, online and in the workplace. The survey also looks at unwanted behaviours that, while they may not be included in the Criminal Code, can still have significant negative impact on those who experience them (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 4).

The SSPPS measures self-reported incidents of the following unwanted behaviours in public in Canada:

- unwanted physical contact (such as touching or getting too close in a sexual manner);
- indecent exposure;
- unwanted comments about sex or gender;
- unwanted comments about sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and;
- unwanted sexual attention (such as comments, whistles, gestures, or body language).

According to the SSPPS, approximately one in three (34%) women 15 years of age or older living in the core of a Canadian CMA experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in a public place in the 12 months preceding the survey—more than double the number of men (15%) (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 8). These numbers were on par with the experience of people living within the core of the Halifax CMA (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 8).

Nationally, the most common types of unwanted sexual behaviour experienced by women in public were unwanted sexual attention (25%), unwanted physical contact (17%), and unwanted comments about their sex or gender (12%). These were also the three most common types of behaviour experienced by men, though at a considerably lower rate (each 6%) (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 3).

The SSPPS also found that 45% of women who had experienced unwanted sexual attention in the past 12 months said it happened at least three times (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 7).

Finally, one study observed that women are more likely than men to make use of victim services. In addition to or in lieu of police services, crime victims may seek assistance from other services such as crisis centres, victim services, women's centres, psychologists or social workers. 14% of violent crime victims contacted at least one such source of support, most often a psychologist or social worker. Women who were victims of violence were more than twice as likely as men to make use of one of these services (19% compared to 7%) (Perreault, 2015, p. 26).

## How are diverse women, girls and non-binary people impacted?

Literature and statistics, key stakeholder interviewees, WSA participants and the HRM SC SPS program's guiding committees (the Implementing Committee and the WACH) all highlighted that some people are made more at risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM.

Women and girls; young people; racialized women; Black and Indigenous women; women with disabilities; 2SLGBTQ+ people, particularly trans women and trans feminine people; unhoused or precariously housed people; and those living below the poverty line were all named as people who are at an elevated risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

These insights are affirmed by other data and literature we explored: specifically that women living in poverty, Indigenous women, women living with disabilities, racialized women, women living in isolated communities, immigrant women and young women are all more at risk of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.

These populations and demographics are, of course, not discrete, meaning that individual people may, and often do, hold more than one of these identities or backgrounds. As noted previously, because there is overlap between systemic forms of oppression, there is also often overlap of populations that are identified as being at heightened risk for sexual and gender-based violence in public spaces.

### *Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people*

Incidents of sexual assault committed against Indigenous people in Canada are three times the rate of non-Indigenous people, and 94% of Indigenous people who experience sexual assault are women (Conroy & Cotter, 2017, p. 8).

A genocide is being committed against Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people in Canada in the form of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls crisis (National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019). Between 1980 and 2012, 16% of all women murdered in Canada were Indigenous (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017), with Indigenous women making up only 4% of the female population in Canada. For many years, Indigenous Two-Spirit people, women and girls across Canada have been calling for justice for the many Two-Spirit people, women and girls who continue to be harmed and killed, with violence perpetrated against them occurring at the intersections of colonialism, misogyny, sexism and racism.

Many of the interview participants we spoke with mentioned that in particular Indigenous women, girls and non-binary people may feel unwanted or unwelcome in public spaces in Halifax because of a long and continued legacy of displacement, erasure and racism against Mi'kmaw people in Halifax and Nova Scotia. This feeling can be amplified for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people, for whom sexual violence is often racialized. Being able to see oneself reflected and welcomed in public spaces is a key factor in experiences of safety.

### *Racialized women, girls and non-binary people*

Systemic issues such as racism, colonialism, anti-Blackness, and xenophobia contribute to sexual violence against racialized women and some newcomer populations. These forms of marginalization are often reinforced through

healthcare, education, and justice systems which may negatively impact the likelihood of women reporting experiences of violence.

During the WSA training, most participants reported feeling the most comfortable in public spaces close to where they live and in areas where they are familiar with their surroundings. This sense of comfort in familiar spaces was underlined with a discussion in which a few women shared feelings of being ostracized when they left their communities because of their race and/or ethnicity. Black women in particular noted feelings of hyper-visibility or being under extra surveillance when further away from home.

For example, one woman from Halifax's North End, a historically African Nova Scotian, working class community, said she felt like people perceive her as a safety threat in the South End, an area perceived as predominantly white and wealthier. Historically, conversations around women's safety have centred white, able-bodied, cisgender, heterosexual women, often to the exclusion of other women.

This exclusion is caused by and contributes to the marginalization of racialized and Indigenous women, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and women with disabilities—groups that have been found to be at increased risk for sexual violence when compared to other women (Conroy & Cotter, 2017).

*Creating Communities of Care through a Customary Law Approach*, a project that supports urban Indigenous and African Nova Scotian women who have experienced violence, explains that limited state responses to well-documented historical and inter-generational trauma and ongoing institutionalized racism and marginalization are serious barriers to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous women trusting and accessing mainstream support services (Creating Communities of Care, 2021). They also call attention to the impact that a criminal justice system that has been unresponsive and disproportionately punitive towards members of racialized communities has on African Nova Scotian and Indigenous women's ability to safely report instances of violence (Creating Communities of Care, 2021).

### *Newcomer women, girls and non-binary people*

Many of the data sets we explored noted that they did not have enough information to make statistically sound observations about the impact of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence on newcomer and immigrant women, girls and non-binary people. This means that our understanding of newcomer and immigrant women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces is particularly limited.

A recent report prepared for HRM's Office of Diversity & Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office by Engage Nova Scotia, based on the 2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey, shows that women in Halifax who answered the survey who do not have citizenship reported lower levels of trust in strangers in their community, trust in people in their neighbourhood and confidence in police than both women who do have citizenship and men (Holland & Hill, 2021, pp. 52-53).

Interview participants and members of our guiding committees called attention to the exclusion of some newcomer women, girls and non-binary people from public spaces because of language barriers and lack of specific services geared towards newcomers. Further, newcomer women, girls and non-binary people might not report instances of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence because of fear and/or mistrust of authorities or fear and uncertainty about how reporting their experiences could impact their immigration status.

### *Women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities*

Ableism, inaccessible infrastructure, and unreliable means of transportation are some of the inequities that result in women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities being made more vulnerable to sexual violence in public spaces.

The 2019 GSS shows that, nationally, women with a disability were sexually assaulted at much higher rates, with rates of 94 incidents of sexual assault per 1000 women with a disability compared to 22 incidents per 1000 women with no disability (Cotter, 2021, p. 11). Women living with disabilities are also at an increased risk for intimate partner violence, and often face increased barriers to accessing services and support (Not Without Us: A Report About Changing the Response For Women with Disabilities Experiencing Domestic Violence, 2019).

Scoping study interview participants affirmed the inequities that women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities face when accessing public spaces and public life, highlighting, in particular, the impact that a lack of reliable and safe transportation options and accessible infrastructure has on people's ability to access public spaces and important services, let alone feel safe and secure in them.



## Youth

Young people are consistently identified as being at higher risk for sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. The 2014 GSS states that almost half (47%) of all sexual assault incidents in 2014 were committed against women aged 15-24, two times higher than the 25-34 cohort and eight times higher than women aged 35-44 (Conroy & Cotter, 2017, p. 7). Results from the 2019 GSS show that women 15-24 were sexually assaulted at a rate of 187 per 1000 and women 25-34 at a rate of 85 per 1000 (Cotter, 2021, p. 10).

### Key Issue Highlight: Human Trafficking and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Youth

Human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth are prevalent issues within the HRM (Ibrahim, 2021). Based on results from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, Nova Scotia has been overrepresented in police-reported instances of human trafficking in Canada over the past decade (Ibrahim, 2021). In 2019, Nova Scotia reported 51 incidents of human trafficking, accounting for 10% of instances reported nationally (Ibrahim, 2021, p. 14).

Among national census metropolitan areas (CMAs), Halifax has the second highest rate of reported incidents of human trafficking, after Toronto. In 2019, Halifax reported 10.2 human trafficking incidents per 100,000 population compared to the national CMA rate of 1.6 per 100,000 population (Ibrahim, 2021, p. 5).

Research conducted by the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking highlights the stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway between Halifax and Moncton as a primary route along which victims are trafficked (Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, 2021, p. 33). Trafficking and Exploitation Services System (TESS)—a province-wide partnership between YWCA Halifax, government, law enforcement officers, non-profit organizations, and survivors—affirms this assertion, noting that service providers across the country have, for many years, shared anecdotal evidence that many of the victims and survivors they work with are originally from Nova Scotia (Gagnon, 2020).

The SSPS also identified that for both men and women, being younger, and specifically younger and of a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, increases

the odds of experiencing unwanted sexual behaviours in public (Cotter & Savage, 2019).

### *2SLGBTQ+ women, girls and non-binary people*

Homophobia, transphobia, and harmful stereotypes all contribute to a higher risk of all forms of sexual violence for 2SLGBTQ+ people. Fear of violence and harassment in public spaces, such as in public washrooms, sidewalks and parks, may impact and impede trans and gender-nonconforming people's ability to fully participate in public life.

Nearly one in four Halifax residents experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public in 2018, with women being more likely than men to experience unwanted sexual behaviour in public (35% versus 12%) (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020, p. 18). For members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ population, the odds of experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour are even greater.

Not including violence committed by an intimate partner, more than 1 in 10 2SLGBTQ+ Canadians had been sexually or physically assaulted in 2018, compared to 1 in 25 cisgender, heterosexual Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2020).

Data shows that being younger and being a 2SLGBTQ+ person are among the factors that most significantly increase the odds of experiencing sexual violence in public spaces (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 3).

The 2019 GSS shows the odds of being a victim of violent crime were twice as high for people who identified with a sexuality other than heterosexual, compared to those who identified as heterosexual (Statistics Canada, 2020).

The survey also highlights a striking difference in rates of sexual assault reported by bi-sexual people: in 2019, more than 83% of all incidents reported by those who identified as bisexual were sexual assaults. This is a rate of 541 sexual assault incidents per 1000—nearly 29 times higher than the rate among heterosexual Canadians (Cotter, 2021, p. 10).

In a 2019 study, Halifax based Wisdom2Action engaged with over 500 2SLGBTQ+ youth across Canada to better understand their experiences of gender-based violence. Some of the most common themes in participants' experiences were a lack, or perceived lack, of safety in public spaces and the pervasiveness of street harassment. Participants emphasized the heightened risk of street harassment for gender non-conforming 2SLGBTQ+ youth and racialized 2SLGBTQ+ youth (Lachance, 2019, p. 15).

### *Women, girls and non-binary people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity*

Many of the key stakeholder interview participants spoke about how, as Halifax sinks further into an affordable housing crisis, women and youth in precarious living situations are made vulnerable to violence in both domestic settings and public spaces.

The 2019 GSS also affirms the heightened threat of violence towards women, girls and non-binary people experiencing homelessness . 1 in 10 individuals in Canada stated that they had experienced homelessness (considered by the survey to be living on the street, having to live with someone else or in their car because of having no where else to go) at some point in their lifetime (Cotter, 2021, p. 13). Respondents who reported experiencing homelessness in the 12 months preceding the survey experienced violent victimization at a rate three times higher than those who had never been homeless (Cotter, 2021, p. 14).

The Home for Good Project was a three-year collaboration between four local agencies—Alice House, Elizabeth Fry Society of Mainland Nova Scotia, the Marguerite Centre and YWCA Halifax—who serve women experiencing housing insecurity. Their research shows that “barriers to achieving housing security are gendered but the system designed to provide housing are not designed as such” (Crocker & Doran, 2018, p. 3).

The women who were interviewed for the research project highlighted the gendered barriers that exist to finding, accessing and navigating services and programs for housing security. The researchers state, “the stories women told in our interviews show that the stakes are high. Finding safe and affordable housing keeps them from going back to abusive relationships, gives them a fighting chance at avoiding relapse into addictions and provides their children with some sense of security. A gender-neutral housing system cannot meet these challenges.” (Crocker & Doran, 2018, p. 3).

### **Summary: What do we Know?**

Through the scoping study process, we have learned that women, girls and non-binary people are made more vulnerable to sexual violence in public spaces. Further, because of intersecting systems of sexism, misogyny, racism, xenophobia, ableism, colonialism, homophobia and transphobia, Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, racialized, newcomer, 2SLGBTQ+, women, girls and non-binary people, women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities and women, girls and non-

binary people experiencing homelessness are all made more at risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

There is a great need for more localized data and research that sheds light on the experiences of *all* women, girls and non-binary people in public spaces in the HRM. The HRM SC SPS program must serve all women, girls and non-binary people. As such, the program must continually seek to understand and respond to both the commonalities and nuances in diverse women's, girl's and non-binary people's experiences of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces and integrate these lenses into the program's priorities, plans and outcomes.

As we move forward into the next stages of the HRM SC SPS program, it will be critical for us to respond to both the diverse and unique needs of all women, girls and non-binary people when addressing and responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

# Important Themes

## Feelings and Experiences of Safety in Public Spaces

Throughout the scoping study process, the link between built spaces and feelings of safety and well-being was frequently highlighted. A key piece of knowledge imparted by local women who have been working to advance the use of WSAs in Halifax is that perceptions of safety aren't always tied so much to geographical space, but rather built and social features of spaces.

Participants in the WSA training pointed to both dangerous features, such as construction site debris, and less physically intrusive features, such as litter, as signs that a space is not well taken care of. In the WSAs the Public Safety Office has facilitated since the training, participants have prioritized increased lighting, clearing of garbage, and beautification efforts, such as installing murals and flower boxes, as key elements of making public spaces feel safe and welcoming.

These women also talked about how important other users of spaces are. In particular, the presence of children made participants feel more at ease and less unsafe in spaces, citing the feeling that children being present means there are people watching out for them, if not directly, then nearby.

Another clear theme that emerged in the WSA training was concern over pedestrian safety – being able to see and be seen and to hear and be heard are particularly crucial in areas with heavy vehicle traffic. Participants pointed out areas where sidewalks abruptly end or do not exist, construction is common and poorly contained, and crosswalks are not clearly marked or easily accessible. During the WSAs conducted since the training, similar concerns have been raised concerning the need for clear pathways and accessible sidewalks.

Participants have also referenced nearby residences as a positive attribute of public spaces – there was a sense that if an emergency were to happen, people nearby may be able to see or hear and therefore offer help. Participants often emphasized how much safer they feel in spaces where they can easily perceive what is happening around them.

Engage Nova Scotia's Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey considered women's experiences of safety within the larger category of community vitality, including sense of community, confidence in institutions, discrimination, safety and trust as important indicators of the well-being of women.

The survey produced insights that can act as a starting point of understanding some women's experiences in different areas of the HRM.

Women who responded to this survey in the Sackville, East Dartmouth and Spryfield/Armdale areas perceived low levels of support if they were to need help. Women living in the South end of Halifax and the Dartmouth waterfront reported high levels of perceived support if they were to need help. North Halifax and Dartmouth, however, showed moderately low levels of perceived help in case of need (Holland & Hill, 2021, p. 13).

Survey results show that the closer women live to the downtown core, the more common it was that they experienced gender discrimination (Holland & Hill, 2021, p. 13). Regarding reported feelings of safety walking after dark, women in Sackville area, North Dartmouth and Fairview/Clayton Park reported the lowest levels of feeling safe (Holland & Hill, 2021, p. 13).

Finally, notably, this survey provides some striking information about women in the HRM who answered the survey and reported mental health challenges. Women with mental health challenges reported lower levels of needs fulfillment, help in case of need, social climate and bonds, confidence in the police, sense of belonging to community and physical wellbeing (Holland & Hill, 2021, pp. 47-50).

It must be noted, however, that like many data sources, this survey's results do not allow for a robust analysis of the experiences of the full spectrum of identities that women, girls and non-binary people hold, notably gender identity outside of man and woman, sexuality, different abilities, races and Indigenous identities.

### **Violence against Women, Girls and Non-Binary People and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has shed further light on significant gender inequities. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes that women have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic due to their roles as essential workers (health care employees, grocery store clerks, etc.) and as unpaid care providers for their families, including caring for the sick, elderly and children (OECD 2020).

Increased confinement and decreased mobility have resulted in increased risk of violence against women and girls (OECD, 2020). UN Women refers to this as "the shadow pandemic" (UN Women, n.d.). As numbers of reported cases of violence increase, hotlines are unable to respond to all of the calls and access to services such as shelters becomes more difficult or even impossible (UN Women, n.d.).

A recent Canadian study suggests that women may be more concerned about their safety during the pandemic. 10% of women, compared to 6% of men, shared that they were concerned about violence in the home during the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020).

There has also been concern about women's experiences of violence outside of the home, which, as UN Women notes, continues despite confinement (UN Women, n.d.). Specifically, less than one third of women felt safe walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood since the pandemic, compared with almost half of men polled (Statistics Canada, 2020, p. 3).

When we consider intersectional impacts of the pandemic, young women were more likely to report feeling unsafe when walking alone after dark in their neighbourhood since the start of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2020, p. 3).

In addition, "young female participants were also more likely to feel that crime had increased in their neighbourhood since the start of COVID-19" (Statistics Canada, 2020, p. 3). Indigenous (17%) and visible minority (14%) participants were more likely than non-Indigenous or non-visible minorities (both at 11%) to believe that crime had increased in their neighbourhood and expressed that they would not feel safe walking alone after dark in their neighbourhoods (Statistics Canada, 2020, p. 4).

### **Resources, Organizations, Networks and Supports**

In the inaugural meeting of the Implementing Committee, members conducted an initial mapping activity to brainstorm the stakeholders they know of or are connected to who are working on issues related to the safety of women, girls and non-binary people in public spaces in the HRM. The chart below includes these stakeholders, as well as other stakeholders brought forward by interview participants, the WACH and through other scoping study research.

This list is by no means exhaustive, as there are, no doubt, many other people and groups impacted by and/or responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM. This stakeholder map does, however, provides a useful jumping off point to better understand the ecosystem of people and groups with a stake or role to play in these issues.

Grassroots Groups and Communities	
2SLGBTQ+ communities African Nova Scotian communities Disability communities Faith communities Hearing impaired communities Neighbourhood watch groups Newcomer communities	Residents associations School associations and groups Trans communities Urban Indigenous communities University good neighbours groups University communities Youth groups and youth serving organizations
Community Based Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and Service Providers	
902 Man Up Avalon Sexual Assault Centre Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Family resource centres Heartwood Centre for Community Youth Development Hope Blooms Immigrant and Migrant Women's Association of Halifax Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) Leave Out Violence Nova Scotia Mainline Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) Native Women's Association Nova Scotia College of Social Workers Phoenix Rainbow Action Network	South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre Trafficking and Exploitation Service System (TESS) Partnership The Association of Black Social Workers, Nova Scotia (NSABSW) The Youth Project United Way Various shelters Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project</li> </ul> YWCA Halifax <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GirlSpace</li> <li>• Nova Scotia Transition and Advocacy (NSTAY)</li> </ul>
HRM Departments, Business Units and other HRM affiliated groups	
Board of Police Commissioners Business Improvement Districts Community Mobilization Teams Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office Emergency Services Halifax Libraries	Parks and Recreation Recreation/community centres Strategic Communications Street Navigators Transportation and Public Works Youth Advocate Program



Halifax Regional Police	
Other governmental and para-governmental departments, units and services	
African Nova Scotian Affairs Develop Nova Scotia Events Nova Scotia Halifax Regional Centre for Education IWK Health Centre	Mental health services Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) RCMP Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) Tourism sector

Stakeholder and asset mapping activities will continue to be integrated throughout the life of the HRM SC SPS program to ensure the work considers and responds to the ever-evolving network of people, communities and organizations involved and impacted by this work.

### Summary: Important Themes

Natural, built and social features of public spaces all impact women’s, girls’ and non-binary people’s experiences and feelings of safety, wellbeing and belonging in the HRM. Feeling safe and comfortable enough to move around and spend time in public spaces is critical to women, girls and non-binary people being able to access the resources and services they need. Throughout the scoping study, it was affirmed that when diverse women, girls and non-binary people have input into and can shape public spaces in a municipality, these spaces are made safer, more comfortable and more accessible for everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women, girls and non-binary people. Confinement to private spaces and lack of access to public spaces has increased the risk of women, girls and non-binary people experiencing violence. As we look to responses and solutions to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM and formulate next steps in the HRM SC SPS program, we must remember that we are still in the midst of the pandemic and, thus, must account for the additional challenges and barriers experienced by women, girls and non-binary people at this time.

Finally, through the scoping study process, we have learned more about the resources, organizations, supports and networks focused on responding to and preventing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM. We better understand the assets that exist in our community and the stakeholders this program should seek to connect with and work alongside in this program.

We also still have a lot to learn—we know there is much more to understand about what services and programs these stakeholders offer, what support they require in their work and what other critical resources exist in our communities. Efforts to better understand the resources that already exist in the HRM will be a key element of our next steps forward in this program.

# Conclusion: What's Next?

## Priority Areas

Conducting this scoping study has given the HRM SC SPS program an opportunity to explore more deeply the realities of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM. What we heard and learned in this process will help build the foundation of this program moving forward.

The priorities brought forward in this study are not exhaustive and do not necessarily reflect all the most important and pressing issues regarding sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM. Rather, these priorities provide both a compass to align the HRM SC SPS program in the right direction and a roadmap of what conversations, connections, collaborations and focuses we should pursue in this program.

As mentioned previously, the HRM SC SPS program is an iterative one. The priorities highlighted in this scoping study will help form the program, but we must be responsive and willing to incorporate new understandings and focuses if, in our work alongside community members and stakeholders, we are guided to other pressing and important priorities.

Informed by the guidelines provided by UN Women, conversations with interview participants and our guiding committees and the literature review, the following are values we will aim to apply to all the priorities we have identified:

1. Centering people who belong to communities and demographics who have been identified as being made most vulnerable to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public places. This program must aim to be informed by these communities at each step along the way.
2. Considering which issues are persistent, emergent, or of a pressing nature in the HRM; responding to immediate needs but being flexible enough to shift plans and priorities as our understanding of issues changes.
3. Seeking connection and collaboration with work already being done by members of our Implementing Committee, the WACH, and other organizations and networks in HRM, considering the ways in which our participation in this program could build on, support and enrich this work.

The following are the priority areas that were identified:

### A gender-safety lens across HRM Business Units & strategic interventions

WACH members noted that ensuring women's, girl's and non-binary people's perspectives are included in all HRM initiatives was a high priority, and they suggested looking at ways to embed a gender lens into all work the HRM does.

As we move forward in this program, alongside the members of the program's Implementing Committee, we should aim to see the ways in which most, if not all, HRM Business Units can integrate considerations for women, girl's and non-binary people's safety into their work and, thereby, be well positioned to take up strategic opportunities to improve women's, girls' and non-binary people's access to and safety in HRM public spaces and services.

### Working together

Interview participants, WSA participants, WACH members, Implementing Committee members and our literature review all pointed to collaboration as being critical to working towards preventing and responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM.

In the 2014 Mayor's Roundtable on Violence cooperation, information sharing, eliminating silos, sharing expertise and knowledge exchange were consistently identified as necessary to remove barriers and improve services and resources to address gendered violence in HRM (Clairmont, 2014, p. 88). Strengthened partnerships between the HRM and the province and the HRM and community organizations were also recommended (Clairmont, 2014, p. 89).

This priority also aligns closely with best practices provided by the UN SC SPS FPI—working with and supporting the people and organizations who are already doing the work to respond to and prevent sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces is a critical value of this program.

### Addressing housing insecurity and homelessness

Those experiencing chronic homelessness rarely find refuge from public spaces and the risks of violence that can be present in them. In addition, women, girls and non-binary people who do not have safe, secure housing are at a higher risk of being sexually exploited in order to access supplies they need.

It is also critically important to consider the unique challenges that women, girls and non-binary people experience in accessing supports and housing options when experiencing homelessness. These barriers are further amplified for women, girls and non-binary people who are Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, people of colour, newcomers, and women, girls and non-binary people who have disabilities, who may not only be contending with a shortage of appropriate supports, but also the systemic barriers of racism, xenophobia and ableism.

### Transportation and mobility

In Halifax, among those who have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public, one in ten (9.5%) Halifax residents said the most serious incident took place on public transit, significantly higher than the rest of Nova Scotia (5.1%) but closer to other provincial numbers (11.5%) (Conroy, Rotenberg, Haringa, & Johnston-Way, 2020, p. 18).

Young people, lower-income people, newcomers, and people with disabilities are all less likely to have access to a vehicle and therefore more likely to rely on forms of active transportation such as public transit, biking, or walking. Buses and cabs were two of the physical spaces that interview participants acknowledged to be particularly concerning areas for sexual harassment and assault. Fear of encountering violence while trying to get from point A to point B may lead women to plan outings around factors such as time of day, which can mean less women, girls and non-binary people are present in public spaces at night, perpetuating a cycle of feelings of unease around mobility.

Members of the WACH spoke about how newcomer women often do not have access to cars, and therefore rely on walking or taking public transportation, increasing the likelihood of harassment due to an increased amount of time spent in public spaces. Increasing Halifax's walkability was a priority for some of the members as well, with a focus on making walking a safer transportation option.

### Responding to and preventing human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of youth in the HRM

The prevalence and impact of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in the HRM came through in the scoping study as a key area in which the municipality can act and support already ongoing work on these issues. This work will continue to be a priority of the Public Safety Office and the HRM SC SPS program, through the TESS Community of Influence in which the program coordinator is involved, and through other channels and networks that arise.

## Education

Key stakeholder interviewees, WSA participants and our guiding committees highlighted education as one of the ways to address and respond to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces. Suggestions involved getting the word out about services and supports available to victims/survivors, teaching bystanders how to recognize and respond to sexual violence in all of its forms, unpacking and combatting misogynistic and harmful social norms thereby encouraging the development of healthier understandings of sexuality, gender, relationships and treating all people with respect.

Members of the WACH emphasized the importance of working with men and boys to combat ingrained misogyny, as well as working with women, girls, non-binary people and bystanders to be able to identify and respond to street harassment.

## Understanding local experiences

It has become clear to the HRM UN SC SPS program that there is a lack of data on women, girls and non-binary people's experiences of safety in public spaces in the HRM.

As we reflect on the content of this scoping study and plan a path forward for the program, it is imperative that local women, girls and non-binary people of all races, sexualities, gender-identities, ethnicities, abilities, immigration statuses, incomes and ages have an opportunity to shape this work. The program should prioritize assessing already existing methods of data collection to include more opportunities for diverse women, girls and non-binary people to share their experiences and developing new systems to collect data in a way that will allow disaggregation for the diverse experiences of women, girls and non-binary people.

In July 2021, the HRM SC SPS program, in collaboration with the Diversity & Inclusion Office, was tasked by the WACH through Regional Council, to prepare a report exploring ways in which we can collect data and information regarding Asian women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety in public spaces. This motion, and others like it, move us towards collecting and seeking out data that tells us a more in-depth story about the ways in which a diversity of women experience public spaces in the HRM.

## Possible Action Items

The following action items have been identified as some possible next steps in the HRM SC SPS program:

Scanning the work of all HRM Business Units to better understand where the HRM SC SPS program can support municipal projects, policies and initiatives that impact women's, girls' and non-binary people's safety in public spaces and help build capacity for these spaces, services and policies to better serve women, girls and non-binary people.

Responding to the lack of data and information available about diverse women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety in public spaces in the HRM:

- Working with REES (Respect Educate Empower Survivors) (source) to develop a platform for HRM public spaces. REES is a secure online platform that people can use to report instances of sexual harassment in public spaces, helping the community and HRM to understand where strategic interventions are required to address sexual violence in public spaces and support survivors/victims of sexual violence. This platform can also act as a central information hub for survivors/victims looking for resources and support.
- Working alongside other HRM Business Units to gather more data on diverse women's, girls' and non-binary people's experiences of safety, wellbeing and belonging in public spaces in the HRM. This should include a mix of methods and tools for gathering women's, girls' and non-binary people's input. Possibilities include integrating a lens of safety from gender-based and sexual violence in already existing HRM surveys and engagement opportunities, designing new surveys and opportunities for people to safely share their stories and lived experiences in more in-depth, and oftentimes, more culturally appropriate ways.

Collaborating with TESS and YWCA Halifax to facilitate training for HRM staff on recognizing and responding to instances of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of youth.

Continuing to develop the WSA tool as a means for women, girls' and non-binary people to contribute to shaping public spaces in the HRM.

- This will include working with different communities of women, girls and non-binary people and various HRM Business Units to use and continue to adapt the tool for the HRM context.

- In October, the Public Safety Office will be hosting a workshop with HRM planners to share the WSA tool and explore ways in which the tool could be used and/or adapted to contribute to a community based, gender-safety lens in planning projects in the municipality.

Utilizing the resources and networks made available to the HRM through the UN SC SPS FPI, organize skill-sharing and learning opportunities for HRM staff to engage with people and organizations globally that are implementing innovative initiatives for safer public spaces for women, girls and non-binary people.

These actions are by no means exhaustive, but rather, are items that have arisen over the course of working on the scoping study, as Public Safety Office staff have interacted with various stakeholders.

## Next Steps

The next phase of the HRM SC SPS program will be focused on creating a theory of change and project plan, guided by input from the Implementing Committee, the WACH and various other community and grassroots stakeholders.

The project plan will focus on building a roadmap for establishing the necessary relationships to work in the priority areas identified in this scoping study, to address gaps in our knowledge and to continue to move forward in answering the questions we still have about sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM.

The project plan should also set out steps to further explore what work is ongoing within the municipality to bring a gender-safety lens to programs, polices and services, build the HRM SC SPS program's capacity and the relationships necessary to work alongside communities and organizations already doing this work and come to a more thorough understanding of the roles this program is best suited to play in responding to sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.

For some of the priorities, we are well positioned to take some action immediately. For example, in aligning efforts across HRM Business Units, we have the knowledge and capacity—within the Implementing Committee, the WACH and in the Public Safety Office—to begin to identify upcoming projects, plans and policies that could integrate a lens of safety from sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces.



Of course, taking action related to these priorities will happen simultaneously to having conversations and building relationships with communities—in engaging with residents and communities at each step in the program process, we will better understand the services, programs and policies they encounter in their daily lives and will no doubt learn more about where efforts to integrate a lens of safety for women, girls and non-binary people in HRM policies, programs and services are necessary.

As aforementioned, the priorities identified in this scoping study will guide our next steps and remain as core focuses in our work; however, as we learn more and gain further insight into the questions we still have about sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the HRM, we will aim to be flexible and leave space in our work to respond to emerging and pressing issues.

For the coming months, the main work of the Program Coordinator and HRM SC SPS program will be to lead a process to create the program’s theory of change and develop a project plan, while also moving forward on the action items we have identified during the course of the scoping study.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: List of Acronyms

2SLGBTQ+ - Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer. The plus encapsulates other diverse identities along gender and sexuality spectrums.

GBV - gender based violence

GSS- General Social Survey

HRM - Halifax Regional Municipality

HRM SC SPS- Halifax Regional Municipality's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces Program

HRP - Halifax Regional Police

RCMP - Royal Canadian Mounted Police

SSPPS - Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces

UN - United Nations

UN SC SPS FPI - UN Women Safe Cities & Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiative

WACH- The Women's Advisory Committee of Halifax

WSA- Women's Safety Assessment

## Appendix B: Key Terms and Definitions

### Cisgender

“Having a gender identity that is the same as one’s sex assigned at birth (e.g. they were assigned female at birth and identify as a woman).”<sup>3</sup>

### Femicide

Defined as the killing of women and girls, femicide is the most extreme form of violence on a continuum of violence and discrimination against women and girls.<sup>4</sup>

### Gender

“Refers to the roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society or culture may construct or consider appropriate for the categories of “men” and “women”. It can result in stereotyping and limited expectations about what people can and cannot do.”<sup>5</sup>

### Gender-based violence

Violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. Gender-based violence encompasses a range of behaviours, not all of which meet the threshold of criminal behaviour as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada, but nonetheless can have significant and long-lasting negative impact on the victims/survivor. Some forms of gender based violence are sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual, psychological and economic violence.

As stated by the Canadian Women’s Foundation, “it is the types of abuse that women, girls, and Two Spirit, trans and non-binary people are at highest risk of experiencing. It can take physical and emotional forms, such as: name-calling, hitting, pushing, blocking, stalking/criminal harassment, rape, sexual assault, control, and manipulation.”<sup>6</sup>

### Non-binary

One term used to describe gender expression and gender identity that do not fall within the binary of male and female. Throughout this scoping study, we use the term non-binary to refer to the diversity of genders outside the strict binary identifiers “male” and “female”. There are, however, many other terms that

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<sup>3</sup> HRM’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (2021) *D&I Terminology Guide*.

<sup>4</sup> The Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability.

<https://www.femicideincanada.ca/about/types>

<sup>5</sup> HRM’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (2021) *D&I Terminology Guide*.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Women’s Foundation <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/gender-based-violence/>

people may prefer to use instead when self-identifying, including, but not limited to, gender-diverse or genderqueer.

### Sex

“Refers to a person’s biological and physiological characteristics. An individual’s sex is most often designated by a medical assessment at the moment of birth. This is also referred to as birth-assigned sex.”<sup>7</sup>

### Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual comments, attention, actions, or gestures. As is the case for other forms of sexual violence, a key component to sexual harassment is that someone does these actions without the consent, permission, or agreement of the person or persons they are targeting. Sexual harassment includes non-contact forms such as: sexual comments about a person’s body parts or appearance, whistling, catcalling, demands for sexual favors, sexually suggestive staring, following, stalking, and exposing one’s sexual organs at someone. Sexual harassment also includes physical contact forms, like someone purposely brushing up against someone else on the street or public transportation, grabbing, pinching, slapping, or rubbing against another person in a sexual way. Some forms of sexual harassment may be covered within criminal law, while others are not but nonetheless can have significant negative impact on a person.

### Sexual Violence

The Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team defines sexual violence as “any sexual act that is committed without ongoing, freely given, informed, specific, and enthusiastic consent. Sexual violence also includes harassing and intimidating sexual behaviour.

Examples of sexual violence include:

- rape (including marital rape)
- sexual assault (sexual contact without consent)
- sexual harassment
- indecent exposure
- voyeurism (viewing and/or photographing/recording someone engaging in private activities without their knowledge or consent)
- non-consensual condom removing ("stealth")
- sexual exploitation

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<sup>7</sup> HRM’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (2021) *D&I Terminology Guide*.

- child sexual abuse”<sup>8</sup>

The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children states that, “sexual violence.... refers to any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality (e.g., childhood sexual abuse, sexual assault, drug facilitated sexual assault, rape during armed conflict, sexual harassment, stalking, sexual cyber harassment, sexual exploitation), is gender-based violence and is about exerting power and control over another.”<sup>9</sup>

#### Survivor

As stated by the Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team, “this term is used to refer to a person who has been through violence and emphasizes their strengths by referring to the fact that they survived.... It is up to an individual person who has been through violence to decide whether they want to be referred to as a victim or a survivor. Alternatively, some people prefer the term “person who has been through violence”.<sup>10</sup>

#### Trans or Transgender

“An umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned male at birth but identifies as a woman may refer to themselves as a trans woman.”<sup>11</sup>

#### Two-Spirit

“An umbrella term that encompasses many diverse Indigenous gender identities and sexual orientations. For some, the term implies the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits in the same body. Historically, two-spirit people were respected and often celebrated members of their communities. However, colonization severely impacted the perception of two-spirit people as it brought with it homophobic and transphobic ideologies.”<sup>12</sup>

#### Victim

As stated by the Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team, “this term is used to refer to a person who has been through violence and

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<sup>8</sup> Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team. (2021). Bridges to Safety: Building the capacity of the settlement sector to respond to gender-based violence, together with the anti-violence sector. Learn At Work. <https://www.ngbv.ca/online-course>.

<sup>9</sup> The Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women and Children <https://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/docs/LearningNetwork-GBV-Glossary.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team. (2021). Bridges to Safety: Building the capacity of the settlement sector to respond to gender-based violence, together with the anti-violence sector. Learn At Work. <https://www.ngbv.ca/online-course>.

<sup>11</sup> HRM’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (2021) *D&I Terminology Guide*.

<sup>12</sup> HRM’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO (2021) *D&I Terminology Guide*.



emphasizes the fact that they were victimized by a crime. Note: It is up to an individual person who has been through violence to decide whether they want to be referred to as a victim or a survivor. Alternatively, some people prefer the term “person who has been through violence”.<sup>13</sup>

#### Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that all forms of VAWG and SVAWG are underreported, so we cannot simply rely on official crime data to understand the scope and nature of the problem. It is also important to remember that the perception of safety - that is, how safe a person feels in a given time and place, shapes their urban experience, and it often guides mobility choices and can limit access to urban opportunities and services. There are thus real consequences on the daily lives of women and girls due to their perceptions of safety, even if they are not experiencing violence or sexual harassment at that specific moment.

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<sup>13</sup> Gender-Based Violence Settlement Sector Strategy Project Team. (2021). Bridges to Safety: Building the capacity of the settlement sector to respond to gender-based violence, together with the anti-violence sector. Learn At Work. <https://www.ngbv.ca/online-course>.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations General Assembly (1993) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. *Proceedings of the 85th Plenary Meeting*, Geneva, Dec. 20, 1993. United Nations: Geneva.

## Appendix C: Key stakeholder interview consent form

**Research project:** UN Women Safe Cities Safe Public Spaces Programme.

**Primary researcher:** Brandy Whitford, on behalf of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)'s Public Safety Office.

Contact information:

**Researcher:** Brandy Whitford

**Phone number:** 902.430-6703

**Email:** whitfob@halifax.ca

**Advisor:** Amy Siciliano

**Phone number:** 902.210-0102

**Email:** sicilia@halifax.ca

**Interview Date:**

**Interview Location:** Virtual interview via Skype.

**Time commitment:** Approximately 1 hour.

**Purpose of interview:** Information from interviews will be used to form the scoping study of the UN Women Safe Cities Safe Public Spaces Programme, which is a document produced to better understand the local context and issues surrounding gender inequity and violence in public spaces. To put it briefly, the scoping study will inform programme design.

**Associated risks:** Topics may be emotionally triggering.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed on the topic of sexual violence in public spaces in Halifax. Fear and experiences of sexual violence – from street level harassment to femicide – is a pervasive and long-standing issue. It happens on streets, parks, transit, workplaces, and homes and can deeply impact women and girls' ability to participate fully and equally in public life, restricting mobility, and access to essential services, education, employment and recreation. In Halifax, there is on average one sexual assault reported to police each day, but we know that this statistic only gives a surface-level glimpse at the scale of the issue, as survivors of sexual violence are less likely to report to police than those of other crimes.

In 2010, UN Women launched its UN Women Safe Cities Safe Public Spaces Flagship Programme. Since then, several cities across the world have joined the programme, including the city of Halifax. In joining the programme, Halifax is committed to identifying locally relevant and owned solutions, strengthening laws and policies, investing in the safety and economic viability of public spaces, and fostering transformative social norms that promote women and girls' rights to use public spaces free from sexual violence.

You have been asked to participate in this research project because of the work you do in the field of responding to and/or prevention of violence against women. The semi-structured interview will consist of 8-10 questions with the intention of helping the interviewer gain a better understanding of the views of those doing important work relevant to the research topic. Please carefully review this form and do not hesitate to ask for clarification on any part of the form if needed. By signing this form, you agree that:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to stop the interview and/or withdraw your information at any time, including during the interview and up to a month after the interview is complete. You are also free to refuse to answer any question(s) and continue with the interview.
- The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by hand.
- Recordings and transcriptions of the interview will not be shared with anyone other than the primary researcher
- The recording and transcription of the interview will be stored on a password-protected computer and destroyed within two years of the completion of the scoping study.
- Though identities will be obscured, it should be noted that given the nature of the study, there remains a risk of indirect identification.

Interview content, including direct quotations, may be used in the scoping study. By signing this form, you agree that:

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time; furthermore, I am free to refuse to answer any question at any time.
- I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
- The interview or extracts from it is for the purpose described above, and may be used for related purposes.
- I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
- I waive any right that I may inspect or approve the finished product, which may include the use of my interview or extracts from it. if I have consented to such use.
- I hereby release HRM in respect of any claims arising from the use of the material as outlined above.
- I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain deidentified quotations by me for the intended purpose of the scoping study, as well as for related purposes (i.e. programming and/or communications).

- I have full and complete authority to permit the use of my interview or extracts from it, and no other person's authorization is required.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's printed name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

In accordance with Section 485 of the Municipal Government Act (MGA), HRM is collecting your personal information in order to seek your consent for the use of your interview in content as outlined above. This personal information will not be used or disclosed for any other purposes. If you have any questions about the collection and use of this information, please contact HRM's Access and Privacy Office at 902-490-7460 or [accessandprivacy@halifax.ca](mailto:accessandprivacy@halifax.ca).

## Appendix D: Key Stakeholder Interview Questions

### 1. Situational questions

- a. Could you tell me a bit about your work? What is your organization, and what is your role within that organization? What does the geography of your work look like?
- b. Could you tell me about your work as it relates to sexual violence in Halifax?
- c. What are some of the challenges you've faced in either working to prevent, address, or respond to sexual violence in Halifax?

### 2. Stakeholders and plans

- a. What organizations or groups do you know of who are affecting change in Halifax around the issue of sexual violence?
- b. Could you tell me about collaborative work you do in the field? Are there groups or organizations you'd like to work alongside? Are there barriers preventing you from working with them?

### 3. Demographics

- a. Based on your experience, are particular groups of people (women/girls) more at risk for sexual violence? If so, which populations are more at risk in Halifax?
- b. What would you say your priorities are with regards to addressing sexual and gendered violence in Halifax? What priorities do you think the HRM should have regarding sexual violence against women?

### 4. What's missing?

- a. What kind of gaps in knowledge do you think we have about the issue of sexualized violence in Halifax? Can you think of reasons why those gaps might exist?
- b. Are there any particular areas geographically or activity-wise that you believe should be considered as priority areas for interventions (i.e. Halifax transit terminals, Argyle Street, festivals such as Halifax Pride, Jazz Fest, the Buskers)?
- c. How could Halifax's participation in the Safe Cities program help organizations like yours respond to and prevent sexual violence in public spaces?

### 5. Room to share any info the participant would like to, and to go over next steps re: research.