

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

**DATE:** December 20, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Additional Shelter Options and Updated Encampment Approaches

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**PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL**

**ORIGIN**

May 3, 2022, Halifax Regional Council Motion (Item No. 15.1.9):

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to continue to support the Province and other partners to ensure individuals have safe, supportive and affordable housing,

5. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and enter into a contribution agreement with the United Way to convene a lived experience committee to advise staff,

6. Direct the CAO to return to Council with a subsequent report with a subsequent report with an additional analysis and recommendations for actions, including a timeline and plan for supporting the transition of people, education and implementation that is lead and delivered by civilian staff.

7. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to provide a staff report on negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Province of Nova Scotia on supporting Unsheltered Residents of HRM. The report should include defining the roles of each order. of government and specific actions to support and prevent homelessness within the HRM.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

**RECOMMENDATIONS ON PAGE 4**

2. Direct the CAO to continue efforts to increase availability of affordable housing as described in the body of this report, and

4. Direct the CAO to continue to review options to add non-park sites to inventory of outdoor sites available for overnight sheltering,

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Smith, seconded by Councillor Stoddard

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

3. Direct the CAO to formalize criteria and locations for the designation of overnight sheltering sites in parks consistent with the criteria and locations described in the body of the staff report dated April 28, 2022, with the removal of the one-night camping sites, and addition of those sites to the list of potential longer term camping sites if required and possible to ensure adequate supply to meet demands to be brought back to Council for consideration.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED.

June 14, 2022 Halifax Regional Council Motion (15.1.5)

MOVED by Councillor Mancini, seconded by Councillor Austin

THAT Halifax Regional Council endorse the proposed criteria and locations in municipal parks for designated camping intended for those experiencing homelessness.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

September 12, 2023 Halifax Regional Council Motion (15.1.7)

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

1. direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to lease private property, if possible, as locations for persons experiencing homelessness to shelter.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

3. direct the CAO to establish additional encampments, temporary housing, or tiny home locations on all types of municipality-owned properties. Such sites may include rights of way, parking lots, and surplus lands.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

4. direct the CAO to write to the province requesting their immediate plans to create deeply affordable housing options in HRM, including the leasing of private property for persons experiencing homelessness and request the province provide on-site wrap-around services for homeless encampments that have over ten people.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

5. direct the CAO to explore the options of the non-park property types outlined in the staff report dated September 4, 2023, as well as campgrounds, and outdoor facilities, as locations for unhoused persons who are sheltering in a vehicle.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

MOVED by Councillor Cleary, seconded by Councillor Mason

THAT Halifax Regional Council:

6. direct the CAO provide a staff report to explore the feasibility of purchasing and installing prefabricated structures, similar to the Sprung structures in Toronto, to provide rapid response emergency housing in HRM including funding opportunities for installation and operation, which include other orders of government and the private sector.

MOTION AS AMENDED PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

September 12, 2023 Halifax Regional Council Motion (15.1.7)

MOVED by Councillor Russell, seconded by Councillor Lovelace

THAT Halifax Regional Council endorse the approaches contained in the staff report dated October 17, 2023.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY**

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

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to

...

- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities

79A(1) Subject to subsections (2) to (4), the Municipality may only spend money for municipal purposes if

- (a) the expenditure is included in the Municipality's operating budget or capital budget or is otherwise authorized by the Municipality; ...

Halifax Regional Municipality By-law P-600 Respecting Municipal Parks

### **Camping**

8. (1) Camping is prohibited in a park unless otherwise posted or by permission.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct the CAO to support the launch of a Province of Nova Scotia run:
  - a. a short term shelter and temporary housing initiative consistent with this report;
  - b. a long-term shelter and temporary housing initiative consistent with this report; and
  - c. a temporary shelter and/or sheltering option to support the unhoused persons current sheltering at the former Correctional Ball Field in Sackville.
2. Direct the CAO to adjust the approach to supporting individuals experiencing homelessness to further incentivize people to use indoor shelters and temporary housing options and disincentivize the use of encampments.
3. Pending the launch of the additional shelter space, direct the CAO to take action to un-designate Grand Parade as an encampment site, and re-assess number and location of other designated encampment sites.
4. Direct the CAO to consider options to provide increased support to improve encampment community member safety until the Province can stand up the short-term shelter in January 2024. The cost of these measures not to exceed \$200,000.
5. It is further recommended that this report not be released to the public.

**BACKGROUND**

The Halifax Regional Municipality is in the midst of a housing crisis; it continues to worsen. The number of people reporting they are homeless, as of December 12, 2023, is 1,082<sup>1</sup>. The By Name List (BNL) only expanded to more than 1,000 people at the end of August 2023 and in three months grew almost 8 per cent. The Sleeping Rough Survey conducted July 2023, identified 178 people who were sleeping rough in HRM and the navigators who completed that survey estimated that number had climbed to over 200 by September 2023. With the opening of the 100-bed Emergency Shelter in Dartmouth by the Province of Nova Scotia (PNS), Navigators identified in excess of 100 people still sleeping rough in the deteriorating winter weather conditions; it has become imperative that additional shelter and temporary housing space is made available to ensure people's survival.

Currently, encampment residents face the risk of exposure to winter weather, fire, carbon monoxide poisoning, exposure to drug use, unsanitary conditions, and potential violence, among many other issues. Municipal staff have approached the Province of Nova Scotia, Department of Community Services, and they have agreed to open additional shelter or temporary housing option in Halifax if HRM can find and supply a place for it. The running of such a shelter or temporary housing option represents an investment by the Province of Nova Scotia of \$4 million. In addition, the Province has committed to operating a temporary housing or sheltering option for those persons living in the Sackville Ballfield who will be displaced in order to facilitate the construction of the tiny homes pilot community. This would be an investment of \$1.7 million by the Province.

**DISCUSSION**

**Current State of Designated Locations**

As of Monday, December 18, 2023, the population of the current designated locations is as follows:

- Geary Street in Dartmouth had 1 Tyvek shelter and 2 tents
- Green Road had 3 Tyvek shelters, 8 tents, and 4 camper trailers

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<sup>1</sup> [AHANS | HRM Homelessness Statistics](#)

- Barrington Greenway had 4 tents
- Grand Parade had 27 ice huts and currently 20 people occupying them. The volunteers expect the 7 empty ones to be occupied in the near future
- Victoria Park - had 1 Tyvek shelter and 24 tents
- Lower Flinn had 3 or 4 tents that are occupied.
- Correctional ball field had 25 tents and based on a conversation with the volunteer group help people in that encampment, several of them house multiple people.

Based on this count there are approximately 100 people sleeping rough in designated locations. There are also others in the community in non-designated locations that increase that number.

### Growing Homeless Population

While the number of people sleeping rough currently has dropped from a peak of over 200 in September 2023, there are still more than 100 people with no place to shelter from the cold. This population includes seniors and youth. Phoenix House confirmed this week that they are turning away 20 – 30 youth a night from services as they are full.

In addition, all indications are that the number of people unhoused, and therefore living in parks if nothing changes, by Spring next year will grow significantly. Based on current estimates that number will be double or more. If these estimates come to fruition and there are no new initiatives implemented it is reasonable to expect the tent populations in these areas will double. HRM's experience, and that of other jurisdictions, inform that the impact on the surrounding community from homeless encampments grows exponentially with the increasing size of the encampment. Larger encampments are worse for the people forced to live in them, they are worse for the people who live around them, and they have larger negative impacts on the business community near them.

### Urgent Action is Necessary

With the colder temperatures associated with this time of year, there are escalating risks to the health, safety, and lives of those sheltering outside, as well as the communities around them. Colder temperatures require that people have warming centers or other means of warming, or they face injury and death from exposure. Wood, propane or butane heaters and appliances are not meant to be used in an enclosure and pose a risk of fire and carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Even electric heaters pose a fire threat in a tent and can carry a risk of electrocution. A fire in an encampment location poses a serious risk to others in the encampments and the surrounding community. In the past month, there have been multiple fires in encampments, including one on November 21, 2023, that closed the Dartmouth-bound ramp to the MacDonald Bridge.

Beyond fire and CO risks there are other dangers for those who live in encampments. Most recently this past Friday, December 15, 2023, there was a death in Grand Parade from a suspected drug overdose, as have been others during the Fall. There have been multiple reports of predatory criminal behaviour committed against people experiencing homelessness such as assault, theft, human trafficking, and drug dealing. Some of these behaviours are happening in encampments.

Previous reports documented some of the many impacts encampments have on their surrounding communities. They include residents not being able to use park and recreation spaces, theft from stores, businesses, and homes, vandalism, challenges for businesses to attract customers and retain staff, waste that attracts rats and vermin and promotes disease, social isolation, and a variety of other concerns.

### Volunteer Supports

As reported in the media, several groups of volunteers have formed to assist people experiencing homelessness. The Gated Community Association has been formed in Sackville as a formal not-for-profit

organization, and they have been providing support to the residents of the designed location in that community. A less formal group has been formed around the residents of Grand Parade, and both 211/311 receive daily calls from people looking to help.

While the help of the volunteers is welcomed by many, in many cases they lack the core training and knowledge to operate a sheltering space in ways that align with best practices. In recent months, volunteers have removed youth as young as 14 from a Provincial care facility, transported them to and housed them at an encampment. They have encouraged one 18-year-old to not participate in a rehab program, moved vehicles and structures onto HRM-owned properties without notification or permits, set up structures in manners that are not safe, and used fuel-based appliances in a manner that HRFE determined was unsafe. There are also reports from former residents of encampment sites that volunteers are encouraging them to not take advantage of Provincially run and sponsored shelter programs.

HRM is assigning a community developer (CD) to work with groups providing them a single link to HRM resources and assisting them to support people in more appropriate ways. The CD will also encourage volunteers to support community members to move inside and out of the cold and unsafe conditions that currently exist in encampments.

#### Update on New Shelter Space

In November 2023, the Province of Nova Scotia opened a new emergency shelter on Windmill Road in Dartmouth. This space provided 50 beds with people living in encampments prioritized for access; HRM navigators filled more than 30 of the initial beds. Within 90 minutes of opening, there were 53 people in line outside. Due to the overwhelming need, within a couple of weeks, the Province expanded the capacity of the shelter to 100. The shelter is currently divided into two sections, one for men and one for women; future plans will include a separate space for youth.

As of Friday, December 15, 2023, the section of the Windmill Road shelter for men is full. Pending the opening of the new temporary housing option for 32 women at the Waverly Inn in Halifax, the Province and their service provider, 902 Man Up, are considering options to reconfigure the internal spaces to increase capacity for men, as they are the majority population sleeping rough. To note, existing shelters such as the one on North Park Street, the Salvation Army, Turning Point, and others are at capacity. Staff have also confirmed with Phoenix House that as many as 30 youths a night are being turned away as their shelter space is also full.

#### Why People Don't Wish to Go To The Shelter

Conversations with persons experiencing homelessness note that even if there was space, some are not prepared to go to the Dartmouth Shelter. For some, it simply is not in Halifax, doesn't provide sufficient support, it doesn't provide enough secure storage, and for others, it doesn't offer any level of privacy. Some are enjoying the high levels of support that are being provided by volunteer groups such as food and supplies, especially in Grand Parade and Sackville.

It is important to note that some people are struggling with addictions and substance abuse. Persons facing these challenges are often unable to use in a shelter setting and are not able to stop using. There are many who would like to address their substance abuse issues but without access to a comprehensive rehab program, they have no hope of success. The inclusion of shelter space where a person actively suffering from substance abuse disorder could stay would address what has been one of the largest barriers to a large segment of the encampment population from moving inside. Projects such as the Shelter Nova Scotia run Herring Cove Apartments here in HRM have proven the viability and success of a 'wet shelter'.

Finally, there are a few people who simply are unable to function in a managed or supported housing initiative. Some also have such problematic behaviours, often linked to significant mental health needs, that for the safety of other residents and the staff, are banned from accessing any shelter or housing environment. For these clients sheltering outside in a park is their only option. It is for this reason, that even

with a dramatic increase in the availability of housing, there will always be some people sleeping rough in HRM.

#### Space For Additional Shelter and Temporary Housing Options

For over 6 months staff have searched for suitable spaces to host a variety of services including the Sobering or Stabilization Centre, a Drop-In Centre, and sheltering and temporary housing options. While many options have been found landlords are not prepared to rent their spaces for purposes that involve the homeless. At this point, the municipality has identified several church basements that are prepared to consider providing space for these types of purposes. Considering the number of people still sleeping rough, church hall options are insufficient to meet the need. While several of them could be used in tandem to create sufficient space, as reported and discussed with Regional Council in October 2023, there is a significant shortage of supporting staff within the sector. The Province has only one service provider, 902 Man Up, available to set up one additional space at this time.

The owners of the strip mall that housed the old Sobey's Store on Pleasant Street have identified they would be willing to consider leasing that space for this purpose. This site is 21,000 sq ft and is a viable option as a shelter space. The current state of the space is not suitable and would require extensive roof repairs, flooring repairs, and the installation of a sprinkler system as the building was built before such a system was a requirement. The annual base rent for the premises would be \$400,000 +/- per annum.

Staff have also considered industrial spaces but have not yet been able to find a large warehouse space available that the landlord is prepared to support the purpose. Expropriation of a space is an option but one such potential space suitable space available is a very large building, with multiple tenants, valued at \$40 million, and support from the Province of Nova Scotia to purchase this site is not available at this time. Staff are actively looking at the purchase availability for suitable standalone warehouse/industrial buildings as they become available on the market with a view to shortlisting options early in the new year.

Staff therefore have considered two municipal sites for a new shelter or temporary or housing option. The first is the Gray Arena located in Dartmouth and previously used as a sheltering location. This location did not prove popular with shelter users when last utilized and it is not near the recommended services that residents need. The other is the Halifax Forum Multi-Purpose Room on Young Street. This space is in Halifax and is within easy walking distance of a large grocery store, fast food offerings, NSLC, corner store, and a drug store that regularly participates in harm reduction activities. In all measures under a homelessness lens, the multi-purpose space at the Halifax Forum is the more desirable location. In terms of short-term use, the sudden loss of the Gray Arena cancels a range of children and youth recreation programs. The sudden loss of the Forum Multi-purpose Room will result in the loss of some community events, many geared toward an adult population. There will likely be some frustration and community complaints if the Multi-purpose Room is closed to support homelessness efforts. The loss of revenue for the Gray Arena in the short term is larger than the loss of the Multi-purpose Room.

Considering the predicted growth of the homeless population, in the long term, a large space or multiple large spaces are needed. Without, at minimum, a large space, suitable to house more than 150-plus people, the continued growth of encampments is inevitable. While nothing is available in the short term, a large campus-style space, with different sectioned areas for the various needs of the unhoused population, with targeted supports, is needed. The concept would provide configurations to support both emergency shelter beds and single occupancy style options.

To support a large endeavor, a large industrial or event space would be suitable for this purpose. An alternative option is a large tent structure, such as the three recently deployed in Toronto. The reality of the market is the Province and/or the municipality would need to own such building or land space as it is highly unlikely a commercial property owner would rent their space for such a purpose.

As such, the recommended option to address both the short-term needs, sheltering from the cold and unsafe conditions, and the long-term needs, to reduce the number of people forced to sleep rough, is to

provide the Halifax Forum Multi-Purpose Room to the Province of Nova Scotia to run a shelter for up to six months. Furthermore, to immediately explore with the Province of Nova Scotia options for a long-term, multi-configuration, large shelter and temporary housing facility for 24 – 36 months.

#### Removal of the designation of Grand Parade and Victoria Park

In October, at the recommendation of staff, Regional Council endorsed the designation of a small portion of Grand Parade and Victoria Park for sheltering. Since that time both members of Council and staff have received extensive community feedback about the importance of Grand Parade as a key location for important civic events, such as Remembrance Day. In the current encampment strategy, significant locations such as cemeteries or other memorial sites are not designated as sheltering locations, and in many cases, a rapid response strategy is in place to help relocate someone to an alternative site before they become settled in that location. Based on the experiences over the past two months and with the addition of further indoor sheltering space, staff now recommend that the Grand Parade not be used as a designated location.

Staff have been reviewing the current state of Victoria Park. Recently, due primarily to people leaving food out in the park, numerous rats and other vermin have moved into the space, and there are reports of encountering rats at various times throughout the day. Staff have attempted to address the rising rat population but with the continued presence of food waste their number is increasing. HRM has previous experience with park sites that became overrun with vermin and believes that at this point, Victoria Park needs to be cleared of residents to allow for their abatement of them, and to remediate the park grounds before more damage is done.

It is important to note that without increased shelter space and housing, and futureproofing for the expected rise in the number of persons experiencing homelessness, reducing the number of people sheltering in parks and keeping them clear will not be possible.

#### Incentivizing Shelter and Temporary Housing Usage

One of the core challenges is getting those who are experiencing homelessness to take advantage of shelter and housing spaces. A key here is the need to ensure sufficient shelter space in locations people are willing to go to, that does not create barriers to accessing the supports they need, some referenced in this report. In order to reduce the number of people unhoused and living in parks, essentially a two-pronged approach is required. The municipality, the province, and others must make the shelter and housing spaces as desirable as possible. Secondly, the municipality, while still supporting its principles of dignity and the right to housing, makes sheltering outside less attractive than it currently is when shelter beds are available. At the core of these efforts is the need for sufficient beds for people to move to, without sufficient sheltering and housing options these efforts will not be successful.

Should Regional Council approve the recommendations in this report a new shelter and temporary housing space will be created in the municipality, providing up to 150 more beds. At the same time, the Province is launching 100 pallet shelters, a 52-unit tiny home community, and a 32-bed women's temporary housing project. Additionally, there are discussions in place to create a seniors temporary housing facility. Based on existing projections there will be additional space needed as well.

#### Revised Encampment Approach

Considering the rate of growth in the number of people experiencing homelessness and being unhoused, an ever-increasing number of HRM parks and public spaces will be lost to support the homeless. This challenge is reflected in multiple municipalities across North America and is in many cases the most urgent issue faced. In some cases, parks simply do not have sufficient space to meet the need and encampments grow onto streets and other types of locations. Continued and growing investment in resources, housing and supports for persons experiencing homelessness will be essential if HRM wishes to avoid the fate of other municipalities.

As stated in the Framework to Address Homelessness in HRM, a stated goal of the municipality in terms of this work is: “That every resident of the Halifax Regional Municipality has a safe, supportive, and sustainable home and that all homes are purposely constructed for long-term human habitation, built to safety codes and standards, and in a suitable location based on access to transportation and amenities and municipal planning strategies.” Even if homes are not available the municipality wishes people to have a safe, indoor location to shelter, better protected from the risks of weather, fire, other natural disasters, and violence. Indoor shelters also provide access to electricity and clean running water, both essential to support people’s health and wellness. Therefore, as indoor options are brought online, the municipality should adopt a revised approach to addressing people sleeping rough. Some core elements of this approach should include:

- Not facilitating people sheltering outside when indoor options exist and are available to a particular community member. This would adjust the current municipal practices around providing tents and other similar resources. This would also release resources currently used to buy tents and supplies, allowing them to be invested in more effective solutions.
- When sufficient and suitable shelter beds and temporary housing options are available for everyone, do not permit long-term encampments to exist in public spaces.
- Enforce a series of standards on necessary camp sites when there are no indoor sheltering beds or temporary housing available. This would include applying the standards around unsightly premises to encampment sites and cleaning sites up when the community member is not able to do so. This could also include the provision of 24/7 support and security on encampment sites.
- Invest in further diversion supports. This would include the provision of storage for people who currently have multiple tents in a single location to try and protect their belongings until sheltering or housing becomes available with sufficient storage. It would also include eviction prevention efforts and other approaches to keep people from becoming homeless.
- When an encampment site needs to be closed one of the frequent complaints of people experiencing homelessness, and community advocates, is the risk of criminalization. Staff intend to adjust the encampment closure approach to not focus on the people themselves but on the items, they have in the space. For example, if a community member is sheltering in a park, they would receive notice that camping is not permitted in this area. They would be offered help to move to a new location or to store their belongings. Should someone still be unwilling to move after several attempts staff would, with HRP support to ensure that staff and community members are safe, remove the items not permitted to be in the park such as a tent or other items. In this approach people are not fined, they are not arrested, they have options to keep their belongings, and help moving.

### Data Collection

While there is data available from such tools as the Point in Time Counts, Sleeping Rough Surveys, and lived experience consultation there is a need for more information about who specifically is unhoused and sheltering in our community. This data would allow an increased level of case management planning, better services to clients, and an ability to track people through their journey from homelessness to housing, or migration from one encampment to another. As such, the municipality is looking to utilize HIFIS, a Government of Canada, homeless data management system for data collection; this is the system required by the Province for use in shelters and facilities. Having access to this program would allow staff to make better informed decisions on individual needs, and also allow for staff to make sound recommendations to Regional Council. The Province is supportive and prepared to offer HRM a license and training to use this program, which would provide additional evidence-based decision-making between the two levels of government.

### Drop In Centre

An initiative planned for 2023 – 2024 was the launch of a drop-in centre for persons experiencing homelessness. These types of facilities and services are essential to the support for unhoused people, supplying them with daily support, a dry and safe place during the day, and reducing the impact of

homelessness in the larger community. Staff from the Municipality and the Province were able to identify more than 15 suitable locations available for lease, but no landlords were prepared to rent their space for a purpose such as this involving homelessness.

Pending the support of Reginal Council, moving forward and considering a larger shelter option, a drop-in centre may be suitable as a component of the campus style option discussed in this report.

### Immediate Response

With the Province approximately a month out from opening another shelter the risk of injury and death from exposure, fire, or carbon monoxide poisoning continues to grow, especially with worsening weather. In the short term, the municipality continues to provide education about the dangers of any type of fire or heater within a small camping style tent. Signage will also be posted at locations and staff continue to look for other opportunities to ensure people have heat, power, and are safer. The municipality is exploring options, including with their provincial counterparts, such as warming sheds.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs of resources and operations for the short-term shelter will be provided by the Province of Nova Scotia.

Revenue loss associated with the provision of the Halifax Forum Multi-Purpose Room for January – March is estimated by staff of the Halifax Forum at approximately \$37,000. Based on the Management Agreement with the facility, HRM would be responsible for covering that loss of revenue if it results in a deficit. This does not include possible lost revenue opportunities from clients who choose not to book the Forum with the risk that its shelter use continues past April 1, 2024. Extending the use of the shelter until the end of August would result in a total loss of revenue, January 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024, of approximately \$90,000. Should the Forum be used as a long-term shelter, the annual net loss of revenue would be between \$300,000 - \$400,000. This is comparable to the expected base rent for market premises elsewhere. There may be need for security to supplement security provided by the province.

The costs and implications for the creation of a long-term shelter location, other than the Forum, are impossible to estimate without a known location and general operating plan. Staff will return to a future Council meeting to discuss options after further negotiations with the Province and more information is available.

Short-term immediate supports to encampments while the Province prepares to stand up a new shelter in Halifax could likely cost \$100,000 - \$200,000 depending on the types of interventions.

### RISK CONSIDERATION

There are several risks with the approaches outlined in this report.

1. There is a high level of risk that the Gated Community Association will not support the existing plans for the launch of the Tiny Homes pilot. This work is scheduled to start in February and while the Province and HRM are making plans to support the current residents of that encampment site, multiple sources have reported the Association intends to resist this work unless every community member is prioritized for a tiny home. Unfortunately, not every resident is at a point where they would be successful in that situation.
2. There is an extremely high risk that insufficient shelter and temporary housing space is created, and the number of unhoused persons will grow to such as point that the municipality will be unable to keep Victoria Park and other municipal spaces clear of persons needing to shelter.

3. That a larger space for a long-term shelter as outlined in this report is not found and that the best option will be to maintain the shelter at the Halifax Forum until facility renovations begin.
4. That more people will be injured or die in encampments due to weather or from attempts to remain warm. That people may also be victims of criminal activity, including drug dealing, theft, or human trafficking.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

At this time, no formal community engagement has occurred, however, Navigators have had informal discussions with many encampment residents about the need for a Halifax shelter, the need for single-room occupancy style sheltering, temporary housing options, emergency bed options, and the various social supports that are needed. Should the recommended short term approach be approved it is recognized the Forum Board will need to be engaged before any public announcement.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

Additional sheltering or temporary housing will generate waste and garbage. These will be addressed through the installation of large tip and dump waste containers.

Encampments also generally produce needle waste, and this will be addressed by scheduled needle sweeps conducted by Mainline Needle Exchange.

The continued presence of encampments in parks significantly damages the park infrastructure, such as grass, trees, tables and chairs, and other components. Once an encampment is closed remediation will occur before the space is suitable for general community use. Park space remediation is completed by the Parks and Recreation Park team.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Regional Council could choose to direct the CAO to not support the Province of Nova Scotia in opening a new shelter in Halifax or Sackville as outlined in this report, including refusing to provide spaces for them.
2. Direct the CAO to not invest municipal dollars in short-term mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of injury and death between now and when the Province of Nova Scotia stands up a new Halifax Shelter.
3. Direct the CAO to continue to support the existing encampment management approach or adopt a different one than outlined in the report.
4. Other alternative approaches as approved by Regional Council.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

None

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If the report is released to the public, a copy can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210, or Fax 902.490.4208.

Report Prepared by: Max Chauvin, Director of Housing and Homelessness 902.456.7420