

Re: Item No. 14.1

HALIFAX

May 7, 2024

Item 14.1: Update on Homelessness

Halifax Regional Council Meeting

Background

- Between current and planned resources Province will have created over 900 new beds since 2022
- BNL: April 30 – 1,239 people – 4% growth/month
- Signs of rapid growth in the number of people sleeping rough
- Designated locations: 4 locations, 26 sites, over 65
- Additional 30+ in non designated sites + rural

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Continued sleeping rough growth

- Options not available to meet needs
- Cost of living – Highest rates of poverty in Canada
- Rental price pressure
- Unstable housing options
- Fixed term leases and renovictions
- Control and agency
- Challenges of congregate living
- Sense of community
- Mental health and addiction

Encampments are bad for those forced to live in them

- Health decline
- No heat and cooling
- Fire and CO gas
- Vermin and disease
- Violence
- Extreme weather
- No ability to move forward
- No potable water
- No showers & toilets
- No food prep and storage
- No power
- Risk loss of porta potties

Encampments are bad for the community

- Noise and disturbance
- Risk of fire
- Rats and disease
- Violence
- Loss of recreation, events and community
- Disruption to business and staffing
- Vision of the future for precariously housed

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Sleeping rough is not permitted

- sites within 50 metres of a school, daycare, or adult care facility;
- on active sports fields, dugouts, or bleachers;
- within horticultural displays or gardens;
- within cemeteries; near environmentally or culturally sensitive areas;
- blocking a path or right of access;
- on bridges, docks, or piers;
- near playgrounds, pools, or splash pads;
- near skateboard parks or sports courts;
- near picnic shelters, gazebos;
- near recreation facilities;
- or in highly inaccessible spaces for individuals, services, and support providers.
- **De-designated sites**

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Requiring people to move

- Determine someone needs to leave a location
- Street navigator connection (may have already happened)
- Compliance Officers provide a notice (notice period may vary)
- Engage service providers
- Regular offers of support – moving, storage etc
- Discuss barriers
- Close the site
- Last resort: engage Halifax Regional Police or RCMP to assist with transition

Long term approach

1. When people sleeping rough have suitable indoor options that they can access, the municipality will not permit the establishment of encampments.
2. Continue to close designated locations, as more shelter and housing becomes available.
3. The berms on University Avenue will be de-designated by the fall due to the high risk from snow and ice control.

Actions to reduce encampments

- The creation and support of encampments encourage them
- Continued support for Prov NS work
- Update list of prohibited locations
- Improve coordination, case management, and referrals
- Restrict provision of tents
- Provision of storage
- Diversion support
- No additional power (at this time)

Need for additional temporary designated locations

- Insufficient and unsuitable indoor space at this time.
- Lack of mental health and addiction support.
- Temporary until new resources are available.

- Option 1: Allow organic growth
- Option 2: Manage the growth