

Re: Item No. 4

HALIFAX

Update Concerning
Homelessness
in HRM and Activities
Since June 14, 2022

August 2, 2022

Item 4.0

Housing Crisis

- 586 individuals without a safe, permanent, and fixed address
 - 91 unsheltered in tents, encampments on public land and places unfit for permanent human habitation

2022 Point in Time (PIT) Count: April 7, 2022

- By Name list growth
 - April 19th: 547
 - May 31st: 616 12.6% growth over 42 days
 - July 26th: 633 2.8% growth over 56 days

[AHANS | What We Do | HRM Homelessness Statistics](#)

Long Term Outlook

There is the potential for increase in the number of homeless in HRM in the next two - three years.

- Loss of affordable housing stock
- Continued dramatic growth in HRM population
- Renovictions
- High levels of inflation
- Pending ending of Provincial rent cap

Root Issues

- Lack of suitable housing stock
- Dramatically rising costs
- Poverty
- Access to timely and comprehensive health support
- Racism, ableism, sexism, etc.
- Lack of support for children in care

The Ultimate Goal

That every resident should have a home that is safe, supportive, and sustainable and that all homes should be purposely constructed for long-term human habitation, built to safety codes and standards, and be in a suitable location based on municipal planning strategies

Responsibility for housing

Between 1995 and 1996:

- Service exchange process transferred various roles and responsibilities between municipalities and the Province of Nova Scotia.
- Province of Nova Scotia assumed responsibility for social services, including affordable housing and child welfare, nursing homes, and homes for the elderly.
- Municipalities are required to make contributions to the Province for education, social housing, and corrections.

Background

- People have slept rough in our community for many years and will continue to do so
- Construction of Halifax and Dartmouth Modulars (64 units)
- Support for hotel stays
- Various housing projects: 243 by late 2023 with additional projects possible
- Successful activities to house persons experiencing homelessness
- Designation of locations where people can shelter
- Creation of lived experience committee

Recent: Meagher Park

- Closure of Meagher Park on July 5th with transition period until July 17th
- Signage and notices
- Park residents indicated a willingness to move
- Support from street navigators and service providers (multiple times and various agencies)
- Opposition from advocacy groups including Halifax Mutual Aid (HMA), Permanent, Accessible, Dignified and Safe Housing (PADS), Nova Scotians United, and Freedom Convoy
- New and returning (park) residents

Meagher Park cont.

- Residents of the park no longer willing to leave
- Conversations with advocates and protestors in the park
- Some individuals trying to help those in the park have been made to feel uncomfortable by protesters
- Compliance officers' visits to the park
- People working in the sector continue to recommend people move into the park, in direct violation of the park closure

Recent Public Communication

- Apr 22: Municipal update – Occupancy permits issued for Halifax modular units
- May 2: Municipal update – Construction at Halifax modular units completed & fully ready for occupancy
- Jun 14: Briefing to Regional Council & endorsement of staff report on designated outdoor sheltering locations
- Jul 5: Municipal statement – Meagher Park closure & services of designated outdoor sheltering locations
- Jul 15: Municipal update – services for designated outdoor sheltering locations
- Jul 22: Municipal update – services of designated outdoor sheltering locations & transition deadline for Meagher Park
- Jul 27: Municipal update – compliance visit to Meagher Park

Reported Impact of Encampments

- Significant mental health impact including PTSD
- Health and safety concerns
- Social isolation
- Property damage and theft
- Loss of trust in police, government, & elected officials
- Retaliation on neighbours

Reported value of Meagher Park

- Sense of community and belonging
- Safety as it is a public site, specifically for women
- Central location with easy access to services such as grocery store
- Access for ambulance and emergency vehicles
- Perceived path to housing
- Feeling that Meagher Park was not used or needed

Reasons to close Meagher Park

- Escalating health and safety concerns
- Other options are available with increased supports
- Location is not suitable based on criteria
- Profound impact on surrounding community
- Reported increasing conflict in the community between advocacy groups, neighbours, and park residents

Next Steps

- Negotiation and a civilian led approach toward closing the park has not resulted in any meaningful result other than escalation of protest efforts and general violence
- Commitment of advocates and protesters to proactively engage in conflict should the municipality enforce the July 5th notice
- With civilian and partner efforts exhausted, the next step in the endorsed response plan will be to ask Halifax Regional Police for assistance