

January 9, 2024

Wanda Baker Hayward
Chair, Grace United Church Unified Board
70 King Street
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B2Y 4R3

Dear Wanda Baker Hayward:

Thank you, for your letter dated September 27, 2023, regarding emergency and affordable housing in Nova Scotia. The Minister has requested that I respond on his behalf, as Senior Executive Director, Housing. I apologize for the delayed response.

Firstly, I would like to thank you, and your colleagues for the work Grace United does to support the people and community of Dartmouth. I want to assure you that housing affordability, especially among vulnerable people and groups, is one of the Province's top priorities. We also recognize that the rising numbers of people experiencing homelessness is a persistent issue. That's why we have a specific target for improving affordability in the recently released five-year housing plan, [Our Homes, Action for Housing](#). The Plan includes a target to make 17,250 household units more affordable over five years, in addition to targets to incentivize the creation of more new supply and to improve housing conditions.

The five-year Plan has a number of initiatives to address affordability, as well as to incentivize the creation of new units. I would like to highlight some programs and initiatives which may be available to you to assist with your immediate needs:

- [Canada-Nova Scotia Targeted Housing Benefit \(Rent Supplement Program\)](#) This program supports households across the Province who struggle to pay for their rent through rent supplements. There have been 7,000 funded rent supplements in 2022-23 and another 1,000 in 2023/24, to help households who struggle to pay for their rent.
- The Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency has been working hard to reduce turnaround times for units and place households in public housing as quickly as possible from the waitlist.
- The [companion housing pilot](#) in partnership with Happipad, a not-for-profit organization that uses technology to match compatible renters and homeowners with available rooms to rent. Through this pilot we hope to create up to 500 new affordable housing matches over the next two years without waiting for construction or renovation.
- Incentivizing new non-market housing units in the Community Housing sector through the [Affordable Housing Development Program](#) and the [Land for Housing Program](#). To date, 12 parcels of land have been conditionally approved through Land for Housing, which could help deliver over 2,000 housing units, roughly one-third of which will be affordable and available only to eligible households.

- The [Community Housing Growth Fund](#) and the Community Housing Acquisition Program (CHAP) are targeted to non-profit housing providers to create and preserve affordable units. As of December 1, 2023, over \$21M has been loaned to community housing organizations through the CHAP, to preserve over 436 units with 141 new deeply affordable units in the last year.
- We also recognize that the rising numbers of people experiencing homelessness is a growing issue. For example, the government and private sector are coming together to build a tiny home community, the first of its' kind in Nova Scotia, to help people experiencing homelessness in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). A pilot community in Lower Sackville will have 52 units, providing housing for about 62 people through collaboration between the provincial and municipal governments and Nova Scotian companies The Shaw Group and Dexter Construction. The Province will invest \$9.4 million in construction and \$935,000 per year in annual operating costs.
- So far in 2023-24 there has been a 10-fold increase in investments (\$6M to \$60M in one year) into growing Community Housing Sector. For 2023/24 the program budget is \$8.3M.
- The Rapid Housing, Initiative is a federal program focused on the rapid development of deeply affordable housing for those who are experiencing homelessness or are at significant risk of homelessness. \$16.6M to support the construction of 195 deeply affordable housing units, plus an additional 63 expected in round 3. Rounds 1 through 3 of the Rapid Housing Initiative, provided capital contributions to support the creation of new permanent affordable housing units. The funding was designed to cover the rapid construction of new rental housing units and the conversion/rehabilitation of existing buildings to affordable housing, as well as the creation of new affordable housing units that serve priority populations as identified in the National Housing Strategy, who are, or otherwise would be in severe housing need or experiencing, or at risk of homelessness -
 - o Round 1 (October 27, 2020 – March 31, 2021) funding went towards projects that helped those in severe housing need, specifically, people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness and people living in temporary shelters because of the COVID-19 pandemic,
 - o Round 2 (June 30, 2021 – March 31, 2022) funding addressed the urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians, and
 - o Round 3 (December 12, 2022 – March 15, 2023) supported the housing needs of the country's most vulnerable.
- \$2M commitment to build new modular housing to tackle homelessness in Bridgewater. This project is making progress and developments will likely be announced in the new year.

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Despite the work underway, there is much more to do to ensure all Nova Scotians can afford a safe place to call home. Thank you again for taking the time to reach out on this important issue. I appreciate your commitment as we strive to improve access to affordable housing for every Nova Scotian.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vicki Elliott-Lopez", with a circular flourish at the bottom.

Vicki Elliott-Lopez
Senior Executive Director, Housing
Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

c: Honourable John A. Lohr, Minister, Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing

C-0649 /kh