



September 27, 2023

Honourable Trevor Boudreau
Department of Community Services
P.O. Box 696
Halifax NS B3J 2T7

Dear Minister,

We note that one of the priorities of your department is "working with partners and communities to find ways to reduce poverty and address homelessness throughout the province." It is with regard to this priority that we are writing to you.

As a downtown Dartmouth Church, we are all too aware of the situation of people who are unhoused and who are precariously housed. They come to our door for help and we also meet them in the programming we offer with partners. We are deeply concerned.

Recently released statistics show a growth in homelessness (Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia: 1,035 people actively homeless in HRM (September 19, 2023) and Sleeping Rough Survey: 178 (July 2023)). Additionally troubling to us is that for the Sleeping Rough Survey, 31.5% of people sleeping in the rough had been involved with Child Protection Services as a child and/or youth. This suggests we must have better supports for those existing child protection services.

We are thankful for the Out of the Cold shelter, the housing at the former DoubleTree by Hilton and Future Inn and the wrap around services offered but the housing need has ballooned to include people who are employed or have been priced out of the housing market.

We urge your department in concert with the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing to respond to the urgent need for emergency housing as well as deeply affordable housing in Dartmouth. The emergency housing offered needs to be more than an emergency shelter that only operates on a nightly basis. This does not offer people the stability and security that people need to leave their tents and tiny shelters.

The private sector has no interest in providing deeply affordable housing so it becomes the role of government to ensure that there is a sufficient housing stock to meet the needs of people with low incomes. Although the recent announcement of 222 public housing units for the entire Province is most welcome, it will not meet the need. We urge you to make further investments including with other partners in HRM.

One of the components driving homelessness and precarious housing is income. As the Department that administers income assistance, we would request that income assistance rates be increased to reflect the cost-of-living increases and that rates are not cut for individuals who are homeless.

Yours sincerely,

Wanda Baker Hayward
Chair
Grace United Church Unified Board