Halifax
Nova Scotia
September 6, 1963

His Worship the Mayor
and Aldermen
City of Halifax
Nova Scotia

Your Worship,
Madam, and Gentlemen:

The Halifax Advisory Committee on Human Rights submits for consideration by City Council the following statement prepared in the interests of the residents of Africville, whose future has been for some time a concern of City Council.

The Halifax Advisory Committee on Human Rights is a volunteer non-delegate group consisting of residents of Africville and citizens living elsewhere in Halifax and its vicinity. The Committee was formed in August 1962, at the invitation of several residents of Africville, to advise in matters related to an anticipated clearance of the Africville land area for industrial use. A list of the Committee's eighteen members is appended.

The Committee has met approximately sixteen times on its own, including two meetings at which City staff members were present; once at City Hall, with representatives of City Council or City staff; and five times at Africville, where public meetings were conducted by the Chairman of the Committee and at which, on one occasion, City staff members were present.

It is clear that residents of Africville have a strong sense of community. A survey which the Committee conducted, through personal interviews with one adult member in each of sixty-nine of the approximately eighty families living in Africville, indicates that the average adult has lived in Africville for thirty-five years. In reply to the question, "If Africville is expropriated, what kind of housing would you like to have, and where?", most respondents indicated that they would prefer to live in the north end of the City and definitely in single-family dwellings with low down-payments and low monthly repayments.

It is clear, also, that residents of Africville vary in their ability to provide acceptable housing accommodation for themselves. The Committee

submits that there are at least two possible means by which acceptable housing might be made available:

(1) By the formation of a limited-dividend housing company on a non-profit basis (under Section 16 of the National Housing Act) for the advantage of Africville residents financially able to benefit from such a formation;

(2) By the construction of high-density housing on the upper slopes of Africville, provided by the City of Halifax in agreement with a corporate body (under provisions of the Municipal Corporation Supplementary Powers Act, 1954) to be made available to persons displaced through the redevelopment program anticipated for the Africville area and, regardless of race, to other citizens of Halifax.

The Committee has concluded, in view of its numerous meetings and consultations, that

(1) the complexity of property tenure in Africville,
(2) the strong sense of community in Africville,
(3) the probable high cost of relocation arrangements likely to be acceptable mutually to Afridville residents and the City of Halifax, and the apparent need for special financial arrangements, and
(4) the depressed condition of housing in Africville, would warrant the City's taking extraordinary measures.

THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS, therefore, that City Council engage a person of outstanding qualifications, in training and experience, to study Africville in depth and for the purpose of formulating specific recommendations of sound ways and means of solving problems in housing.

The Committee advises that, as a first step towards implementing its recommendation, City Council bring to Halifax a specialist who would be requested (after a preliminary survey of Africville, and discussion with City staff, with the Halifax Advisory Committee on Human Rights, and with other resources) to state whether, in his judgment, a study in depth is indicated.

The Committee's recommendation is submitted for the reasons intimated above and, also, in the knowledge of an outstanding report published in 1958 by Dr. Albert Rose, Professor of Social Work, University of Toronto, of Canada's first extensive experiment in slum-clearance and urban redevelopment: Regent Park, Toronto. Dr. Rose's report, a record of social and administrative significance, impresses the Committee that a study of like calibre would yield similar far-reaching solutions for Africville. A biographical statement about Dr. Rose is appended.

Yours very truly,

THE HALIFAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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