

# Spotlight on Public Safety

Monthly report to the HRM Board of Police Commissioners - December 2013



## Staff Sgt. Scott MacDonald HRM's Public Safety Officer



Inclement weather often brings with it some attention and concern around the issues of affordable housing and homelessness. November in HRM has been no exception, and the Public Safety Office has been participating in multiple efforts on this front.

The Nova Scotia Housing and Homelessness Conference was recently held here, Mayor Savage hosted a roundtable on affordable housing and the federal and provincial governments were recognized at an event for their contributions towards a supportive transitional apartment building project recently launched in Halifax (see photo below).

Is there connection between preventive public safety efforts and homelessness and affordable housing? Absolutely! Halifax Regional Police and the HRM Public Safety Office have a strong interest in seeing improvements and additional capacity for safe, supervised and supportive housing options in the region.

Read more about my perspective on this complex issue in my latest blog at <http://spotlightonpublicsafety.com/2013/12/05/368/>



S/Sgt. MacDonald (far left) joins Don Spicer, Executive Director Shelter Nova Scotia (third from the left), the Honourable Peter MacKay, Minister of Justice (center) and other stakeholders at an event announcing a new transitional housing project.

## Community Engagement

Engage citizens and community groups in playing an active role in public safety in HRM.

- Thousands of students from across Atlantic Canada came to Halifax on November 27 for Free the Children's *We Day Atlantic Canada*, a day-long educational event that celebrated the power of young people to create positive change in their local communities and around the world. The event brought together student leaders from across Atlantic Canada who are volunteering and working to make a difference in both their local and global communities. We Day is part of a year-long program called We Act that gives educators resources to help bring social justice issues into the classroom and to encourage students to get involved in issues about which they feel passionate.

## Partnerships

Align with all levels of government, social agencies and community partners to realize efficiencies and improve public safety programs and services in HRM.

- Parents and students who are involved in or witness bullying behaviour in schools will now have an easier way to report it. The province's Online Reporting Form for Students and Parents went live on November 18. The online system is one of only a few being used in Canada. It will be continually monitored by the department and adjustments will be made as necessary. You can access the system at <https://edapps.ednet.ns.ca/IncidentTrackingSS/Intro.aspx?lang=1>

## Diversity

Strengthen HRM's connection with our diverse communities while at the same time addressing quality-of-life issues within those communities.

- When bad weather put a damper on plans for setting up their holiday tree, the Africville Heritage Trust reached out to Cst. Shaun Carvery, HRP's Diversity Officer, for assistance. The son of an Africville descendant and a very active member in the community, Cst. Carvery was quick to lend his tree trimming skills. The second annual Africville Church Service and Tree Lighting Ceremony took place on November 30 at the Africville Museum. This is the second year of operation for the Africville Museum and the second annual tree lighting. Christmas in Africville was always a community event and having the tree lighting every year is a chance to bring a little of the past into the future.

## Police Community Response

Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and Halifax District RCMP must continue to implement policing strategies which reduce crime and enhance public safety.

- Operation Christmas, an annual campaign that aims to help travellers stay safe this holiday season, was launched on November 22 in Sydney. The campaign will see law enforcement agencies across the province set up check points in an effort to reduce impaired driving and encourage motorists to practise safe winter driving.

## Sustainability Initiatives

HRM as an organization must undertake a variety of initiatives to improve public safety.

- Each year, HRM recognizes the extraordinary contributions of individuals and groups who volunteer their time and skills to provide services and programs in HRM communities. Nominations for the HRM Volunteer Awards are due December 13, 2013. Visit [halifax.ca/volunteerservices/awards/index.html](http://halifax.ca/volunteerservices/awards/index.html) for more information.



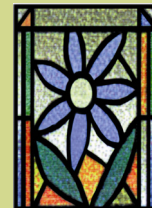
### Kicking-off the holiday season

HRM Partners in Policing spread a little holiday cheer at a number of festivities across HRM, including the Parade of Lights, where 40 young people from both agencies' youth programs, along with a contingent of officers, marched the parade route together.



Members of the HRP Youth Program provide "security detail" for Blue, the crime fighting dog, at the this year's Parade of Lights.

## HRP Victim Services



In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, November 25 to December 10, we are profiling HRP Victim Services, an integral part of the HRM Public Safety Office.

Victim Services is a police-based support unit providing services to victims of crime, with a focus on victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The unit is comprised of four civilian employees and over 20 trained volunteers who work collaboratively with police officers. Victim Services members provide crisis intervention and support to victims at the scene. Members of the unit conduct proactive outreach to victims, identifying victims by screening police reports and reviewing all intimate partner/spousal and sexual assault calls on a daily basis. The unit also accepts referrals from police officers.

Anyone who has been the victim of a crime may use the services of the Victim Services Unit. The unit provides police case information, emotional support, safety planning and referrals to victims. This service is delivered through telephone contact, drop-in visits, at the scene and home visits. Staff members also provide short-term follow-up to victims.

Victim Services worked on a total of 1,122 cases and carried out 1,415 follow-up contacts. Eighty-eight per cent of the cases were intimate partner violence with 140 files coded as high risk for lethality.

### Facts about violence against women

Halifax Regional Police received 2,660 reports of domestic disputes in 2012, and respond to an average of 221 domestic disputes per month.

Every week, at least one woman in Canada is murdered by a current or former intimate partner.

In Canada, a woman is sexually assaulted by forced penetration every 17 minutes. Seventy percent of rapes are committed by a perpetrator who knows the victim.

Spotlight on Public Safety is produced monthly by HRP's Public Relations Unit for Staff Sergeant Scott MacDonald, HRM's Public Safety Officer.