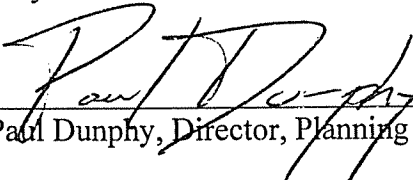


Halifax Regional Council  
Committee of the Whole  
February 10, 2004

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

**SUBMITTED BY:**

  
Paul Dunphy, Director, Planning & Development Services

**DATE:** January 27, 2004

**SUBJECT:** Housing Research and Initiatives

## INFORMATION REPORT

### ORIGIN

May 28, 2003 Motion of the Committee of the Whole that staff provide a report on a policy or strategy on affordable housing in Halifax Regional Municipality.

### BACKGROUND

- HRM does not have a responsibility for social housing but it has a strong interest in ensuring that housing is affordable to households of all income levels;
- Staff has been actively working on issues related to homelessness and affordable housing since 1997, including participation on the Steering Committee of Community Action on Homelessness responsible for locally implementing the federal strategy on homelessness;
- Housing policy development is an ongoing process but thanks to HRDC research grant progress has been made in the last year;
- This report provides update on major activity areas and highlights research findings.

In 1998, the Big City Mayors declared homelessness in Canada a national disaster. In 1999, the federal government introduced the Supporting Community Participation Initiative Program (SCPI) for homelessness programs in the most affected communities. In response to the program in HRM the Community Action on Homelessness (CAH) was formed to oversee the allocation of \$6M for local initiatives, and moved swiftly to approve over thirty projects (see attachment 1 for list of projects funded). Representatives of community agencies and all three levels of government, including HRM staff, are represented on the CAH Steering Committee (see attachment 2). SCPI 2 is underway with an additional \$ 4 million dollars available to enhance supports for homeless individuals and assist them in the transition from shelter to housing.

HRM received \$123,000 in research funding from SCPI in 2002 to:

- rebuild our knowledge and understanding of homelessness and housing issues,
- explore opportunities for municipal involvement, and
- increase community capacity in addressing local problems.

SCPI research funding for HRM has been renewed for another year.

## DISCUSSION

The lack of access to affordable housing (housing that consumes no more than 30% of household's gross income) is the result of social conditions and personal circumstances. While HRM does not have jurisdiction over the delivery of social services and housing, residents and visitors observing homelessness and poverty on our streets may not pause to consider which level of government bears responsibility for it. The "HRM 20/20: Vision and Values" statement considers homelessness and poverty as being not acceptable to the citizens of HRM. Diverse and affordable housing is also one of provincial areas of interest included in the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act and requires that new planning documents and plan amendments include policies addressing affordable housing, special needs housing and rental accommodation. Issues of housing and homelessness are therefore central to Council's goals and good municipal governance. Access to affordable housing and shelter are critical to:

- **HRM's growth as a healthy community:** Adequate housing provides for personal health and safety, and high quality of life for individuals and entire communities.
- **Public health and safety:** Adequate emergency, transitional and health services reduce pressure on police and fire services.
- **Economic development:** The lack of affordable housing drives up wages and affects the ability of companies to attract and maintain qualified workforce. Ultimately the cost of housing affects capital investment decisions.
- **Reduced commuting:** The lack of affordable housing near employment centres increases commuting, therefore contributes to road congestion, air pollution and reduced quality of life.
- **Efficient use of existing infrastructure:** Infill development within serviced areas, on transit routes and near employment centres is often suitable for mixed income, affordable housing developments. Projects of this nature can reduce the need for municipal service extensions, support public transit and support regional planning objectives.

Housing is a key determinant of health, economic growth and quality of life. The Halifax Regional Municipality's aim should not be to move into areas that are clearly in the mandate of federal and provincial agencies. We can however identify efficiencies and opportunities within existing activity areas to support the development and maintenance of affordable housing stock in the region.

Over the course of the past year staff undertook several initiatives related to the physical and social aspects of affordable housing and homelessness.

### 1. Hiring of a Research Coordinator

The federal funds allowed us to hire a Research Coordinator to coordinate research activities, consult with staff and community stakeholders, develop and oversee specific projects and ensure that research findings are shared both internally and externally.

### 2. Community Development

Since amalgamation staff has been working with community groups on housing related projects. In 1999, staff started to formally advise the CAH Steering Committee. In the last two years staff has been active on the CAH Research Committee, which shaped several key studies and disseminated research findings to community groups through various events, workshops and publications. Staff presented at a non-profit housing development course offered through Mount Saint Vincent University, at a national planning conference in July, and at various other local venues. A January workshop addressed future directions for practical, policy relevant research. Staff has also been involved in preliminary discussions related to standardized information collection and retrieval system for shelters and service agencies, and in supporting the development of several housing projects.

### 3. Literature Review of Current Housing and Homelessness Research In HRM

Staff compiled and reviewed government, academic, and community based sources on affordable housing and homelessness in HRM. This literature review served as a foundational piece for subsequent projects, and has already proven to be useful to community groups, government officials and academic researchers. The publication was distributed to libraries, community groups and will be placed on the HRM website (attached).

### 4. Homelessness in HRM - *A Portrait of Streets and Shelters*

On June 19, 2003 staff facilitated a survey of homelessness in the Metro area. Streets, shelters, transitional facilities and emergency services were included in the survey. Thanks to the support of volunteers and community agencies we were able for the first time to gather quantitative information about homeless individuals in the Metro area. In addition to demographic characteristics, causes of homelessness and health problems were revealed. The survey offers a tangible glimpse into the conditions surrounding homelessness in HRM. This report is included with a separate staff report.

### 5. Needs Assessment of Housing as an Approach to Harm Reduction in HRM

Severe mental health and addictions issues are a factor contributing to chronic homelessness among some individuals. It is the general policy of local shelters that those who are disruptive or intoxicated cannot be admitted. This research suggests that there is an urgent need for a shelter of last resort, for more long-term addiction programs and a continuum of housing supports in HRM for those that are not being served by existing services. This report will also be widely distributed and will support the work of community groups who are currently developing a proposal for a harm reduction facility. This report is attached. More details are included in a staff report tabled with Council today.

### 6. Housing, Homelessness and Diversity in HRM

The purpose of this project was to initiate an exploration of housing and homelessness issues among diverse groups. Our analysis of the last Census and the *Portrait* survey indicated that minority groups are over-represented among the at-risk and homeless populations. This project initiated a number of focus groups on housing and homelessness issues and related services among Black

Canadians, Urban Aboriginal Canadians, Immigrants, Refugees and Refugee Claimants. The initiative was positively received by community organizations servicing these groups, who conducted or facilitated the focus groups. Findings are being finalized and will be widely distributed.

#### 7. Municipal Land Use Policy and Housing Affordability Study

This study nearing completion focuses on housing affordability as influenced by municipal policies, regulations and programs and provides a useful context for developing a regional housing policy. Two workshops and numerous interviews solicited input from HRM, provincial and federal government staff, developers and community stakeholders. The most promising planning, regulatory and financial measures are discussed in the context of experience in other jurisdictions and application in the local context. The development of a housing policy is an ongoing process. Once the study is completed, it will be determined which recommendations should be incorporated in the regional planning process, and which ones can have an earlier application.

#### 8. Public Perceptions on Housing and Homelessness Issues in HRM

Staff commissioned Corporate Research Associates Inc. to include questions on housing affordability and homelessness and in their Metro Second Quarter Survey (April 2003). Summary of findings are attached. The survey indicates that increasing housing costs and homelessness are a growing concern in HRM. The majority of respondents support an increased public role in addressing these issues.

#### 9. FCM Quality of Life Reporting System

Staff participated in the third FCM Quality of Life Reporting System survey. The Final Report will be published in February and will include HRM data. HRM's ongoing involvement in the project allows research conducted locally to be placed in a national context for the purpose of determining and comparing trends, and for advocacy.

#### 10. Funding Renewed until March 31, 2005

Some of the future activities will include monitoring of housing and homelessness trends, continued involvement with CAH, assisting agencies in developing standardized information collection and retrieval systems, identifying service gaps, follow up to the Portrait of Streets and Shelters, and continuing internal discussions on developing a housing policy.

### **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

None

### **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

None

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Projects Funded by the SCPI Federal Homelessness Initiative

Attachment 2: Composition of the Community Action on Homelessness (CAH)

Attachment 3: Literature Review of Current Housing and Homelessness Research in HRM

Attachment 4: Harm Reduction Report (Community Needs Assessment of Harm Reduction Supports for the Hard to House in HRM).

Attachment 5: Public Perceptions of Homelessness and Housing affordability in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Kasia Tota, Housing Research Coordinator, (902)490-4023

**Attachment 1:  
Projects Funded through**

**SCPI**

**1999-2003**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Funding</i>
* Metro Non-Profit Housing Association	Established in 1988, they provide safe and affordable housing to single low-income individuals. Funding was provided to construct and furnish their new 19-unit housing facility, with a support centre, located on the corner of Gottingen and Gerrish Streets	\$1,406,564
Metro Turning Point	Established since 1975, the shelter provides safe accommodations for up to 75 people per night. Funding for a Trustee Support Worker will provide essential guidance and services to those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless	\$136,454
North End Community Health Association	Established in 1971, it offers leadership in primary health care and education, and advocacy. As the SCPI sponsoring agency, the funds received were used to support the CAH office and staff enabling them to fulfill their mandate. NECHA provided support services for the administration of the funds. It was essentially a 'flow-through' process.	\$276,910
Community Care Network Society - Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank	Established in 1983, they assist over 480 families every month with food or furniture. Funding enables Parker Street Food and Furniture Bank to rebuild its facility and replace items destroyed by fire in January, 2001.	\$47,378
Salvation Army	They provide supportive services to men 19 years and older with multiple needs such as addictions, physical disabilities, and those who are at risk of homelessness. Funding was provided to renovate and upgrade the facilities located at the Halifax Booth Centre.	\$120,656
Street Feat	Founded in 1997, to give the homeless and the poor an opportunity to express concerns and opinions. Funding will cover capital expenditures, conduct day-to-day operations and hire an individual on a part-time basis to promote their newspaper to increase operational funds.	\$54,033
Adsum House (Association for Women's Residential Facilities)	Established in 1983, they operate a temporary emergency shelter for homeless women 16 years and older and their children. Funding provided for a consultant to complete a feasibility study, business plan, proposal and site selection for a long-term 20-bed supportive residential facility. Renovation cost to the exterior of the building was also provided.	\$83,376
Alice Housing	Established in 1983, they provide a combination of housing and support services for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence. Funding was provided for two positions to implement and coordinate the Family Support Program designed for "Alice's Kids". Additional funding was granted to purchase and renovate a building for supportive housing for Youth.	\$232,990

Association for Persons in Recovery from Addictions and Abuse	Incorporated in 1992 provides support services to organizations working with women in recovery from alcohol, drug abuse and addition. Funding was provided to conduct research, and to develop a business plan, cost analysis and proposal on the acquisition and operation of a Residential Program. (Marguerite Centre)	\$20,100
Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures	This organization promotes the well being of Canadians, Immigrants and Refugees, particularly from diverse cultures in Nova Scotia. Funding acquired to administer a voice-mail system for those without access to telephone and messaging services.	\$127,485
Freedom Foundation	Established in 1988, they provide a 12 room, transition house for men recovering from alcohol, drug and gambling abuse. Funding was provided to renovate the facility including replacing their roof, furnace, hot water heater, windows and siding and to purchase capital items.	\$74,788
Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre	Established in 1973, the community organization provides culturally-centered programs such as the new shelter that opened in 2000 called Kina'matino'kuom . Funding provided covers wages, capital costs and overhead costs for their new shelter.	\$278,082
Direction "180"/ Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre (Mainline)	Established in 1992, they are dedicated to reducing the spread of blood-borne diseases among populations in high-risk activity. Funding provided was used to renovate the facility, make referrals, deliver individualized methadone treatment, and provide advocacy on legal, housing, social services, and employment issues.	\$394,434
Metro Non Profit Housing Association (Choir)	The Shining Lights Choir was formed in 1997 at the Housing Support Centre. Funding is provided to help the choir with costs for equipment and to cover costs for the support team.	\$67,736
Saint Leonard's Society	Works to reduce the effects of crime by assisting with the reintegration of adult offenders into the community as law-abiding citizens. Funding provided will allow for renovations to their new residential facility, "Barry House".	\$48,390
Marguerite Centre	This project will provide safe residential housing and programs for 12 women in recovery from substance abuse. Funding will be provided to purchase a building and for the operation and set-up of the new facility.	\$666,686
Alcare Place	Renovations to an existing building that acts as a transition house for 10 males recovering from addictions, as well as outreach services for clients. Funding will also cover capital costs.	\$109,783
Bryony House	Renovations to their supportive housing for women and children who are fleeing from abusive situations.	\$62,000
Affirmative Industry Association	Research project for Co-Operative housing for people with multiple barriers.	\$95,627

* Canadian Mental Health Association	Purchase of equipment, furniture along with minor renovations to the Sharing and Caring Club for youth with mental health issues. This sponsor also supported the assessment agreement for the Community Plan.	\$39,200
Lesbian, Gay and Bi-Sexual Youth Project	Funding for the Safe Home project and the purchase of a house and some furniture.	\$301,890
Club "24"	Renovations and capital items were purchased for their club. They provide shelter and meals for homeless people.	\$104,884
Help Line	Researched and developed a resource booklet for street youth.	\$5,000
* Nahum Centre	Funds were approved to renovate a building, purchase furnishings and cover operation costs for a 16-bed supportive transitional facility for women and children.	\$770,541
Phoenix Youth Programs	Approval to cover staff and new office set-up costs for a prevention program for in-school youth.	\$314,194
Eastern Shore Family Resource Centre	This project was recommended to do research on homeless single women and children in the rural area.	\$36,351
MISA	Funding was provided to purchase a 6-unit apartment building for Immigrant men.	\$238,133
Home of the Guardian Angel/Single Family Centre.	Project development to examine supportive housing needs for single women and children	\$23,500
* Halifax Regional Municipality	Funding provided to research issues on homelessness with the HRM.	\$123,728
Hope Cottage	Support was provided to replace furniture and broken appliances.	\$50,000

**Projects Funded through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS)**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Funding</i>
Tawaak Housing Association	Established in 1981, they provide adequate, suitable and affordable rental housing to aboriginal peoples of low income to moderate income. Funding will allow for renovations and the purchase of furniture.	\$174,262
Mi'kmaq First Nation Healing Society	Funding provided to cover costs for awareness materials. Capital items and support was also provided.	\$23,200

**Projects Funded through the Youth Homelessness Strategy**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Funding</i>
Brunswick Street United Church, (Camp Brunswick).	Providing summer camps since 1929, their goal is to support young people in developing life skills and social skills through youth leadership development. Funding will employ at-risk/homeless youth to rebuild the camp	\$89,425
Regional Independent Student Association (RISA)	Established in 1993 to address the unique needs of students who are at risk of not completing their high school education. Funding was provided to give youth work experience and employment skills and to purchase exercise equipment for their facilities.	\$94,895



---

Phoenix Youth Programs	Established in 1987, Phoenix provides support to at-risk and homeless youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Funding will enable Phoenix Youth Programs to establish a new 20-bed youth shelter with supportive services and care for homeless youth.	\$2,600,000
Canadian Mental Health Association	Purchase of equipment, furniture along with minor renovations to the Sharing and Caring Club for youth with mental health issues. This sponsor also supported the assessment agreement for the Community Plan.	\$98,236
Maritime School of Social Work	Research work on youth services and housing within the HRM area.	\$73,850
Alice Housing	Established in 1983, they provide a combination of housing and support services for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence. Funding was provided for two positions to implement and coordinate the Family Support Program designed for "Alice's Kids". Additional funding was granted to purchase and renovate a building for supportive housing for Youth.	\$255,500

NOTE: Some budgets may not be as quoted, as they are still operational.

\* identifies projects where HRM was a partner

**Attachment 2:  
SCPI Steering Committee  
Composition**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<b>Angela Power</b>	Alice Housing
<b>Carol Charlebois</b> <b>Rev. George Leach</b>	Metro Non-Profit Housing Association Hope Cottage
<b>Ida Vincent</b>	Tawaak Housing Association
<b>Jill Lindgren</b> <b>Juan Carlos Canales-Leyton</b> <b>Linda Wilson</b>	ARK -- Community Member Centre for Diverse Visible Cultures (CDVC) Association for the Development of Children's Residential Facilities (ADCRF)
<b>Paul O'Hara</b> <b>Sheri Lecker</b> <b>Steve Kisely</b>	North End Community Health Centre (NEHC) Adsum House Department of Psychiatry, Dalhousie University
<b>Timothy Crooks</b>	Phoenix Youth Programs
<b>Wayne MacNaughton</b>	Metro Non-Profit Housing Association – Community Member

**STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Ex-Officio Members

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
<b>Alicia Nolan</b>	Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) Nova Scotia Regional Office
<b>Audrey Moritz</b> <b>Barb Nehiley</b>	Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Atlantic Business Centre Halifax Regional Municipality
<b>Donna Smith</b> <b>Jeffrey Conrad</b> <b>Jim Graham</b> <b>Judy McMillan</b>	NS Dept of Community Services Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) NS Dept of Community Services Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
<b>Peggy MacCormack</b> <b>Angela Bishop</b>	NS Department of Health, Community Mental Health Supports for Adults <b>CAH Community Office</b>
<b>Anna Hunter</b>	<b>CAH Community Office</b>