

Halifax Regional Council
July 15, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:



Paul Dunphy, Director Planning & Development Services

DATE: July 7, 2003

SUBJECT: Renewal of Support For FCM National Housing Policy Options Team

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGINS

Letter of Request May 22, 2003 from Councillor Elizabeth Arnold, Co-Chair, National Housing Policy Options Team, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

BACKGROUND

Council has been a member of National Housing Policy Options since 2001. FCM has again asked member cities to re-commit to the project for 2003/2004 and the voluntary contribution has been reduced to \$0.015 per capita, or \$5,400 or any amount that the municipality can afford.

DISCUSSION

Staff will continue HRM participation in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities project known as the National Housing Policy Option Team (NHPOT) through the commitment of annual voluntary per capita contributions:

The FCM through NHPOT, has developed a National Affordable Housing Strategy which recommends capital reduction grants to builders as a way to provide sustainable lower costs and thus lower, affordable rents for moderate to low income tenants. In Halifax Regional Municipality the average monthly rent for

a 2 bedroom apartment is approximately \$704¹. Membership in the National Housing Policy Options Team (NHPO) allows HRM to have a voice in municipal advocacy on housing at the federal and provincial government levels. Research and lobbying actions undertaken by FCM benefit all municipalities where affordability is a serious concern.

There is no question that FCM has been very successful in its advocacy efforts on housing. The numbers of municipalities standing behind FCM has been critical in persuading the Government of Canada to continue to engage in the issues of homelessness and affordable housing.

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.

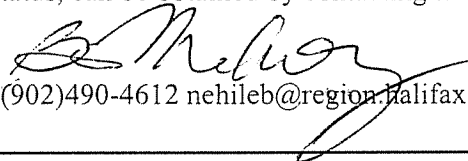
ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT 1: Letter from FCM Co-Chair National Housing Policy Options Team, Councillor Elizabeth Arnold

ATTACHMENT 2: CMHC Report November 2002

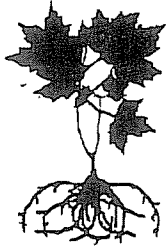
Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Prepared by: Barbara Nehiley, Special Projects Advisor (902)490-4612 nehileb@region.halifax.ns.ca



¹

Source CHMC, 2001



Federation of
Canadian Municipalities

Fédération canadienne
des municipalités

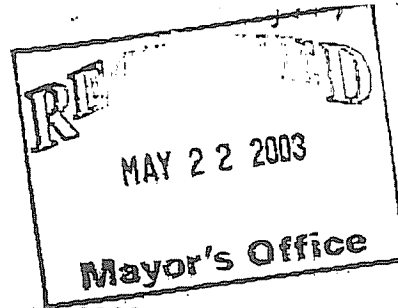
MAJOR'S OFFICE
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May 15, 2003

DATE: *May 22/03*
His Worship Peter Kelly
Halifax Regional Municipality
PO Box 1749
Halifax NS B3J 3A5

Dear Mr. Mayor Kelly and Members of Council:

All of the members of the FCM National Housing Policy Options Team (NHPOT) thank the Halifax Regional Municipality for its support and hope that your Council will favourably consider our request for continued support.

It has been a great year for the NHPOT and FCM's advocacy efforts on housing. We continued to expand our membership, including many mid-sized to smaller municipalities as well as the big cities and regions. With your expertise and assistance we have persuaded the Government of Canada to continue to engage in the critical issues of homelessness and the need for affordable housing.

The recent federal budget continued the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, so critical in the fight against homelessness, for another three years at \$135 million per year; an additional \$320 million over the next five years for affordable housing; and an extension of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for three years at \$128 million per year. That's another \$1.1 billion dollars into housing and homelessness. With homelessness and affordable housing funds announced previously in the past three years, this brings our total, not even counting reduced GST on affordable housing or provincial/territorial contributions, to just over \$2.5 billion. Not a bad return for your investment.

However, there remains much to be done to turn those budget announcements into actual affordable units across the country. FCM, through the NHPOT, needs to work with all stakeholders to overcome barriers to implementation of the federal housing program. We will also work toward implementation of the balance of our policy options, including measures to ensure that the private sector re-enters the market, in partnership with all orders of government, for a long-term solution to the current crisis.

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Mission Statement

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has been the national voice of municipal governments since 1901. FCM is dedicated to improving the quality of life in all communities by promoting strong, effective and accountable municipal government.

Énoncé de mission

La Fédération canadienne des municipalités (FCM) est la voix nationale des gouvernements municipaux depuis 1901. La FCM est vouée à améliorer la qualité de vie dans toutes les collectivités en favorisant des gouvernements municipaux forts, efficaces et responsables.

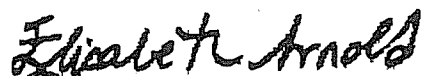


We ask your continuing support in the form of a 1.5-cent per capita contribution, or any other amount your council would support. Participation entitles the donor to a position on the NHPOT Steering Committee.

You have been irreplaceable in your support and expertise. For that you have our sincere thanks and our pledge to keep doing our utmost, working with you until we achieved an end to the affordable housing crisis.

Please call John Burrett, at FCM, (613) 241-5221 (244), (jburrett@fcm.ca), who will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Yours truly,



Councillor Elisabeth Arnold
Co-Chair, National Housing
Policy Options Team

EA/JB:co
Encl.

cc Ms. Barbara Nehiley

Average Rental Vacancy Rates Rise to 1.7 Per Cent

OTTAWA - November 26, 2002 - The average rental apartment vacancy rate in Canada's 28 metropolitan areas¹ rose to 1.7 per cent in October this year from 1.1 per cent in October 2001, according to the Rental Market Survey released by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) today. This is the first increase in the vacancy rate since 1992.

"Many factors contributed to the increased vacancy rates over the past year," said Michel Laurence, Chief Economist at CMHC's Market Analysis Centre "Foremost among them are low mortgage rates, which have reduced the carrying cost of home ownership. This encouraged many people to make the switch from renting to owning, causing vacancy rates to go up in many metropolitan areas."

Seventeen of Canada's 28 metropolitan areas have higher vacancy rates than one year ago. Highest recorded vacancy rates are in, Saint John (NB), Sudbury, Chicoutimi-Jonquière and Thunder Bay. Lowest vacancy rates recorded are in Québec City, Gatineau, Montreal, and Kingston. All had rates under one per cent.

Vacancy rates were higher in eight of Ontario's 11 metropolitan areas. Of the eight metropolitan areas, with higher rates, Toronto, Kitchener, Ottawa, Oshawa and Windsor increased by one percentage point or more.

In Québec, two of six metropolitan areas had higher vacancy rates than 2001. The greatest relative increase occurred in Chicoutimi-Jonquière (4.9 from 4.4%), while Montréal's vacancy rate rose to 0.7 per cent from 0.6 per cent. Vacancy rates in Gatineau, Quebec, Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières declined.

In the Prairies and British Columbia, vacancy rates went up in five of eight metropolitan areas, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria. Abbotsford, Regina and Winnipeg experienced declines.

In Atlantic Canada, the vacancy rate in Saint John (NB) rose to 6.3 per cent, the highest rate of all Canadian metropolitan areas. Rates increased slightly in St. John's (NFLD) and fell slightly in Halifax.

CMHC's annual rent survey shows that average rents for two-bedroom apartments increased in all metropolitan areas except, Thunder Bay where it remained unchanged. The greatest increase occurred in Edmonton at 8.4%. Halifax posted the second-largest increase at 4.6 per cent. Average rents in Gatineau, Sudbury, Montreal and Windsor also rose more than four per cent.

The highest average monthly rents for two-bedroom apartments remained in Toronto (\$1,047), Vancouver (\$954), and Ottawa (\$930). The lowest average rents were in Trois-Rivières (\$431) and Chicoutimi-Jonquière (\$440).

CMHC's Rental Market Survey is conducted yearly in October, to provide vacancy rate and rent information on privately initiated apartment structures containing at least three rental units.

Vacancy Rates in Apartment Structures of Three Units and Over
Privately Initiated, in Metropolitan Areas

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Atlantic Region					
St. John's	15.4	9.2	3.8	2.5	2.7
Halifax	5.5	3.6	3.6	2.8	2.7
Saint John	7.3	5.2	3.4	5.6	6.3
Québec Region					
Chicoutimi-Jonquière	4.8	4.9	4.4	4.4	4.9
Gatineau	6.7	4.4	1.4	0.6	0.5
Montréal	4.7	3.0	1.5	0.6	0.7
Québec	5.2	3.3	1.6	0.8	0.3
Sherbrooke	7.3	7.6	4.7	2.3	1.8
Trois-Rivières	8.5	7.9	6.8	4.7	3.0
Ontario Region					
Hamilton	3.2	1.9	1.7	1.3	1.6
Kingston*	5.4	3.4	1.8	1.5	0.9
Kitchener	1.5	1.0	0.7	0.9	2.3
London	4.5	3.5	2.2	1.6	2.0
Oshawa	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.3	2.3
Ottawa	2.1	0.7	0.2	0.8	1.9
St. Catharines-Niagara	4.6	3.2	2.6	1.9	2.4
Sudbury	9.4	11.1	7.7	5.7	5.1
Thunder Bay	9.3	7.5	5.8	5.8	4.7
Toronto	0.8	0.9	0.6	0.9	2.5
Windsor	4.3	2.7	1.9	2.9	3.9
Prairie Region					
Calgary	0.6	2.8	1.3	1.2	2.9
Edmonton	1.9	2.2	1.4	0.9	1.7
Regina	1.7	1.4	1.4	2.1	1.9
Saskatoon	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.9	3.7
Winnipeg	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.4	1.2
British Columbia Region					
Abbotsford*	7.4	6.7	3.7	2.4	2.0
Vancouver	2.7	2.7	1.4	1.0	1.4
Victoria	3.8	3.6	1.8	0.5	1.5
Total (1)	3.4	2.6	1.6	1.1	1.7