



PUBLIC STATEMENT

Town of Truro Addresses Housing and Homelessness Issues

Truro, NS – January 5, 2024 – As issues and concerns surrounding the lack of housing and increase in homelessness continue to rise in Truro, Town Council is committed to making this one of the top priorities for the Town of Truro.

Council recognizes that supporting those most vulnerable and helping to create safe, secure, and affordable housing in Truro will help to reduce homelessness. The shortage of housing and the increase in homelessness is impacting every community across Canada. We are committed to working with our federal, provincial, and other local government partners to develop long-term sustainable solutions. We also want to ensure immediate and short-term solutions are in place to bridge the gap. We continue to work with our local community organizations and agencies to seek solutions that can be implemented quickly and have been assured that plans are in place in the event of a severe weather event this winter.

The Town wishes to thank community partners working with the Town to address this challenge. Paramount to this work is the Truro Homeless Outreach Society, which operates Haven House on Arthur Street, a 24-hour-a-day shelter offering emergency and transitional beds, personal care supplies, food, housing support, eviction prevention, and advocacy to anyone over the age of sixteen. The Town of Truro supports this organization by offering an annual grant that allows them to put more funding into shelter operations, where it is needed the most.

The Town would also like to recognize the efforts of the Colchester Food Bank, which provides much-needed food and services to those in need. Food insecurity and hunger not only affects those experiencing homelessness, but anyone vulnerable in our community. This year, rather than host a New Year's Day Levee, Town Council opted to make a cash donation to the Colchester Food Bank. The Town also provides an annual grant to the Colchester Food Bank, allowing more operational funding.

The Town will continue to work with numerous other community agencies and groups to find unique solutions that can be implemented locally. We are scanning communities across Canada for best practices to determine local solutions to address both housing and homelessness.

As part of this, we approved a new Community Plan in November 2023, which helps address the lack of affordable housing options. In the new Community Plan, homeowners have the ability to create in-law suites or additional dwelling units on their properties. These accessory dwelling units are a very effective way of providing new housing. They also align with funding programs from other levels of government. In addition, they can help to deal with rising housing costs by allowing homeowners to supplement their income. The Community Plan helps eliminate some of the “red tape” around getting new apartment units approved and on the market, but only in areas where there is expected to be little impact on existing neighbourhoods. The Plan also allows additional housing options to be developed in all areas of Town, including increasing housing types and density.

Approximately 1,200 residential units are approved for development within the Town of Truro, and about 250 of those are currently under construction. While it will take time for all of these apartments to be built, it's promising to see, as it means additional housing options and much-needed housing supply will be developed in Truro. We will continue to work with housing developers to encourage housing proposals that add value and make Truro a more affordable place to live.

Council has also instructed staff to complete an in-depth study on affordable housing and to recommend additional policies that can be implemented to encourage or mandate the development of affordable housing. We expect to have this report in the Spring of 2024.

We believe that everyone has a right to live safely and securely in Truro, and although the Town does not provide housing, run emergency shelters, or directly provide services in this area, we do help fund, support and collaborate with those who do. We will continue to fund, advocate, and work with our community partners, stakeholders, agencies, government partners, and the private sector to develop short- and long-term solutions.

We encourage all citizens to move forward with kindness and compassion as we collectively work together to find solutions. We all strive to make Truro a place where anyone, no matter their individual circumstances, can live with dignity, inclusion, and have a roof over their head.

- Mayor Bill Mills, Town of Truro, on behalf of Truro Town Council.