

March 11, 2021



Dear Warden Nickerson,

Affordable housing is one of the current priorities for the Community Health Boards of the Western Zone of Nova Scotia. While our area already suffered from a dearth of adequate, affordable housing pre-COVID, it has been brought to our attention over and over again that this crisis has only worsened as the economy has suffered and additional stress has been brought to bear upon the market.

Adequate, affordable housing has been recognized as a key social determinant of health by our federal government for nearly 50 years (see: Lalonde Report, 1974). According to Public Health Canada's Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Reporting Initiative:

Poor housing conditions including issues such as mould, safety, crowding, and unaffordability, have been associated with a wide range of health conditions among adults:

- chronic diseases
- infectious disease such as tuberculosis
- injuries (e.g. falls among seniors)
- poor mental health
- adverse childhood development

Addressing housing below standards by improving the quality and by increasing the availability of adequate and affordable housing, including social housing, has the potential to reduce health inequalities in chronic and infectious diseases and injuries. Therefore, the Community Health Boards of the South Shore are united in writing to you to advocate for the recognition and initiation of action in correcting this urgent crisis within our communities.

In addition, many new residents are coming to Nova Scotia as our reputation as a beautiful, welcoming, and relatively safe place to live grows on the national and international stage. We are pleased to welcome new members of our communities, yet cannot help but observe the ways in which our limited housing stock both creates a barrier to this growth and puts undue pressure on housing options for those of us already living in the province.

We know that you are already invested in this issue and finding solutions, for which we thank you. Moving forward, we call on you to:

- stay current in your knowledge of provincial and federal funding available to municipalities regarding housing development;
- commit your support to local nonprofits addressing housing issues; and
- collaborate with surrounding municipalities on policies that promote affordable housing so that they are consistent throughout the South Shore.

Your local Community Health Board is happy to partner with you in exploring pathways to supporting affordable housing of good quality, such as land banking, tax incentives for development, and bylaws that support affordable housing. We recommend looking at the town of Bridgewater's coordinated access plan as a model for other municipalities on the South Shore

and throughout the province. We look forward to working together as we all create the change we wish to see in our communities.

Sincerely yours,

The Community Health Boards of the South Shore

*Lunenburg County Community Health Board*

*Queens Community Health Board*

*Shelburne County Community Health Board*

