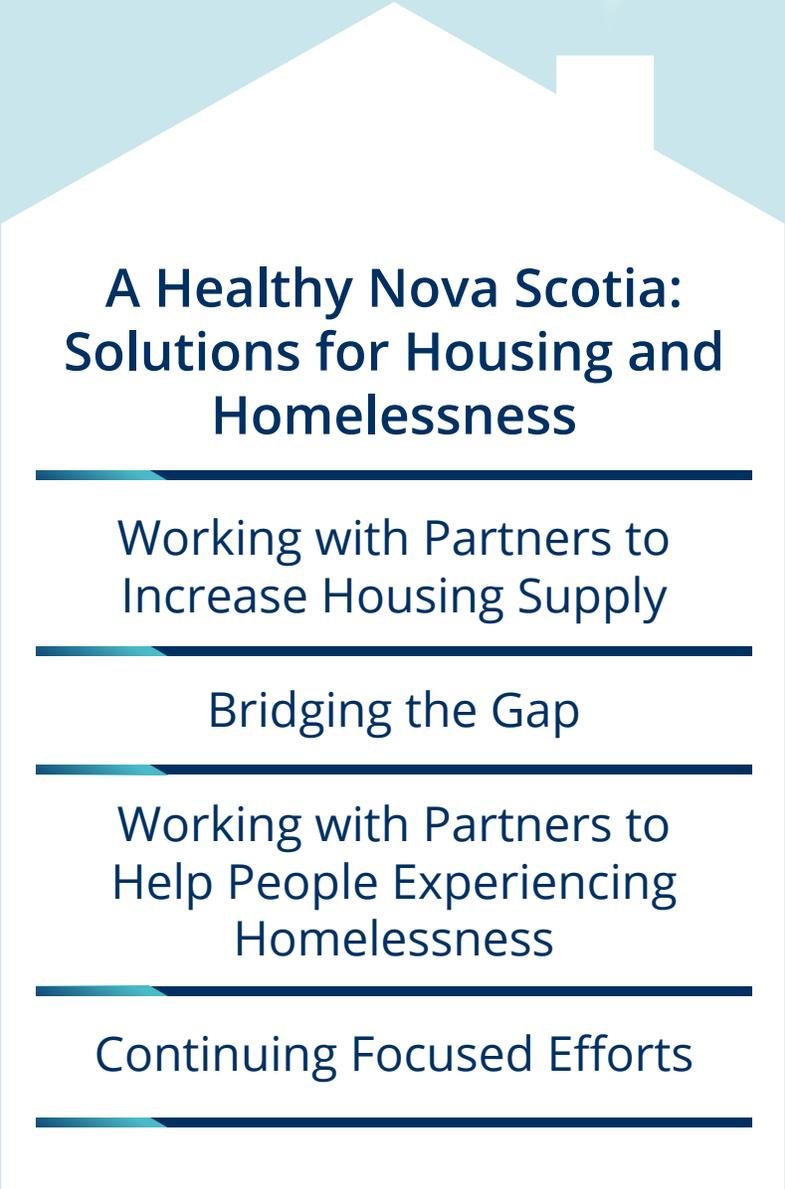


A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Housing and Homelessness

October 2021





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Working with Partners to
Increase Housing Supply

Bridging the Gap

Working with Partners to
Help People Experiencing
Homelessness

Continuing Focused Efforts



A Healthy Nova Scotia: Solutions for Housing and Homelessness

Affordable, safe housing is crucial for a healthy society, quality of life, social equity, and, of course, attracting new residents and growing the economy.

Nova Scotia is facing a housing crisis. As one example, the Affordable Housing Commission said the cost of new houses went up 11.6% last year, more than twice the percentage increase from the year before. This disproportionately affects people who are trying to buy their first home and lower-income earners, many of whom are from marginalized or racialized communities.

The only real solution is to increase the supply of affordable housing, including rental stock.

This plan outlines comprehensive, integrated actions that will collectively increase the supply of affordable housing. This involves working with partners, in the short- and long-term, by:

- investing and building now,
- approving more projects more quickly,
- freeing up land for projects,
- providing more tools for municipalities,
- finding, attracting, and training more skilled tradespeople, and
- planning for transportation needs.

The plan includes protections for Nova Scotians to bridge the gap, created by years of government inaction, until the housing supply increases.

The plan recognizes the need to ensure that the Province's most vulnerable Nova Scotians have access

“The only ‘silver bullet’ there might be, in terms of the greatest possible impact, is for us to work across all our different organizations and points of view, breaking down silos, barriers and bureaucracy to create the future together.”

– Nova Scotia Affordable Housing Commission

to safe housing options. Just as significantly, the plan commits to working with partners to help people experiencing homelessness obtain the supports and services they need in order to address the unique challenges they face.

This plan builds on the advice of the [Affordable Housing Commission](#), actions in federal-provincial housing agreements, Nova Scotia's Housing Action Plan, and conversations with stakeholders.

This crisis, however, did not develop overnight, and it can't be overcome that quickly either. It will require time and focused efforts to resolve through constant consultation, investment, and action. Nevertheless, now is the time to start.

This Government's commitment is simple: do what is needed to make sure all Nova Scotians can afford a safe place to call home.

Working with Partners to Increase Housing Supply

Investing and Building Now

Nova Scotians have waited too long for action. We will not wait.



With this investment, almost 4,500 individuals or families will get an average of \$327 to help with their rent each month.



- This year, the Government will invest almost \$35 million to support more than 1,100 new affordable housing units in communities across the province. Of these, 425 will be rent supplements available immediately, to help people and families stay where they are living now.
- Within the \$35 million investment, the Government is planning new construction projects across the province. Details will be announced once agreements have been finalized with partners.
- This year, the Government will make investments to increase affordable options for students and take pressure off the overall community housing shortage. The Province will build residences at three Nova Scotia Community College campuses. The Government will also create a province-wide

student housing strategy to respond to changing student housing needs. Discussions will begin soon about other traditional and creative options to increase student housing across the province.

- The Government will move forward with inclusionary zoning, which is a planning tool that provides incentives or requires developers to include affordable housing within new mixed-income developments. The Affordable Housing Commission and municipalities have asked for this tool, which can be used by all municipalities to increase affordable housing where it is needed most in their communities. It will be added to the Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter this legislative session.

Approving More Projects, More Quickly

Developers have told the Province that the amount of red tape and time it takes to get approvals discourages development, particularly in the Halifax Regional Municipality where government failures have created the greatest urgency.

- Legislation will soon be introduced to create a task force focused on analyzing and improving appropriate residential projects in the Halifax area. This planning task force will have membership from the Province and the municipality and will be chaired by an appointee of the Province. The task force will report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.



“The mandate of the task force is clear. Act fast to increase the housing supply.”

– Premier Tim Houston



Freeing up Land for Projects

The Province has significant underused land which could be used for affordable housing, built in partnership with community housing groups and the private sector.

- The Government is identifying a list of provincially owned properties that can be better used for housing. Staff will work with community groups, municipalities, and others to get projects underway on these lands as quickly as possible. Land acquisition is often a significant barrier. Through this initiative, the Government will step up in support of being part of the solution.

Providing More Tools for Municipalities

Often, municipalities have said they need the flexibility to improve incentives and clear barriers to building affordable housing in their communities, where it is needed most. A key example is the need for inclusionary zoning in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will meet with municipalities across the Province to discuss possible measures that support affordable housing, such as better regulation for short-term rental units and flexibility in taxation that will encourage affordable housing development. Government will discuss this issue with municipalities over the fall and winter. The goal would be to introduce amendments to the Municipal Government Act and the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter in the spring session of the Legislature.

Short-term rentals are increasing across Nova Scotia. Clarity is needed around this growing industry, and we need to ensure it does not negatively impact affordable housing. Government will consult with stakeholders over the fall and winter, with the goal of introducing legislation in the spring of 2022.

Finding, Attracting, and Training More Skilled Tradespeople

Employers say they're having trouble finding enough skilled tradespeople.

- As part of the work to recruit and retain more apprentices, the Government will review the training ratio for apprentices with the goal of creating more opportunities while easing the skilled labour shortage.
- The Province will also introduce a waiver of the provincial portion of the provincial income tax on the first \$50,000 of income for any trades worker under the age of 30.

Planning for Transportation Needs

The Province plans to double its population by 2060. A transportation plan is needed to help ensure people can get to work and move around as the population grows in the Halifax Regional Municipality.

- The Province will create a joint regional transportation group. The group, including engineers and planners, will review roads, ferries, and public

transit to create a master transportation plan for Halifax Regional Municipality to be ready for rapid residential growth in the coming years.

Bridging the Gap

Permanent rent control discourages developers from building and works against efforts to increase the overall housing supply. However, renters in this province cannot pay the price for the many years of government inaction and deserve protection to bridge the gap until the housing supply grows. As such,

- Legislation will soon be introduced to create a 2% rent cap on residential rent increases. This will protect tenants for two years, while supply is being built.
- Legislation will be introduced to protect tenants against “renovictions” — when a landlord evicts a tenant related to plans for major renovations.

Working with Partners to Help People Experiencing Homelessness

Homelessness is a persistent and growing issue in Nova Scotia. Some of the current challenges include more people experiencing homelessness, growing homelessness in rural parts of the province, and people experiencing increasingly complex barriers to securing safe and stable housing.

The Government will take a series of actions to help ensure people who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness, are supported to transition to stable housing. The investments will also provide additional supports for those most at-risk, while enhancing services for people outside of the Halifax Regional Municipality:

- Supports for families at risk of homelessness: New funding will be provided to deliver services to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and to explore a family support pilot for rural Nova Scotians.
- Indigenous Permanent Shelter and Supportive Housing supports for the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to continue providing emergency beds and to implement an Indigenous supportive housing initiative.

- Supports for people transitioning out of correctional facilities to help prevent them from becoming homeless. This includes: new funding to provide emergency beds for men being released from correctional facilities, continued funding to hire more outreach workers, and to continue operations of transitional housing supports serving criminalized and vulnerable Indigenous women, trans, and non-binary persons.
- Funding for Hotel Shelter Model: This includes 24/7 wrap-around supports to individuals temporarily residing in hotels and hotel accommodation for individuals who are ineligible for income assistance.
- Emergency Shelter Investments, including extension of some COVID measures: this could include allocating permanent funding for some temporary COVID-19 measures which have been successful and where needs remain high.
- Address Shelter Nova Scotia funding challenges.

Continuing Focused Efforts

The housing crisis was not created overnight. It will require continuing focused efforts to resolve. More consultation with more groups and continuing to implement recommendations from the Affordable Housing Commission will build on these first actions. For example:

- Ministers from across government (including Community Services, Mental Health, and Justice) will meet with community groups and partners who support people who are experiencing homelessness. The goal is to ensure the right supports and services are in place to help address their individual needs so they can more successfully transition from the streets to safe places to live.
- The Government is continuing to implement the 17 recommendations of the Affordable Housing Commission. These were created by a group of members from various sectors and regions across the province.

An updated plan will be released in Fall 2022 to be transparent and accountable to Nova Scotians on progress and to reflect new actions identified through continued consultations and research.



“The housing crisis is real, and it was not created overnight. We are acting now and into the future to do whatever needs to be done to make sure Nova Scotians can afford a place to call home.”

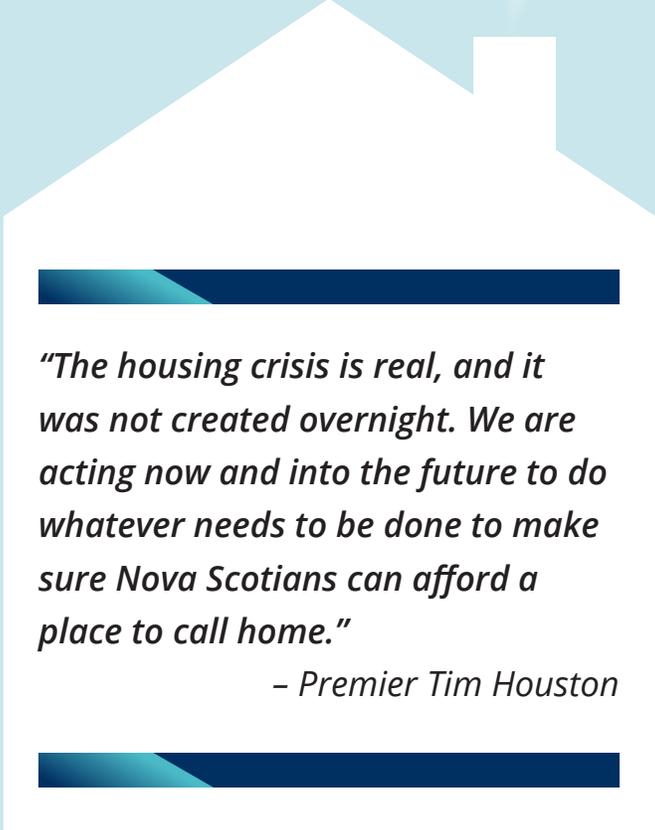
– Premier Tim Houston



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ISBN 978-1-77448-247-6



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- Premier Tim Houston