



EMERGENCY SHELTERS UPDATE

MAY 12, 2022- In December 2021 and January 2022, the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth, in generous cooperation with local parishes, constructed twenty emergency crisis shelters on church properties to help those living in tents find safe shelter for the winter. These shelters went up quickly thanks to the generosity of the Catholic and civic community, the skill of our engineers at Well Engineered Inc., and close collaboration with municipal officials in Amherst, Bridgewater, and Halifax Regional Municipality. Most of these shelters had a guest the same day they went up. Since then, teams of parishioners have been supporting occupants in many ways, including providing food, clothing, access to showers, laundry, and other basics. Our teams have also been working to help our occupants move toward finding affordable housing. For example, arranging for the shelters to have civic addresses, and even mail delivery, has helped occupants apply for jobs and income assistance programs. Unfortunately, at the same time the housing situation in the province has continued to deteriorate. The estimated number of people experiencing homeless in HRM alone has increased from 409 in October 2021 when our planning began, to 568 as of May 3, 2022.

Our original goal was to help our 20 guests find housing resources before the project ended on May 31, 2022. The hard reality is, even with housing supports, there are too many people in need and too few places to go. Therefore, in consultation with local municipalities, we are extending the length of stay for our current guests and seeking to add additional support.

We have asked each parish to keep their shelter in place until a solution is found for their current occupant. After that, we can move the shelter or bring in a new guest based on need. To support this extension, we are partnering with local community groups to work with all of our guests to find housing. Also, we are seeking to hire a full time Project Coordinator to support our parish teams, connect with our guests, and help interface with various aid organizations.

Archbishop Dunn named Homelessness as one of his pastoral priorities for the Archdiocese. Our shelter project provides some immediate relief but is not a solution. Therefore, given the chronic nature of this issue, in consultation with the Archdiocesan Finance Committee, our staff are exploring partnerships with local non-profits to help facilitate the construction of new affordable housing units in the province.

Thank you for your support so far. Please continue to pray and work for a solution to this pressing need in our Archdiocese.