



Emergency Shelters Project: One year later.

Conversations and planning for the Archdiocesan Emergency Shelters Project began early in the fall of 2021. The aim: to provide temporary shelter for folks living rough, i.e. in tents and on the streets, as winter approached. This project happened quickly due to the generosity of many people. Donations were swift and in total over \$390,000 was collected. By December 2022 the project started to take shape. So much has happened in the past year.

- The Archdiocese partnered with a local engineering firm, Well Engineered who donated their design services to create 8x8 shelters with heat, a small single bed, linens, and lights.
- Twenty shelters were built and placed at nine locations throughout the archdiocese plus two in Bridgewater and two in Amherst.
- We welcomed and supported over 25 occupants at various points through the year.
- We collaborated with parish-based shelter coordinators and volunteers who worked daily with occupants to integrate them into the community. Many parishes organized meals, gift cards, and invited occupants to participate in community programs.
- A full-time Diocesan Shelter Coordinator was hired in June of 2022.
- We have begun to transition the project into a temporary transitional housing program led by the Diocesan Shelter Coordinator.

All the money collected has gone to either the creation of the shelters themselves at \$11,500 each or supports for the occupant, which include shelter upgrades (\$67,400 – air exchanges, air conditioning, door locks) portable toilets (on-going monthly cost of \$175 per location), maintenance for each shelter (\$21, 140), and a portion of the Diocesan Shelter Coordinator's salary.

Lindsay Misiner is our Diocesan Shelter Coordinator. She has many years of lived and work experience in the social services field. Most recently, she worked with the John Howard Society on a similar project. Lindsay's work experience, and her first-hand knowledge of the situations our occupants face, helps her provide invaluable support for our occupants with their day-to-day and long-term tasks.

Lindsay works closely with each individual to map out their next steps. She helps them to obtain income and where she is able, she assists with mental health or addictions related needs. Once these tasks are completed, housing options are explored either through organizations like Metro Regional Housing Support and/or private housing options. Housing in Nova Scotia is in crisis for many reasons: cost, location, and acceptance rate to name a few. As a result, it is sometimes necessary to find private means for housing options since Metro Regional Housing options can have be up to an eight year wait.

Occupants have come and gone from our shelters for a variety of reasons including: employment, family support, or an occupant's support needs are beyond what we are able to provide. Recently however, we were pleased to assist one of our long-term occupants move into their own apartment. Our goal is to help other occupants find the same success.

Over the next year, we will continue to work with occupants to find housing options. The generosity of individuals, groups, and partner organizations has brought about the success of this initiative. We now look to further financial gifts and partnering to keep the project going. And growing. As the program evolves some of the goals we hope to achieve are to:

- Create a service plan for every occupant that develops capacity based on their financial, housing, social, and physical and mental health needs.
- Fund, build, and support up to 5 additional emergency crisis shelters on parish properties within the Archdiocese.
- Partner with other social service organizations to further assist shelter occupants.
- Help more occupants find sustainable housing.

In order to be a better community, we need to actively work at building a better community. That is what we desire to do. Together. We are grateful to many who have been a part of this initiative and look forward to the assistance and partnerships that are yet to come.

For more information on the Emergency Shelters Project or to donate, visit:

www.halifaxarmouth.org/shelters.

November 30, 2022