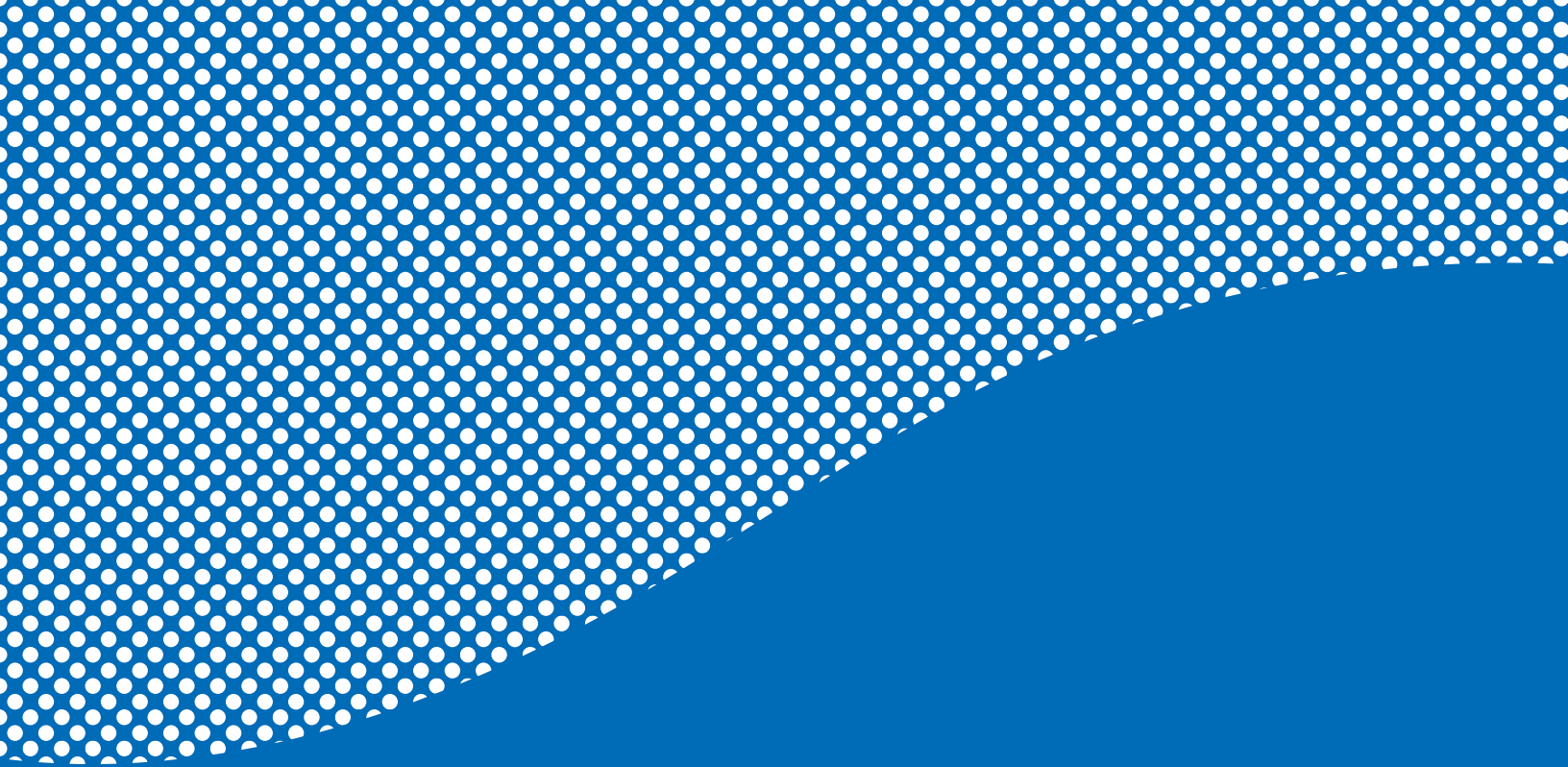




Our Homes, Action for Housing

A Five Year Housing Plan





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Minister's Message

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home.

A safe home gives people and families the comfort and security they need to work, study, attend school, and thrive. Nova Scotians also need affordable homes so they have more money in their pockets for basic needs like groceries, recreation, and transportation. Housing comes first.

Right now, we need more. More supply, more people to build, and more collaboration.

I've said from day one that fixing the housing crisis and increasing housing supply is going to take time, hard work and a willingness to do things differently. Since taking office, our government has made housing a top priority. We invested almost \$300 million since 2022 to increase, improve, and preserve housing stock. We brought in key legislation to protect tenants from unacceptable rent increases and cut red tape to ensure development can proceed as quickly as possible. We are improving our public housing system through the first investment in three decades to build more units, creating a new client service model, and investing in accessibility enhancements that will serve our most vulnerable residents. We have almost tripled the investment in rent supplements, and we are investing in modular housing options for healthcare workers, additional housing for students, and temporary housing for people experiencing homelessness.

I want to acknowledge the added impact that events such as Hurricane Fiona, the wildfires in Shelburne County and Halifax Regional Municipality, and recent floods have had on Nova Scotians and on housing in our province. Events like this will require us to pivot and respond in different ways. But that is what we do as Nova Scotians. We will stay the course in the long term while we remain flexible to respond to what is in front of us.

We now have access to comprehensive data from the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* to help inform all partners as to how to close the housing gap in our communities. This is just the beginning. We won't slow down. We will be bold.

And we have a plan. Action for Housing a multi-year plan for housing to guide our work with our partners to

- increase housing supply
- grow and sustain affordable housing, and;
- deliver programs people need

The responsibility for housing is shared across all levels of government and across sectors. Municipalities, the Government of Canada, not-for-profits, developers and communities all play important roles in the creating housing and we must work together to make significant change. Our municipalities play a key role as enablers in increasing housing supply.

Our vision for the future is clear: *Nova Scotians have access to safe, affordable housing that meets their diverse needs.* This plan wasn't built in a boardroom. It was crafted with input from over 20,000 people from one end of the province to the other, representing Nova Scotia's rich diversity. This plan reflects voices and ideas from all communities.

This plan highlights efforts that will help people right now and well into the future. But the Province can't do it alone. It's time to set aside "not-in-my-backyard" sentiments. Regardless of where you stand, the expectation is clear: We need more homes. We need more collaboration and partnership. We need more investment. It's time to work on solutions together to improve our homes for everyone.

Together, we will achieve our goals.

John Lohr,
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Section 1:

Introduction

Executive Summary

Since taking office in fall 2021, the government has acted quickly to respond to the housing supply gap affecting so many Nova Scotians. Through the 2021 *Solutions for Housing and Homelessness Plan*, the government injected \$35 million in funding for quick investments to spur the housing market and support those in housing need. Significant progress has been made. A kick-start \$65 million in new strategic investments in 2022/23 ensured there are far more housing options being developed than in previous years.

Action for Housing will guide the Provincial commitments to support the development of more housing and will complement federal and municipal initiatives. It takes collaboration across government to a new level and encourages our partners in the private and community housing sectors to come together and think differently to help us respond to housing needs. The Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report informed the 12 key actions identified in this plan. These actions will create conditions for more housing supply in collaboration with our partners. The work will be hard, but we, as a government, and as Nova Scotians, are not afraid of hard work. Nova Scotians need housing—now and into the future. The initiative generated by our solutions will have an impact now and over the long term.

Vision

Nova Scotians have access to safe housing that they can afford and meets their diverse needs.

Guiding Principles

These are the guiding principles for both government and community partners:

- **INNOVATION** – adopt and/or scale up strategies and models that are working well to improve available options.
- **COLLABORATION** – with the non-profit and private housing sectors, communities, municipalities, and our Federal partners to create new housing.
- **PEOPLE CENTRED** – focus on actions that clearly impact the person seeking government support for housing, so people have better health, social, and economic outcomes.
- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION** – all marginalized communities, including African Nova Scotians, Indigenous people, and persons with disabilities, have equal opportunities to find housing that meets their specific needs.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** – be transparent through targets and monitoring of goals.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY** – promote development that supports ***Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth.***

Overview and Targets

Action for Housing sets out bold targets. It outlines three strategic solutions and 12 actions to help create conditions for more housing options now and into the future. Each action shows how to incent more supply and create or preserve homes that are affordable. Nova Scotians have given us clear direction and we've learned from our work so far.

Nova Scotians have access to safe housing that they can afford and meets their diverse needs.



Increase Housing Supply

1. Use Provincial Land and Infrastructure to Create Housing
2. Increase Skilled Workers to Build Homes
3. Reduce Red Tape, Update Housing Laws
4. Invest More to Build More for People
5. Pilot New Approaches to Help Individuals and Families



Grow and Sustain Affordable Housing

6. Grow the Community Housing Sector
7. Repair and Upgrade Affordable Housing to Help People Remain in Homes
8. Make Publicly Owned Housing More Accessible for People and Climate Friendly
9. Innovate, Test, and Scale Up Projects to Create Welcoming Communities



Deliver Programs People Need

10. Dedicate Funding to Indigenous People and People of African Descent
11. Help Move People Experiencing Homelessness to Housing
12. Simplify and Promote Programs

Five-year Targets



Implementing Action for Housing will create the conditions and pave the way for at least 41,200 new household units required over the next five years.

26,000

new units approved for fast-track development through existing special planning areas and other Executive Panel on Housing in HRM initiatives

12 months

will be shaved off housing approvals in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), which includes the six to nine months already achieved through work of the Executive Panel on Housing in HRM

3,000

new homes will be supported on Provincial land through the Land for Housing Initiative, and through the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency.

1,500

households will be housed through incentives for secondary suites, conversion of short-term rentals, home sharing platforms, and other unique approaches to leveraging our existing housing stock.

1,200

new long-term care rooms will help seniors and other Nova Scotians live in dignity.

9,500

new homes for individuals and families will be supported and incented through tax measures, legislative changes, and innovative approaches and pilot projects

Help make at least 17,250 household units more affordable over five years including:



5,000 rental units

support the construction of new affordable and supportive units with housing partners (including 25% located on Provincial land) and preserve or expand community housing through funding the purchase or repair of low-end of market rental units.

11,000

unique households will receive support with monthly rent by 2028 through rent supplements.

1,250

homebuyers (250 a year) will receive help to purchase their first home.

Improve housing conditions for more than 47,900 households:



12,000 homeowners will be able to remain in their homes through access to home repair and adaptation program

Up to **900** publicly owned affordable housing units will receive accessible and environmentally sustainable upgrades through a partnership with the Federal government

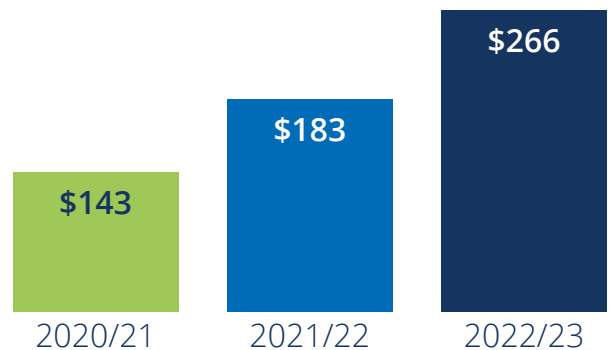
On average, **35,000** seniors a year will receive help with household chores, transportation, and health services through the senior care grant

10% funding of affordable housing development programs and the Community Housing Growth Fund will be dedicated to African Nova Scotian communities and Indigenous people living off reserve.

Funding Housing

We are making historic investments with our partners, so more people can build their homes and lives here. Since 2020/21 government has increased the housing investments from \$143 million to \$266 million in 2022/23.

Investments in Housing (in millions)



Why We Need a Housing Strategy

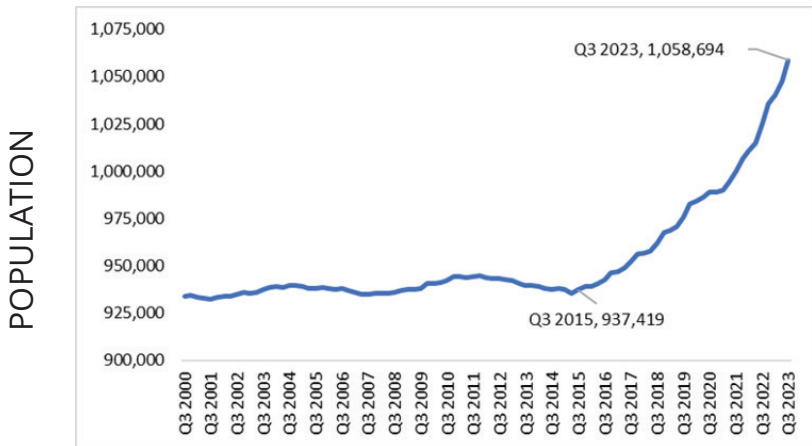
The *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* confirms how our housing needs are changing in our province. We know the growing population and housing supply shortage is most prominent in HRM but is also impacting all other regions of the province. Nova Scotia has become one of the most desirable places to live in Canada with our welcoming communities, long beautiful coastline, and vast goals for a strong future. More young people and students want to study and build a life and career here. Thousands of newcomers and immigrants have settled in our province over the last year, bringing rich diversity to our communities. And, because of strong incentives and policy changes, more essential workers, like nurses, skilled trades professionals, and doctors, are choosing to live and work in Nova Scotia.



Population Growth: More people are moving here than ever before. As of July 2023, our population stood at 1,058,694. In fact, over the past year, Nova Scotia has experienced record population growth it has not seen in over 50 years. HRM’s population jumped by 4.5 per cent from July 2021 to July 2022 and is projected to grow by another 3% in 2023. For communities and the province there are clear long-term benefits—new businesses and jobs, and greater diversity.

This is good news for our province. But with opportunity comes challenge. Significant growth puts pressure on the housing market, and we now need more housing stock and repairs to our existing infrastructure than ever before. Additionally, like the rest of the world, Nova Scotia is facing the impacts of climate change, workforce labour and supply shortages, high inflation, escalating rents and record-high interest rates, and a strained housing market with a one per cent vacancy rate.

Population Growth



These factors will continue to influence how quickly new homes can be built. Additionally, our province has the third oldest population in the country, and as we work toward determining housing solutions and the type of housing that is needed, our seniors are a key group that must be considered as more of them downsize and look for alternative options.

What Nova Scotians Told Us

For the first time in over a decade, the government launched a province-wide housing needs assessment in 2022 to help 49 municipalities and our housing sector better understand the housing demand both provincially and in local communities. The *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* included workshops with municipal staff and elected officials and input from 20,000 residents, employers, and stakeholders. Most municipalities said they wanted to help address the housing shortage but lacked the expertise and resources. They also included engagement sessions with seniors, people experiencing homelessness, and people living in publicly owned housing.

The consultants were also asked to prioritize input from students of 11 post-secondary institutions so the government could better support their housing needs as enrolment grows. The feedback is being used to develop a separate post-secondary student housing strategy to increase housing options across Nova Scotia, both on- and off-campus, and support inclusive innovative solutions that will make students want to stay and build a life here.

As part of our commitment to improving engagement with communities, the department also funded a housing needs assessment for African Nova Scotian communities to analyze racism and systemic barriers to housing.

Overall themes from the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* engagement:

- **AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY** – Almost half of respondents saw their housing costs (either rent or mortgage) increase while others said they couldn't find a place to rent.
- **SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS** – The lack of housing has impacted vulnerable and marginalized communities more deeply.
- **SUITABLE SUPPLY** – Finding housing that is in good condition ranked high as a concern. Many of Nova Scotia's homes are older and need upgrading. Seniors and persons with complex needs said they needed more suitable options.
- **TRANSPORTATION** – The lack of public transit in many communities is a concern related to affordable housing that affects people who don't have cars, including persons with disabilities and students looking for housing.
- **BARRIERS FOR DEVELOPMENT** – All types of development were affected by the rising fuel and material costs that led to projects being slowed down. The skilled trades shortage made it difficult for housing stakeholders to increase supply.

Section 2:

Strengthen Partnerships, Seize the Opportunities



Increasing the housing supply and providing affordable housing for all Nova Scotians is a shared responsibility. It requires a team effort to improve the living conditions, social supports, and housing options for everyone. Having a home can influence a person’s mental health and well-being and is essential to our social and economic prosperity. That’s why all levels of government need to be prioritizing housing needs and working together on behalf of residents and communities.

What We Will Do

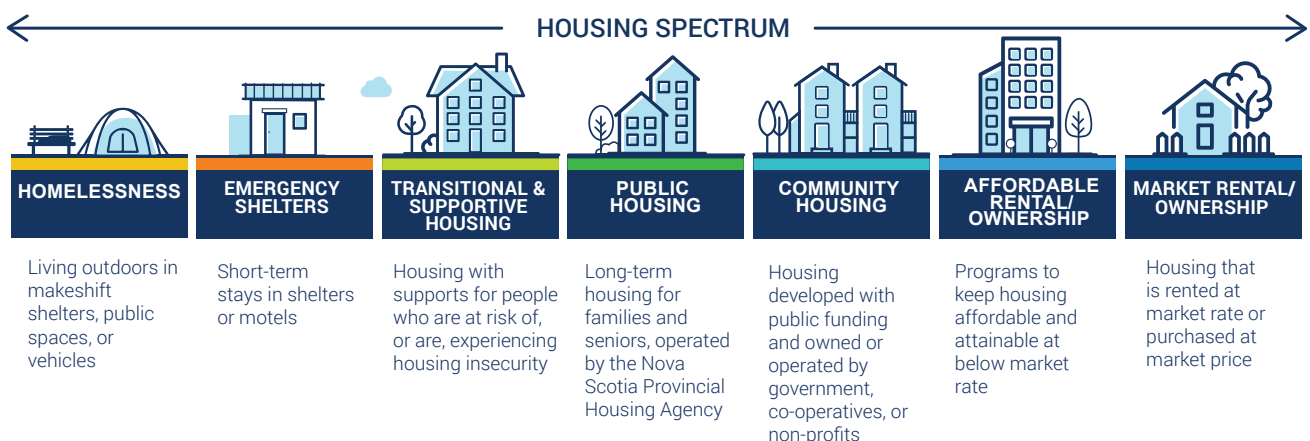
Over the next five years, we will collaborate more on housing needs and solutions across government to help create all types of housing for Nova Scotians. We need to look across the spectrum, from temporary housing to affordable options, to student accommodations, to market housing.

This plan reaches across departments and into communities as we engaged with African Nova Scotians, Indigenous communities and organizations, persons with disabilities and, other marginalized communities to develop ideas together that would have the greatest impact.

We will maximize the funding opportunities available to build homes with our federal partners and act on suggestions from people closest to the community.

We will work with our municipal, private and non-profit housing providers, and our health system partners including operators, foundations, community-based organizations, to support the current and long-term recruitment and retention initiatives outlined in Action for Health, the Province’s plan to improve healthcare. This includes establishing a cross-government action team to identify where immediate housing needs are today and, in the future, to accommodate incoming healthcare professionals in communities. The Joint Regional Transportation Agency is currently leading the development of a Regional Transportation Plan that will facilitate sustainable growth and development and improve the safe and efficient flow of people and goods into, out of, and throughout Halifax and the surrounding region.

Working within government, our departments of Community Services, Advanced Education and Justice and the Office of Addictions and Mental Health will lead initiatives to help people find and maintain housing, from emergency shelter to first-time home buyers.



Section 3:

Core Strategic Solutions



Understanding How Much Supply We Need

Identifying what Nova Scotia needs starts with understanding the gap between the supply and demand. *Action for Housing* is based on the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* which was compiled through in-depth engagement with all 49 municipalities. This insight is a game changer for planners who now have a reasonable projection to support their growth. Municipalities have more information to develop economic and growth plans for their communities.

Data was also collected from post-secondary students and administrators across the province so universities and colleges can better understand the barriers students face as they plan for future enrolment and help students find safe and affordable housing in the community where they are going to study.

Over the next five years, we will use the data from the housing needs assessment to help create the conditions and pave the way for the private market and community housing sector to help build new supply. Using Provincial policy levers and financial resources, we will consider the regional housing shortages identified in the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* and adapt our policies and programs through an evidence-based lens.

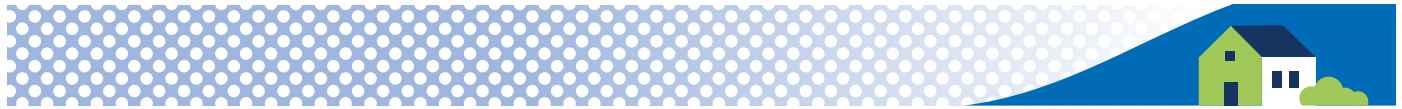


The report estimated that given various key indicators, including demographic predictions, the province has a current gap between housing supply and demand of 27,300 units and that is expected to grow to 71,600 units by 2027. By 2027, 30,400 new units are expected to be built by the market based on the pace of recent construction. We will work with all partners in the housing sector to clear the way and create the climate to incent new construction to help close the remaining gap of 41,200 units.

Solution One: Increase Housing Supply



Simply put, the demand for housing is outpacing supply. The *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* found the entire province is experiencing a vacancy rate below 1 per cent in all unit sizes. And our economic analysis tells us that above all other means, the most effective way to increase affordability is to increase supply. Any approach must seek to bolster the supply of the full range of unit types if Nova Scotia is to reach and maintain healthy vacancy rates in the future. As new housing comes to market, more rental and affordable options will become available for Nova Scotians. At the same time, Nova Scotia needs to help find the skilled trades professionals to get the job done. Municipalities also want local data to determine what type of housing their communities need now and, in the future, and to work more closely with the Provincial government and developers.



ACTION 1: Use Provincial Land and Infrastructure to Create Housing

What We Accomplished:

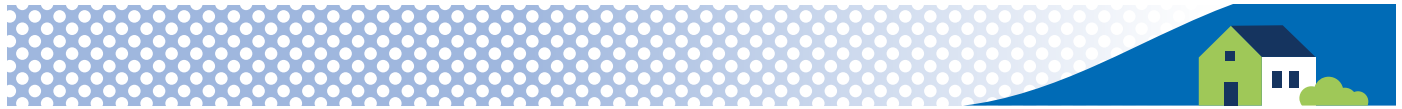
- ✓ In 2021, the government completed a Provincial inventory of land compiled by Nova Scotia Lands to initiate the process of identifying sites that are most suitable for residential development. The **Land for Housing Initiative** was launched with the first Property Opportunity Notices released in May 2022. So far, 25 Property Opportunity Notices have been released and **10 proposals have been approved, accounting for 732 units**. As many as 3,000 potential future housing units could be created based on these and additional proposals received that are currently under review.
- ✓ This year, we invested \$22 million with housing partners to start **to build modular housing** in areas where there is land available to create immediate supply to support the recruitment of key workers, such as health-care professionals and skilled tradespeople as well as for people experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ A critical part of helping our communities continue to grow and be able to develop more housing is partnering with our municipalities and the Federal government to ensure we have the **infrastructure we need**. Through partnerships and programs such as the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, we are able to leverage funding from other levels of government. Since 2019, together we have invested in excess of \$724 million for projects from that program to improve local infrastructure across the province.
- ✓ The Province provided \$32 million through the Sustainable Services Growth Fund in 2023 to help eligible municipalities invest in capital infrastructure for water/wastewater, accessibility, and active transportation projects that support the development of new housing to help growing communities.

Housing for Healthcare

On September 11, 2023, the Province announced the first site under this initiative in partnership with the Housing Trust of Nova Scotia, a non-profit housing provider. The former Wheelhouse Motel on the South Shore will be converted into mixed-income housing for healthcare workers. The site will include 10 to 12 one-bedroom units plus six townhouses suitable for families.

What We Will Do:

- We will invest more than \$80 million over five years to create 222 new, energy efficient, rent-geared-to-income public housing units on government owned land adjacent to existing public housing properties that will provide safe, affordable homes for more than 520 low-income individuals, families and seniors. The new units will be built in five regions: Bridgewater, Kentville, Truro, Halifax, and Cape Breton. We anticipate that the first new units will be available for tenants in the 2025/26 fiscal year.
- The department will continue to identify available Provincial land for future affordable housing developments. The next phase will see up to 36 new sites released with over **400 acres of land** spread across 10 counties made available for the private and non-profit sector to put forward proposals to create new housing.
- We will help **persons living with disabilities** live as independently as possible in community. Over the next year, modular housing will be built and open in Kentville, Bridgewater, Sydney Mines, Middleton, and Halifax.
- Through the Province's first multi-year student housing strategy, we will create new housing options for students and collaborate with institutions to identify solutions to advance construction of new on and off-campus housing units.
- Through our Federal and Provincial funding programs, we will continue to support infrastructure projects to prepare municipalities for future growth resulting in sustainable, healthy, and resilient communities.



ACTION 2: Increase Skilled Trades Workers to Build Homes

Recruiting and retaining more skilled workers is a pressing issue for Nova Scotia. According to Prism Economics and Analysis, over 11,000 skilled trades professionals will be needed by 2030.

While the number of apprentices has been on the rise, Nova Scotia is a growing province that needs significantly more skilled trades workers to address our housing and critical infrastructure demands. Bold changes must be made to ensure we can meet the growing demand. To do this, the government will attract, train and retain more newcomers, youth, and equity-deserving people into the apprenticeship system faster.

We will modernize our apprenticeship system to become a skilled trades leader in Canada. By working with sector associations, Nova Scotia employers and apprenticeship training providers, we will create new and innovative pathways to skilled trades, personalized supports to retain apprentices, and incentives for more people to become certified in their trade, so they can train the next generation of skilled workers. Government also heard the concerns of municipalities that require more building officials to inspect homes. We are doing our part by streamlining training at the community level. The labour solution will take into account the unique needs of both urban and rural communities to fill these jobs.

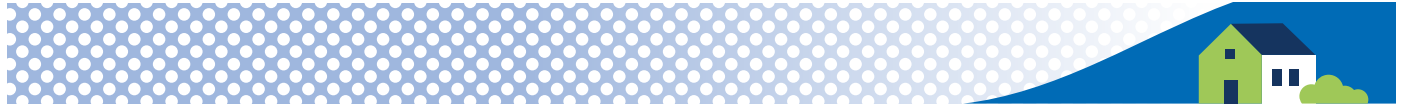
What We Accomplished:

- ✓ Launched the More Opportunity for Skilled Trades (MOST) program to help recruit and retain workers. The program rebates Provincial income tax to eligible trades professionals under age 30. If they are employed and registered as apprentices or certified journeypersons, they will receive a rebate of the provincial taxes paid on the first \$50,000 earned.
- ✓ Hired community navigators to help connect skilled workers to the resources they need to live in Nova Scotia.
- ✓ Established the Minister's Panel on Pre-Apprenticeship and Trades Training in December 2022 to provide recommendations on the trades programming at NSCC needed to meet the demands of today's employers. They established 18 recommendations that are now being mapped out for implementation.

What We Will Do:

- Implement government's plan to accelerate growth in the skilled trades to meet the demands of a growing province, which includes:
 - Targeted recruitment strategies to increase skilled trades workers.
 - Removing financial barriers and building programs, supports and incentives for people entering the skilled trades.
 - Establishing individualized learning supports to significantly increase retention rates of apprentices to completion.

- Building capacity within the skilled trades to mentor and train more apprentices.
- Accelerating skilled trades training at both the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship stages.
- Changing how the apprenticeship system connects and responds to industry.
- The standard apprenticeship training ratio was increased from one journeyperson to one apprentice to one journeyperson per two apprentices in 2022. But we know that isn't enough, so we will increase the standard training ratio to one journeyperson per three apprentices in most trades and exclude final level apprentices in the calculation of the ratio in all trades.
- Launch the Critical Construction Worker Pilot Stream of Nova Scotia's Provincial Nominee Program, which includes 21 highly in-demand occupations in the construction sector – largely focused on the residential building trades. This new immigration stream will broaden the pool of skilled workers companies need and recognize valuable industry experience for these occupations.
- We are focused on attracting construction workers and working with industry on solutions. We are supporting the sector with national and international recruitment events, education and resources for guiding employers through immigration programs, and program innovation to simplify processes and remove barriers.
- Add up to 5,000 additional new apprentices to the system in the next three years; increase the number of journeypersons and trades qualifiers by 1,000 a year. Our retention rate would increase to 60% within five years - the highest in the country.
- Scale up and invest \$700,000 in a successful pilot for newcomers—the Work-based Trades Assessment Project—developed by the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia. This program matches newcomers with employers for 12 weeks to assess their skills to allow the Apprenticeship Agency to recognize their previous experience toward an apprenticeship program.
- Invest \$400,000 over the next year to help the Nova Scotia Building Official Association support two cohorts of building inspectors through their training program to help bring new housing units to market faster.
- We will streamline the certification of building officials and remove the requirement for six-months of on-the-job training for building officials who move here from other provinces.



ACTION 3: Reduce Red Tape and Update Housing Laws

The Province is taking steps to get more housing built, faster, especially in the Halifax Regional Municipality, where over 40% of our population resides, and where we are seeing the most significant increase in population. Several actions have been taken to reduce red tape and expedite the supply of housing, with much of the work driven by the Executive Panel on Housing in the HRM. The executive panel, created by the Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality Act, is a partnership between the Province and HRM reporting to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Since late 2021, it has implemented several solutions to increase the housing supply in HRM.

In early 2022, the panel recommended several changes to reduce red tape and modernize and improve the development approval process in HRM. As a result, in April 2022, the government passed Bill 137 (Act to Amend the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter Respecting Housing), which made several amendments to the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter.

Government also amended the Municipal Government Act to give municipalities increased authorities related to housing and accessibility initiatives.

What We Accomplished:

- ✓ The Executive Panel on Housing in HRM sped up the planning for major residential construction projects by designating 10 special planning areas that will fast track the construction of 23,000 housing units. Construction is already underway in some of these areas.
- ✓ The Executive Panel on Housing in HRM shaved between six and nine months off both the Province's and HRM's approval processes through legislative changes that included:
 - removing the requirement for newspaper notification and reducing notice period
 - allowing digital submission of planning documents and land use by-laws
 - shortening timelines for Provincial review
 - improving development agreement authority
 - expediting development agreement approval process
 - including security and deferral of bonus zoning charges when occupancy permits are issued
- ✓ Government changed the Residential Tenancies program based on input from landlord and tenants. It also passed legislation in 2023 to extend the temporary rent cap to December 31, 2025. Once the current cap of 2 per cent expires at the end of this year, residential tenants who are renewing their lease or sign another fixed-term lease for their current unit, will see their rent rise to a maximum of 5 per cent a year starting January 1, 2024.



A development project in the town of Guysborough will construct a 36-unit building, which would include 18 affordable housing units

- ✓ On December 1, 2022, the new Housing Supply and Services Act took effect and replaced two acts: the Housing Act and the Housing Nova Scotia Act. The new legislation modernized the structure and oversight of Provincial housing programs and increased accountability under a newly created Crown corporation responsible for public housing in Nova Scotia.
- ✓ In October 2021, amendments were made to the Municipal Government Act and Halifax Regional Municipality Charter which enabled the use of inclusionary zoning to address affordable housing needs in all municipalities across Nova Scotia.

What We Will Do:

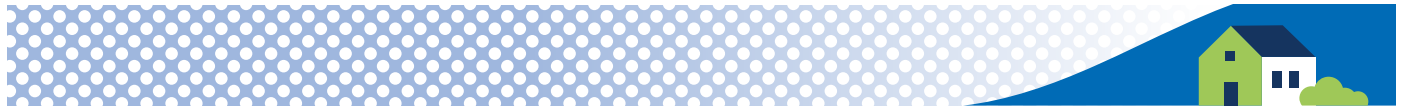
- The department and the Executive Panel will continue to work with HRM on implementing the 15 recommendations made in the HRM Housing Development Barrier Review aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of housing development in the municipality.
- Recently introduced legislation responds to recommendations contained in the review, and also supports the direction of the federal government with respect to expediting housing development:
 - creating one of Canada's first trusted partner programs, which will offer qualified developers – working with certified professionals who have a solid track record of quality developments – expedited services, allowing them to get shovels in the ground faster.
 - exempting critical healthcare facilities from land-use bylaws to allow urgently required beds to be built faster in communities that need them the most.
 - temporarily freezing all municipal permit and development fees for two years.
 - creating more flexibility through changes to rules for unit mix for buildings, increasing the minimum floorplan size for high-rise buildings, reducing minimum lot sizes and increasing allowable coverage.
 - accelerating development approvals by giving expert planning staff more authority
 - giving the Housing Minister authority to make decisions on development in HRM without a recommendation from the Executive Panel on Housing or request from the municipality.

- giving HRM the authority to unilaterally discharge existing development agreements that are more restrictive, to enable height and density.
- granting all variances respecting set backs or street walls unless HRM can demonstrate that they materially alter the intent of the municipal planning strategy.

Regulations will also be developed to allow for more density and the use of more sustainable building materials.

- We will encourage the transition of commercial short-term rentals to convert back to the long-term housing market through changes to the Tourist Accommodations Registration Act to increase fees for commercial short-term rentals and to increase fines for host and platforms that do not comply with regulations. The Act will be renamed the Short-term Rental Registration Act. These amendments will be in addition to the amendments introduced in 2022 that required all tourist accommodations to register, including those in the host's primary residence, accommodation operators to comply with local land use by-laws as a condition of registration, and accommodation and platform operators to only list short-term rentals that have valid registration numbers.

“West Hants Regional Council has committed to helping address the housing supply issues within the region. Council believes one of those changes, the allowing of secondary suites within a dwelling or on a property, will allow for the immediate availability for much-needed housing options, secondary income for homeowners, an affordable and safe option for those looking for housing, and potential social benefits for elderly or single property owners and renters. With a small and simple by-law change, council believes meaningful and impactful results will follow for its residents, property owners, and those in need.” **Abraham Zebian, Mayor, West Hants Regional Municipality**



ACTION 4: Invest More to Build More for People

Nova Scotians are looking to the Province to take leadership when it comes to managing the housing supply. We listened and that's why we are making historic investments to spur on new construction. These investments will fill gaps in the market including homes for families, students, and seniors of all incomes. We are seizing opportunities by investing and paving the way for developers and non-profit organizations to construct new types of housing, such as modular, or to convert old buildings. The fastest new housing options are often the ones that exist, so we are also ensuring we invest more to maintain our current housing stock. We can't afford to lose any existing homes. In today's market, every unit counts.



The Province is investing \$5 million in the former Tartan Downs racetrack development in Sydney toward a new mixed-income project offering market townhouses and apartments serving a range of individuals and families, including students. The project proposed by Urban Neighbourhood Development Association, a non-profit society, could bring over 600 new units on that site.

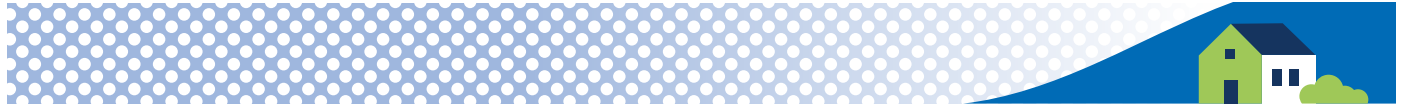
“The growth of our region’s economy is intrinsically tied to our region’s ability to address housing needs, both for those currently here and those who will need to come here to sustain this growth. Our region has dedicated tremendous effort into reversing its downward population trend. Investment in new developments, such as the Tartan Downs project, are necessary to match this effort and to ensure our region remains a place people want to live, work, and invest.” **Tyler Mattheis, President & CEO of the Cape Breton Partnership.**

What We Accomplished:

- ✓ We partnered with the federal government to invest a total of \$16.6 million in 10 affordable housing projects planned for Sydney, Sydney Mines, Guysborough, Tatamagouche, Truro, Amherst, Alma, Shelburne, and Barrington.
- ✓ The former Wheelhouse Motel in Lunenburg is the first site under the \$20million housing for healthcare investment announced earlier in 2023. The site will include 10 to 12 one-bedroom units plus six townhouses suitable for families.

What We Will Do:

- Our analysis shows that the most effective way to increase affordability is to increase supply. We will support the construction of all housing types across the province in areas of demand. We will use the housing needs assessment data we have obtained to work with municipalities to incent construction of the housing their communities need.
- We will build on what has worked in other jurisdictions. The government will continue its partnership with the Housing Trust of Nova Scotia to build modular housing to support workforce recruitment so we can continue to attract health-care and skilled trades workers to the province. This is key to spurring economic growth and ensuring short-term supports are provided while we work toward longer-term housing solutions.
- We will support the construction of more modular homes to help people experiencing homelessness.
- We will match the federal government's commitment and remove the provincial portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) on new rental housing construction. This initiative, estimated to be between \$80 and \$100 million per year, in combination with our existing programs and partnerships with businesses and non-profit organizations, will generate affordable options for more Nova Scotians.
- We will pilot a new Secondary & Backyard Suite Incentive Program to incentivize homeowners to build secondary or backyard suites that can assist with housing family members and provide more rental opportunities across the province. It is estimated that 320 new affordable units will be created over the next three years through this pilot.
- We will partner with Indigenous organizations to invest in housing for those living off-reserve. In 2023/ 24, we are investing an additional \$3.5 million to help Indigenous homeowners make repairs or adaptations to their homes and support the development of new culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous people. And we will support more accessible housing options, and more community-owned housing, for African Nova Scotian communities.



ACTION 5: Pilot New Approaches To Help Families and Individuals

We need to think differently about how we use the existing housing supply.

Everyone from individual homeowners to planners can seize the opportunity before us. Our public survey confirmed that too many people, are waiting for suitable housing, including people who are waiting in hospital because more suitable accommodations are not available upon discharge.

What We Accomplished:



- ✓ We are supporting the development of new culturally appropriate housing for Indigenous households by investing \$2.3 million on a project in Wyse Road, Dartmouth.
- ✓ In June 2023, the government launched an innovative partnership to promote companion housing to unlock some of the estimated 130,000 empty bedrooms in Nova Scotia. We continue to promote home sharing by working with Happipad, a Canadian not-for-profit organization started with help from the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) that has developed a secure and user-friendly online platform to support the home sharing process from start to finish for both renters and homeowners.

What We Will Do:

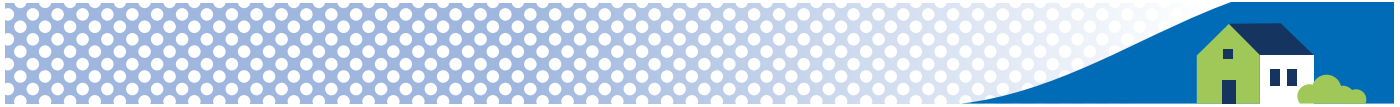
- We are exploring how to transition commercial buildings for residential use to hasten the creation of housing stock.
- We will pilot a new approach to place housing owned by the Province in the hands of community housing organizations to increase affordable housing options for their communities, empowering them to come up with solutions that directly affect them. This could include adding density and affordable home ownership options, and creating community land trusts.
- We will seek opportunities to promote and support shared housing. Examples of shared housing include residential care facilities, seniors housing, group homes, transitional housing, workforce housing (i.e., for temporary foreign workers in seasonal industries, for construction workers, etc.) and rooming houses/single room occupancies. As an alternative housing form, shared housing provides several benefits including comparatively affordable (often deeply affordable) rental rates, more housing choice in the market and supportive housing options.

- We will explore innovative ways to address labour issues through manufacturing process improvements and use of robotics.
- We will explore innovative tools and programs, such as lease to purchase options, to make homeownership more accessible and attainable for Nova Scotians.

Example: A new memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Preston Area Housing Fund signed in January 2023 has helped start discussions to address inequities and explore opportunities to support long-term housing needs in the area. Through the MOU, we will work to transfer up to 50 provincially-owned housing units in Cherry Brook–Lake Loon, North Preston, East Preston, and Westphal to the non-profit organization. The government is also providing \$3.5 million to support the ongoing repair, maintenance, and sustainable operation of the units.

Solution Two: Grow and Sustain Affordable Housing

Every community needs a balance of homes to support Nova Scotians at all income levels. We need various types of housing at every price point to create overall housing affordability for our citizens, as our needs assessment analysis demonstrates. And we need the help of the co-operatives and non-profit sector, in addition to private developers, to get the job done. Helping to create more affordable housing is a priority of *Action for Housing*. We've got to take actions that preserve affordable housing units for people with lower incomes and we must ensure that new developments of all types are supported to create whole communities.



ACTION 6: Grow the Community Housing Sector

This government has made unprecedented investments to grow the number of non-market housing units through partnerships with the community housing sector, and it shows. The sector is growing.

Currently, community housing organizations are mostly centred in HRM and Cape Breton. Most of them focus on helping vulnerable Nova Scotians, but due to their business model and their non-profit status, they reported having trouble obtaining financing from private lenders to leverage their assets to build new or acquire existing properties. They want the government to bridge that gap and invest more in the community housing sector.

Funding Increase Community Housing Commitments



What We Accomplished:

- ✓ In 2022, we launched the **Community Housing Acquisition Program**, a new lending program that supports non-profit organizations to purchase and maintain affordable housing through repayable, low-interest loans up to \$10 million per project. Nova Scotia was recently recognized by the University of British Columbia as the first province in Canada to create a rental acquisition program for the community housing sector. To date, we've invested over \$20M to preserve 431 affordable housing units, 136 of which are supportive housing units targeted toward vulnerable tenants. For example, it helped with the purchase of Tamarack House in Halifax to transition men leaving correctional services with support services and funding from the Department of Community Services ensures rents are affordable and provides programming supports to tenants that includes life and employability skills development and attachment to permanent housing. The Housing Trust of Nova Scotia preserved affordable housing for at least 295 people with our help by purchasing five apartment buildings in Halifax and Dartmouth.



- ✓ In recognition of the unique needs of the community housing sector in the housing market, the Province launched a **Community Housing Growth Fund** in fall 2022. This fund is intended to support capacity building, plan for new development, and undertake research and innovative projects. As of July 2023, 36 projects were awarded for a total of over \$1.5M.

Community Housing Growth Fund Supports Park Development Association

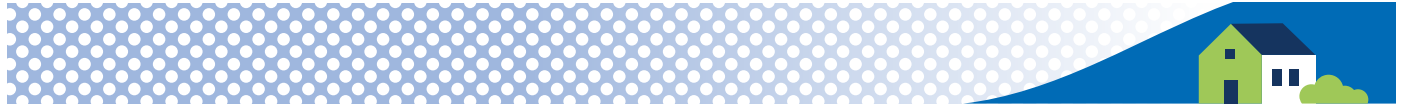
Funding was awarded for the creation of a master plan for the property of the Annapolis Basin Conference Centre. The Annapolis Basin Conference Centre owns two large pieces of land that, up until recently, were used to host cadet training events. A local association will start planning for community development that best suits the needs of the area and help create housing and other services for the residents.



True North in Dartmouth will open a dozen family units in 2023 with funding from three levels of government under a program designed to build rapid housing. The apartments will offer affordable rents.

What We Will Do:

- We will continue to support the growth of the community housing sector with Provincial investments over the next five years. These investments will ensure long-term housing affordability for low-income Nova Scotians while growing the equity of community housing providers. For example, construction is underway now for two new buildings in Halifax with **Compass Nova Scotia** that will offer 57 new units, of which 51 will be affordable.
- Create new affordable housing through mixed-income projects that contain both market and affordable housing units in the same building.
- We will support the work of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada and the newly founded Nova Scotia Non-Profit Housing Association and leverage their experience and expertise to continue to strengthen our community housing sector.
- Continue to partner with the federal government to help low-income Nova Scotians, including individuals and families at risk of homelessness, through programs funded under the National Housing Strategy. A Federal program that supports **rapid housing projects** to meet urgent needs, and that all levels of government contribute to, will bring new units online fast in various parts of the province. We will invest \$3.6M to support development of 38 new affordable units for vulnerable populations in the Halifax Regional Municipality under this program.



ACTION 7: Repair and Upgrade Affordable Housing

As we increase our efforts to create more housing supply, we cannot afford to lose any of our existing, naturally occurring affordable housing. In most cases, retrofitting existing older stock is less expensive than new construction and helps keep people in their homes and communities. Improving the condition of our housing stock also presents an opportunity to make our homes more accessible and climate friendly.

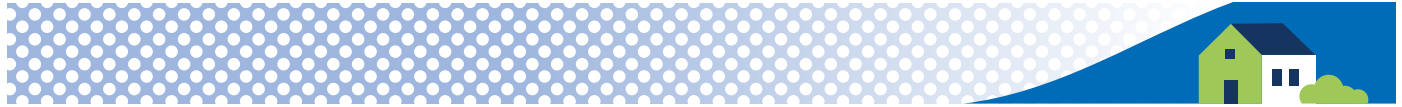
What We Accomplished:

- ✓ Each year, more than 2,000 applications are approved for grants and forgivable loans to support emergency home repairs and health and safety upgrades, and last year we helped 370 persons with disabilities with accessibility needs. This ensures that seniors can age in place and stay in their community longer, reducing the need for more government-assisted facilities. In 2022/23, we invested an additional \$5.3 million through our home repair programs to help an extra 300 families remain at home safely and comfortably.
- ✓ We invested \$19.7M to repair 450 housing units through the Community Housing and Infrastructure Repair Program last year alone.
- ✓ We have supported ***Our Climate, Our Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth*** through phase two of the Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency Program. The program will provide deep energy retrofits to over 2,500 Mi'kmaw homes by 2027.
- ✓ Building on the success of the Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency Program, we are developing a program for African Nova Scotian communities, starting with communities most affected by the Land Titles Initiative. The new community-based program will address inequity by providing customized community education and engagement, training opportunities, and home energy retrofits.
- ✓ In December 2022, the Province invested \$140 million in energy efficiency programs over four years to help move Nova Scotians away from oil heating. The programs provide energy efficiency upgrades including free heat pumps for low-income households. When combined with federal contributions, the funding will help about 13,500 low-income households and about 30,000 middle-income households.

"My wife and I love our little home and this is helping with modifications that will allow us to stay here. When we needed some assistance, the program really came through for us." **David Simpson, program participant, South Farmington, Annapolis County**

What We Will Do:

- In the next several years, we are planning for 900 publicly-owned affordable housing units to have accessible and environmentally sustainable upgrades through a partnership with the federal government.
- More than 200 public housing units in Cape Breton Regional Municipality will receive energy efficiency improvements, ensuring tenants are more comfortable in their home over the next four years. The Province and the Federal government are each investing \$4 million in this project, which includes installing insulation, air-sealing systems, and efficient water heaters, and converting oil-fueled heating systems to electric heat pumps.
- By investing \$13 million more this year, we will reduce the wait time for seniors—many of whom have disabilities—to get their homes repaired or modified to be more accessible so they can age safely in place. We will also encourage tenants with disabilities to work with their landlords to apply to our housing programs funding or forgivable loans to upgrade their units.
- We will dedicate funding and prioritize the repair of at least 64 rural homes for Indigenous people through the Native Council of Nova Scotia over the next two years.
- During the next five years, we will provide financial incentives for the creation of net-zero energy ready and net-zero energy affordable housing buildings (new construction and existing) and support low-income homeowners to complete energy reduction projects on their homes. In 2023/24, \$2.1 million will be invested toward this construction. These programs have the potential to positively impact approximately 2,000 households.



ACTION 8: Make Publicly Owned Housing Accountable, More Accessible for People and Climate Friendly

In June 2022, the Auditor General of Nova Scotia issued a report, *Oversight and Management of Government Owned Public Housing*, that concluded the Province needed a more effective governance structure in place for managing the operations of 11,200 public housing units. It identified poor processes and delays around the placement of tenants who are some of our most vulnerable residents, many of them seniors. People living in public housing advocated for accessibility and, through engagement, raised concerns that those units were regularly occupied by people who did not require them. There are also cases of people living in units larger than they need, which prevents families from moving in.



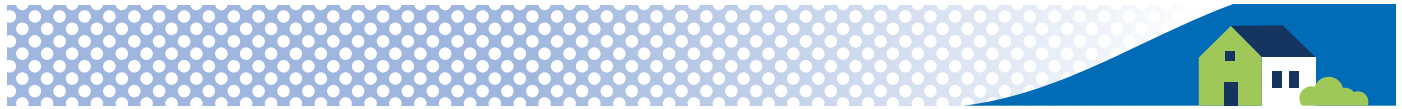
A public housing three-bedroom home adapted to be accessible for a Cape Breton family.

What We Accomplished:

- ✓ We amalgamated five regional housing authorities under one roof: the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency, created under the new Housing Supply and Services Act. The agency has already begun to create consistency in how public housing is managed across the province. For example, in early 2023, we introduced a new, clear, consistent client appeals process for when there's disagreement about a decision made by any district of the agency.
- ✓ Government accepted all recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) report, titled *Oversight and Management of Government Owned Public Housing* released in June 2022 and a second OAG report titled *Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority-Examination of Service Contract Awards* released in January 2023.
- ✓ The Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency has completed 25 per cent of the 20 recommendations from the June 2022 OAG report and are on track to complete the remainder by 2025. For the January 2023 OAG report, they have completed 75 per cent of the 4 recommendations.

What We Will Do:

- The Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency is committed to improving oversight and management of its 11,200 units, where more than 17,000 people live, through consistent policy implementation and improved management of the day-to-day operations.
- For the first time, the agency will develop and publicly post a five-year improvement plan that is updated annually to enable tenants and clients to see where and when work is being done, and to allow contractors, or those that bid on our work to plan, reducing the time it takes to get the job done.
- We will improve unit turnaround times to move people off the wait list for public housing and into our units as quickly as possible. New targets will be set and implemented within the next two years.
- Nova Scotians living in public housing will see improvements to ensure their home is safe and well-maintained. Over the next four years, we will invest an additional \$50.7 million (including \$15.3 million in 2023/24) in capital investments so the agency can make critical improvements to aging infrastructure, address deferred maintenance, and update outdated critical IT systems, and making strategic investments.
- The Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency continues to make accessibility a priority. Under the National Housing Strategy Bilateral Agreement, it has invested over \$10M to complete accessibility upgrades to 118 units and will invest an additional \$8.6M in 2023/24 to continue this work, so that more individuals and families have access to affordable and accessible units. Of the 222 new public housing units that will be built over the next five years, 80 will be fully accessible -providing safe, barrier-free living for seniors and those living with disabilities. The Agency will also continue to explore ways to increase accessibility in existing units without leaving units empty during renovations.
- We will develop a plan for the next phase of improving public housing within the broader housing landscape that will lead to better outcomes for low-income Nova Scotians.



ACTION 9: Innovate, Test, and Scale Up Projects to Create Welcoming Communities

Best practices show that new and more creative approaches, backed by investments, can create social housing that is more integrated and less stigmatized. Feedback from the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* indicated there needs to be greater diversity in size and style of social housing to meet unique needs. We need to focus on creating communities that lead to better economic and social outcomes, include mixed income units as well as green spaces, and offer easy access to community centres and commercial industry.

What We Accomplished:

- ✓ In October 2023 the Province announced a contribution of \$9.4 million to pilot a partnership between the provincial and municipal governments and private sector to develop a 52 unit tiny home community. This will house about 62 people. This project will be the first of its kind in Nova Scotia and provide housing to people experiencing homelessness in Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). Beyond the contribution of \$9.4 million in capital funding, the province will provide an additional \$935,000 per year in annual operating costs. We will evaluate the pilot for expansion to other communities.

What We Will Do:

- The land trust model is an example of a new model embraced by community. We will support community land trusts by transferring Provincial land to non-profit organizations that hold land in trust for the community with the intention of developing and sustaining affordable units on that land.
- We will explore innovative new construction methods such as mass timber through collaboration with partners across the housing construction eco-system to test and scale up new approaches that get badly needed housing created faster.

We will launch a new public housing strategic asset management framework that will help us leverage our publicly-owned assets to their fullest capacity. A systematic review of our public housing stock will allow us to determine what to maintain, where to build new, what to divest, and what to transform into new mixed-market communities, while retaining and growing the number of non-market units. We will launch a strategic asset transformation pilot initiative at three sites to explore opportunities to add density where public housing already exists, in partnership with the community sector. We will learn from best practices across the globe to modernize and create mixed-income communities in partnership with residents and housing providers.

- Seventy per cent (7,615) of our clients in public housing are seniors who want better social connections. Addressing isolation of seniors is a key concern and we will look to revise policies and develop new ones to rethink our approach to social housing.
- We will encourage new, affordable housing projects to follow climate-friendly principles and invest in housing proposals to help them exceed minimum energy efficiency requirements.



Climate-friendly Housing

Nova Scotia's *Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth* notes that 12.4 per cent of Nova Scotia's greenhouse gas emissions come from buildings. Some innovative housing developers are embracing technology and systems that will help minimize that impact for current and future generations. Woodman's Grove Residences in Annapolis Valley, a POLYCORP affordable housing project, will be rental accommodations that not only provide the comforts of home for tenants but will demonstrate some of the leading green technology designed to reduce building emissions. Rainwater recycling and water conservation, triple-glazed windows, building envelope air tightness, and R50 equivalent exterior wall insulation, heat pumps, and high efficiency appliances are just a few of the features of this planned development. The property will feature solar panels to reduce energy use with a goal to achieve Net Zero energy. Of the 72 units, 60 will be at various levels of affordability.

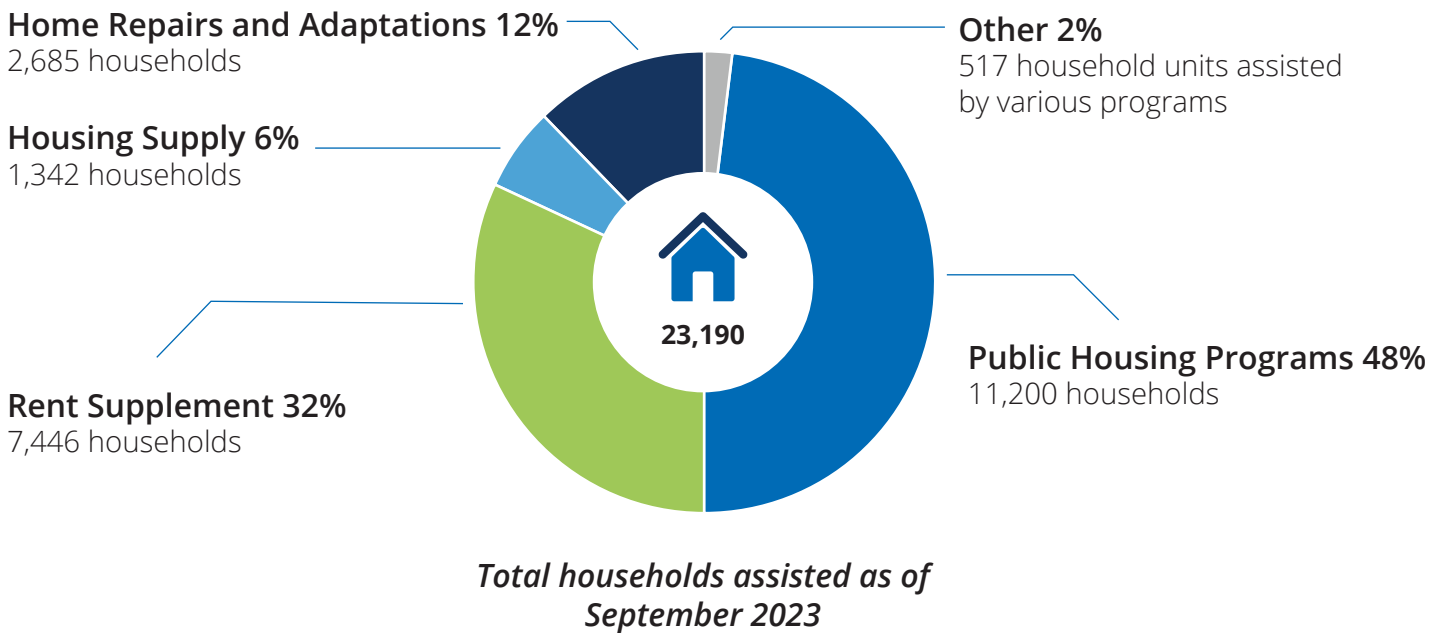
Solution Three: Deliver the Programs People Need



A lack of suitable, accessible housing for seniors was one of the issues heard most often in both urban and rural areas, according to the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* public survey results. Seniors were most impacted by a lack of funds to undertake repairs as their fixed incomes were spread too far with record high inflation. Adequate housing is essential to our seniors' dignity. Almost 22 per cent of our province's population is over 65, so we must consider the appropriate needs of seniors and retirees in our programs because they've contributed so much.

We also know there are unique challenges navigating the housing system for newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ people, and persons with complex disabilities. Our Homes, Action for Housing recognizes the unique barriers to housing experienced by historically marginalized African Nova Scotians and Indigenous people who have a harder time finding housing within their budget.

Setting bold new targets presents an opportunity to update our housing programs to make sure we have the right support for those most in need of government's help. As of August 31, 2023, we were on track to help 22,713 Nova Scotia households through rent supplements, home upgrades and investments to bring new housing construction that includes affordable units, to the market as fast as possible. As implementation gets underway, we will try to help as many Nova Scotians as possible each year.



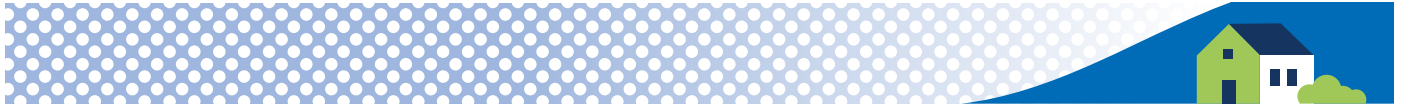
What We Accomplished:

- ✓ We made changes to our programs and developed strategies that meet the needs of specific populations. For example, we adjusted the **Down Payment Assistance Program** twice in 2022 to reflect rapidly changing market conditions and to expand eligibility, helping more first-time home buyers purchase their first home with interest-free loans of up to 5 per cent. The program changes expanded eligibility for those who are separated or divorced and reflected the significant changes in market conditions. Last year, 148 first-time home buyers used the program, up from 59 prior to changes being implemented.

- ✓ Government helped low- and middle-income Nova Scotians through funding increases that allow more homeowners to qualify for a home heating rebate.
- ✓ In 2021, we introduced the Seniors Care Grant, a \$500 annual grant to low-income senior households that helped approximately 25,000 seniors remain in their homes and it has continued to grow to 37,000 this year. In 2023 the grant was increased to \$750.
- ✓ During the last year, we opened housing programs to an additional 19,000 people outside HRM by expanding eligibility criteria and changing household income thresholds.
- ✓ The Province is adding new, and replacing existing, long-term care rooms to help our aging population move into housing that's more appropriate for the care they need. We are building 1,200 new rooms and replacing 2,300 , bringing the total number to 3,500 rooms by 2027 to assist Nova Scotia's vulnerable aging population seek homes in the future.
- ✓ We are funding a pilot program, Capable, which partners a nurse, occupational therapist, and handyperson, to help 300 older people to live in their homes with improved safety, function and independence.

What We Will Do:

- We will help 1,000 more people with the cost of rent through rent supplements bringing the total to 8,000 households that will be helped by the end of 2023/24.
- We will continue to evolve our rent supplement program to meet individual needs, reduce wait times, and ensure equity across client groups. For example, we recently changed criteria for senior households that will increase access and put more money into the pockets of those served.
- We will seek to make our home repair programs more effective and efficient to ensure that we offer a streamlined, easy-to-access, and easy-to-navigate suite of programs that are centred on what clients need to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
- We will listen to the needs of our clients and evolve our programs to drive a culture of continuous improvement.
- We will continue to seize opportunities to leverage federal funding to support victims of gender-based violence, including, women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people experiencing violence.



ACTION 10: Dedicate Funding to Indigenous People and People of African Descent

We heard directly from marginalized communities that the lack of housing exacerbates systemic failure and forms of discrimination resulting in marginalized communities being impacted more. People want more input, and they want the government to empower them to shape their own destiny. We are committed to a new way of working with communities on community-owned solutions.

What We Accomplished:

- ✓ As part of the development of Action for Housing, we engaged with under- represented communities to hear first-hand what government is doing right and what needed to change. We began targeting funding toward certain communities that have faced historical barriers, including building housing equity.
- ✓ In January 2023, a new MOU with the Preston Area Housing Fund has started discussions to address inequities and explore opportunities to support long-term housing needs in the area, including work to transfer up to 50 Provincially owned housing units in Cherry Brook–Lake Loon, North Preston, East Preston, and Westphal to this non-profit organization.
- ✓ Several departments worked together to fund affordable housing for urban Indigenous people by partnering with the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. The new Diamond Bailey House in Halifax opened in March 2023, providing culturally responsive housing supports and services through 42 transitional supportive housing units for urban Indigenous Nova Scotians.



What We Will Do:

- We will promote more inclusive, welcoming communities through locally driven solutions and by raising awareness about tenant’s protections to combat discrimination.
- We will give women and children who are fleeing violence priority to emergency housing when they need it. We will work with transition homes in rural Nova Scotia to ensure supports are in place.
- We will embed inclusive practices and policies across our organization to address unconscious bias and ensure our programs are inclusive.

- We will continue to promote access to home ownership with flexible, innovative pilot projects that are more inclusive of Black/African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities.

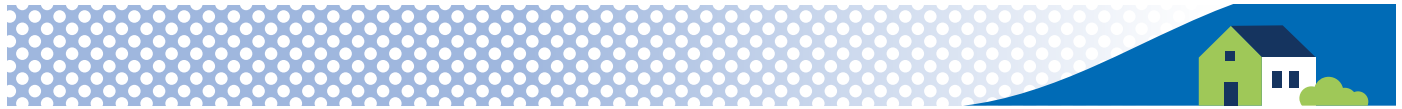
Action for Indigenous People:

- We will work with Indigenous organizations to support the creation of all types of housing that are lacking off-reserve, including homes for multi-generational families and emergency housing for men. For example, we are supporting the repair of 111 household units for Indigenous people.
- As part of repairing the 111 units, this year, we are making a \$2.2 million investment toward 20 units on nine properties is being managed by the non-profit Tawaak Housing Association, which owns and operates socially assisted rental housing in suburban areas of Nova Scotia.
- A new eight-unit affordable housing complex in Dartmouth to provide homes for Indigenous youth exiting foster care will be supported. These youth face complex challenges, including discrimination in the competitive market, and will benefit from safe and affordable housing by next year.
- Support will be provided to the Native Council of Nova Scotia to undertake a new affordable housing development for Indigenous people living in rural communities.

Action for People of African Descent:

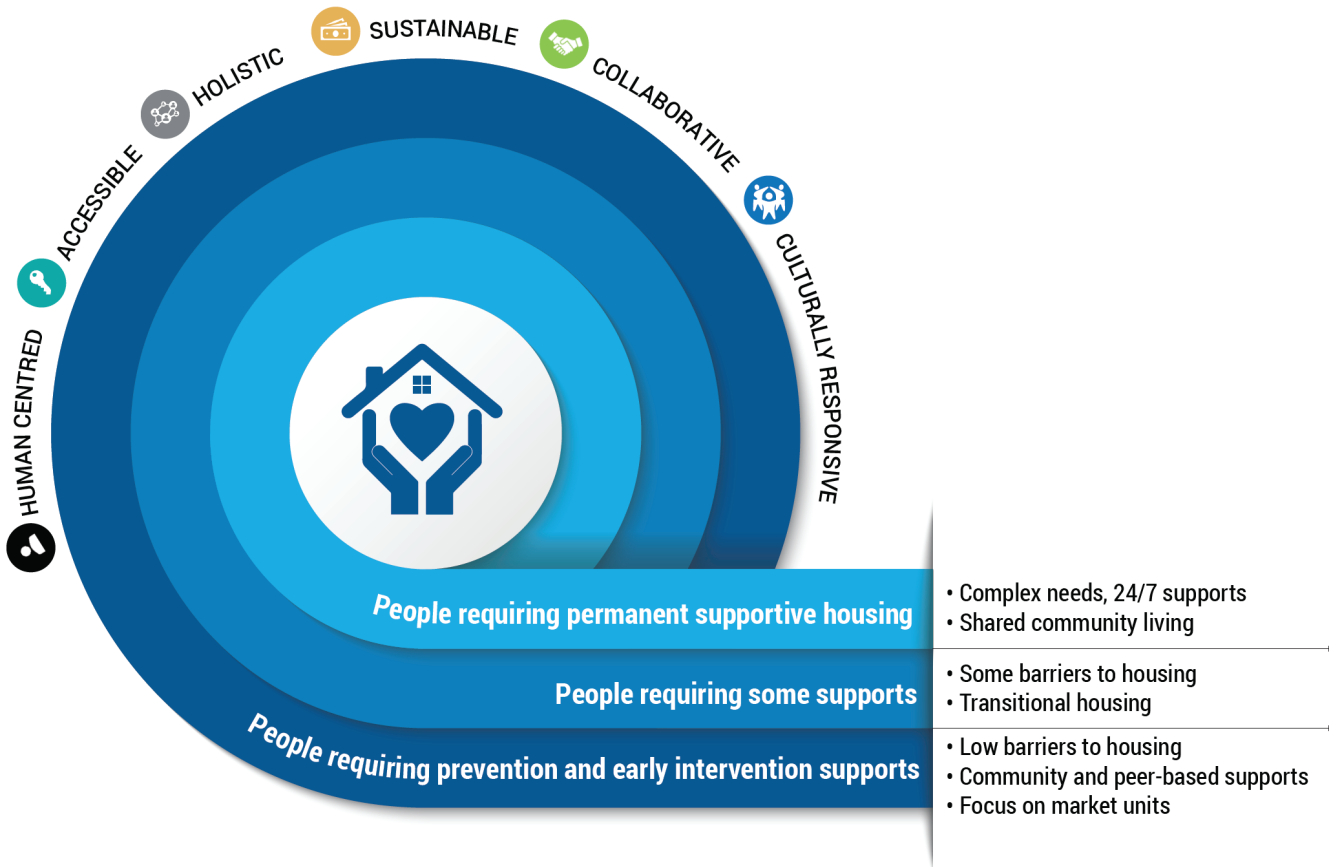
- An investment of \$2 million in a new national organization, the Black Communities Housing Technical Resources Centre, will support community-led housing projects. Services will include the provision of counselling, and expertise to Black-led organizations across Canada to correct the imbalance in access to housing development resources and financing.
- We will continue to work with African Nova Scotia communities to complete a tailored housing needs assessment. This will include an analysis of environmental racism and systemic barriers to finding housing and assist in developing a housing strategy for African Nova Scotian communities.
- Work with African Nova Scotian communities to support the creation and implementation of sustainable and long-term housing options for community members.





ACTION 11: Help Move People Experiencing Homelessness to Housing

Creating more affordable supportive housing options for individuals and families is one of the most pressing issues facing us as a Province. Safe, emergency, transitional, and supportive housing is needed in the short and long term for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness, many of whom struggle with mental health and addictions challenges, are criminalized or marginalized, or have other poverty-related housing barriers. An all-hands-on deck approach is required as we implement a new path forward.



What We Accomplished:

- ✓ **We created Nova Scotia’s First Supportive Housing Model:** Community Services, together with Health and Wellness, the Office of Addictions and Mental Health, Justice, and Municipal Affairs and Housing, is working to ensure everyone has a home that best meets their needs. A total of 417 new supportive housing units have been created since April 2022. This represents 71% of all supportive housing units in the province.

- ✓ The reasons why an individual or family is without shelter may be as varied as the people themselves. Supportive housing is a model of affordable housing with supports for individuals and families who are at risk of or are experiencing homelessness.

These supports enable individuals and families to remain in their homes. Supports vary from on-site to outreach-based and can be for needs such as physical or mental health, substance use, or life-skills support. Examples include:

- The Axis Supportive Housing Program, operated by the Elizabeth Fry Society of Cape Breton for women leaving corrections, is now providing mental healthcare, employment support, and financial supports.
 - Tamarack House in HRM and Berma's Place in Pictou, both operated by the John Howard Society, are providing wrap around housing support services for men exiting corrections.
- ✓ Using available commercial property, together, a Dartmouth hotel was converted into 60 new affordable housing apartment units with harm-reduction services for people experiencing homelessness who actively use substances. The building was re-named the Overlook and operates under the leadership of the North End Community Health Centre and the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia with financial support from the Province.



"We simply didn't have enough of the right kind of housing. The bottom line is the government has now stepped up with the realization that without a focused approach, we wouldn't make much headway."

Jim Graham, former executive director of the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia.

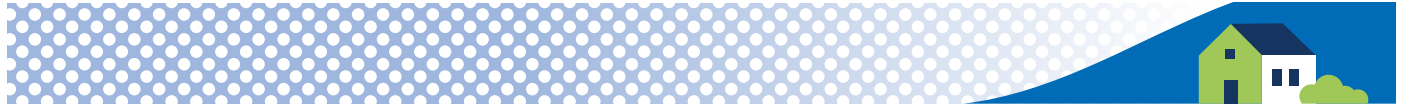
Expansion of Emergency Supports:

- ✓ Across the province, the number of shelter beds and housing support workers has increased to help those experiencing rural homelessness. Organizations like Viola's Place Society in New Glasgow, Haven House in Truro, Beacon House in Sackville, and Open Arms in Kentville now receive annual funding for their shelter operations and support the province's prevention-focused work to help keep people housed. Additional housing supports have been established in Eastern Shore and the Valley.
- ✓ Temporary emergency hoteling options have expanded through eight rural communities and the Shelter Diversion Support Program in HRM, and temporary emergency shelter beds have increased in Amherst, Sackville, and Dartmouth.
- ✓ The Province has committed \$1.8 million for an additional three overnight shelters for the winter of 2023 – in Amherst, Bridgewater and HRM. The location for the HRM shelter will be finalized and released soon.

- ✓ With more extreme weather events, the Province is dedicating \$250,000 to support the co-ordination of emergency weather responses across the province for people experiencing homelessness.

What We Will Do:

- In partnership with service providers and municipalities across Nova Scotia, we will invest \$7.5 million to purchase 200 Pallet shelter units to provide temporary housing across Nova Scotia, including 100 to be located in HRM. The Province will further commit land within HRM and the funding will also purchase bed frames, mattresses and desks, and support operations.
- The Province is also expanding diversion and eviction prevention support funding by \$570,000 to 11 organizations – eight in rural Nova Scotia and three in HRM – to ensure service providers have more options for Nova Scotians in need.
- The Province will provide HRM with up to \$180,000 in funding this winter to support a designated campground for RV and trailer hook-up.
- The Province is committing \$85M over five years to advance supportive housing, including creating 1,085 new supportive housing units over the next five years, emergency shelter beds, and support shelter diversion initiatives. We will continue to expand supportive housing options across Nova Scotia in partnership with service providers who have experience working with individuals experiencing homelessness and providing supportive living environments.
- We will continue to support the purchase of existing rental properties through the Community Housing Acquisition Program to retain affordable housing and create more supportive housing units.
- We will improve transitional housing options for homeless individuals leaving hospital through initiatives like The Bridge, Atlantic Canada's first integrated homelessness and health services initiative, developed by Community Services and the Department of Health and Wellness.
- The Province's first ever Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be developed.



ACTION 12: Simplify and Promote Housing Programs

We've heard concerns from tenants through the *Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report* public survey about their concerns for safety, discrimination, and frustration about where to turn for help. There is a desire for more information about housing programs that can assist Nova Scotians purchase a home in such a tight market. There's always more we can do to share information through municipalities and the public. The low vacancy rate has also caused many newcomers and Nova Scotians to feel powerless when experiencing discrimination while applying for housing or unsure where to turn when they are being renovicted or living in unsafe conditions.

What We Will Do:

- We will increase education of tenant rights to address the stigma newcomers can experience when applying for rental housing. A new renter's handguide will be promoted so more people are aware of tenant protections and is now available in various languages for newcomers.
- Better information will be provided to help people with disabilities find an accessible home as the province grows and works toward the goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030.
- Webinars and in-person information sessions will be hosted with communities to promote program information and support the application processes for private and non-profit sectors.
- Although most tenants and landlords follow the residential tenancy rules, some do not. We are exploring options to better address compliance and enforcement in residential tenancies.

Section 4: Tracking Our Progress



Outcomes, Measures, and Targets

To achieve our vision that Nova Scotians have access to safe, affordable housing that meets their diverse needs, we will measure the impact of our goals and expected outcomes. Annual updates will show how we are doing in addressing the gap between housing supply and demand, and what adjustments we need to make. Staff and our leadership will monitor progress, and the impact of our actions, and we will act swiftly to course correct as necessary. We must be flexible and able to shift based on what we learn. Knowing what we are striving to achieve, and how we will measure our progress, will keep us on the right track. .Nova Scotians can follow updates on novascotia.ca/action-for-housing/



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