

411 Highway 214
Elmsdale, Nova Scotia
B2S 2L8

November 3, 2025

15 Commerce Court
Elmsdale, Nova Scotia
B2S 3K5

Dear Warden Roulston and Municipality of East Hants Councillors,

On behalf of Northern Zone Public Health, we are writing in support of the East Hants Municipal Housing Strategy that was approved on October 29, 2025. As members of Public Health's Healthy Communities team, we want to emphasize the close relationship between housing and health outcomes, and to highlight why this strategy is a vital investment in community well-being.

Access to stable and adequate housing is one of the most significant factors influencing health. When individuals and families have safe and affordable housing, they experience lower stress levels, improved mental health, and greater access to employment, education, and healthcare services.

Public Health focuses on upstream efforts to address the root causes of health inequities, including housing insecurity or homelessness. The cost, context, conditions, and consistency of housing, known as the "4 C's" of healthy housing, all impact health outcomes for community members. For instance, individuals may struggle to secure stable housing while trying to manage other life responsibilities. Many organizations offer emergency shelters and temporary housing solutions to meet immediate needs for safe shelter. However, addressing housing instability requires a broader focus on affordability and income, such as governmental policies. All policy is health policy, and housing policy that promotes affordable housing and increased social support creates conditions for everyone to access safe and stable housing.

People and families can experience housing insecurity in any community. This insecurity can result from various factors, including job loss or unemployment, poverty, racial discrimination, domestic violence, insufficient access to healthcare, and a lack of affordable housing. These root causes of housing insecurity are not limited to urban areas. Evidence suggests that housing insecurity is just as prevalent in rural communities as it is in urban areas. However, rural housing insecurity is often less visible, manifesting as people living in vehicles, couch surfing, staying in violent relationships, or overcrowding in homes. When communities lack the infrastructure and services necessary to prevent or address housing insecurity, such as safe and affordable housing options, community members are put at a greater risk of experiencing housing insecurity.

We see benefits in the proposed priorities and actions intended to improve the variety of housing options to meet the diverse needs of East Hants residents. Priorities such as 6.1.1, which focuses on increasing opportunities for special care housing and 6.3.2 to create incentives to reduce energy poverty, reflect a proactive and equity-focused approach. The priorities and actions targeting affordable and non-market housing development, as well as support for non-profit housing developers and operators, acknowledge that housing is not merely a market commodity; it is a human right.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing housing solutions that recognize the vital connection between housing and health. We welcome the opportunity to support this important work in any way we can.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Angie MacIntyre, Manager, Health Communities