

Reaching Home:

Cape Breton Regional Municipality Homelessness Plan

2019 – 2024

Note:

All communities receiving funding from Designated Communities stream are required to use this template in order to complete the community plan under Reaching Home. In completing this template, communities are encouraged to develop comprehensive community plans that reflect the contributions of all funding partners, including other orders of governments, not-for-profit organizations, and the for-profit sector.

Please note that in communities that receive funding from both the Designated Communities and Indigenous Homelessness streams, cross-stream collaboration is expected to promote the adoption of a community-wide planning process and support the achievement of community-level outcomes reflecting the needs of the whole community. To support communities in completing their community plans, a Reference Guide has been developed. It is recommended that this be reviewed prior to completing your community's homelessness plan to ensure understanding of the requirements and completeness.

The Community Plan for Reaching Home must be approved by the Community Advisory Board (CAB) of the Designated Community before it is submitted to Service Canada. If your community is developing a joint plan with the Indigenous Community Entity, both Community Advisory Boards must approve the community plan.

In addition to the core requirements provided in this template, communities may also wish to include other components that provide insight into the community's housing and homelessness context or contribute to community-level homelessness challenges, such as a map of the community's current homelessness services and/or gaps in homelessness services or infrastructure (e.g. housing stock). Communities have full flexibility in drafting these sections.

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1. Community Engagement

Please identify the steps taken to engage your community stakeholders in developing this plan.¹

With the establishment of the Community Entity (CE), and the effective work done by the CE coordinator over the past 7 years, stakeholders within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) are more knowledgeable about the HPS and RH homelessness funding streams and how they are able to effectively utilize the program to improve the services to those who are homeless, and at risk of homelessness. Representatives from the local health authority, people with lived experience, service providers, other funders, Indigenous organizations and even just concerned citizens were all invited to the consultation sessions. Anyone who has expressed interest in helping those who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, has had their concerns heard and given the opportunity to have input into the 2019 community plan.

The CE was also fortunate to have engagement from its first voice Community Advisory Board (CAB) representative in the consultation process. Our first voice has been a CAB member since 2014 and although he is currently in a stable living arrangement he has over 40 years of lived experience dealing with his former addictions, mental health issues and homelessness. The CBRM CE and CAB have always strived to help its first voice member feel welcome, engaged and understand that their contribution to the group is invaluable.

Community consultation meetings were held on September 10th, 11th, and 12th in the downtown core (Sydney) the north side (North Sydney / Sydney Mines) and in the Glace Bay / New Waterford communities. Notices of the consultation meetings were posted in the local newspaper, sent to contacts via email and shared on social media. During the consultation meetings stakeholders were provided with information relating to Reaching Home, its eligible and ineligible activities and how organizations can apply starting from the call for proposals process, to completing the application, entering into a Community Entity agreement and the evaluation /monitoring of projects approved by the CAB.

The CE has always struggled to engage the Indigenous population in our community. There are very few off reserve Indigenous organizations operating within the municipality and the organizations that are on reserve have been a challenge to engage. Notice of the consultation meetings were posted on several difference media platforms and mailed directly to Indigenous organizations that the CE Coordinator has had contact with.

¹ Engagement with local Indigenous organizations, and the Indigenous Community Entity and Community Advisory Board (if applicable) is expected in the development of this community plan.

Hopefully, in the coming years with the creation of the new Indigenous funding stream for Nova Scotia we will have more success engaging Indigenous organizations in the community plan process and in addressing homelessness within CBRM. The CE Coordinator has been involved in conversations with the Halifax CE and the newly formed Nova Scotia Indigenous CAB to help facilitate and administer the Indigenous-funding stream for the 2019-20 fiscal year. We look forward to having additional homelessness funding for the province of Nova Scotia and see this as a crucial aspect of engaging the Indigenous organizations in our communities. The CBRM CE will continue to take every step possible to engage the Indigenous community with Reaching Home.

The second part of the consultation meetings allowed for the stakeholders to have their input into the community planning process. Listening to the opinions and concerns of the local stakeholders provides the CE with invaluable information to help direct the funding allocations to the most needed areas of our municipality. Many of the smaller outlying communities do not have the same service provision as the downtown core of Sydney and as we move to a coordinated access approach it is crucial that everyone, no matter what area of CBRM they reside in, have access to the supports and services they need.

Glace Bay Session:

The CE coordinator went over each of the priorities in detail describing the eligible and ineligible activities, providing examples of types of projects that could be applied for and answering questions from the participants as they arose. The Capital Investment Priority was the most discussed as many of the participants still have issues with their organizations building or infrastructure that they struggle to find funding to maintain or upgrade. Participants were also very interested to discuss the Housing Services Priority recognizing that Housing First is an example of Housing Services and Shelter Diversion/Prevention already working in our community.

The CE coordinator spoke to the group about Coordinated Access and how it will complement the Housing First program we started 5 years ago. The group was very happy to hear that a coordinated access system of addressing homelessness will get local organizations and service providers to begin working together more as a coordinated team to better help meet the needs of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

For the last 45 minutes to an hour of the meeting the CE coordinator collected feedback from the group. There was great discussion about the five priorities but the main issue that all the discussions kept coming back to was the lack of affordable housing in our community. Ultimately, this is why the group felt capital investments was one of the top priorities identified.

One of the attendees very clearly stated that “Housing Services and Shelter Diversion/Prevention are only going to be possible if there are units available to house clients in, you can’t place someone in a unit that doesn’t exist.”

Other issues that were discussed are:

- The gap in housing for people who are single, non-senior adults (including Youth). Most housing interventions are directed at families and seniors. CBRM needs more support for the single individual experiencing homelessness. (Targeted rent-supplements, more bachelor and one bedroom units.)
- Landlords who do not perform necessary upkeep to their rental units.
- Discrimination by landlords based on people’s appearance or past.

Sydney Mines Session:

The CE coordinator went over each of the priorities in detail describing the eligible and ineligible activities, providing examples of types of projects that could be applied for and answering questions from the participants as they arose. The group was very interested to learn more about Coordinated Access and how it could make it easier to connect clients on the North side (Sydney Mines /North Sydney) of our municipality with programs, housing and services in the city of Sydney. One attendee made the comment that for someone on a fixed income telling them to travel from Sydney Mines to Sydney (about a 20 minute car ride) for services is like telling them to travel to Montreal. So far everyone attending the meetings seems very receptive to Coordinated Access and the potential benefits it has to provide better service to those in need.

The CE coordinator and participants also discussed the Capital Investment Priority. There are still several organizations on the north side that are in need of repairs or upgrades. The group was also very vocal about the lack of affordable housing in their communities. One of the participants is currently working on a proposal for the provincial government that would create a mixed use housing/social enterprise site with hopes that the CAB/CE may be able to help with by provide Reaching Home funding.

The group was very engaged and provided excellent feedback to the CE Coordinator. The main issues that continued to come up was the lack of affordable housing units (specifically with relation to north side communities) but also CBRM as a whole. They also feel that there needs to be a Mobile Outreach Street Health (MOSH) team in our community. This would lessen the burden of bringing clients to the needed services by bringing the services right to the client. The idea of a MOSH team has been discussed between the CE, CAB and local Service providers for several years now and discussions with provincial decision makers and the health authority have already been taking place. The CE, CAB and community member’s all agree that in a geographically

sprawled out area such as CBRM a MOSH team is going to be necessary to reach all of the outlying communities with a coordinated access system.

Overall the feedback from the group was very positive and hopeful. They recognized the importance of each priority but the conversation kept coming back to the Support Services and Capital investment priorities. The group feels that the majority of services are in the downtown core of Sydney and very difficult for clients in the outlying communities to access. This is the main reason Coordinated Access was such a popular topic at this consultation. The group recognizes the benefits of everyone working together and being on the same page. A representative in attendance from the Nova Scotia Legal Aid has witnessed her clients being discharged to no fixed address and stated that discharge planning could prevent many of her clients from needing to access the Emergency Shelter.

There was a lot of great discussion and feedback from the group in Sydney Mines but much like the Glace Bay session the issues that kept coming up were the lack of affordable housing units and the gap in housing experienced by single, non-senior adults in our community.

The group also felt the municipality should be doing more to regulate landlords who are renting sub-standard units for a premium price and make the derelict/vacant buildings easier for housing groups to acquire and convert to affordable units before too much time passes and the building is unsalvageable.

Sydney Session

After the CE coordinator went over each of the five priorities the group had a lengthy discussion about coordinated access. The overall response to the topic was positive with many attendees excited to have local organizations work together more. MOSH or Mobile Outreach Street Health Teams were also discussed and the group felt this would be the most effective method of implementing a coordinated access system in CBRM. Halifax has had a MOSH team since the beginning of Housing First but Cape Breton has yet to receive any provincial support towards funding a MOSH team.

The participants had some questions and concerns about the lack of affordable housing in our community and whether or not a coordinated access can operate when there is little to no available affordable housing units in CBRM. This was a common topic in all three communities. There are housing interventions for families and seniors but single (non-senior) individuals (including youth) have fallen through the cracks. Youth in particular require additional supports while experiencing homelessness and the group felt that a transitional youth housing facility could help break the cycle of homelessness early in an individual's life so they are better prepared to live more independently.

Some of the other major concerns and comments heard from the Sydney session attendees were:

- More regulation of rental units and landlords to ensure they are providing safe, secure units and not taking advantage of vulnerable populations.
- Municipal government is not engaged enough (Lack of awareness)
- Municipality needs to be more proactive (less red tape for developers, quicker action on tax sales)
- An increase in the number of units will decrease the number of slumlords (they only have customers because of the lack of housing)
- New housing developments should be mixed use (affordable and premium)

The priorities identified in the Glace Bay area can be very different from the north side or downtown core and vice versa. By holding consultation meetings not only downtown but in each of the outlying geographical areas we were able to capture a complete picture of the issues / challenges that those communities face. For example, the lack of affordable housing was an issue raised in each of the 3 community consultations, while the communities outside of the downtown core say they need better access to transportation and services.

The community consultation meetings provided an excellent opportunity for quality feedback from those in their respective communities. The best source of information is the direct source and that is why we held several consultation meetings in each of the areas of our municipality. The people on the ground (frontline workers, community members) often have a different perspective on the problems and solutions for their community.

Our community has been very fortunate over the past 5 years to have several local research initiatives take place to better illustrate our housing and homelessness situation. Annex A at the end of this document highlights some of the key outcomes of the research projects as it relates to our community planning discussion.

2. Investment Plan

In the table below, please outline your planned allocation of Reaching Home funding from 2019-24 by investment area. Please note that it is acceptable that your community’s funding priorities change over time. This investment plan is to demonstrate that your community has a vision moving forward for the allocation of Reaching Home funding. An example has been included in the Community Plan Reference Guide.

Reaching Home Annual Allocation

2019-2020: \$795,211
 2020-2021: \$785,211
 2021-2022: \$817,502
 2022-2023: \$817,002
 2023-2024: \$817,002

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Housing Services	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
Prevention and shelter diversion	15%	15%	15%	20%	20%
Support Services	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Capital Investments	20%	20%	20%	15%	15%
Coordination of Resources and Data Collection	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Administration	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
CCI Funding	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The CBRM Community Entity and CAB plan to use the CCI funding to help fund the implementation of Coordinated Access. A Coordinated Access manager will be hired to work with local service providers on behalf to the CAB and CE. CBRM and Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Community entity coordinators have already had discussion around a provincial HIFIS network. The Halifax CE is about 18-24 months ahead of CBRM CE and has generously offered to help CBRM with its Coordinated Access implementation, specifically around HIFIS 4.0 implementation, database/storage, Privacy and Data provision agreements. Part of our CCI funding will go towards the support of this provincial HIFIS network which is currently only being supported by the Halifax CE.

Our community service providers are faced with aging buildings and lack of resources. Often it is a case of repair the building or provide services to clients in need. For this reason, capital projects have played an important role in the allocation of Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funding during 2014-19. The CE/CAB does not foresee this changing drastically over the next few years under the new Reaching Home

(RH). For CBRM HPS and RH have helped preserve the capacity of many local service providers who were watching their building fall into disrepair. As organizations begin to have their immediate capital issues addressed they then shift gears and begin applying for more service provision projects. For this reason, CE/CAB expect to continue to receive capital project applications during the Call for Proposals (CFP) process and maybe in year 4 or 5 of this agreement the number of capital requests will begin to decrease.

3. Cost-Matching Requirement

In the table below, please outline all funding for homelessness initiatives your community plans to receive from external partners from 2019 to 2024.

The CBRM Community Entity strives to secure and utilize as many different sources of funding as possible and strongly encourages its applicants to do the same. Being from a somewhat economically depressed region matching Reaching Home funding to other sources dollar for dollar can be a challenge. Some projects come to the table with more than \$1:\$1 ratio while others have mostly in-kind support. Both financial and in-kind support are greatly appreciated and in some instances the in-kind support is even more valuable than having dollar values.

That being said, the CAB and CE recognize how important it is to leverage the Reaching Home funding to maximize its impact and stretch every dollar as far as possible. The province of Nova Scotia plans to invest \$20 million over four years towards the creation of a poverty reduction blueprint (Province of Nova Scotia, 2018). This provincial funding will mainly be administered by Housing Nova Scotia (HNS) focussing on four main priorities; 1) increasing access to affordable housing, 2) sustaining public housing stock, 3) keeping and expanding partnerships and 4) ensuring their agency can meet existing and new challenges. The priorities of the Provincial Government and HNS complement Reaching Home very well and while CBRM will not see all of the \$20 million allocated for Nova Scotia we expect that our local organizations will be able to secure some of this funding for our community. In fact, over the past 15 months or so we have had a lot of success working with HNS and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to open a new men's, women's, and youth shelter that will play an integral role in our Coordinated Access Program. The CE/CAB are confident that these partnerships will continue over the next five years but it is difficult to place a dollar value on it as the amount of funding we may receive is dependent on so many variables.

Housing Nova Scotia in the Eastern Region has an allocation under the RRAP program (Rental/Rooming House Assistance Program) to assist landlords with emergency or Health and Safety repairs. This program is targeted to assist landlords who are providing affordable housing to persons on low-to-moderate incomes with rents within Median Market Rents for the area. This program can provide funding of up to \$24,000 per

unit under the Rental RRAP program and up to \$16,000 per bed unit under the Rooming House RRAP program. Housing Nova Scotia can also provide Disability RRAP funding to Landlords who are providing housing to persons with physical disabilities. The funding is up to \$24,000 per unit to fund the cost of eligible repairs relating to the individual's disability to support accessibility.

Our community has identified several other sources of funding (Listed Below) we are currently exceeding the \$1:\$1 ratio for 2019-20 and close to \$1:\$1 for the remaining 4 years. That being said, we will continue to identify and leverage as many other sources of funding that become available during the 5 year funding period.

Projected Funding towards Homelessness Initiatives						
Funder	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2019 - 24
Dept. of Community Services	\$618,000	\$671,000	\$671,000	\$671,000	\$671,000	\$3,302,000
Housing Nova Scotia	\$275,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$125,000	\$775,000
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	\$458,000	-	-	-	-	\$458,000
Home Depot	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$100,000
Total	\$1,371,000	\$762,000	\$762,000	\$762,000	\$762,000	\$4,419,000

4. Coordinated Access

Please discuss the steps you will take to implement coordinated access system in your community. If your community has a coordinated access system in place, please describe how it presently functions.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality does not have a coordinated access system in place at this time but we do have some elements of CA already being done through our Housing First (HF) Program and the lead organization that operates HF program, Cape Breton Community Housing Association (CBCHA).

We are currently maintaining a “By Names priority list” that was started during the 2018 Point in Time Count. The list is a living document that is updated regularly as new referrals come in. We also have a large number of our shelters and service providers using common assessment tools, our HF team uses both VAT (Vulnerability Assessment Tool) and SPDAT (Service Priority Decision assessment tool). We were also fortunate enough to have received VAT Trainer training provided to us by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, so we now have people in our community who can train others to properly use the VAT to prioritize clients.

In 2018 CBCHA began renovations on a new building to house their offices, the Housing First offices and a new accessible shelter for both men and women. This new shelter will be the central hub of housing in our community and play an integral part in our Coordinated Access system. Service providers and outreach sites will be able to refer clients struggling to secure housing to the CBCHA shelter where they will be assessed and prioritized. Based on their level of vulnerability the client will then be placed on the by names list to receive housing services. The most vulnerable will likely become HF clients while others may just need some help finding available units.

The shelters in CBRM are also already using the HIFIS 3.8 system to manage data collection. We have attended some training sessions on HIFIS 4.0 but have not made the switch from 3.8 to 4.0 at this time. We do not foresee any issues with having HIFIS 4.0 fully implemented in our community in the coming years. In fact, many of the local shelter providers are being switched over to HIFIS 4.0 at a provincial level. This makes it easier for us on a local level to get organizations using HIFIS 4.0.

On September 17, 2019 the HIFIS training team and representatives from the Halifax CE travelled to Cape Breton to assist some of our local shelter providers with the switch from HIFIS 3.8 to HIFIS 4.0. The group also met with the CBRM CAB and CE to discuss HIFIS 4.0 as it relates to the implementation of a coordinated access system. With a larger homeless population, more services and more federal/provincial funding than CBRM, Halifax is ahead of us in the move to implement C.A. Halifax has begun the process of creating a Province wide HIFISNS.CA network that they would like Cape Breton to be part of. This would provide Cape Breton with access not only to our local network but the larger provincial network.

As mentioned before these are the elements of CA we feel as though we have already implemented in CBRM. The Community Entity (CE) and Community Advisory Board (CAB) will form sub-committees on both CA implementation and HIFIS 4.0 implementation.

The coordinated access sub-committee will decide upon a governance model, establish terms of reference and oversee the management and accountability of the Coordinated Access system in our community. This committee will also decide upon many other elements of CA that we do not currently have in place, such as prioritization criteria and the referral process. Ideally, we see the CA sub-committee being comprised of representatives from the 3 shelters, the host organization (CA agreement holder) a

number of CAB members, the CE coordinator and the individual hired to be the CA coordinator.

The HIFIS 4.0 implementation sub-committee will assist local organizations with implementation and on-going maintenance such as planning for legal advice on privacy issues, establishing a data governance framework and security procedures.

The Community Capacity Innovation (CCI) funding will be used to hire a Coordinated Access project manager, which will work closely with the sub-committees, the CAB and the CE coordinator to implement CA and HIFIS 4.0 before March 2022.

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality is the result of the amalgamation of several smaller communities (Glace Bay, New Waterford, Louisburg, Sydney Mines and North Sydney). This creates a very geographically sprawled out coverage area for implementation of CA. Most of the services needed by those who are homeless and at risk of homelessness are in the downtown core of Sydney. The smaller outlying communities do have service providers such as foodbanks and libraries, but the only emergency shelters are in Sydney. Two years ago under the HPS funding stream the CE funded a project with The Ally Centre of Cape Breton called "Safe, Supportive Spaces". This project resulted in the creation of 2 satellite offices in 2 of the outlying communities (Glace Bay and Sydney Mines). Both of these spaces were offered in partnership with trusted service providers already based in the respective communities. The Ally Centre is now able to provide services to clients in those communities which were previously only available by travelling to Sydney. Even though Sydney is only about a 20 minute drive from each of the outlying towns, for someone on a fixed income it was tremendously challenging and the distance was a huge barrier.

With the success of the safe, supportive spaces project, this demonstrates that the most effective way to offer CA services to the entire municipality is by creating a Mobile Street Outreach Health team or MOSH team. This team would be able to travel to each town and area of the municipality and meet with the clients instead of transporting every client to Sydney we would be able to transport the services to the client. If the MOSH team is unable to resolve the issue or the clients need additional services they would be able to assist that person with a referral and possibly even with transportation.

The CBRM CE and CAB have been meeting and speaking with our community members since the start of this 5-year funding period (April 2019) through individual meetings and again through the community consultation meetings the CE coordinator has been engaging the broader community in the implementation of Coordinated Access since the start of this fiscal year. Overall, the community and service providers have been very receptive to Coordinated Access. They are particularly happy to hear that CA will help get local organizations away from their "silos" and thinking more broadly as a community instead of as individual organizations. Ultimately, they recognize that CA benefits our vulnerable community members by having everyone working together and coordinating their efforts.

Coordinated access has been presented to the broader community during local conferences and media reports which has resulted in questions and inquiries from the public about it. We feel all of these activities have informed and engaged the community in the early steps of CA implementation. In the coming months with the hiring of a Coordinated Access manager we will continue to engage and include the broader community in the process of implementation.

Engaging the Indigenous community has always been a challenge in our community. Up until recently there was no Indigenous Reaching Home funding stream in Nova Scotia and the designated communities funding stream had limitations on what Indigenous projects could be funded. This made it difficult to effectively engage Indigenous communities because we were asking for their guidance and assistance but had very little to offer in return. With the new Indigenous funding stream we see an opportunity to improve our Indigenous engagement while also helping them access some of this new Reaching Home funding. By improving overall Indigenous engagement in our community we expect to also improve the amount of engagement they have in the implementation of Coordinated Access.

Timelines:

November 2019 – CAB and CE continue meeting with local shelter and service providers to explain coordinated access and the role each organization can play.

January 2020 – Once Community Plan is approved the CE will issue its first CFP with special interest given to organizations looking to be involved with Coordinated Access.

March 31, 2020 – Coordinated Access manager is hired with Community Capacity and Innovation (CCI) funding.

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021 – CA manager, CAB, CE and local shelters develop CA governance model and a HIFIS implementation plan

March 31, 2022- Coordinated Access fully implemented in CBRM

5. Community-Wide Outcomes

If you would like your community to measure progress on additional outcomes beyond the [federally mandated outcomes](#), please identify those outcomes. Please provide your proposed indicators, targets, and methodology for each of the additional identified outcomes.

Based on the analysis of the housing supply and demand resulting from research conducted by Dr. Leviten-Reid & Bridget Horel in 2016, it is estimated that an additional 400 affordable rental units are needed in the CBRM.

One of our community wide outcomes will be to create 5 to 10 more affordable units in our community by the end of this 5 year funding period. The units can be market units, supportive units, transitional units or even boarding room units. The rent must be affordable either through rent caps or rent subsidies meaning the tenant is not paying more the 30% of their monthly income (CMHC) and the unit must be in decent physical condition.

The second community wide outcome will be to reduce the number of individuals discharged from public institutions into homelessness. We will have our local emergency shelters providers track the number of individuals accessing emergency shelter and homelessness services who were recently discharged from a public institution to no-fixed address. We will begin tracking this information next year (2020-2021) to establish a baseline and determine our target reduction based on that baseline number.

6. Official Language Minority Communities

The Government of Canada has a responsibility under the Official Languages Act to ensure that programs and services meet the needs of [Official Language Minority Communities \(OLMCs\)](#). Please describe the steps that you will take to ensure that the services funded under the Reaching Home take the needs of the [OLMCs](#) into consideration where applicable.

There are no official language minority communities in the CBRM and in 7 years the CAB and CE have not had any requests to provide the information in any other languages. That being said, the CE and CAB are willing and able to assist any group, organization or individual who would like to learn more about Reaching Home funding in their preferred language by:

- Making project-related documentation and announcements available in both official languages;
- Actively offering Project-related services in both official languages;
- Encouraging members of both official language communities to participate in the project
- Providing its services, where appropriate, in such a manner as to address the needs of both official language communities.

We will also continue to monitor the demand for services in the official minority language on an ongoing basis so that if need be the right mix of sub-projects is in place to support OLMCs.

Note: ESDC has removed all personal and identifying information for members of the Community Advisory Board(s) from this document. To validate or change this information, please contact your Service Canada representative.

Annex A

Rental Housing Study – Leviten-Reid & Horel 2016

The rental housing study completed in 2016 collected data from 292 landlords with a total of 5,627 rental units and 19 landlords with a total of 84 rooms in boarding houses. The study looked at the characteristics, types and composition on rental housing in CBRM.

Some of the key findings of the rental housing study are:

- For profit landlords are the main provider of rental housing in the municipality, followed by public housing and then non-profit providers.
- More rental housing is available in Sydney than in non-Sydney areas combined, and rents are higher in Sydney.
- The maximum shelter allowances provided by the provincial income assistance program is only sufficient for a person to afford rent in 10% of market rentals but few of them are vacant.
- More than half of rental units have month to month leases. (This type of lease arrangement is to the benefit of the landlord not the tenant.)
- The majority of the rental housing stock is targeted towards seniors and families with children, while the majority of people struggling to secure safe affordable housing are youth and single (non-senior) adults.
- The majority of room or boarding houses are targeted toward students or individuals with low income or experiencing homelessness.
- Most rental housing is not accessible for persons with physical limitations.

Some of the key recommendations coming from the rental housing study are:

- Affordable housing for all households in core housing need. This would best be accomplished through rent supplements in particular for youth and single, non-senior adults.
- Development of more accessible rental units.
- Have the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation start collecting data on the secondary rental market instead of just the primary.
- Develop rooming houses specifically for women.
- Have the provincial government develop and share information with landlords, tenants and community groups regarding discrimination in the housing market.

Tenant Study – Leviten-Reid & Horel 2016

The tenant study research project looked at the background and experiences of rental unit and rooming house tenants in the CBRM. Data was collected from 492 rental housing tenants and 26 rooming house tenants.

Some of the key findings in the tenant study project were:

- Most rooming house tenants are single men with low income (under \$20K/year)
- An association was found between income and rental unit type.
- Low income reported by 76% of public housing tenants, 34% of non-profit tenants, and 38% of for-profit tenants.
- Rooming house tenants report poorer outcomes than rental housing tenants on indicators such as mental health, stress, life satisfaction, sense of community belonging.
- Compared to non-profit housing tenants, for-profit and public housing tenants report lower housing quality based on the need for repairs.

Some of the key recommendations that came from the tenant study project are:

- Inspections of rental units and rooming houses to ensure units are safe and habitable (i.e. - installation of smoke detectors)
- Statistics Canada to collect better housing quality data through census.
- Housing first staff to focus on quality of units for tenants.
- Community based mental health supports to be accessible to tenants.

2016 Point in Time Count and 2018 Point in Time Count

In 2016 and 2018 our community participated in the national Point in Time Count. This enumeration of homelessness in CBRM was done over 12 hour time period, based on surveys conducted on the street and through local organizations during the study period.

Some of the key findings of the Point in Time Counts are:

- In 2018 there were 115 individuals experiencing homelessness, a decrease from 137 in 2016.
- In both PiT counts, 19% were age 24 or younger. There were more females than males and there was an overrepresentation of First Nations individuals.
- In both counts the main causes of homelessness were found to be poverty, addiction and substance abuse, family conflict and domestic abuse.
- More people are provisionally accommodated than absolute homeless, and absolute homelessness decreased in 2018.

- In 2018, in response to the question “What do you think needs to happen within CBRM to address homelessness?” the leading response was more affordable housing.
- In 2018 a by-names list was started and a registry week was held through the 20K Homes campaign under the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.
- The by names list will allow our community to monitor and prioritize housing placements.
- Having a by names list to work from is also an important part of moving towards a Coordinated Access system.

Service Based Count 2016 and 2018 – Bickerton & Oake 2016 / Roy & Bickerton 2018

The service based homelessness counts of 2016 and 2018 was with the assistance of Public Health Services, Cape Breton University and the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Group of CBRM. It involved the enumeration of homelessness in CBRM over a 1 month period based on the service provider report of clients they interacted with during the study period.

Some of the key findings of the Service based studies are:

- In 2018, there were 284 individuals experiencing homelessness, a decrease from 304 in 2016.
- The rate of people under the age of 30 experiencing homelessness increased from 38% to 42% by 2018.
- In both counts, the main cause’s homelessness included poor housing options, low income, addictions/substance abuse, criminal history, family breakdown and mental illness.
- In both counts, most people experiencing homelessness are single, and more people are provisionally accommodated than absolutely homeless.

Youth Homelessness in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality – Moore 2018

The Youth Homelessness in CBRM study was conducted by Brenda Moore in partnership with Cape Breton Community Housing Association (CBCHA), Public Health Services, Cape Breton University, Pathways to Employment and the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Group of CBRM. This study was done in conjunction with the Housing First for Youth Pilot project and Youth CREW skills development pilot project facilitated by CBCHA and Pathways to Employment. It involved consultation with 22 youth participants and over 60 service provider’s with the ultimate goal of enhancing access to coordinated, adequate and appropriate services and supports for youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Providing transition planning to help youth exiting homelessness to live and independent life.

Some of the key recommendations resulting from the Youth Homelessness study are:

- 3 year Goal: to decrease youth homelessness (age 16-24) in the CBRM through intervention efforts, and prevent new experiences of homelessness by 2021.
- Early intervention and prevention (education and family intervention)
- Systems planning and organization through implementation of a Coordinated Access System.
- Housing Support for Youth (Crisis response, supports and independence)
- Leadership, collaboration and alignment (Key stakeholder involvement in planning activities, alignment with other strategies.)