

# Housing & Homelessness

## Issue in brief

- Many people in our community are living in extreme housing poverty and must accept unsafe, undignified or inadequate housing as their only option. Others must make difficult choices between shelter, food, clothing and other basic necessities on a daily basis. United Way believes everyone deserves a safe and comfortable home.

## Why does solving this issue matter?

- For all of us, home is the foundation for our health and wellbeing—as individuals and as communities. When our neighbours can't access safe, affordable housing in our city, the foundation on which they build their lives is broken. This impacts their ability to participate in and contribute to our communities, along with a host of other negative economic, social, mental and physical health consequences.
- For some, access to affordable housing in HRM is a constant struggle because of low wages or insufficient employment. Others may be escaping domestic violence and in need of immediate shelter. Having short-term and long-term affordable housing options such as emergency shelters and community housing is critical for these individuals and families to succeed in our community. When we can all see beyond our daily survival, we can create healthier, more engaged and more prosperous communities.

## Facts & Stats

- Between 1,500 and 1,700 individuals use shelters in Halifax every year.
- In Halifax 19,565 households are living in extreme housing poverty (spending half or more of their income on housing) and could be at risk of homelessness.
- 40,000 Halifax households are spending more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, which is the general accepted threshold for housing affordability.
- In addition, there are 1,617 people on the waiting list for public housing in Halifax.
- 211 Nova Scotia reports that the most common unmet basic need is affordable housing.
- Nearly 60% of homeless youth in Canada were part of the child welfare system at some point in their lives.
- A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that a single person would have to earn at least \$17.49 per hour—or work 61 hours a week at minimum wage—to afford an average one-bedroom apartment in Halifax.
- 85% of low-income, single parent households in Halifax are headed by a woman.
- It is estimated that 14,000 affordable housing units are needed in HRM.