

# Truro & Colchester CHAMBER of Commerce

## Communities Seek Solutions to Housing Demands.

By Sherry Martell

Housing has been a prominent topic in nearly every broadcast and media source for months as well as government tables at all levels. Communities across the country are seeking solutions to meet housing demands.

When presented with a quagmire of programs, funding options, land availability and "red tape," it is easy to see why there isn't a singular solution across all areas that will solve this issue. In addition, the needs today will not be the same as months and years down the road as our population continues to increase and economic pressures continue.

The discussion surround-

ing housing options considers that the needs range from addressing homelessness our communities, to increasing accessible and affordable housing, as well as new homes, condos, rentals and all other types.

The Truro and Colchester Chamber of Commerce has been involved in ongoing productive discussions with every level of government, as well as construction association.

We know that businesses continue to be challenged to fill their labour needs. That issue is directly related to housing in that a workforce, whether local or immigration influenced depends on candi-



Sherry Martell

dates being able to secure safe, attainable places to live. There is also the front-and-centre issue that we need to attract more qualified trades people to the area to build housing and yet at present with an extremely low vacancy rate that is compounding the situation.

At this year's Annual General Meeting luncheon, we heard from Paige Hovelling, Communications and Government Relations special with the Nova Scotia Realtor's Association.

That organization recently completed a study We all Play a Part: REALTOR Solutions to Nova Scotia's Affordable Housing Crisis, where they spoke to Nova Scotian's government, service providers and industry professionals to learn what was working well and where improvements could be made to have more people attain housing. Since this study was presented to the Affordable Housing Commission, nearly two years ago, Nova Scotia has seen a further declining in attainability across the housing spectrum.

There is no question that Nova Scotians have experienced increased pressure on housing over the past two years. Our province has seen tremendous population growth, setting records for immigration and topping over the one million citizens mark.

The reality is our housing supply has not kept pace and that additional strains have prompted a decrease in housing attainability.

During the coming months the Chamber will continue to engage with organizations and government bodies to

identify solutions, solidify partnerships and provide accurate information to our membership.

On April 4, the Chamber will be hosting a sector roundtable with guest speakers from the Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA) with representation from both national and provincial branches. Any business or developer related to the supply and demand of housing and construction is welcome to join us in this discussion.

In the evening, the Chamber will host its Annual Dinner

Gala and Awards with guest speaker Leah Nord, Senior Operation Director of CHBA national branch speaking about housing trends and advocacy across the country.

For more details on how to register visit the Chambers website [www.trurocolchesterchamber.com](http://www.trurocolchesterchamber.com) and click on the events tab.

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Truro Chamber of Commerce hosted a Women in Business seminar.

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## The Shoreline Journal Tid-Bits

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### Reducing Wait Times for Driver's Tests

Nova Scotians will be able to get a driver's test sooner with the Province adding more examiners and making the testing system more efficient. Public Works has hired five new driver examiners to work at Access Nova Scotia centres and is partnering with Safety Services Nova Scotia to hire and train 10 more. With these 15 new driver examiners, up to 900 tests per week will be added to the system. Tests are also being added by extending hours and making appointments available on weekends.

About 10 per cent of appointments are currently missed or not completed; this rate will be improved through reduced paperwork, more reminders and improved translated materials.

The goal of the initiative is to reduce wait times for a driver's test to about three weeks. The current wait time in Nova Scotia is about six weeks and was as high as 22 weeks last August. Before the pandemic, the average wait time was 10 to 13 weeks.

Supports for Volunteer Firefighters, Ground Search and Rescue Available

Volunteer firefighters and volunteer members of ground search and rescue teams can now access new mental health supports - any time, at no cost.

The Nova Scotia Firefighter and Ground Search and Rescue Volunteer Assistance Program gives these first responders and their families access to a range of health and wellness services, including personal and family counselling, financial advice, stress management and nutrition advice, and more.

"Volunteer first responders play such an important role in communities across Nova Scotia where, in many cases, they are the first to respond in an emergency," said Brian Comer, Minister of Addictions and Mental Health. "This new program is a way to support our volunteer firefighters and ground search and rescue teams - to help the helpers who do so much for us."

The program includes counselling from mental health clinicians, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week in person, by phone or online. The service is part of a two-year pilot program with Telus Health that will help the government better understand the mental health needs of volunteer firefighters and ground search and rescue volunteers.



Immigration was the subject at another seminar/information meeting hosted by the Truro Chamber of Commerce.

Connection Church  
38 Pleasant Street, Truro

## Additional Shelter Space in Truro

People experiencing homelessness in the Truro area will soon have access to more shelter spaces, providing safe, warm places to sleep away from the elements. A temporary emergency overnight shelter will open Monday night, February 12, in Connection Church, 38 Pleasant St. The hours will be 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. Monday to Saturday and it will close at 8 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The shelter, with services provided by Souls Harbour Rescue Mission, will operate until April 30.

The shelter will have 15 beds, based on the current needs of the community. Guests will receive meals, and through the Truro Housing

Outreach Society, they will have access to showers. They will also have laundry access two days a week.

The society has expanded its hospitality program at Haven House. Clients who are staying at the new shelter, as well as anyone else experiencing housing insecurity in the community, are encouraged to stop by Wednesday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m. or Sundays from 4 to 8 p.m.

The Province is providing funding for the shelter location, as well as operating and staff costs. Wraparound services will be provided through an existing partnership with the society and include housing support services.