

# South Shore Housing Action Coalition



*Healthy affordable housing options  
for all, at every stage of life*

11/13/2014

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

SSHAC is a coalition among diverse and committed individuals and stakeholders working collaboratively to build awareness and facilitate action on the need for quality, safe and affordable housing in Lunenburg and Queens Counties in particular, and Nova Scotia in general.

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## OUR HISTORY

In response to the challenging housing conditions home visitors were often seeing affect their clients, staff at Public Health came together in late 2008-2009 to look at the issue of affordable housing on the South Shore. These internal discussions led to a public workshop on Tenants Rights in September 2009 facilitated by Fiona Traynor at Dalhousie Legal Aid and attended by representatives of many organizations in Lunenburg Queens. There was general consensus in those present that there was a distinct lack of safe, quality, affordable housing on the South Shore and interest in trying to come together to take action. With leadership shown by Second Story Women's Centre, Lunenburg County Community Health Board and Public Health, a community committee was formed in the winter of 2010 and has been meeting monthly to increase awareness and develop an action plan around the need for better housing.

## MEMBERSHIP

SSHAC is a coalition among diverse and committed individuals and stakeholders, including:

- Second Story Women's Centre
- South Shore Transition House Association
- Inn from the Cold
- Aspotogan Heritage Trust
- Bridgewater Family Support Centre
- Queens County Community Health Board
- Mahone Bay Seniors Project
- South Shore District Health Authority
- Western Regional Housing Authority
- Lunenburg County Community Health Board
- Community Links
- Town of Bridgewater
- Municipality of the District of Lunenburg
- Municipality of the District of Chester
- Region of Queens Municipality
- Town of Lunenburg
- Town of Mahone Bay
- Community members

## OUR VISION

Healthy, affordable housing options for all, at every stage of life.

- **Healthy** means safe, well-maintained, not-crowded, free from environmental hazards (including lead paint, moisture, mould, pest infestations, lead paint and exposure to hazardous gases such as carbon monoxide and radon), with an adequate supply of potable water and functioning toilet facilities, and access to support, services and outdoor recreational space.

- **Affordable** means that tenants/residents are not forced to pay more than 30% of their income on housing.
- **Housing** means both rental and resident-owned places to live.
- **Options** means that people have some choice in the range of housing types available to them.
- **All** means that everyone, no matter what their age, race, religion, sex, physical ability or family situation has access to housing.
- **Every stage of life** means that there are appropriate housing options available as one moves through life's stages, from children and youth, adolescents, single adults, young families, middle-aged persons or seniors.

## OUR GOAL

As community members we will work collaboratively to build awareness and facilitate action on the need for quality, safe, and affordable housing in Lunenburg and Queens Counties in particular, and Nova Scotia in general.

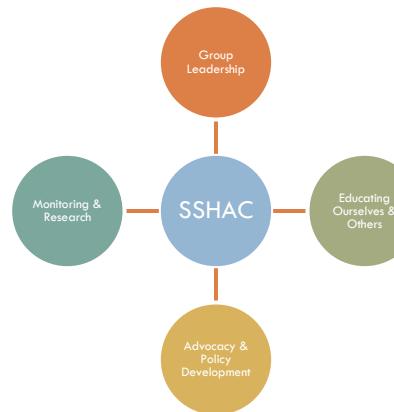
## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Our coalition is comprised of persons/groups/organizations interested in working in partnership to achieve our common vision of “*healthy, affordable housing options for all, at every stage of life.*”
- We support the vision of a vibrant and diverse community with a range of affordable, accessible and safe quality housing.
- We welcome diversity in our membership.
- We work towards consensus in decision-making.
- We listen respectfully to all voices, and support each other in continuous learning and action.
- We commit (whenever possible) to regular attendance at Coalition meetings.
- We promote the work of the Coalition within our organizations (where applicable) and in the community.

## OUR GOVERNANCE

Guided by our shared vision, goal and guiding principles, SSHAC has identified 4 focus areas for our work. SSHAC activities fall within these focus areas and are agreed upon by the membership. SSHAC members are encouraged to participate in the focus areas of interest. These include:

- **Group Leadership**
  - Coalition building and organizing
    - Activities include: planning meetings, inviting community members and identified presenters to meetings, correspondence, etc.
- **Advocacy & Policy Development**
  - Focus on research and development of policy recommendations for quality, safe and affordable rental housing
    - Activities include: UNSM resolution on rental housing standards, best practices for rural municipalities for addressing housing issues (presentation), providing input into housing related initiatives
- **Educating Ourselves and Others**
  - Regular campaigns to further the awareness of our group, tenants and landlords, public policy makers and the general public.
    - Activities include: publication of a quarterly newsletter, maintaining our website and using social media (Facebook page), presentations/consultation as requested by community
- **Monitoring and Research**
  - Development of a picture, both statistical and qualitative, of housing in Lunenburg and Queens Counties, and elsewhere in Nova Scotia.
    - Activities include: scanning and collection of local, provincial, and national media for articles related to affordable housing, needs assessment planning, Housing in Our Communities: The Numbers



## ORIENTATION FOR NEW MEMBERS

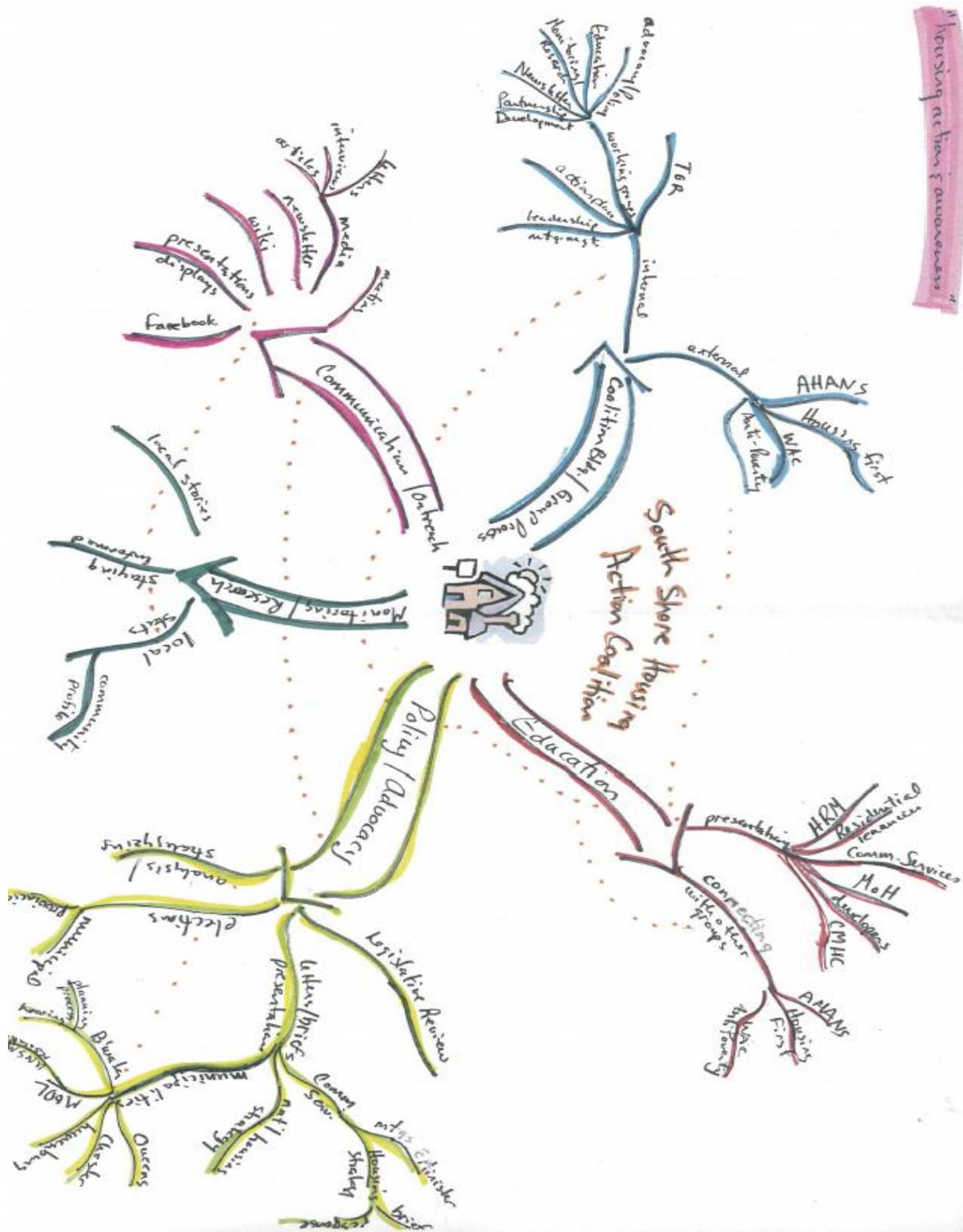
- New members will be welcomed at a general meeting of SSHAC;
- New members will receive a copy of the Information Package for New Members, a SSHAC brochure and a Membership Contact List;
- New members will be added to the Newsletter distribution list;
- A current member will be “paired” with a new member, to act as a mentor and as a person who can provide background and answer questions. The mentor may also assist the new member with choosing an action group which is of interest.

## SSHAC MEETINGS

SSHAC meets regularly\* on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at the Bridgewater Fire Hall from 1:30pm-3:30pm.

\*It is occasionally necessary to reschedule our regular meetings to accommodate community and member activities. Any changes to the meetings are communicated with the membership as soon as possible.

## SSHAC ACTIVITIES



## South Shore Housing Action Coalition Timeline

2008- 2009

- Community Home Visitors ask “What can we do to address housing issues?”
- Public Health Case Study Group
- September 2009 Tenant’s Rights Workshop with Dal Legal Aid

2010

- January 2010 PH, SSWC, Lunenburg CHB meet
- Participation in AHANS consultation
- Presentation to MODL: Motion to develop action plan & appoint councilor to SSHAC
- February 2010 First SSHAG meeting
- Goals & Objectives Developed

2011

- Vision Developed
- Brief presented to Minister, Community Services
- Multiple learning presentations
- 1st NS Housing & Homeless Conference

2012

- Research into Legislative Frameworks
- Participation in Housing Strategy Consultations
- 2nd NS Housing & Homeless Conference Planning Review
- 2012-2013 Action plan developed
- Municipal Election Strategy
- Provide input to Town of Bridgewater

2013

- Presentations to Councils Reps appointed (Plans)
- Ongoing Education & Communication Activities Conference
- Response to Housing Strategy for Nova Scotia prepared
- Housing in Our Communities: The Numbers Report prepared
- Resolution from MODL at UNSM re: Rental Housing Standards Passed
- CMHC Luncheon (Housing Action
- 3rd NS Housing & Homeless
- Provincial Election Strategy

2014

- Needs Assessment Committee: Planning
- Ongoing Education and Communication Activities
- Research and Presentation on Best Practices for Rural Municipalities for Addressing Housing Issues
- Relationship & Coalition Building Activities
- Response from 2013 UNSM Resolution

# SSHAC HOUSING GLOSSARY

**ACCEPTABLE HOUSING** is housing that meets all three housing standards (see definition of housing standards). The term integrates adequacy, suitability and affordability into a single measure of housing conditions (CMHC).

**ADEQUATE HOUSING** (according to the CMHC) is housing that does not require any major repairs (see definition of housing standards). However, the UN Human Rights Council on the Right to Adequate Housing states adequate housing has:

- security of tenure, free from fear of being removed or to be subject to undue threats;
- access to public services and infrastructure, such as education, health, leisure, transportation, electricity, potable water, adequate sewage and garbage disposal systems;
- access to environmental assets, such as land and water, and to a balanced environment;
- affordability, with costs compatible with the income levels or housing with subsidies;
- good housing conditions, with protection against cold weather, heat, rain, wind, fire, flood, risks of collapse or other threats to health and life;
- priority for the needs of vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities;
- proper location, with access to physicians and hospitals, schools, day nursery and transport, in urban or rural areas;
- use of materials, structures and space in accordance with the inhabitant's culture.

**AFFORDABILITY** is one of the three housing standards used by Statistics Canada and CMHC (see definition of housing standards). Housing which costs less than 30% of a household's gross income is considered affordable. Costs include rent, mortgage, utilities, property taxes, etc. (CMHC).

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING** is a term used in a broader way than the term "affordability" (see above). Affordable housing is "available at a cost that does not compromise an individual's ability to meet other basic needs, including food, clothing, and access to education and the ability to actively participate in community life" (UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing). The degree of affordability results from the relationship between the cost of housing and household income. It is not a static concept, as housing costs and incomes change over time (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011). Affordable Housing can be provided by a municipality, city, government, or non-profit organization. It may take a number of forms that exist along a continuum – including emergency shelters or transitional housing, non-market rental (also known as social or subsidized housing), formal and informal rental, and affordable home ownership (NBNPNA). Usually the term "affordable housing" is used to describe housing that adequately suits the needs of low and moderate income households at costs below those generally found in the housing market.

**CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION (CMHC)** is Canada's national housing agency. Established as a government-owned corporation in 1946 to address Canada's post-war housing shortage, the agency is now a major provider of mortgage loan insurance, mortgage-backed securities, housing policy and programs, and housing research.

**CONDOMINIUMS** are buildings in which units are owned individually, while the common property is owned jointly by all of the owners (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).

**CORE HOUSING NEED** is housing that falls below at least one of the three housing standards (see definition of housing standards) and requires a household to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative housing that meets all three housing standards (CMHC). A household is not in core housing need if its housing meets all of the adequacy, suitability and affordability standards or if its housing does not meet one or more of these standards, but it has sufficient income to obtain alternative local housing that is acceptable (CMHC).

**EMERGENCY SHELTERS** are temporary accommodations for people who are homeless; they prevent people from becoming street homeless (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).

**HOUSING STANDARDS** are the three standards used in Canada to determine the core housing needs of households and individuals:

- **Adequate** housing is reported (by residents) as not requiring any major repairs.
- **Affordable** dwellings cost less than 30% of total before-tax household income (including utilities, taxes, etc.).
- **Suitable** housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households as per National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements.

**RENTED CONDOMINIUMS** are investor-owned condominium (strata) units rented on the private market (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).

**SAFE HOUSING** is used to describe more than one dimension of safety; it can include health (damp, mould, chemical exposures, etc.), physical hazards (risk of accidents or falls etc.), public safety (crime, victimization), and psychosocial safety (control, social connectedness, absence of stigmatizing features etc.). In its definition of adequate housing, CMHC addresses the need for safety from health or physical hazards but it does not appear to include other dimensions of safety.

**SECURE MARKET RENTALS / PURPOSE BUILT RENTAL HOUSING** is apartments and/or buildings that are built with the intent to be rented in the private market. Through regulation, they cannot be separated and sold as separate units (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).

**SECONDARY SUITES** are typically additional units within the structure of a principal single family residence, and are often basement apartments or lock-off suites in townhouses / apartments (Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).

**SOCIAL HOUSING/PUBLIC HOUSING** is housing for low and moderate income individuals and families, usually subsidized through a variety of mechanisms, including senior government support. Public Housing in Nova Scotia is owned by the Nova Scotia Housing Development Corporation and administered/managed by Housing Authority offices throughout the province (Government of Nova Scotia).

**SUPPORTIVE HOUSING** fills the gap between independent living in the community and dependent living in an institutional setting. It is permanent (no limit on length of stay) affordable housing, in any configuration (congregate, individual etc). It has some form of care component that is designed to help people maintain their housing. It includes a combination of affordable housing and services. Typical support services include mental health and or other health supports, life skills training, and meal preparation (NBNPHA; Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy, 2011).