

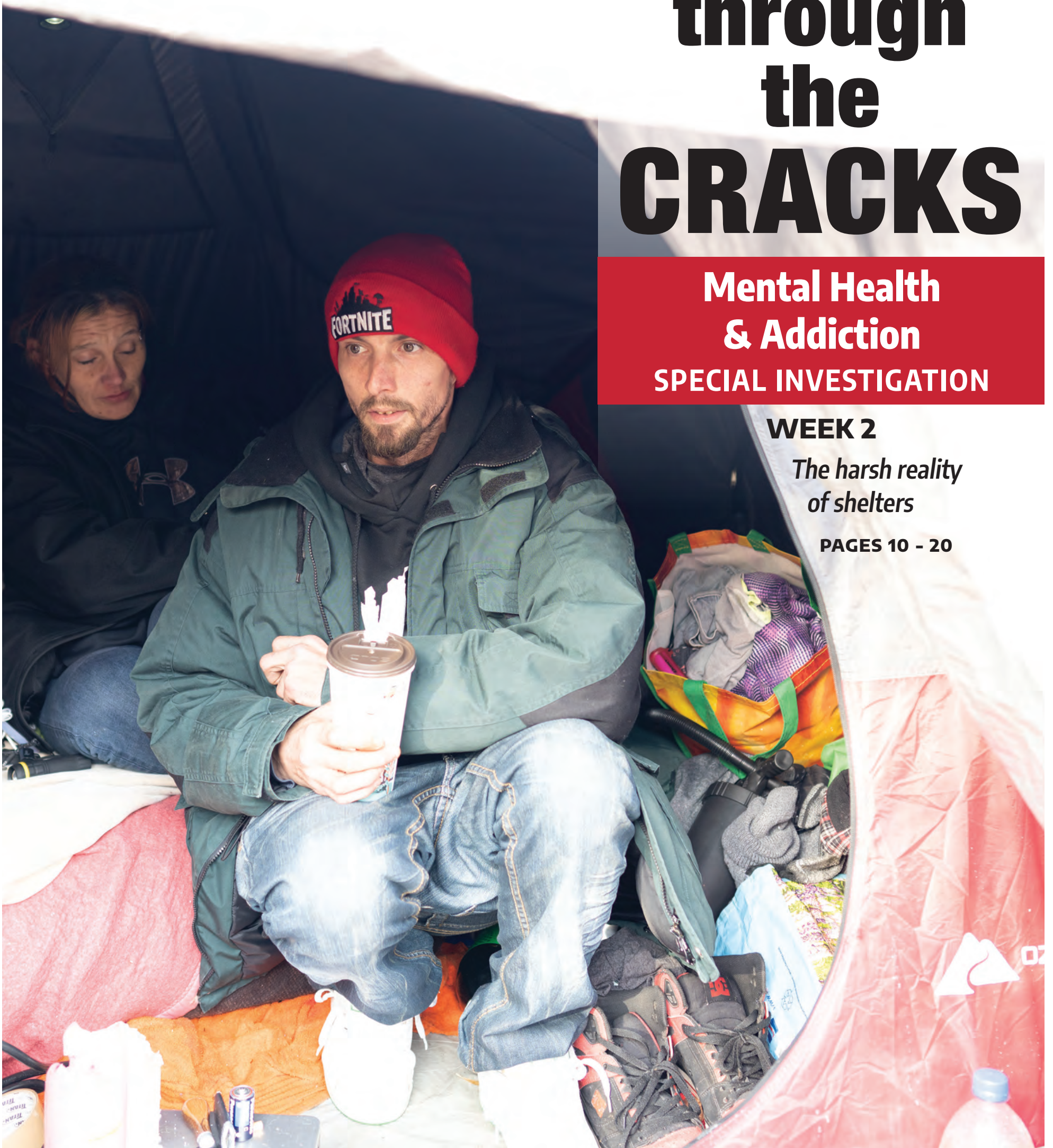
through the CRACKS

**Mental Health
& Addiction**
SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

WEEK 2

*The harsh reality
of shelters*

PAGES 10 - 20



Kayla Gifford and Catlin Alder lived in a tent for months when they tried to leave a derelict apartment and were subject to a rental scam. Shelters did not suit the couple for multiple reasons. They have not yet found an apartment that will accept their application. Photo by John Morris Photography

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Until this January, men lined up at Bedford MacDonald house around 4pm every evening to secure their bed for the night.

Photo by John Morris Photography

Supply and demand

“It’s always doors closed in your face when you’re having a hard time.”

By Rachel Collier

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
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Early last November

Donnie Handrahan, from Alberton, lined up at Deacon House in

Charlottetown, the only shelter specifically tailored for men with substance use issues or chemical dependencies in the province.

Eight other men had lined up before him, some as early as 4:30 pm, hoping to win access to one of nine beds when the shelter

would open around 8 pm. James Cleveland was in line with Handrahan that night.

“Donnie was joking around laughing about it. If he didn’t get a bed, he was gonna jump over the bridge,” Cleveland told The Graphic. “I didn’t think much more about it. But sure enough

he didn’t get a bed.”

Handrahan drowned in Hillsborough River hours later.

According to Handrahan’s sister Rose Marie Richard and his brother Lester Handrahan, the coroner was not able to confirm if the death was by suicide.

“He could have slipped on the

rocks,” said Lester. “No one really knows.”

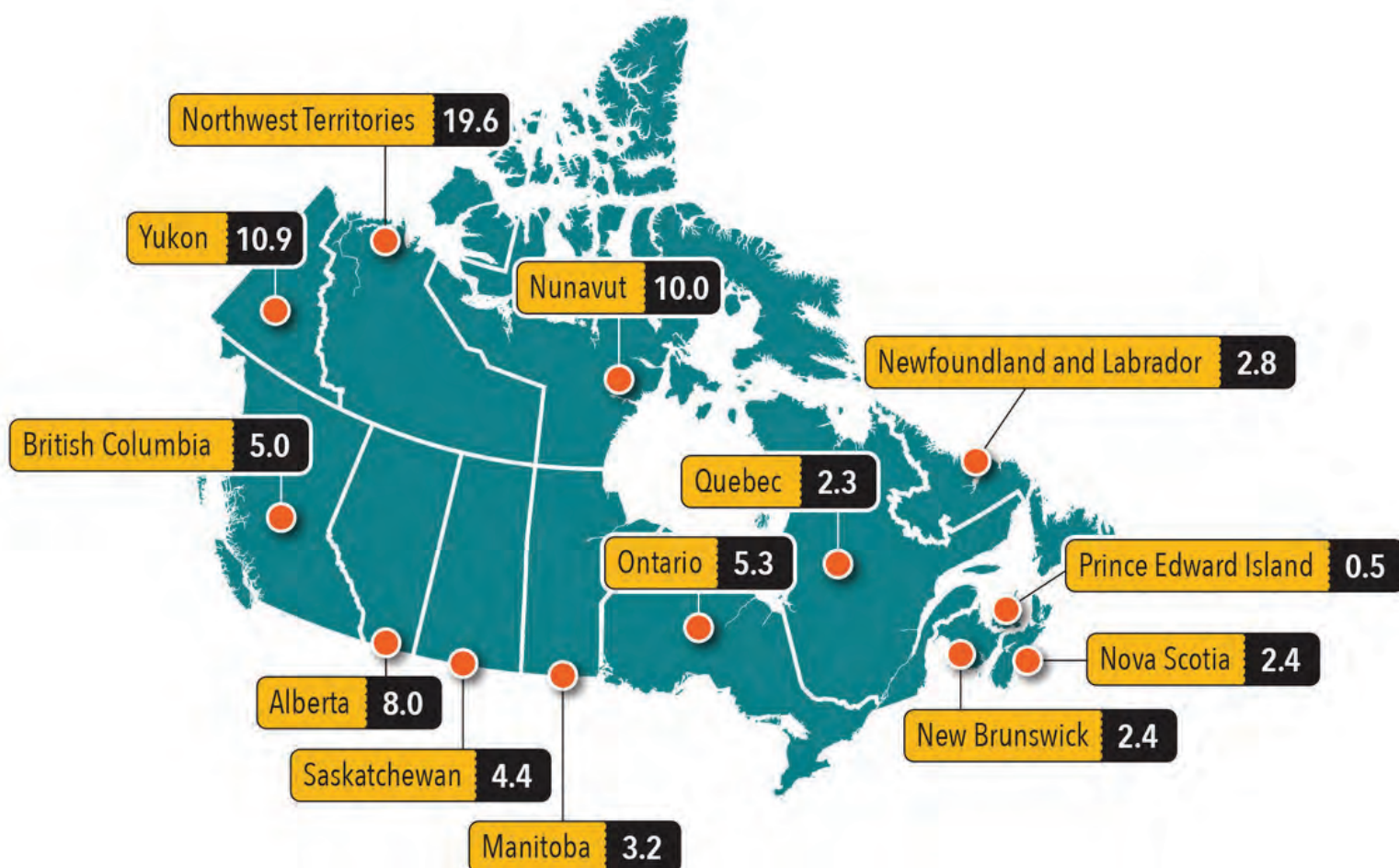
But they do know he had a poor mental health track record involving serious self-harm. He had struggled with both mental health and addictions since he was young and experienced abuse, said Richard.

PEI last in shelter bed count

By Rachel Collier

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Number of emergency shelter beds by population of 10,000



PEI has the fewest number of general emergency shelter beds per 10,000 residents in Canada, according to the most recent data available, the 2019 Canadian Shelter Capacity Report.

The report, which was prepared by Employment and Social Development Canada, found PEI has just 0.5 beds per 10,000 people.

Even by comparison to other Atlantic provinces this is low. Both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have 2.4 beds. Rates in Canadian territories were as high as 19.6 and among provinces as high as 8.0 in Alberta.

Since data was gathered, PEI did increase emergency shelter beds for women with the addition of eight beds at Blooming House in Charlottetown. Deacon House has also increased to offer nine emergency shelter beds.

With this new total of 17 emergency shelter beds, which are distinct from transitional shelter beds and beds for people fleeing violence, the province still only offers 1.1 beds per 10,000 Islanders. If the 12 beds for men at Salvation Army’s Deacon House are included our provincial rate would stand at 1.8 beds per 10,000 Islanders—still lower than anywhere else in the country.

Quebec had the next lowest rate found at 2.3 beds per 10,000.

This visual was sourced from Employment and Social Development Canada’s Shelter Capacity Report 2019. It draws from Statistics Canada data. Emergency shelter beds have increased on PEI notably with the addition of eight women’s emergency shelter beds. All considered, the number of beds per population on PEI is still lower than any 2019 rate across the country.



According to family, the coroner's report showed no indication that Donnie Handrahan was drunk or high the night he died.

Submitted photo

At 60, Handrahan had been living at a 24-hour care home in Miscouche. It seemed to be great for his well-being, said his sister. But Handrahan was known to leave the home to venture out to Charlottetown or up to Tignish, on occasion when he would relapse.

Handrahan's friends say his death highlights the need for more readily available mental health and addictions services –

particularly low-barrier shelter beds.

"It's always doors closed in your face when you're having a hard time," says Alan MacDonald, who knew Handrahan for nearly 30 years.

"He would call detox and it would be, call back later, call back later. And then you try one shelter, Bedford MacDonald House and they say not tonight, then you try the next down here at Deacon and the door is closed again."

He added Handrahan was only one of many to endure this demoralizing rejection. He has been through it himself time and time again.

"If someone had opened the door to Donnie that night, he might have made it through to a better mood," said MacDonald.

He added someone in the shelter might have recognized he was struggling and set him up with better mental health services. But he suspects even the simplest warm welcome and a place to stay could have sup-

ported his mental health well enough to live to see a brighter day.

"He will be missed."

Cleveland, who experienced homelessness this past fall through early winter, said there is an acute need for more beds and more services.

His statement was supported by a number of Deacon House clients who were waiting up to four hours on another chilly late November night.

To alleviate long waits outdoors, which forced some clients to choose between food or a warm shelter bed, the province launched a booking system this January. Clients can call in advance to book a spot through the emergency shelter line run by Salvation Army.

Cleveland questions how it will work. Someone who might be accepted into Bedford MacDonald House early in the day might not be considered sober enough for safe entrance by 8 pm. Many clients don't have great access to phones. Daily plans

often change.

Men's shelter clients consistently emphasize accessible phone lines, which rarely resolve issues. If there were enough beds for everyone, the nearly four-hour line up in the cold wouldn't have been necessary to begin with.

In March of 2021 the Department of Housing and Social Development released occupancy data which showed between 179 and 239 night stays at Bedford MacDonald House per month between October 2020 and Feb 2021.

"It's kind of sad to report and share that we are full on a regular basis," said Jamie Locke, communications representative for Salvation Army Atlantic in April of 2021.

But clients say occupancy rates are misleading because shelters often make subjective decisions to deny entry, according to people interviewed.

Salvation Army refused an interview request.

In December of the same year

The Graphic requested Salvation Army, which was handed an untendered \$3.7 million management contract by the King government, to release updated occupancy data.

Salvation Army refused. A government spokesperson said the organization will only release the minimum required data to conform to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

FOIPP is a process that often takes months, or longer, to generate public disclosure from third parties. It is a tactic often used to delay transparency.

An Assessment of Need Report, published three years ago by the Department of Social Development and Housing, states that in June of 2019 Bedford MacDonald House was full most nights, often turning as many as five men away.

The report anticipated the shelter would remain full or near capacity for the foreseeable future. Clients confirm that is the case today.

Recording catches BMH deny shelter is accessible

By Paul MacNeill
and Rachel Collier

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The call came into Bedford MacDonald House late on Friday March 26, 2021. Was a room available for someone with mobility issues? the caller asked, who he described as having a "bad limp, he can't walk or lift himself out of the chair"

"I don't think we can do that; they need to be able to take care of their own needs," the shelter employee responded, but volunteered to contact his manager.

The policy was affirmed 10 minutes later in a second call, during which the employee offered the government's emergency shelter number as an alternative.

Circling back, the caller clarified that the potential client could look after their own needs, such as showering, but was unable to climb stairs.

"It's just like a liability kind of thing; we need them especially to be able to go up the stairs because we have a big set of stairs which leads to the rooms. Unfortunately, we are not able to." The employee indicates Bedford MacDonald House is not wheelchair accessible.

But it is.

Bedford MacDonald House is capable of housing high-risk men who also happen to have mobility issues, not an uncommon reality for those living on the streets. Renovations, totaling more than \$15,000, were completed in the fall of 2019 including construction of a wheelchair ramp and opening two ground-floor beds.

The accessible beds, which also serve as overflow beds on the ground floor, opened during the short period when Mike Redmond acted as house manager. He and his team engaged clients in a more active way, attempting to build a foundation on which to grow future success.

But 24-hour service and client outings to the Charlottetown Guild, fishing, softball games or making bread also raised flags in Salvation Army leadership. There was worry about the need and cost.

Redmond was fired in September 2020, less than a year after taking on the role. He oversaw development of the new accessibility features. After his dismissal, the homeless community voiced concern that Salvation Army was moving quickly to reduce services, including closing the two accessible beds opened less than a year earlier.

The recording runs counter to findings of an investigation into allegations of discrimination against Salvation



Michael Redmond has been appalled to see how Bedford MacDonald House men's shelter and transitional housing arrangement he helped develop has been handled by Salvation Army since he was fired from the agency in September of 2020.

Photo by Rachel Collier

Army. In the fallout of the firings, Bedford MacDonald House clients came forward to publicly accuse the Christian-based organization of discrimination. In December 2020 the provincial government promised an investigation, but it allowed Salvation Army to hire the

investigator, HR Atlantic.

In a report released last May, the investigator found no evidence of discrimination by the shelter or staff "on the basis of physical disability, criminal record, or ethnicity, cultural or racial heritage." However, "the investigation process was frustrated by a lack of co-operation and/or access to the individuals making the allegations."

Lynn Bradley, who was addictions and mental health co-ordinator for the Native Council of PEI, worked with some of the clients who made allegations of discrimination that were investigated by HR Atlantic. She was never contacted in relation to the investigation.

The calls that night were not made by an actual client, although Bedford MacDonald House did not know this. They were made by an individual, not a former employee, using a pseudonym for both himself and client. They confirm fears of the homeless community that services were being reduced. The Graphic obtained copies of the calls.

Minister of Social Development and Housing Brad Trivers supports the work of Salvation Army, despite consistent accusations by clients of discrimination.

"I truly believe that the Salvation Army, as a whole, is an excellent organization, dedicated to helping people and there's definitely no systemic sort of problems," he said in an interview. The minister believes Salvation Army can effectively deal with any specific incident that might arise.

Detached government oversight

The hands-off approach to the investigation is typical of how the King government deals with Salvation Army. In November 2020, it signed an untendered \$3.7 million, three-year contract for it to operate Bedford MacDonald House, Smith Lodge and Community Outreach Centre.

Since then, Salvation Army has reduced services, while access to shelter data has become less transparent.

Record keeping in the immediate aftermath of Redmond's departure was limited to daily room counts. During Redmond's tenure detailed case management files were maintained including wait lists, lists of men on the street, lists of those with sustainable housing (as measured by six consecutive months), as well as follow-up calls or visits to 120 clients.

See page 12

Recording catches BMH

continued from page 11

Case files included health information, parole information, family, partners, medication history and a plan for each individual on how best to move their life forward.

Redmond does not believe this level of detail has been maintained.

Last March government voluntarily released the most basic data - bed night summaries for five months from October 2020 to February 2021 that showed between 179 and 239 night stays at Bedford MacDonald House per month. This is a sharp decline in bed use from when Redmond was regularly opening all 12 beds, which include overflow and accessible beds. He was reporting closer to 350 or 360 bed night stays per month.

Even with lower bed usage, clients as well as a Salvation Army media representative report men are still routinely turned away.

The spirit of transparency government displayed last year no longer exists. It is now hiding

behind the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to refuse voluntary release of the same information. Salvation Army says it will abide by FOIPP, a notoriously slow process that often takes more than a year to process.

In 2019 the province agreed to fund skill development and recreational activities for clients, and the emergency support line for Bedford MacDonald House. Salvation Army received \$343,200 in 2020-21 and \$353,200 in 2021-22 to provide these services. However, since the agreement was reached the hours of operation of the shelter have been cut in half.

Minister Trivers said he is 'fairly confident' money allocated to provide 24-hour accessibility to these services is being properly utilized.

However, at this point a communications officer interrupted and requested The Graphic forward the referenced government news release.

"He may not have had an



Lisa Cooper, Chief of the Native Council of PEI, has requested support to reopen their organization's men's shelter which closed in 2006. She sees a serious need for low-barrier shelter that her members can trust and where they can access the wrap around services the council in co-ordination with partners provides.

Photo by John Morris Photography

“ I’m an alcoholic. And if I get refused because of my medical condition, it’s like refusing a diabetic because they don’t have insulin. ”

MATT DUNN



Matt Dunn of Sturgeon has shivered through countless winter nights on the back step of the old Smith Lodge when he hasn't been able to access low-barrier shelter. Multiple clients have told the Graphic that, contrary to their contractual obligations, Salvation Army staff deny clients shelter if they present even the slightest signs of intoxication.

Photo by John Morris Photography.

opportunity to review it, as I believe it was before his time working on the portfolio," she said.

The Graphic forwarded the press release. The representative replied with the following written statement: "The Department of Social Development and Housing believes that many, if not all, of the funding commitments have been met by the Salvation Army through taking on the management Community Outreach Centre, Smith Lodge, the Shelter Support Line and Bedford MacDonald House."

What the minister did not acknowledge is recreational and expanded service funds are in addition to grants for Smith Lodge transitional units and Community Outreach Centre. Grants for the latter totalled \$650,000 in 2020-21 and over \$1 million in 2021-22.

Is Salvation Army the right fit?

What many people question is whether a religious-based organization, with a long history of homophobic and discriminatory accusations against it, is the right organization to lead shelter services in 2022.

Matt Dunn, 32, of Sturgeon, believes Salvation Army does discriminate. He was kicked out of Bedford MacDonald House in 2020.

Homeless, and seemingly without options, he attempted suicide. He survived and received treatment in the mental health unit of Prince County Hospital. Upon discharge the recommendation was made to meet with Salvation Army and attempt to gain re-entry.

The thought of religion being raised made Dunn anxious, but he felt there was no choice. "During the meeting I was asked to take part in the serenity prayer. I

was emotionally vulnerable and felt ambushed with religion," he wrote in a letter outlining his experience.

Dunn also criticizes the agency's loose interpretation of what it means to be a low-barrier shelter.

Salvation Army is contracted to "accommodate an allowable tolerance of client intoxication (a harm reduction model)." A level of intoxication tolerable at Deacon House, for example, is often not tolerated at Bedford MacDonald House, Dunn says. Numerous shelter clients who spoke with The Graphic corroborate this.

"I'm an alcoholic. And if I get refused because of my medical condition, it's like refusing a diabetic because they don't have insulin," said Dunn.

Former Salvation Army communications representative Jamie Locke assured The Graphic, prior to his departure from the position, that clients under the influence of drugs and alcohol are accepted.

"The only thing that would cause a turning-away of a client is if they were of a significant risk of harm to themselves or to others," he said.

"Even when that does happen, we find other accommodations, it is not just turning someone to the street, because that's just unacceptable," he added.

It's an assertion Dunn disputes. He has shivered through dozens of harsh winter nights over the past four years when the shelter was either full or would not accept him due to his level of intoxication. He was not connected with alternative accommodation.

Twenty-year-old Andrew Morrison of Summerside agrees. After aging out of an Island group home at 18, he became homeless. He says he was denied shelter at Bedford MacDonald House for being high from marijuana.

Referencing men who are turned away when they even smell of alcohol, he says a lot of the time, "they're harmless."

The Native Council of PEI doesn't think Salvation Army is best positioned to offer services.

"We have heard from many of our community members that there is a great mistrust of it (Bedford MacDonald House), particularly with the affiliation with the church, as well as reported incidents of discrimination among staff members towards Indigenous peoples," Native Council Chief Lisa Cooper told the Standing Committee of Health and Social Development in November.

She says it is not enough for a non-Indigenous organization to receive Indigenous training and then claim that they are the best suited to provide services to her community.

"If you don't fully understand the additional layer of issues that comes with the traumatized Indigenous community, your best intentions are still going to fall short," she said in a follow-up interview with The Graphic.

Wanda Lyall is NCPEI's financial director but also heavily involved in the council's housing, mental health and addictions programs.

Knowing conditions some clients endure, she fears lives will be lost if low-barrier shelter options, which Indigenous people trust, are not developed.

"If we don't get a shelter run by us, like a true low-barrier shelter. Yeah, it is going to happen. And, you know, pardon the French, but there will be hell to pay."

Chief Cooper requested support from the province to reopen Nitapk men's shelter, which the council operated until 2006 when it closed due to lack of funding. The council also ran Grandmother's House, a Charlottetown women's shelter until funds dried up in 2012.

While funding is an issue to reopening a shelter, so is availability of infrastructure. Both the former Smith Lodge and Charlottetown Curling Club, now the Community Outreach Centre, were purchased by the provincial government and offered to Salvation Army to operate.

NCPEI requested support in opening a shelter last September. To date the King government has offered no firm commitment.

Minister Trivers says he is pleased with government's shelter strategy. "We actually are doing fairly well on the low-barrier side of things," and dismisses concerns Bedford MacDonald House is not meeting contractual obligations.

He added low-barrier shelters are provided to those who need it, not necessarily all at the same place.

"The people with deeper issues or deeper problems, sometimes, you know, people want to go to Deacon House, for example. But we have to, we have to make sure everybody's safe," he said. "I think that's what we're doing."

He expressed optimism that a broader working arrangement can be negotiated with the Native Council of PEI.

"They need to be the ones that determine how best the needs of Indigenous people are met when it comes to this area of shelters and support," said Trivers. "What we want to do is, is really listen to them and provide supports where they need it."



In 2019, the King government announced funding to increase services provided at Salvation Army's Bedford MacDonald House, a shelter for men in Charlottetown. For \$355,500 annually the province promised 24/7 accessibility to programs and supports through the shelter as well as recreational and life skills development programming. From the left are Captain Jamie Locke, Major Wayne Loveless, Premier Dennis King, then Minister of Social Development and Housing Ernie Hudson, Majors Dan and Glenda Roode and Mike Redmond. Government of PEI photo

Big promises, stalled delivery

By Rachel Collier

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Smith Lodge

In February 2020 then Minister of Housing and Social Development, Ernie Hudson, announced the PEI Housing Corporation would spend \$1.3 million to purchase Smith Lodge in Charlottetown, creating 28 transitional beds within five months.

The plan was to create beds for men, women and children. But nearly two years later the announcement stands as one of a growing list of costly broken promises.

To date, only nine transitional beds have opened, none of which are available to women or children.

Another eight beds were repurposed to replace capacity lost by closure of Health PEI's Deacon House, which provides emergency shelter for men with chemical dependencies. When purchase price and renovation costs are factored, it has cost taxpayers more than \$2 million to create only nine new transitional beds.

Bedford MacDonald House

In May 2019 Premier Dennis King announced \$355,500 in annual funding for Bedford MacDonald House to provide 24-hour accessibility for programs and support.

A press release stated the shelter's regular services would be maintained and funding would help men transition away from homelessness through coaching, social interaction, direction to practical resources, lifestyle skill development and connection to community resources.

It would also fund new programs focused on health, grooming, social and spiritual care including hygiene kits and recreational activities.

Salvation Army received a total of \$695,000 over two years to provide these additional services.

In September 2020, hours of operation were cut from 24 to 16 per day. This January they were cut again, to 12 hours per day. Reductions leave less opportunity for staff to guide clients and less time for recreational and grooming activities. Clients are now not allowed to enter until Bedford MacDonald House opens at 8 pm.

Shelter services east

When Montague-Kilmuir MLA Cory Deagle heard of Islanders living in cars, on the beach and in other unsheltered situations last fall in his riding, he rushed to the legislature calling for action.

The Minister of Housing and Social Development, Brad Trivers, suggested a needs assessment should be completed before proceeding with any concrete action.

To date, no needs assessment has been completed in Kings County and the department has not announced any clear direction forward on the matter.

Mental health hospital construction start

The province did announce construction has begun on two facilities associated with the mental health campus. However, one will replace Lacey House, an addictions recovery house for women, and the other will serve community-based programming as drawn up by the previous Liberal government.

Construction of the long-promised new mental health hospital has not begun and a project start date is not set. During the last provincial election, Dennis King promised 'shovels in the ground' on day one of a PC administration and a completion date earlier than the Liberals' promise of the 2024-25 fiscal year. No shovel has yet found dirt. The PC government now estimates completion by 2025-26.

Therapeutic courts

Minister of Justice and Public Safety Bloyce Thompson stated in the spring of 2021 the province would launch a therapeutic court.

Therapeutic Courts, such as Mental Health Courts or Drug Courts, use a team approach to offer offenders the range of supports needed to safely integrate with society: mental health and addictions care, housing and social services supports. All while holding the offender accountable. Monitoring is maintained to allow for early intervention if a risk presents.

The department said last month the first phase of preliminary work is nearing completion. It includes building a shared understanding of court types, models, partner and stakeholder needs, challenges and interests.

The next step, according to the department, is to determine necessary resources, policies, and program development in collaboration with partners such as courts, crown, and service providers.

Government will offer no date for completion of either phase of the project. A spokesperson says the minister may have more to say in coming months. But nothing indicates the court's creation is imminent.

The idea of therapeutic courts was evaluated in 2012 and reported on a year later in a review of mental health and addictions services. It was determined then that timely access to both forensic psychiatric assessments and services needed for offenders to comply with court orders were barriers to successful implementation of a therapeutic court.

These barriers still exist today.



These photos show the aftermath of a fire at the Queens Arms Motel where Jerry Campbell caught fire. Submitted photo

Housing program lacks oversight and support

By Rachel Collier

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Jerry Campbell woke up surrounded by fire in his home at the Queens Arms Motel in Charlottetown.

Campbell was a chronic smoker and never one to follow the rules. The 64-year-old, who used to commercially fish lobster off Panmure Island, fell asleep January 3, 2021 and dropped his cigarette onto the motel bed. Fire smoldered through the mattress. By the time he woke he was burning alive; his leg was on fire.

Campbell often required a walker or at least a cane to keep his balance. But he made his way out of his room into the hallway, adrenaline pumping. Another tenant spotted him and leapt to action.

The flames were doused and Campbell was transported to hospital. He spent months at the QEH recovering from the burns. Two others were also transported to hospital in relation to the fire that night.

Mike Redmond, a former Salvation Army staff member, says Campbell should

never have been living in the transitional motel room, supplied under the direction of the Department of Social Development and Housing and Salvation Army.

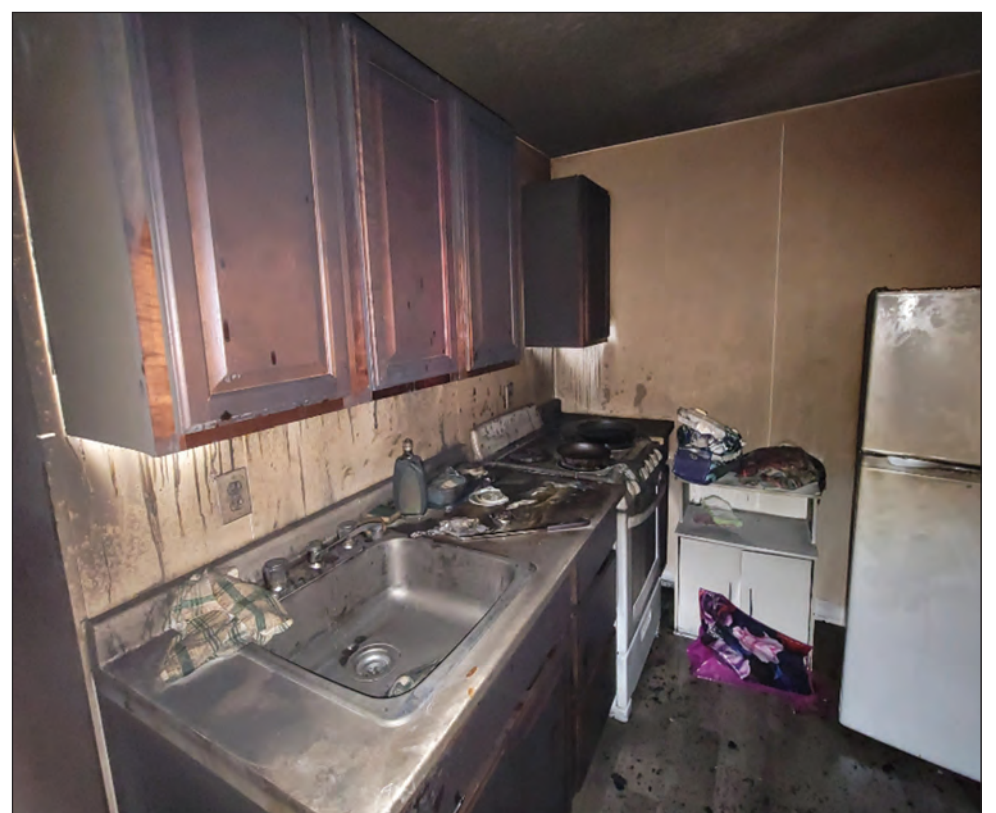
In 2019 Redmond negotiated the 10-unit agreement that first brought transitional home clients to Queens Arms.

The Queens Arms contract was intended for able-bodied clients ready to live independently and comply with a Salvation Army case management plan. Stays were intended to be short-term, until a permanent housing option became available.

This is not always how these units are used, Redmond says. Vulnerable clients, like Campbell, are being placed in transitional units without adequate support or oversight.

Shelley Cole, acting manager of emergency housing for the province, confirms the intent of the units. She says the provincial housing navigator assesses clients then refers them to the service provider (Salvation Army), which provides case management and continued assessment of client needs.

The original 2019 contract between



government and Salvation Army stipulated if a tenant refused programming, their participation in the pilot project would cease and the province would stop funding their stay.

The agreement also allowed service providers to occasionally check in on clients to ensure their well-being and compliance with lease terms.

Redmond says before the fire Campbell should have received care to ensure his drinking was under control and his mobility needs were being met. He contends Campbell should have been moved to more appropriate accommodation.

Once Campbell was discharged from hospital, it was finally determined Queens Arms was not the best place for him. He was moved to a long-term care home in the spring of 2021.

Less than a week later he was back in hospital, this time to treat bleeding esophageal varices, commonly associated with prolonged, heavy use of alcohol.

Jerry Campbell did not leave hospital. He died May 10th at the age of 65.

One of his last wishes, expressed to his brother Bill Campbell shortly before he passed, was to quit drinking, recover functional use of his body and find a way



“

**It was a hellhole.
If I stayed there, they would
have found me dead.**

TONY MACDOUGALL

”

back to fish off Panmure Island.

Redmond says Campbell's move to a long-term care home came too little too late. He wonders what might have happened had he received appropriate support earlier on, such as a community care facility that would allow independence but also access to regular cooked meals, medical supports and supervision.

Campbell's sister Mary Arsenault attests that he would often stop drinking when in an institution like a hospital. But she says it is hard to know what her brother would have consented to. He tended to refuse help.

This is common for folks with addictions, said Redmond, but asserts there must be a better solution than dumping people with complex needs, unsupported, in a motel.

Who is next?

About a month before the fire at Queens Arms, Redmond sent an email to the Minister of Social Development and Housing concerning another motel tenant, also living in one of the province's units. The tenant similarly had mobility issues and struggled with substance abuse.

"What happens if there is a fire, how does this man get out? There are numerous issues with what your department has done here," he wrote.

Redmond was talking about Tony MacDougall.

MacDougall suffered a stroke related to heavy drinking in the spring of 2020. This resulted in ongoing paralysis to his left side. He has little ability to move his left arm. He can walk with a cane but not for long. His left leg tires quickly.

The Graphic visited MacDougall at Queens Arms in October of 2021, shortly before he moved out after a year-long placement. He was far from a picture of health.

It was late afternoon, curtains in his apartment were drawn. MacDougall had not yet gotten out of bed. His hair was long and greasy. He spoke lying down with blankets covering his lower body for decency. He seemed unable to sit up, much less get up by himself to dress, shower or answer the door.

He called through the door for a maintenance worker to let The Graphic in with their key.

He had positioned two chairs on either

side of his double bed so that if he fell he would have the best chance at getting himself back up.

A mess of food and clutter was spread over the floor, packs of cookies and canned goods. He apologized for the mess and said home care was on its way. It was clear he needed more assistance.

The dire nature of MacDougall's existence angers Redmond, who says the motel unit was never intended for someone with his level of need. Supports offered were often inadequate. Home care would routinely cancel appointments. Sometimes when staff did show they would ask if he wanted to go for a drive.

"Of course, I'd say yes. Cabin fever. They wouldn't get much cleaning done though."

Sometimes on these trips MacDougall would seize the opportunity to score liquor.

"It wasn't good," he said.

Falls were an almost daily occurrence. MacDougall began having seizures. He only obtained a Medical Alert necklace in recent months.

Salvation Army employees rarely show up for visits, MacDougall says, and he did not have access to addictions or mental health counsellors or physiotherapy while at Queens Arms.

The contract between Salvation Army and the provincial government states the agency will provide wrap-around services and help clients access government and community systems, including primary care, professional and rehabilitative services.

The Graphic filed a Freedom of Information request for all records pertaining to how often these types of care are accessed by transitional housing clients. Department of Social Development and Housing responded by indicting no such records exist.

The Graphic also requested all documentation concerning oversight and check-ins at provincial transitional housing units. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy office stated that government's contract with Salvation Army requires it to collect and report data. However, "the details of this provision have not yet been perfected. As such, other than the contract, there are no additional records responsive to the request."

"There is no oversight," said Redmond.

Tony MacDougall resisted a move to a community care home in Souris far from everything and everyone he knows in Charlottetown. He maintains it is not the best place for him to be. But in hindsight he believes if he had stayed at the Queens Arms Motel, someone would have soon opened his door and found him dead.

Photos by Rachel Collier

Last November, following hospitalization after yet another fall, MacDougall was finally moved to a community care facility in Souris with 24-hour supervision, no stairs, and three cooked meals a day.

He resisted the move at first, and still maintains this is not the best place for him. But he does realize that because of his addiction and mobility issues, he was not safe at Queens Arms.

"It was a hellhole," says MacDougall. "If I stayed there, they would have found me dead." He noted his mental health and substance use has improved.

Another benefit is he is no longer a target. "No one is looking for anything from me either." At Queens Arms he was regularly pestered for cigarettes or to lend money, favours he rarely saw returned. Despite a better quality of daily existence, MacDougall says a man in his 50s is not intended to live in community care with seniors. He yearns to be closer to Charlottetown.

"I'm afraid everyone will forget about me." He fears the effect isolation will have on his mental health and drinking. "The

last time I looked in the mirror I was a man, not a kid," said MacDougall, a fiercely independent person who has lived on his own since his teens.

His lack of social connection, combined with Covid, has been difficult for him mentally. He is waiting for a room with similar supports in Charlottetown. He has no idea how long the wait will be. So he'll continue to spend evenings scrolling through listings on his iPad hoping to find a better option.

In an interview, Minister of Social Development and Housing Brad Trivers twice wrongly asserted that Queens Arms Motel units are emergency shelter. They are in fact used for transitional housing.

He was also unaware that in February, motel management had requested termination of its agreement, alleging units were not being managed according to the original memorandum of understanding between government, Salvation Army and motel owners.

"It's not uncommon for any of our relationship with landlords to require negotiations," the minister said.

“ A couple of people I’ve dealt with, all they want to do is dump the person. ”

NEIL WEBSTER, LANDLORD

Dump and run

Landlord criticizes lack of effective oversight

By Rachel Collier

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In 2020, Charlottetown landlord Neil Webster rented more than 10 units to the province’s homeless population. He did this through a rental agreement with Salvation Army that was spearheaded by Michael Redmond, who managed Bedford MacDonald House for the Christian organization.

Webster was hesitant to rent to the homeless. He worried about not receiving rent on time and damage that could be caused because of addictions.

“I don’t want to be a slumlord,” he says. But at the same time, he knows people need multiple chances and support to change difficult life realities.

Webster finally agreed after reaching an understanding that Salvation Army and a combination of other social services would help the clients access adequate support.

His hesitation was eased by lease clauses that laid out rules, such as no drinking on the premises or smoking indoors. He gained confidence in the plan because Army staff were able to check in with clients to monitor their behaviour and well-being.

The personal dedication of Redmond, a former leader of the provincial New Democrats, and his colleague, Tami MacIntyre, reassured the landlord.

For awhile it seemed to be working. But over time, he says Salvation Army and social services became less engaged.

“I’m mostly renting to students now,” he said.

When the arrangement was working well, Webster said Redmond and MacIntyre would check in on tenants regularly.

“They would have meetings in the common area with these guys, just sit down with them, have a group session or even private meetings to see what they needed to make things work.”

Staff from the Native Council of PEI would also show up regularly to support their clients.

“Some of the guys don’t need much help but for the guys who did need the help, the Native Council turned around and took them to AA. The Native Council came and would sit there and talk to him. The Native counselor would call me up or text me saying, ‘Hey, have you seen so and so?’ to make sure he was okay and on track.”

This was the support Webster expected, but he noticed some

services began dropping the ball almost from the start.

The first ball to drop

“I was promised by social services that these guys would have home care nurses coming in and checking up,” said Webster. Two of the first clients placed in his units required a high level of care.

“They couldn’t even wipe their bums properly,” he said. “They needed to be in a nursing home.”

He knew that one tenant, an Indigenous Elder, had been in a nursing home but when Covid hit, he was no longer allowed to go outside. He made a run for it and wound up homeless.

“Ninety per cent of the time (the elder) wanted to be outside. He would sit in the area with the tent, smoke, and enjoy the fresh air,” said Webster. “I mean, the only time he went inside was to eat and sleep.”

He raised a tent shelter in the back yard so the elder could smoke and sit outside through bad weather.

Webster hired a cleaner once a week to help these two keep their units in order. But even with this help, the level of home care provided was inadequate.

“I had to tear out the floor and put in new flooring because of the feces,” said Webster. “It went through the cracks of the vinyl

flooring, so we had to clean underneath the floor and re-floor it.”

One client fell down the stairs, and the landlord believes it contributed to his death. He says the client needed a more thorough medical assessment prior to obtaining the unit.

Incidents like this did make it clear to social services the apartments were not suitable to the clients’ needs. They were first moved to units in Queens Arms Motel, managed by Salvation Army in partnership with the Department of Social Housing and Development.

Both Webster’s apartments and Queens Arms are intended for clients working toward independent living and not for those requiring a high level of physical care or who deal with mobility issues.

“It was a classic case of being hot potatoes around the system,” said Jamie Tuplin, a Native Council staff member who worked with the elder.

The Indigenous Elder who fell was eventually moved to a community care home in Souris which offered 24/7 in house support.

While this was an improvement in one way, the Native Council pressured social services to re-evaluate their client’s situation of isolation and his physical health, including mobility



After 16 years of homelessness, Kevin Mayhue is incredibly appreciative of Mike Redmond’s work to connect him with an affordable unit through Neil Webster. “This is living,” said Mayhue who has enjoyed surrounding himself with an array of plant life in a space he can truly call home. Webster believes as long as tenants have the supports they need, renting to a formerly homeless population can work well. Photo by Rachel Collier



Neil Webster wants to give those with a difficult path a second, third and fourth chance in life but he knows for tenant-landlord relations to work, a resident’s whole team needs to show up. After promised regular supports were reduced, residents directed to him from Salvation Army, spiraled out of hand and were eventually evicted. He now focuses on renting to students. Photo by Rachel Collier

issues.

It was determined he was being moved from unit, to unit, to unit while suffering from undiagnosed Parkinson’s disease. When diagnosed he was moved back to a nursing home in Charlottetown, but died shortly after arrival.

“I think he had given up,” said Chris Clay, outreach worker with the Native Council of PEI, who saw that living in less-than-ideal conditions for nearly a year affected his client’s mental health. “I think the move back to Charlottetown, into a living space with the right care, came too late.”

The final straw

The final straw in Webster’s opinion was the firing of Redmond and MacIntyre by Salvation Army, September 1, 2020.

“This is when it all went down the toilet,” he says.

A Salvation Army staff member took issue with the lease agreement clauses Webster deemed necessary to make the rental deal work.

“I mean, a couple of people I’ve dealt with, all they want to do is dump the person. I can’t afford to have people putting holes in my walls or burning a new mattress,” he says.

“It can work,” he said, adding he still rents to two formerly homeless men. One is well supported by the Native Council and neither require extensive social services support like home care or nursing.

The John Howard Society, along with 17 collaborating organizations across PEI, are working to support tenant-landlord relationships through their Addressing Homelessness PEI initiative.

Jody Sentner, with the John Howard Society, wants landlords to engage on the topic.

“Right now, landlords have clients that are in their apartments that, you know, they may have an issue with, and they’ve got nobody to call and nobody to help them work through that,” said Sentner. “So our goal is to work with both the landlord and the client, so we can prevent that eviction.”

A property owner can contact Sentner if an issue arises, and from there she will reach out to the tenant’s primary case worker or extended team to see what can be done.

“It could be weekly or bi-weekly visits from a case worker,” said Sentner. “We would help the client work past whatever barriers they need to overcome.”

Webster says this is a great idea, and almost the same as the plan Redmond and MacIntyre introduced him to in 2020. But, he added, it requires the client’s entire team - including social services like home care, addictions counsellors and case workers - to each to show up and do their part.

Webster is doubtful. Before entering any type of similar rental agreement he would require assurance enforceable oversight and accountability measures are in place.



46-year-old Nanci P has chosen to sleep outside in subzero temperatures rather than move out of her familiar surroundings and away from her belongings, to a bed at the women's shelter in Lennox Island. Pictured here is Nanci resting in a carwash bay where she set up camp in -13C temperatures and light snow, mid-February. She is not the only woman who voiced to the Graphic, emergency shelter bed options far from home are not ideal.

Photos by Rachel Collier

Couples forced to make impossible decisions when homeless

By Rachel Collier

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It was the first week of December 2021 and the closest thing Kayla Gifford and Catlin Alder had to a home was a tent, hidden in tall grass and a thicket of cherry, poplar and willow saplings growing in a vacant lot on the outskirts of

Charlottetown.

Since early September, the couple 33 and 37 years old respectively, would walk 5km into Charlottetown to charge phones and battery packs, access the soup kitchen or grab snacks at the Community Outreach Centre, their main sources of food. Then they hiked the 5km back.

It was a battle of survival as Kayla searched daily for an apartment they could afford on a welfare budget: about

\$750 a month before rent payments would start cutting into food allowance money. She suspects their situation — being on welfare, looking like they were homeless and with rough track records including an eviction and Alder's criminal record which involves instances of violence — didn't help the search.

Conditions were far from ideal. In November, the couple bailed litres of water from the tent after rainstorms

soaked their belongings. By December, when they woke in the morning, they needed to peel frozen outer layers of clothing from the side of the tent. Hypothermia was a regular concern.

Their prized possession was a \$90 tarp supplied by the Native Council of PEI. Alder is Mi'kmaq. The tarp kept them protected from light rain and snowfall.

Both Gifford and Alder were raised in foster care and group homes. Neither has a strong family or social network willing, or able, to help when their housing crisis occurred.

PEI has no shelter options to accommodate couples, and separation from Gifford was an option Alder did not want to consider. He lives with bipolar, borderline personality disorder, ADD and anger issues. Alder feels at his best, with the greatest opportunity to remain stable, when living independently with his partner of more than six years.

He knows he cannot stay calm in socially dynamic shelter environments. This is why he opted for a tent when unable to access an affordable apartment.

For her part, Gifford did not want to separate from her strongest source of support, Alder. In addition, Blooming House, the shelter for women in Charlottetown, was regularly full in November and into December.

Gifford was offered a bed at Chief Mary Bernard Shelter in Lennox Island, but refused. She was in a vulnerable position, uncomfortable with both the idea of leaving her home community and entering an unfamiliar social environment. In addition, her child is in the care of the Director of Child Protective Services. Gifford felt it important to be close by as she works to gain opportunities for visits.



Kayla Gifford and Catlin Alder show the Graphic where they lived for months into the first week of December when the province decided to cover hotel fees through the winter.
Photo by John Morris Photography

See page 18



Late October 2021, the Graphic hit the streets one night and easily found five people living unsheltered in Charlottetown. It was suggested there were even more hidden nearby. Eddie Nicholson was set up in a tent in Joe Ghiz park by Holland College, where he was able to access a power plug. He said he didn't even try lining up at Bedford MacDonald House because he knew he wouldn't be let in. Photo by Rachel Collier

UNSHELTERED

continued from page 17

While one woman from Tignish vouched for the quality of transitional services at Lennox Island, no woman interviewed for this series supports government's policy of sending individuals, from all parts of the Island, to an emergency shelter bed on Lennox Island.

"I don't know anyone there," 46-year-old Nanci P said to The Graphic around 11:30 pm one February night as she set up camp in minus 13 degree Celsius temperatures. Snow lightly fell around her precarious shelter in central Charlottetown. She spent multiple nights forced to endure freezing weather this winter, which resulted in severe frostbite. On at least one occasion, police and paramedics sent her to the hospital emergency room.

She chose nearly freezing rather than accept a 75-minute cab ride to a shelter located in an unfamiliar community, while her belongings would be scattered around Charlottetown.

Despite being capable of living independently, Alder and Gifford were not offered any form of transitional housing. They attempted to contact government's Housing Navigator on multiple occasions with no success until early December.

This is when the province offered them a room in a local hotel. They have lived there since but are being pressured to vacate this spring. They have not yet found a viable replacement.

They are dreading another spring and summer on the streets.

The couple believe Charlottetown needs more housing options for those trying to survive on a welfare budget.

It is possible through all seasons to find Islanders existing by couch surfing, living in a car, makeshift shelter, foyer or under a heat vent of a commercial building.

The reasons are varied and complex and include but are not limited to the following:

- When accessing a shelter requires uprooting from a hometown, social networks or important elements of a person's life, such as children, belongings or a job.

- When people must choose between staying with their trusted and supportive partner and accessing a gendered shelter.

- When people feel uncomfortable in a gender-specific shelter because of their gender expression.

- When people have a pet, such as a dog.

- When resources are not known or poorly coordinated.

- When someone gives up on the nightly shelter hunt after failing to access one or more resources. This can occur when clients are hungry, cold, under the influence, feeling helpless or dejected.

- When people are not compatible with other clients or potential roommates. Incompatibility

“ By December, when they woke in the morning, they needed to peel frozen outer layers of clothing from the side of the tent. ”

can be exacerbated by mental health, cognitive and addictions issues.

- When people feel discriminated against or when they do not trust shelter staff.

- When people have trauma associated with residential institutions like residential schools or group homes.

- When an individual's physical abilities are not accommodated.

- When shelter staff have decided an individual's behavior is unacceptable or unsafe based on policies that allow for subjective decisions.

- When shelters are full.

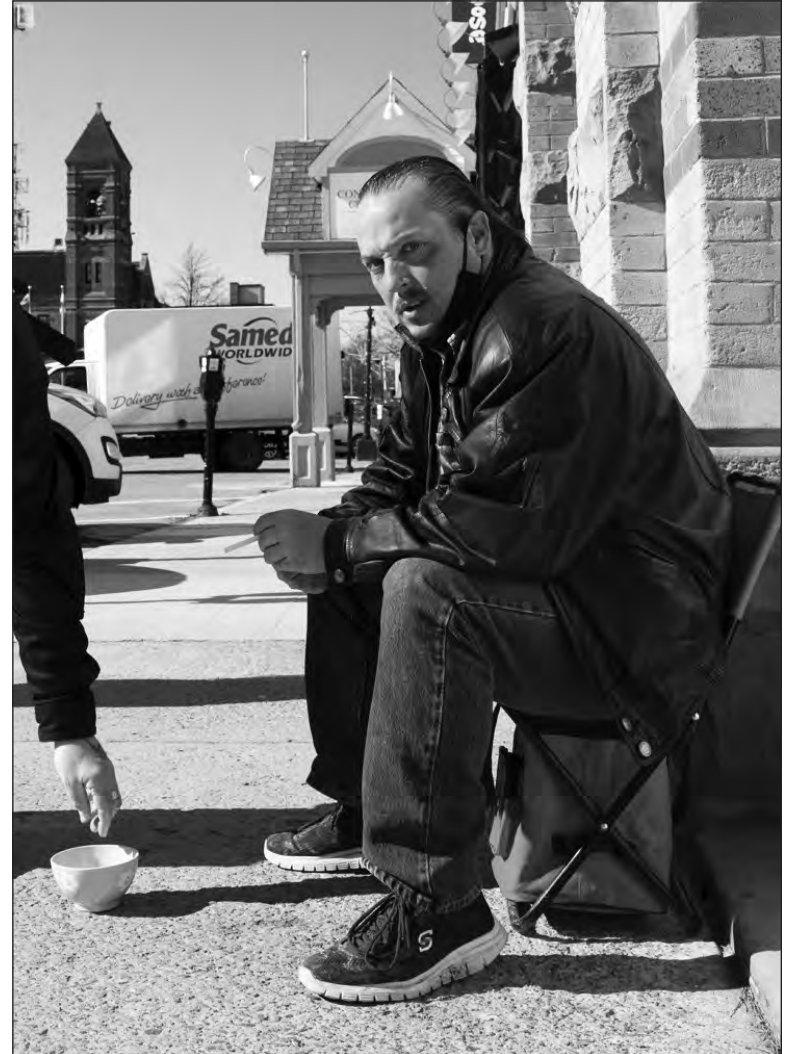
- When motel availability is limited. Availability may be limited due to a client's past actions while living in a hotel room, actions which may be a byproduct of addiction or mental health issues.

None of these issues are impossible to work around.

Through John Howard Society's point-in-time count, which was hindered to some extent by the pandemic, 59 surveys were completed by Islanders experiencing some form of homelessness. Four of these reported being unsheltered. The rest had a roof over their head through shelter services, couch surfing or institutions like jails or hospitals. The point-in-time count has particularly limited reach in rural communities.

Late in October when temperatures dipped just below zero, The Graphic took to the streets and easily found five Islanders sleeping unsheltered in Charlottetown, in vehicles, tents and makeshift shelters.

Norma Dingwell, who is a coordinator with the Southern Kings and Queens Food Bank in Lower Montague, reports there were numerous people in Kings County, who wished not to be identified, living unsheltered well into the fall.



The extent of homelessness is not clear on PEI but one thing is certain, it exists tip to tip. Photo by John Morris Photography

National survey ignores homeless in rural communities

By Rachel Collier

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Without a reporting system coordinated across NGOs and government, determining the true extent of homelessness on Prince Edward Island is almost an impossible task, especially during a global pandemic.

"It's not exact," says Donna Keenan, executive director of the John Howard Society (JHS), the organization which conducted the point in time survey last fall. "It could be higher, it could be lower, but there is homelessness in PEI and all across, not just in the cities."

JHS was able to report 147 homeless people in November through the count, funded by the federal government's National Homelessness Strategy.

It's possible some people were counted twice and it is likely others experiencing homelessness were not counted.

Normally Keenan's team is able to organize and host magnet events in Charlottetown and Summerside by offering homeless access to multiple services as enticement to attend. A hot meal, haircuts, income tax assistance and health services would all be on offer.

Normally nursing students would volunteer to survey clients. This was not possible because of Covid. As a result, fewer surveys were completed.

Of 59 surveys completed, four people reported being unsheltered. The rest had a roof over their head through shelter services, couch surfing or institutions like jails or hospitals.

Rural invisibility

Critics of the National Homelessness Strategy counts say it neglects rural areas. The federal mandate for PEI is to count specifically only in Charlottetown and Summerside. According to the borders set out, even Stratford and Cornwall are considered rural and outside of the survey's scope.

This year the pandemic forced Keenan to resort to new methods by relying on a street count and file reviews from partner organizations. This allowed JHS to gather some detail about Islanders beyond the two urban hubs.

But she acknowledges the data is not comprehensive.

She is looking forward to the upcoming implementation of a homeless information system which may allow stronger data collection and collaboration across more than a dozen Island NGOs and government initiatives.

Young woman calls for more shelter beds and options

By Rachel Collier

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The Graphic has agreed to use a pseudonym to protect Emily's identity from potential stigma from sharing her story.

After aging out of an Island group home at 18 during the pandemic, it didn't take long for Emily of Charlottetown to become homeless. But it took 16 months to overcome.

"Sixteen months is a long time for someone my age to be homeless," she said. "It takes a lot on mental health because you don't know when you're going to eat next, or if you're going to get a clean shower or a nice bed to sleep in. It is also hard to stay sober on the streets."

From the summer of 2020 to December 2021, Emily spent time with friends but primarily relied on Blooming House women's shelter in Charlottetown for a place to stay. Blooming House offers eight low-barrier shelter beds to women from across PEI. It operates as a nonprofit.

Emily's situation worsened early last December, when Blooming House's occupancy approached record level. If there was no bed there, she was out of luck because the only other option in Charlottetown, Anderson House, prioritizes women fleeing violence.

She spent two weeks without access to shelter, in part because she refused the offer of a room 75 minutes away at Chief Mary Bernard Shelter on Lennox Island.

"I don't know anyone there and I have no transportation. So, I was like, I appreciate the offer, but I am not comfortable going all the way out to Lennox Island with no way back, away from anything I know."

She opted to fend for herself.

Men noticed her vulnerabilities and frequently offered her a place to stay. "Not trying to stereotype here, but women are more in danger on the streets than men are." Lack of housing is a common factor leading to sexual exploitation.

Emily knows some homeless women do rely on men in an unhealthy way, especially when addictions are involved, and men have the substances they depend on.

More readily available shelter beds and transitional housing options would lower these risks for women and possibly members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, she says.

When Emily had nowhere to go, she slept outside, hidden as well as possible, often tucked behind the concrete structures of Confederation Centre.

"Men have Smith Lodge Supportive Housing, Bedford MacDonald and Deacon House all in Charlottetown. How come they get the funding, and we don't?" Emily asked, referring to a lack of women's shelter options. She believes she was a prime candidate for transitional housing but no option was available for months.

The province did announce in 2019 transitional housing for men, women and children would open at Smith Lodge. This promise has not yet been kept.

The Department of Housing and Social Development pays far more for men's emergency shelters and transitional housing options than for women. In the last fiscal year, from March through mid-February, the province spent \$780,500 on men's shelters Deacon House and Bedford MacDonald House. During the same period, Blooming House Women's Shelter received \$200,000.

The province also spent \$743,000 on supportive transitional housing options, of which \$643,200 was directed to Salva-



Eight beds is the maximum that can fit in Blooming House, the emergency shelter for women in Charlottetown. There may be a need to look at more beds for Island women moving forward.
Photo by Rachel Collier

“It takes a lot on mental health because you don't know when you're going to eat next, or if you're going to get a clean shower or a nice bed to sleep in.

It is also hard to stay sober on the streets.

EMILY

tion Army for running Smith Lodge, an all-male transitional shelter and for overseeing seven to 10 gender non-specific supported housing units at the Queens Arms Motel. The remaining \$100,000 was directed toward monthly unit rental fees.

The province does run transition units for youth at least 18 years old, and according to the department their accessibility is frequently not an issue. It is not clear if Emily attempted to access one of these units. The province says funding is in accordance with need.

Emily maintains that while the need may be lower for women, a need does exist and it is not being met.

She says if there were more transitional

options she might have had an easier time managing addiction over the summer. Staying at Blooming House was triggering for her because clients are at various points of addiction. Emily was also in a constant state of stress.

"The whole experience was bad for my addictions," she said.

Blooming House volunteered its occupancy data to The Graphic. It confirms the need for women's shelter has risen sharply and exceeds capacity.

"November we saw our highest occupancy rate on record. It was almost 92% occupied for the month. Which really means we were full almost every night," said Brynn Devine, co-founder and vice

president of Blooming House's board of directors.

High occupancy rates continued into early December, when interviewed by The Graphic. Night stays have increased steadily since Blooming House opened in 2019.

"We need shelter services across the Island," said Emily. "I met a lot of people from Montague, Souris, West Prince while I was there."

Blooming House does attract clients from all corners of the Island. Eighty-three per cent of clients reported their last place of residence was Charlottetown, 12% Prince County and 4% Kings County.

Like Emily, a quarter of Blooming House clients are typically between the ages of 18 and 25.

The shelter is not able to increase the number of beds due to lack of space, but Devine agrees with Emily: tiered shelter services for women could be improved and there is a need for increased capacity.

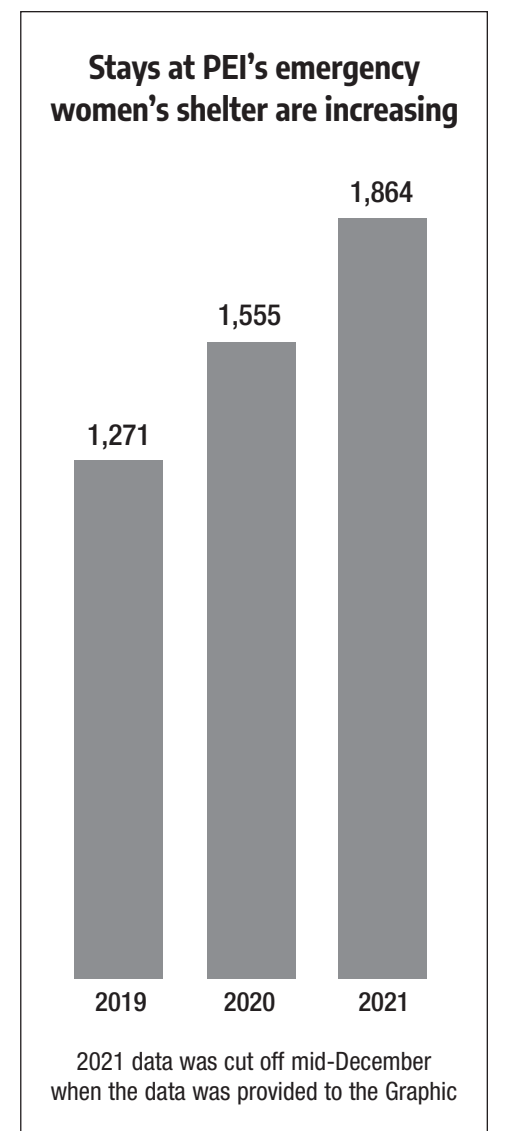
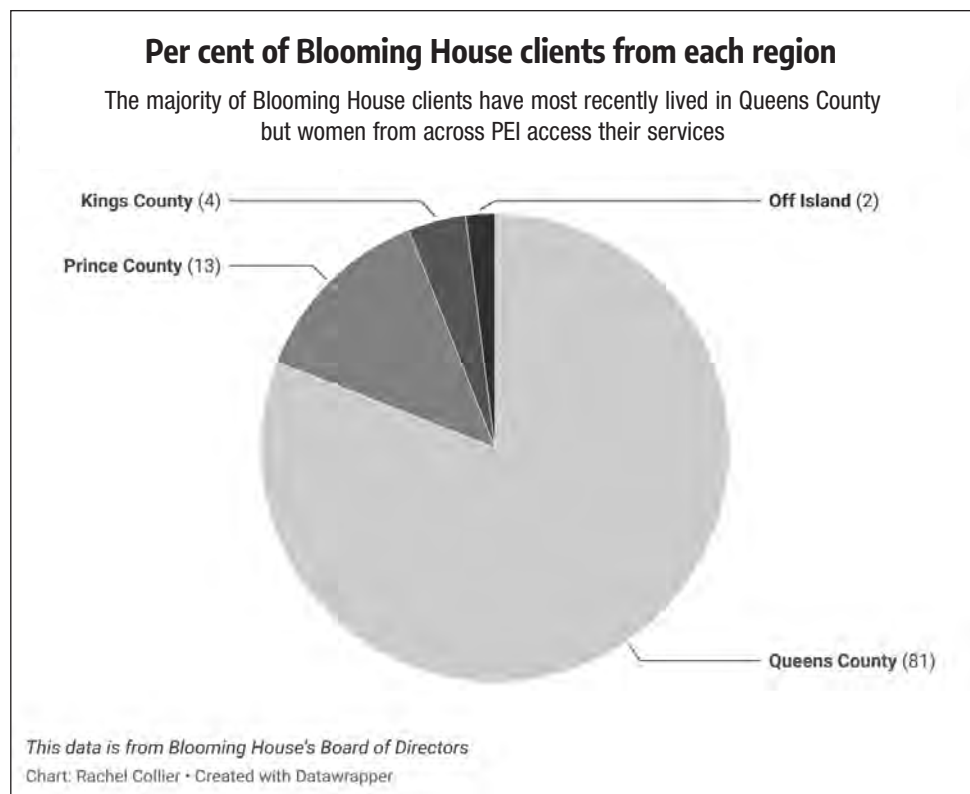
Spotting a similar need for both emergency shelter and transitional units for women and families, the Boys & Girls Club of Summerside along with the Life-House Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter are working to open two emergency shelter beds for women in Summerside and three transitional housing units.

Project funding includes \$300,000 from the federal government and \$100,000 provincial.

The province is working with Chief Mary Bernard Shelter to cover some per diem costs for non-Indigenous clients as well as Indigenous people unaffiliated with MCPEI. The cost is unknown.

Emily sees this as a good start but encourages government and NGOs to continue improvements.

Since the resource coordinator at Blooming House helped Emily find an affordable apartment, she says her stress and anxiety have reduced significantly and she is able to keep her substance use in check.



'Where are the gaps?'

HERE

By Rachel Collier

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November 3, 2021 - Donnie Handrahan, 60, died in the Hillsborough River after being denied shelter services during a mental health crisis.

December 6, 2021 - Nick Stewart shivered through the night in a bank entrance-way when he opted to work rather than stand in line for a shelter bed.

November to first week December, 2021 - Catlin Alder and Kayla Gifford lived in a tent, pitched on the outskirts of Charlottetown, continually searching for a better housing option. When they woke in the morning their clothes were often frozen to their tent wall.

December 2021 - 19-year-old Emily (pseudonym) spent two weeks riddled with anxiety, dodging men, and couch surfing for safety because Blooming House Women's Shelter was full.

December 15, 2021 - Deputy Minister of Social Development and Housing, David Keedwell, presented to a legislative committee on the need for shelter beds.

"Where are the gaps?" he asked.

Over and above the fact that PEI has the lowest rate of shelter beds in Canada, there are numerous gaps to be found in emergency shelter services.

Gender neutral shelter options

Gendered services present a barrier for LGBTQ2IA+ people.

Angele DesRoches, program coordinator with PEERS Alliance, says this is certainly an issue on PEI.

"We've raised that issue. We haven't gotten great traction," she says. "There needs to be a paradigm shift in terms of how we're offering these services. Anything that's gender segregated immediately creates barriers for our community."

Nearly every other province offers access to at least one gender neutral shelter option.

Gender neutral services can also be beneficial for hetero couples in similar situations to Kayla and Catlin, who rely on each other for support.



David Keedwell

Deputy Minister of Department of Social Development and Housing
Standing Committee on Health and Social Development

Indigenous-led shelters

While there is one Indigenous-led shelter on PEI, Chief Mary Bernard Shelter on Lennox Island for women and their children, Indigenous women who live elsewhere in the province would have to uproot from their home community to access services.

Indigenous men have no option. They must rely on Bedford MacDonald House, operated by Salvation Army, a Christian-based organization.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous front-line workers estimate up to 25% of clients accessing emergency shelters on PEI are Indigenous.

Shelter options for families

There are two shelter options that allow women to bring their children, Chief Mary Bernard Shelter in Lennox Island and Anderson House for women fleeing violence.

Chief Mary Bernard Shelter is not ideal for women who might benefit most from support in their home community.

Anderson House prioritizes women

and children fleeing violence. Space is not always available for women in other situations.

Neither accept families with men. No Island men's shelter accepts children.

Currently the province works to locate hotel rooms for families in need of emergency shelter.

Cross-province options

Charlottetown is the only location men can access emergency shelter. There is no emergency shelter for women east of Charlottetown.

A 2021 CMHA needs analysis of housing support in Prince County states:

"Many individuals from the Prince County region do not want to travel to emergency shelters outside of their geographic area where they may already have access to family, jobs, and available supports. Individuals requiring emergency shelter have the option to be placed in hotels in the region."

Hotel environments are often seen as unsafe, especially for families and individuals with addiction issues.

Hotels can provide temporary shelter, but adequate support is required to pro-

vide individuals with the opportunity to access services or address root problems causing homelessness.

After becoming aware of homeless individuals in the Montague region this fall, Montague-Kilmuir MLA Cory Deagle advocated for a shelter in Kings County. He promoted government funding of a needs assessment analysis. No funding has been forthcoming.

24/7 Shelter options

A recommendation repeated in the 2019 community needs assessment of Island shelters is to ensure all emergency shelters provide 24-hour coverage, dedicated case management and wraparound services.

PEI is the only province in Canada that has no 24-hour emergency shelter service available to men.

Bedford MacDonald House, a shelter for men, did offer 24-hour services and had increased staff to support more case management.

Acting Manager of Supportive Housing for the Department of Housing and Social Development, Shelley Cole, told The Graphic, and later a legislative standing committee, that the 24-hour service at BMH was specifically a response to the pandemic.

This is not true.

Bedford MacDonald House provided 24-hour service as of May 2019, well before the onset of the pandemic.

BMH has reduced hours twice since then. In September 2020 it moved to 16-hour days. This January, amid the largest Covid outbreak on PEI, the shelter further reduced its hours to 12-hours a day (8 pm to 8 am).

This is in line with opportunities for Salvation Army to reduce Bedford MacDonald House hours contained in terms of its \$3.7 million shelter operation contract signed with the province in 2020.

A 24-hour shelter option is available for women through Chief Mary Bernard House in Lennox Island and Anderson House in Charlottetown.

Deputy Minister David Keedwell was removed from his position during a series of King government senior management changes mid-February.

Software may improve service co-ordination

By Rachel Collier

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To better understand homelessness

across Canada, the federal Reaching Home program has mandated PEI and 60 other designated communities to adopt a homelessness management information system by March 31, 2022.

As of 2019, 17 of the 61 designated communities had not implemented a system, including PEI.

As of late February 2022, PEI NGOs and government initiatives are still waiting for the collaborative information system to be fully implemented. It's hoped the system will allow better co-ordination of services and gain a better understanding of the populations they serve.

The John Howard Society of PEI is tasked with implementing the service on the Island. It began the first phase in February, with completion hoped before the March 31 deadline.

The system, called Homeless Individuals and Families Information System or HIFIS, is intended to support communities by allowing multiple service

providers to access real-time general homelessness data and client files if permitted by the individual.

The software is limited in that it does not include health care information of an individual. It can help service providers assess, prioritize and refer clients to the right services at the right time without requiring clients to repeat their stories multiple times.

The program's reporting tools are intended to increase understanding of local homelessness trends and needs, and inform evidence-based policy and decision-making all while guarding confidentiality of clients at their discretion.

through the **CRACKS**

Watch for Part 3 March 16

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