

## **A message from Kim Brooks, President and Vice-Chancellor**

*Wednesday, September 20, 2023*

### **Dalhousie's housing strategy and supports**

Nova Scotia has added nearly 111,000 new residents since 2015, bringing our population to over a million. That number is expected to double by 2060.

More than 47,000 students currently attend Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions. That's up 3,600 from 2015 – with the majority coming from outside our Nova Scotia. Universities are instrumental in the province's growth strategy. Dalhousie and other universities play an essential role in Nova Scotia's aspiration to forge a vibrant future for those who currently call this place home and those we will welcome, who will enrich our campuses, our municipalities, and our province with their unique perspectives and diverse experiences.

But the shortage of housing, including affordable housing, threatens these goals and poses immense challenges for many in our community. Whether it's seeing the increasing number of people who have no other option but to live in tents, or talking to newcomers who are desperately seeking affordable housing, we are seeing the lived impacts of this shortage each and every day.

Dalhousie must do its part to help solve this issue. The heaviest growth pressure is happening in Halifax, but Truro is also seeing increased housing pressures. Dalhousie provides residence capacity, largely focused on early-year undergraduate students. We've made changes to how we allocate that residence space in the past year to focus on first-year domestic and international students entering Dalhousie directly from high school, to ensure that supportive residence environments are available to students moving away from home for the first time. We were very happy to fulfill our first-year student housing guarantee this year. That said, we recognize that the current housing pressures in our wider community are driving significant housing pressures for a wider range of our students than ever before.

The urgent question for Dalhousie is: what additional steps can Dal, a growing university in a growing province, take to respond to this urgent need? How can we better support the growth of vibrant, sustainable communities and our province?

Dalhousie needs additional university housing. We are assessing the development of several sites on our Halifax campuses. Planning work is underway, which puts Dalhousie on track to break ground on new housing in Halifax within the next 24 months.

But we also know that expectations for housing are changing as our province and the world change. We need to address the pressures of climate change, ensure accessibility goals are met, consider the needs of a diverse range of students, and offer affordable options.

We want to hear from you! Dalhousie is launching a community engagement process to capture critical feedback around the type and style of housing we will build, and the services, supports and amenities we provide. **We invite your input in this process first [through this survey](#), which will be available until October 15, 2023.**

Where and how we live creates a sense of community and Dalhousie is committed to being transparent and collaborative throughout this process. Building sites, design plans, and other details will be shared following analysis of the community engagement results, site assessments, and approval mechanisms through Dalhousie's Board of Governors and government partners.

Dal is also committed to providing the wrap-around supports and services that contribute to student well-being and success. As one of Canada's oldest universities, we want to strike an appropriate balance between preserving the iconic character of our campuses, while attending to the need for density to ensure that we develop our community in line with the needs of our city and province.

We also have expertise within our institution that can contribute new ideas to address our shared housing situation in novel ways. Our Faculty of Architecture and Planning is building on its existing programming with an eye to new programs to support the housing and construction sectors. The Faculty is actively collaborating with partners in the built environment to better understand how it can support Nova Scotia's housing sector. This fall, the Faculty will convene an engagement series on housing priorities within a Nova Scotia context.

Only by working together, listening carefully to our community, and thinking creatively about what the future of life at Dalhousie and Nova Scotia might look like can we make our campuses, our city, and our province stronger.

Sincerely,

Kim

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### ***Steps we are taking right now to support students navigating the housing market***

- Our off-campus housing website, [dal.ca/och](http://dal.ca/och), is a centralized, resource center for our students looking for housing and rental information.
- The university has also set up a Housing channel in our Dal Mobile App for students, as a place to share rental opportunities and we share resources not affiliated with the university that our students find helpful – Facebook Marketplace, Kijij, Google Maps, etc.
- Bursary funding is available to those students in financial need. (More information can be found [on our website](#).)
- We've reached out to our Dal community asking if they have a spare room in their residence or a rental unit available, to please consider listing it for a student through [Places4Students](#) – an online directory of available student accommodations.
- We also share with our students' information/advice on:
  - viewing rental spaces in person
  - reading the [Tenants Right Guide](#) before committing to an apartment
  - submitting a rental application
  - the lease agreement and what questions to ask
  - submitting their lease with a security deposit, tenant's insurance, and first month's rent.
- Dalhousie students also receive a bus pass to use any busses and ferries in the city, which allow them to expand the areas in which they are looking to find housing.

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**Kim Brooks (she/her)**

President and Vice-Chancellor

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*Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.*

*We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.*