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A recently released report by Stantec, *Quantifying the Costs and Benefits to HRM, Residents and the Environment of Alternate Growth Scenarios*, provides quantifiable evidence to Halifax Regional Municipality that it could save nearly \$3 billion by 2031 by having a more urban growth pattern. Achieving this growth pattern will require the support of all three levels of government. Until the support is achieved, HRM will continue to sprawl with residents taking advantage of the lower cost opportunities for owning and renting that exist on the fringes. Though the EAC is not dealing with Bill 83 exhaustively, as proposed, Bill 83 provides a remedy to the situation by ensuring affordable housing is part of all new developments seeking bonus zoning.

Numerous people who work downtown would love to live downtown. The idea of not needing to spend \$700 per month on a vehicle appeals to them. The idea of freeing up two to three hours a day that would otherwise be spent commuting is exciting. These individuals would live downtown if they could find affordably priced housing.

Artists used to flock to the Gottingen area because there were low cost options available there, but as that part of the city becomes increasingly appealing, rents there are tripling and units that used to be low priced are being converted to high end apartments and pricy condos. It is great to see that HRM and the province are working together to solve this issue by ensuring affordable units are maintained as part of the housing fabric in the Regional Centre.

Throughout its work to ensure HRM is sustainable, both financially and environmentally, the EAC has stressed the importance of maintaining affordable living options. The EAC is concerned that the definition of affordable contains the clause "low to moderate income range" without defining what low to moderate income levels are. The broad categorization of low to moderate needs clarification. Is it a mix of units, with some having to be low and others moderate, or could a developer deem \$100,000 a year as moderate income and have rent prices that reflect that amount? Does the inclusion of low mean that rents in some units will be geared to people on income assistance, or on pension? Having these defined in a way that will allow people on income assistance or working in the service industry to be able to rent or purchase units is crucial. Another provision not laid out in the bill itself is how long units must remain affordable. The EAC would prefer if affordable units remain affordable for the life of the building. It is not acceptable for a unit such as a condominium to be offered initially as affordable only to be resold at a significant profit. Having rental units provided at an affordable level for only a certain number of years is not ideal. When a unit has its rent increased, does the senior who has been living there for 10 years simply have to move? Rent geared to income would be more suitable.



Ecology Action Centre

One very important requirement for members of the EAC was to ensure that public consultation remains part of the process. As laid out in the Explanatory Note f(ii), the Minister has the ability to ensure that public consultation remain part of the process. The 60 day consultation period must be robust and extensive. As a community, we must ensure that this happens.

The calculation for money in lieu of providing affordable housing will likely be included in the regulations for how the bill is applied and therefore is extraneous to the bill itself, but the factors that will be included in the calculation must remain a priority. The EAC stresses that the calculation include a cost allocation for the vibrancy that would have been brought to the Regional Centre if affordable housing units were available. This must also include recognition of the financial benefit that having residents in the centre would have brought to surrounding businesses.

The EAC urges the committee to pass Bill 83 with the inclusion of the words “permanently affordable” and a definition of low to moderate income. Details such as maintaining existing housing stock and ensuring ecologically sensitive building practices can be worked out later. The most important part is putting the framework in place to make development happen. Bill 83 will do that.