

## First homelessness report card tables HRM's problems

Jennifer Taplin, Metro Halifax  
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There were no happy faces or A's on this report card.

The Community Action on Homelessness yesterday released the first in-depth look at homelessness in the HRM. There's no grade on this report, but there will be next year, said Wayne McNaughton, co-chair of the Community Action on Homelessness.

"Hopefully this report card will ... help people to understand better what homelessness is in the HRM, what it looks like and give some ideas on where we need to improve," he said. A number of startling finds were uncovered through surveys and data collection with four out of the HRM's six emergency shelters included.

"There are many more shelter users that we have not been able to count, and there are many more homeless people on streets, on couches that really need our support," said Pamela Harrison, Nova Scotia Community Co-ordinator for Homeless Individuals and Families Information System.

"It's as accurate as we can be today but it's not the whole picture."

Even the numbers they've been able to collect — 1,252 people used shelters last year — are too many for the HRM, she said.

"The number of homeless people we've been able to count — and those that we haven't that are equally important — need our responses now."

And with a weak economy, more people are vulnerable to losing their jobs and are close to homelessness. McNaughton said the solution is simple: adequate income, housing and support services.

"People think this is a huge, worldwide problem but we have the resources to resolve Halifax's homeless problem right here in Halifax, right now," he said. "We just have to get our act together."



Ryan Taplin/Metro Halifax

Cliff Pierro, a homeless person, asks for change at the corner of Barrington and Prince yesterday. Community Action on Homelessness released a report card on the homeless in the HRM yesterday.