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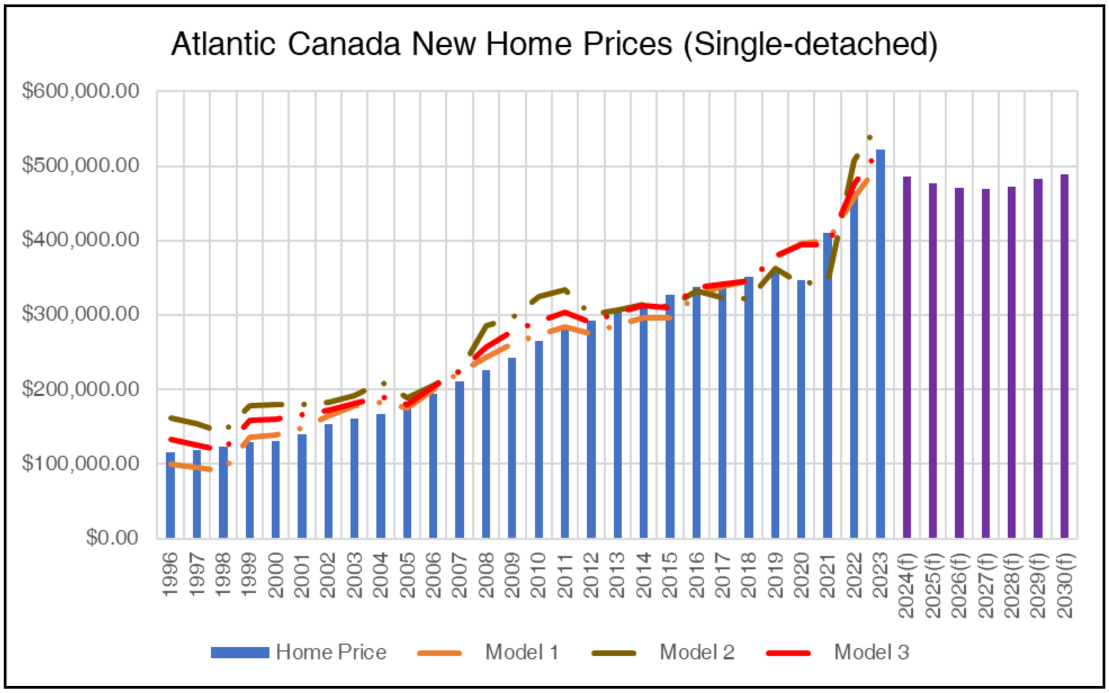
TURNER DRAKE & PARTNERS
Real Estate Counsellors, Brokers & Valuers
Registration to ISO 9001:2015

Newsletter

What Goes Up; May Come Down!



Source: CMHC Actual Median Prices (blue); TDP Forecast (purple).

Atlantic Canada house prices have consistently been in the news since 2021. That year *new* house prices increased by 18.2% year over year, the largest annual increase ever recorded in the region. 2022 saw an increase of 13.5%, followed by a further increase of 11.8% in 2023. But these increases were anomalies: in the two decades pre-2021 *new* house prices increased at 4.9% per annum on average. So, is the party over or can we expect the current trend to continue and for how long? We thought that you would like to know so we whipped out our crystal ball (actually three econometric models) and found out.

Background

We have utilised *new* home prices because that data is available from CMHC. *Existing* house price sales data is not available in the public forum. It is collected by the various real estate associations but is privately held and is often not even shared between the associations themselves, making it difficult and expensive to aggregate. For example, we have access to the data for Nova Scotia because we belong to the Nova Scotia Association of Realtors and for Prince Edward Island because we purchase it from the single real estate association in that province. However New Brunswick has five associations and Newfoundland also has its own real estate body. It would be in the public interest if the associations pooled their data; and real estate sales licensing credentials in each province were recognised in the others; ensuring sales person mobility and the free flow of knowledge for consumers throughout the Region. After all, in aggregate the Atlantic Region has about half the population and land area of most, if not all, of the remaining provinces in Canada. However, there does not appear to be much industry appetite for that type of co-operation so it would have to be a political initiative. It is what it is, so we have to rely on *new* sales prices as a surrogate for used home prices as well. The two are a function of supply and demand and are correlated, so reliance on *new* home prices is adequate for the purpose of this exercise.

Why is it important to look ahead? If you intend to purchase or sell a home the answer is obvious, but it has much wider implications. Every municipality relies on property taxes as their main source of revenue. They are usually the second largest stakeholder in any property, after the mortgagee, and well ahead of the freeholder. Property taxes are a function of property value (price) and the mill (tax) rate. If prices are increasing municipalities have more political room for budgeting purposes… and suffer the reverse if prices are falling. For most municipalities, future expansion or contraction in their tax base focuses on the amount or decline in building activity rather than the performance of their existing inventory. Yet addition to, or decline of, building stock pales by comparison to existing inventory.

House prices are determined by the interaction of supply and demand. Because single family homes are a capital good, supply takes a long time to adjust to changes in demand so prices are relatively price inelastic. In other words, supply cannot respond quickly to changes in demand so prices can be volatile. In this article,

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IN THIS ISSUE

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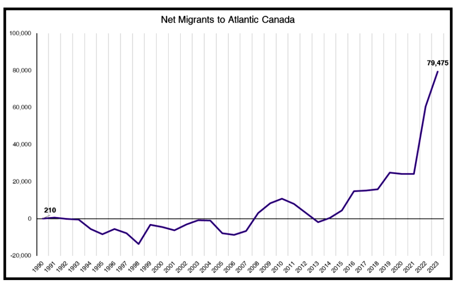
we attempt to rationally list some variables in the economy that could have an impact on home prices, weed out any correlation among them, and try to identify some variables that have a significant effect on median new home (single-detached) prices. Basically, we developed three econometric models to predict home prices, and then used the average to forecast prices out till 2030 (purple bars on the New Home Graph Page 1). Each of the models has been compared to the past home price data (blue bars on the New Home Prices Graph Page 1) to determine their "degree of fit" and are shown as orange, red and gold lines. All three models fitted the past data very well. Model 1 explained 97% of the variation in prices, Model 2, 95% and Model 3, 98%. We have developed forecasts for all four Atlantic provinces, but for brevity focus on the entire region, with references to the individual provinces where necessary. Since our price projections are based on assumptions with respect to variables in the economy we have detailed those assumptions in the article.

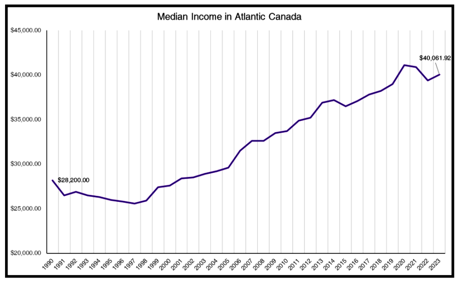
Population



Source: StatsCan and TDP EIU.

First of all, when we talk about demand for homes we have to speak about the population. Atlantic Canada has been the go-to place for Canadians from other provinces, and people from around the world, ever since the pandemic-induced travel restrictions were lifted. The onset of Covid-19, and the Region's success in containing it, initiated migration from other provinces by people able to work from home who were no longer bound to a particular location. Substantially lower home prices than Toronto and Vancouver meant that property owners relocating to Atlantic Canada could purchase a home with a substantially reduced or no mortgage. During the pandemic many bought homes here sight unseen. The Region had the infrastructure for remote working, offered a more relaxed life style, beautiful scenery and was a great place to raise a family. As the pandemic passed, immigration from abroad which had been on-hold during the lock down, also contributed to the rapid increase in net migration (the total of people who came here minus those who left). Immigration from abroad to the Region had increased prior to the pandemic as provincial governments petitioned the Federal Government for a greater share of the pie to combat their rapidly aging population. The combined result of the foregoing is shown on the Net Migrants Graph above. Since all of these people had to be accommodated it resulted in a large increase in demand for all types of housing.

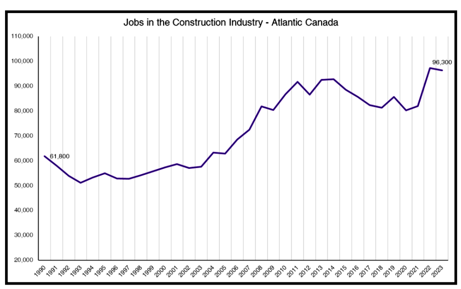
Median Income



Source: StatsCan and TDP EIU.

Median income has increased steadily since 1997 (see Median Income Graph above). Between 1990 and 2023 it grew at an average annual rate of 1.07% with an overall increase of 42.06% ($11,862) over the period. It dropped during the pandemic but is now starting to recover again. Since mortgage availability is based on gross income any increase in the latter will increase home prices (everything else being the same).

Construction Jobs

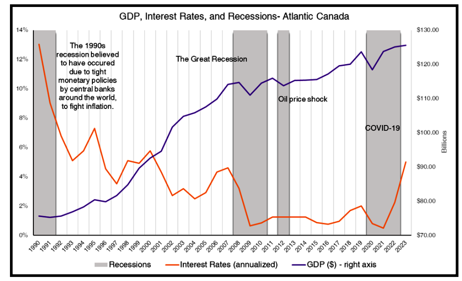


Source: StatsCan and TDP EIU.

The number of construction workers is both a cause and effect. Lack of workers constrains construction activity, whilst lack of work results in fewer employment opportunities. There were 93,000 people employed in the construction industry in 2023, 1,000 less than in 2022 but 10,700 more than in 2019. The dip in 2020 and 2021 was due to the pandemic. However, during period 2014 to 2018, 11,500 people left the industry.

Interest Rates and GDP

To represent the condition of the whole economy, we have chosen the **interest rate** and the **GDP**. We should expect to



Source: StatsCan and TDP EIU.

see a negative relationship between the interest rate and home prices (meaning a decline in home prices as interest rates increase), and a positive relationship between GDP and home prices (meaning home prices go up as GDP goes up). GDP and interest rates should have a negative relationship with each other since the Bank of Canada increases the rate to slow the economy down, and lowers it for expansionary purposes.

The relation between GDP and interest rates is demonstrated quite clearly in the GDP/Interest Rate Graph above. GDP increases when the economy is producing more to feed the strong demand in the economy. Somewhere along the line, prices start increasing because supply becomes unable to meet demand. When prices grow out of hand, the central bank can act to set a new, higher, target interest rate, which sends ripple effects throughout the credit market sector of the economy. With higher interest rates, investment levels fall, and savings increase, which in turn means lower spending (lower demand). The lower demand should lead to lower prices. However, overdo the manipulation of the interest rate and the economy craters. The chart above describes this phenomenon quite well. If you look at the last few years of the chart, you can see why the talk about a hard or a soft landing has been going on in Canada since last year. The Bank of Canada has really shot up target interest rates, but that hasn't yet had a detrimental effect on GDP. However, the fact that annual GDP has not yet declined shouldn't be taken as an excuse to delay rate cuts.

Forecast (2024 – 2030)

Our forecasts for the Atlantic Region are shown as purple bars on the New Home Prices Graph (Page 1). The individual provinces are shown in the following table:

Median Single-Detached Home Prices (Actuals & Forecasted) - 2020 to 2030

	Atlantic Canada	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Prince Edward Island	Newfoundland & Labrador
2020	$347,371.25	$432,500.00	$300,000.00	$321,985.00	$335,000.00
2021	$410,625.00	$485,000.00	$350,000.00	$450,000.00	$357,500.00
2022	$466,250.00	$630,000.00	$430,000.00	$420,000.00	$385,000.00
2023	$521,297.75	$700,000.00	$500,000.00	$435,191.00	$450,000.00
2024(f)	$486,364.42	$625,913.94	$477,460.26	$393,172.52	$428,802.54
2025(f)	$477,148.51	$640,195.48	$446,287.71	$385,851.46	$444,785.58
2026(f)	$471,165.75	$636,859.38	$434,013.42	$375,005.41	$445,904.36
2027(f)	$469,619.08	$625,099.57	$440,144.90	$377,139.24	$447,808.73
2028(f)	$471,801.74	$637,000.38	$428,937.53	$386,688.09	$451,031.25
2029(f)	$482,685.97	$649,024.51	$451,413.66	$391,405.61	$453,786.50
2030(f)	$488,338.57	$661,394.39	$456,672.97	$396,475.19	$455,246.99

Source: Actual median prices from Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation; Forecasts from TDP

Our projections of new house prices

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(period 2023 to 2030) are based on a decline in net migration (from 79,475 to 46,100 annually), a decrease in the interest rate (from 5% to 1.0% - almost back to pre-pandemic levels), a gradual increase in median income (from $40,062 to $44,547), an 11% increase in GDP, and a 4% increase in number of construction industry jobs.

In summary, the consensus of our models is that new home prices are going to fall in Atlantic Canada in 2024, 2025, and 2026. In 2027, they may pick up steam again and keep rising till 2030. Again, remember that there are quite a few variables whose movements these forecasts rely on. If we are wrong and migration figures don't decline as much as we expect them to, then that will add an upward pressure on home prices; if we are wrong and the interest rate is not lowered, then that will put downwards pressure on home prices; if the GDP and median income falls, so will home prices. There are sure to be many other factors that we have not accounted for, and it will never truly be possible to quantify all their effects. However, we believe that home prices will decline in the near future, but not to the level of pre-pandemic times. They will drop to the point close to the new equilibrium price and remain in that vicinity, until a new external shock is experienced.

Jigme Choerab, the Manager of our Economic Intelligence Unit is a professional economist with extensive experience in economic development, research and the real estate industry, both in Canada and the United States. He graduated with a B.A. in Economics from Lehman College, CUNY in 2016 and with a Master of Applied Economics from Saint Mary's University in 2020. He can be reached at jchoerab@turnerdrake.com or 1-800-567-3033 Ext. 323. Our Economic Intelligence Unit undertakes primary and secondary research to provide clients with practical real estate solutions to problems they face in today's rapidly changing world (market surveys, site selection, trade area analysis, supply & demand analysis, demographic reports, impact and economic analysis).

PLANNING DIVISION

Housing Matters

Photo Credit: Bigstock Photo

"You've built an excellent team of planning consultants!". Thanks, this type of feedback it always welcome… and this time it wasn't from Neil's mom. Not that we are unappreciative of our Planning Team: they use big words (both Neil and Andrew are from Ontario) clients and the other firms they partner with on assignments, are frequently generous with their praise. "Passionate" is a much over-used word these days: nevertheless, it describes without hyperbole our Planning Division. Their major focus for the past five years has been housing needs assessment, rather topical in view of the housing crisis facing many communities in Canada. Working in tandem with our Economic Intelligence Unit and sometimes partnering with other firms (Upland Planning + Design Studio, COLAB and MountainMath were coconspirators on Nova Scotia's Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report) they have built an impressive depth of expertise. Working on 29 individual assignments across five provinces (Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and British Columbia), in 165 distinct communities, they have authored or contributed to 123 separate reports. In addition, they are analyzing and providing advice on post-secondary student housing needs for 11 institutions (some with multiple campuses) in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Their focus, as with everything we do, is on providing practical solutions to clients' real estate problems. We asked our Planning Team to detail the challenges communities typically face after they have received a Housing Needs Analysis. This is their response:

The data and analysis is very technical and carries an impression of complexity and precision, making it easy to overestimate just how reliable and accurate are the results. It provides valuable insight but should also be taken with a grain of salt and be used to enlighten and inform. The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) illuminates the path ahead so you can get a sense of where you are heading and what the conditions are like, but there will be no single direct route between the current situation and the ultimate destination.

Housing Needs Assessments are a useful part of what should be a broader and constant approach to managing housing issues. They offer a point-in-time look at conditions and make estimates about the future but they are not a "one-off". There is a need to *constantly* look at the big, real-world picture to ensure the HNA remains current and relevant.

Long term housing needs are a continuum that have to be managed over time. They are not something that can be solved by setting a policy and intervention to resolve the short-term situation. Housing needs have to be monitored, measured and managed, course correcting as necessary when circumstances change.

Policy and regulatory interventions are blunt instruments and municipal governments often have a limited understanding of their impact in terms of achieving housing goals. In large part this is because the private sector provides the housing and they are governed by the market forces of supply and demand, something municipalities do not measure or properly comprehend. If for example, the HNA identifies a short fall of 1,000 housing units, simply re-zoning sufficient land to accommodate this number of units will fall short of the action needed.

The risk between over and under zoning is asymmetrical. Zoning too much land for development may raise the ire of the neighbours but it is less risky than zoning too little. Supply of new housing depends on market demand and developers can usually respond quickly provided that there is sufficient suitably zoned land available. Any oversupply of housing units is likely to be transitory. However, if there is insufficient suitably zoned land available the regulatory bottleneck will create huge affordability issues, indirect social and economic costs, lives destroyed… albeit fewer angry public hearings.

Difficult, expensive and controversial decisions are required to meaningfully address housing needs and this willingness to engage with reality remains the limiting factor in successfully resolving housing problems. HNAs should not be used as an excuse to kick the can down the road. At the end of the day nothing changes unless the information they provide leads to action and with affordable housing you get what you pay for.

Surprises

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Our Planning Team also identified findings that commonly surprised clients:

The affordability gap between renters and home owners is understated in part because StatsCan's affordability indicator (% of households spending more than 30% of gross income on shelter) is often reported as an overall average of the two types of household. In reality the affordability issue is almost entirely concentrated in renter-tenured households and their struggles are not fully appreciated by decision makers who only see a top-line rate heavily diluted by homeowners who are secure. Renter incomes are lower than home owners and this limits their capacity to acquire adequate housing especially if they are lone -parents or single persons.

The depth of housing affordability issues is not widely understood. Whilst the 30% of income threshold referred to earlier is the most common benchmark utilised to determine "affordability", some households spend more than 50% on shelter (termed "Extreme Core Housing Need"). This is a particularly dire situation and the fact that people live under these conditions of financial stress, and in not insignificant numbers, is an eye opener. In Fredericton, for example, (using 2016 census data) 40% of renter households were paying more than 30% of their gross income on shelter… and a third of those were paying more than 50%!

Renters are spread across all age groups. Whilst the common perception may be that renting is a transitory activity between leaving the nest and purchasing a first home this is a mistaken belief. In any age bracket usually at least 25% of households are renters. On an individual basis, many residents rent for all or most of their life.

🌎 *In many communities, the housing crisis is now front and centre and can no longer be easily ignored. There have always been people sleeping in doorways and beneath underpasses but they were relatively isolated incidents in smaller towns and cities. Now we have tents on road medians, in parks and in Halifax, in the Grand Parade. Provincial governments, municipalities and charitable organisations are responding, but when it comes to housing issues there are no shortcuts! The solutions are varied and complex but every journey starts with a single step. To find out how your community can benefit from the unique expertise of out Planning and Economic Intelligence Unit teams contact Neil Lovitt at nlovitt@turnerdrake.com or 1-800-567-3033 Ext. 349.*

PROPERTY TAX DIVISION

There is none so blind…

…as those that will not see! Assessment appeals are a critical part of the property tax process. Without them taxpayers would be denied any redress should their property be over-assessed, a patently inequitable circumstance. Even more important though is the fact that the payment of taxes in a democracy is essentially a voluntary process, witness the rebellions that have occurred when taxpayers are levied taxes they consider unreasonable. In Canada, in common with other countries that follow English common law, the

Photo Credit: Bigstock Photo. Copyright: Everest Community

fundament precept of individual rights and limitations on unreasonable taxes was settled on June 15th 1215 with the signing of Magna Carta at Runnymede in England. Attempts since then viewed as violating that principle, have led to riots, sometimes revolutions, occasionally beheadings and, horror of horrors, the dumping of 342 chests of tea into Boston harbour (apparently somebody was counting!). And taxes not only have to be fair, but must be seen to be fair. It is therefore to the benefit of Assessment Authorities to embrace *"fairness, certainty, convenience and efficiency"*, the principles of good taxation enunciated by economist Adam Smith in his seminal work "The Wealth of Nations". Unfortunately, that does not appear to be on their 'book of the month' list. Which is curious, because without taxpayers, assessors would not have a salary. We first came across this attitude when we launched our Property Tax Division thirty years ago. We needed two years' assessment history to populate our database so approached each of the Assessment Authorities in Atlantic Canada and offered to purchase it from them. Most ignored our initial approach, though St. John's Newfoundland was gracious enough to offer it for free. The catch? We had to go to that fair city and copy out each record out by hand. Eventually with a little persuasion (riots, revolutions and the guillotine were not tendered but media exposure and law suits may have been mentioned) they reluctantly released the data. But it has been a constant struggle since then. When we first launched our PAMS® Property Tax Manager program in 1989 to take the burden of property tax management off clients' shoulders (so that they could get on with running their businesses, employing Atlantic Canadians and paying taxes) the New Brunswick assessment authority contacted clients suggesting they reconsider. And for many years we were unable to access the sales information in any of the Atlantic Provinces despite the fact that they are the basis for property tax assessments and, that in Nova Scotia, PVSC was selling that same information to banks in Ontario for risk management purposes… while claiming that the public here could not be entrusted with it since it was "confidential". Service New Brunswick were similarly parsimonious with sales information, refusing to disclose it to the public until the provincial ombudsman took them to task, scathingly pointing out that it was difficult to determine if an assessment was correct if the very information on which it was based was available only to the assessment authority. And so it goes on. In our Summer 2023 issue of Newsletter we recounted the efforts of the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) to deny us details of the calculations and identity of comparable properties they relied on in calculating their assessed values. This despite a noble

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offer from Giselle Kakamousias, our VP Property Tax Division, to fall on her sword rather than disclose them to third parties (we understand that Putin was hot to have them). That case was resolved in favour of the taxpayer by both the Nova Scotia Assessment Appeal Tribunal and the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board.

The latest iteration revolves around the taxpayers' right to appoint an agent to act on their behalf without first securing PVSC's approval. This is pioneering stuff… not just an attempt to upturn Magna Carta but also to rewrite the laws of Agency! On February 10th 2020, our intrepid warrior, Giselle Kakamousias, girded herself for battle and did what she, and the remainder of our tax team, have done thousands of times before, sent a very polite letter to PVSC informing them that we were acting as the agent for (named) clients and were appealing the assessments on certain properties they owned. The properties were identified in the letter. Our letter requested that the appeals be acknowledged by stamping them with the date of receipt and returning them to us. PVSC graciously complied. On February 18th PVSC, mailed out a Request for Information (RFI) asking for income and expense data on the properties under appeal. PVSC mail out these RFIs to all income generating properties such as offices, apartments, shopping centres and multi-unit industrial buildings once a year. Their rationale being that this information is required as part of the process of calculating property assessments. The RFI is issued under pain of foreclosure… if they are not completed and returned within 30 days the taxpayer's right of appeal is cancelled. We cannot think of a precedent… obviously PVSC are no fan of Magna Carta! However, PVSC ignored our agency letter requesting that all correspondence be directed to us and instead sent it to the property owners. PVSC'S rationale for ignoring our request, it later transpired, was that the property owners had failed to sign a PVSC form, (which they had yet to send to them) acknowledging that Turner Drake was the agent for the property owner… and thus, according to PVSC, we were not acting in that capacity despite having filed the appeals and telling them so. Since the property owners were laboring under the impression that we were acting on their behalf, including receiving and reviewing all PVSC correspondence, they did not return the completed RFIs. PVSC waited the statutory 30 days and promptly declared the appeals forfeited. You could not make this stuff up. This is the reason for which the guillotine was invented. The matter was referred to the Nova Scotia Assessment Appeal Tribunal (NSAAT) where not surprisingly, in a well written and well-reasoned judgement, the Chairman James P. DiPersio ruled as follows (paraphrased):

(1) Turner Drake assumed the position of the property owners' agent when they were appointed as such, prior in fact to us filing the appeals and informing PVSC of the agency relationship. Our letter to PVSC was simply a necessary communication of that relationship.
(2) PVSC had no role to play in the formation of the agency relationship between the property owners and Turner Drake. That was strictly a matter for the latter two parties.
(3) PVSC only sent out its own "Authorization for Property Assessment File Access" form after it had sent out the Requests for Information (RFIs) and had no legislative authority to refuse to deal with the property owner's agent until after the property owner had signed the File Access form (in other words the latter form had no influence with respect to Agency, its authority was limited to accessing, possibly confidential information, in the Property Assessment File (the word "Access" in the title should have been a hint).
(4) The property owners had not lost their right of appeal.

PVSC have now appealed the NSAAT decision to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. We will bring you the results in our Summer Newsletter.

Our Property Tax Division has conducted property tax appeals in every province apart from Nunavut (we have nothing against Nunavut… it is just that nobody has asked us yet). Our innovative PAMS® Property Tax Manager program however is currently restricted to Atlantic Canada. It allows you to focus on your business. We monitor your property assessments, file appeals within the legislated deadlines and negotiate reductions, or if necessary, take them to the Appeal Court. Some assessment authorities pre-publish their Assessment Roll and are willing to negotiate the reductions with us before the Roll is set in stone. For more information contact visit our corporate web site at https://www.turnerdrake.com/products/pt-pams.asp , email Sarah Livingstone at slivingstone@turnerdrake.com or contact any member of our Property Tax Division.

LASERCAD® DIVISION

Fire Safety and Evacuation Plans

Photo Credit: Bigstock Photo

Fire Safety Plan

Creating a Fire Safety Plan is a significant undertaking, requiring not just a floor by floor layout detailing the location of each piece of fire detection, safety and suppression equipment, shut off valves and muster station, but information too on building and human resources. Everything that is required by the fire department to assist them save lives, including their own, and fight the fire. Halifax Regional Municipality's version runs to forty-two pages plus Addenda! It has to be updated whenever a change occurs, such as migrating from oil to natural gas heating, and at least once a year. It sets out the time table for checking each piece of equipment and promises fines of up to $150,000 and detention at His

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Majesty's pleasure for up to two years if the property manager strays from the path of righteousness. Corporation fines are capped at $250,000. Knee trembling stuff, but not every building is required by law to create a Fire Safety Plan; however, finding out means venturing into the National Building Code as well as the National Fire Code. Extracting coherent information from the National Building Code is like nailing jelly to a wall, an exercise high in exertion and low in satisfaction… certainly not for the faint of heart especially when both Codes have to be navigated in tandem. Roll on AI! *The National Fire Code requires a Fire Safety Plan for all buildings that are required to have a fire alarm system under the National Building Code and/or pose significant safety concerns because of the occupants, storage or processes undertaken thereon.* Occupancies such as care, home-type care, treatment or detention centres fall within this category; some comfort perhaps if you are incarcerated by virtue of your failure to file a Fire Safety Plan. So do facilities with high volume occupancies such as schools, colleges, universities, daycares or those with potentially inebriated occupants: licensed beverage establishments or restaurants serving alcohol… and every building that contains an area where treatment is provided in business and personal services occupancies i.e. where medical or other health related interventions occur which may render the hapless recipient incapable, not, in other words, your hairdresser, unless they are customarily careless with their scissors. Demolition and construction sites, together with storage areas in inaccessible places, also warrant a Fire Safety Plan. Buildings and open areas that are used for the storage or processing of flammable liquids such as tank farms, bulk plants, fuel dispensing stations, refineries, distilleries and the like or properties where processes take place fraught with the risk of explosion, high flammability or create related conditions that threaten human life also have to have Fire Safety Plans. Most of these circumstances will be obvious but not necessarily so with respect to the necessity for a *fire alarm system*. Some buildings may have a fire alarm system because of an abundance of caution rather than law. So which buildings are *required* to have a *fire alarm system*? Every building with a *sprinkler* system with more than 8 sprinkler heads (except for one- or two-family dwellings and manufactured homes) must have a fire alarm system. A fire alarm system is also required in *non-sprinklered* buildings containing more than three storeys (basements count as storeys) where the occupant load exceeds 300; or where the occupant load for any major occupancy exceeds 10 (residential sleeping accommodation), exceeds 150 (business and personal services above or below the first storey), or exceeds 75 (low or medium hazard industrial). Residential buildings are not required to have a fire alarm system unless the exit or public corridor serves more than 4 suites or where each suite has direct access to an exterior exit facility leading to the ground floor level. *The bottom line? You require a Fire Safety Plan in virtually all sprinklered buildings; and non-sprinklered buildings with more than three floors (including basement) with more than 300 occupants (~ 60,000ft^2); or with more than 10 beds; or with more than 150 occupants (business and services ~ 30,000ft^2) or more than 75 occupants (low or medium hazard industrial ~ 68,000 ft^2) below or above the ground floor…. and for all buildings where there is a high density of occupants e.g. schools, or incapacitated occupants e.g. bars, dentist's offices, or where highly flammable liquids are stored or used in the industrial process e.g. gasoline service stations. So, while virtually all apartment buildings and institutional facilities require Fire Safety Plans, most small office, retail and industrial buildings do not unless they have a sprinkler system.*

Fire Evacuation Plans

Fire Evacuation Plans form part of the wayfinding signage posted throughout the building's common areas and show the safe route/s out of the building in the event of a fire. They used to be commonplace but have been usurped by lighted exit signs, probably because most people fleeing a fire were reluctant to pause and interpret them (assuming they were visible at all in the smoky conditions), and exit signage located near the ceiling was more visible. The 2020 National Fire Code of Canada only requires them in hotel and motel bedrooms.

The plans required as part of Fire Safety or Evacuation Plans are most cost effectively prepared while we are measuring the entire building for space certification purposes but we can create them anytime provided we have the building on file. Since 1976, we have measured and certified over 10,000 buildings and tenant spaces in Atlantic Canada and Ontario. Our Spacemen/women are graduates of local universities, now courageously navigating our seven-year, industry leading, training program which includes experience and formal education in valuation, property tax, negotiation, real estate research, counselling and making the coffee. So be nice to them, they have mothers too. For more information on Lasercad®, or our eager beaver Spacepeople, visit our web site www.turnerdrake.com; or contact Tyler Manning (the person who keeps the operation running smoothly) at tmanning@turnerdrake.com .

It's Spring: This is Our Home.

Photo Credit: Matt Kok, Brunswick Street Mission, Halifax, N.S.

Over the past two winters makeshift shelters and tents have sprouted on street medians and vacant lots, in parks and woodlots. A heartbreaking sight, the situation has been particularly acute in the region's largest city, Halifax Regional Municipality. To their credit, the provincial and municipal governments have responded, renting hotels and converting publicly owned buildings to temporary accommodation. But this is not a crisis that can be resolved by government alone.

This year our Halifax office is again partnering with Brunswick Street Mission in Halifax. They do not provide shelter but do offer a hot breakfast during the week, a "choice model" food bank, a tax clinic and access to a social worker through their Outreach Program. Their food programs have experienced a dramatic increase in demand in the past two years, with over 11,000 breakfasts served and 3,576 food bank visits in 2023. Our (self described) role is to assist the Mission source funds, equipment, and clothing that are required on an immediate, emergency basis, by providing donations of food, hygienic products and other necessities.

If you would like to contribute as well, financial donations can be made through the Mission's web site at www.brunswickstreetmission.org/turnerdrake and we will match donations up to an aggregate amount of $5,000… or perhaps you may prefer to donate to a charity of your choice closer to home. What amount? How much would *you* spend to avoid *one* night sleeping outdoors? Think of it as insurance, you hope never to use.