

This year's Homeless Count revealed some striking numbers for the North Shore. While the number of homeless people remains high, the count revealed an overall decrease of 19 people from the last count in 2014. The North Shore Homelessness Task Force has concerns about how representative this number is for the homeless population on the North Shore.

Our Task Force believes that there were a variety of circumstances, some unique to the North Shore, that prevented an accurate number of people from being counted this year.

In addition to overall challenges with how the count was coordinated on the North Shore, for the first time during a homeless count, an extreme weather alert was called due to the very cold temperatures on the night of March 7, potentially impacting who was counted and who wasn't. The extreme weather may have driven people indoors as couchsurfers, into vehicles, or farther into forested areas, where they were missed during the count.

It is also important to note that 11 additional people were counted in the Extreme Wet Weather Response shelter on March 7th who would have otherwise been on the street during the count.

The North Shore Homelessness Task Force believes that the Point in Time count methodology is flawed and that cannot truly account for all the people who are homeless in our community.

Nevertheless, a decrease could be interpreted as a result of some of the new North Shore resources put in place since 2014 such as new beds for youth transitioning out of care, and for those recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. However, the demand for these beds is high and little to no housing alternatives exist. In order to move people from emergency beds into supportive housing, and on to affordable rental housing, more housing units across the housing continuum are needed.

Our Task Force will be conducting some supplementary, anonymous data collection with our partners in the non-profit and outreach service community to help us gain a better understanding of the true number of homeless people on the North Shore. We look forward to sharing this information with policy-makers and community members as soon as it is available.