



2024/2025 Chair's Report

There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." This proverb is not just something I believe in deeply—it has also become a theme that has underscored much of the past year at Viola's Place Society.

Over the past year, through meetings, discussions, and sheer determination, Viola's Place Society and the Town Council of New Glasgow have begun forging a stronger, more collaborative relationship. This work has not always been easy, and I would be remiss if I glossed over the inevitable bumps in the road. Like any meaningful partnership, challenges have surfaced, but these "speed bumps" are often the signs of a relationship being built on honesty and mutual effort.

Our work extended beyond New Glasgow, as we also presented to municipal leaders across Pictou County to emphasize the importance of a unified and coordinated response to homelessness, housing insecurity, and poverty in our region. I'm proud to share that these efforts culminated in a unanimous agreement among the municipal districts to contribute financially toward hiring a consultant to develop a Homelessness Strategy for Pictou County. This is a significant milestone—a collective step forward on what is undoubtedly a long road. As the proverb reminds us: If you want to go far, go together. The journey is long, but it does not get any shorter by standing still. We've begun walking it—together.

Internally, our Board of Directors has faced its own set of challenges. But challenges are not inherently negative. They can serve as powerful learning moments, and ours certainly did. This past year has helped us identify gaps in our policies and procedures, and in response, we have actively worked to address and close those gaps.

We've also embarked on the development of a new strategic plan that will guide Viola's Place as we continue to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of housing insecurity. Additionally, we have started to assess the skill sets and experiences that will best serve our Board moving forward. This more intentional approach to Board recruitment will ensure we are equipped with the right voices, perspectives, and expertise to support Lisa and the team in the challenging and vital work they carry out every day.

Speaking of that work, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible frontline team at Viola's Place. If you've ever spent time in an emergency shelter, you will have witnessed firsthand the kaleidoscope of energy, emotion, heartbreak, and inspiration that defines the space. Speaking from personal experience, this is difficult work. It is physically and mentally demanding, sometimes draining, and can often feel futile or thankless. Burnout isn't just a risk—it can sometimes feel inevitable.

Through thoughtful leadership and intentional team-building, Lisa has cultivated an incredibly talented and dedicated group of helpers. They show up day after day—not only for those who access the shelter services but also for the many community members who join us on Hub days. Their resilience, compassion, and steady presence are the beating heart of Viola's Place.

We are also fortunate to have a devoted group of volunteers who generously give their time and energy to this challenging work. They bring positivity, compassion, and valuable insight to our team, and we would not be the organization we are today without their contributions.

As Iain De Jong so perfectly puts it: "Our success will not be measured by how easy we made the work; it will be measured by what we achieved in difficulty."

Of course, I would be doing the organization a disservice if I only spoke about the challenges. Under Lisa's leadership, Viola's Place has not only maintained but strengthened community partnerships and has also forged new, meaningful

connections. Lisa's leadership has been a cornerstone of our progress this year, and I will leave it to her report to outline these successes in greater detail.

In closing, I want to express my sincere gratitude—to the Board, to Lisa and the staff, to our volunteers, to our partners, and to the wider community. The work of Viola's Place is not possible without all of you. It is through our shared commitment, collective wisdom, and our willingness to walk this road together that we are able to make a real difference.

Thank you.