

## Working Session with Service Providers

Living Space Relocation Review – Part 3

Tues, Feb 6, 2024

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

*The working session included 43 service providers representing over 20 organizations. This summary was written by Nicole Swerhun and Matthew Wheatley from Third Party Public. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of the Relocation Review, the intent is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. Note that points are numbered in this summary for ease of reference only and are not intended to imply that some points are more important than others. A draft of this summary was distributed for participant review and no suggested edits were received.*

### Feedback related to the Draft Outcomes of the Relocation Review:

#### The Draft Outcomes of the Living Space Relocation Review:

- 1 What's happening in Timmins is not ok. Timmins is not alone in facing these issues. A lot is happening to try and address them.
- 2 There are significant problems with Living Space today. Different people describe the problems in different ways.
- 3 There is a lot of common ground on how to improve the shelter, regardless of its location.
- 4 Relocation alone will not necessarily solve the problems with Living Space. All location options have risks that need to be considered.
- 5 There is a willingness in the Timmins community to try and work together to make Timmins better. Trust needs to be built. Accountability needs to be shared. There is an urgent need to act.

1. Overall, the Draft Outcomes reflect the feedback shared to date well.
2. Draft Outcomes 1 and 2 go hand-in-hand. There needs to be a bigger focus on the fact that things are not OK in Timmins. What we see in the community today is very bad. It's different than anything any of us have experienced before: how tainted the drugs are, the level of gang activity and the impacts on the community, including Living Space and the people that work there. Homelessness and poverty are a result of many systemic issues. These go beyond what Living Space alone can address. Living Space gets blamed for many/all issues that they don't have control over and/or don't cause. Anger from people directed at Living Space is being directed at the wrong issues. Living Space gets blamed because it is the only place for people experiencing homelessness to go.
3. Draft Outcome 2 should include "increased crime in the community".
4. Unsure about Draft Outcome 5. With the comments posted online that blame Living Space for every problem it is hard to see a willingness from Timmins as a whole to work together to make Timmins better.
5. It is important that differing voices are heard through the process; and these voices need to be encouraged to help solve problems.

### Implementation advice for the Relocation Review Steering Committee to consider:

1. Relocation doesn't matter if you don't fix the issues.
  - If we don't fix the issues now, we'll continue to have the same conversation for years and we'll have more deaths to account for.

## 2. Living Space needs more help.

- We are spending the majority of the time figuring out how to keep workers safe. We feel we are constantly under fire, and we are asking for help. We don't have enough trained and qualified staff at Living Space. The frontline workers don't make a living wage and are expected to deal with the most mentally ill people in our community. I see people getting hurt and dying every day; we don't have the right people to care for them and we are getting blamed. We need to talk about the issues so they can be fixed.
  - Leadership from the different agencies needs to push their staff to show up at Living Space. When this happens, we will see a difference. Changes are happening. Staff from CMHA have been in person at Living Space over the past couple of months and it's working; it has made a drastic difference in how we work with our clients.
3. We need a better coordinated approach to providing services to serve the community and fill existing gaps.
- Services needed in our community are not readily available, including addiction services, life skills, etc.
  - We can't just say "that's not my problem" and push people away to other services and organizations. We also can't rely on the police to take care of everything after 4pm; they have a specific role and training.
  - We need to look at the barriers and red tape each of our organizations have that make coordination difficult and work to break these down. We need action from the leadership to help break down the silos and push the frontline workers from different agencies to work together.
  - A lot of staff from different agencies and organizations are working outside of our scope to fill the current gaps and work together.
4. There is a big need for more affordable housing and housing options. Living Space is the only place for people experiencing homelessness to go. There is a gap that needs to be filled between an emergency shelter bed and permanent housing.
5. Implementation of the outcomes of the Relocation Review need to be well resourced and shepherded.
- Be transparent about what funding is available and what change is possible with what's available.
6. We need to have actionable items to get things done.
- Look to how things got done during the pandemic as an example of how to take action.
  - Consider developing a set of local calls to action. The Steering Committee could be the starting point, then collaborate with others to expand the calls to action. Everyone involved would need to be accountable for collecting data and reporting on progress for the calls to action they have committed to. Look at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action as an example.
  - Develop a "braided" approach to implementation that includes respect, collaboration, and accountability. Be bold, be brave, and stay the course.
7. Accountability is crucial and be ok with mistakes.
- We need to hold everyone accountable with grace. Organizations and service providers need to be ok reflecting back challenges and admit when things don't work. We also need to show how we're evolving to improve our services. This transparency is important to building trust with the community.
  - We need to take a listening approach and recognize what we don't know. Through listening to people experiencing homelessness, we can better understand what people need and provide services to them. In working to support the evacuations, It wasn't until we were quiet and listened to First Nations voices that we understood what was needed.

- The “Big Players”, the Province and Federal Government need to step up and stand with the CDSSAB, Living Space, the City, district municipalities, and to support implementation. Right now, Provincial health care initiatives don’t always align with local needs. There is a need for better alignment and increased accountability, clarity on how decisions are made. We need flexibility at the local level to respond to complex needs.
8. We need to dig deep into structural discrimination and treat everyone with dignity and respect.
    - We sit in rooms and tell them what is best for them, say “you better do this”, “you better do that”, “you can’t have good treatment”, “you better behave”.
    - Services providers need to identify and address policies that discriminate against people who use drugs and are dealing with addictions. If we don’t do this internally, how can we expect the public to stop discriminating.
    - The community still has an us vs. them mentality. People experiencing homeless are not seen as human beings, they’re seen as a problem that needs to be swept under the rug.
  9. Strong leadership is essential.
    - The Steering Committee needs to have members from the general public, including people with lived experience with homelessness.
    - The Steering Committee should also include a designated role for a funding proposal writer. In the past we have submitted proposals for funding in silos; this should be a coordinated effort.
    - Consider a different model / lead, other than the Steering Committee, to lead implementation. Look at Ontario Health Team for Cochrane District and other pilot programs (e.g., Seniors at Risk and Communities at Risk) as good examples of models for implementation.
  10. Look to implementation models that have been rigorously tested and worked in other communities.
    - We can’t just use something someone said is a good idea without good data that shows it works. Consult other emergency shelters outside of Timmins and the District to see what is working for them.
    - Research and develop a centralized service hub.
  11. We need to develop a map/resource that shows what a path to recovery from addiction can look like.
    - We need transparency about wrap around services to help the community better understand who is responsible for what, so they know Living Space is not responsible for everything. And there are a lot of us working outside of our roles to fill the gaps.
  12. Improving understanding of the stigma of homelessness is important. This needs to happen at the community level with students, youth, teachers, business owners. More understanding can lead to greater acceptance. This cannot be done by one organization.
  13. LGBTQS+ people and communities need to be better represented in the process going forward.

### Next steps:

The Third Party Public team will be taking all feedback received by Feb 20, 2024, refining, and then finalizing the Outcomes of the Relocation Review. In addition to in-person working sessions, there is an online feedback form at [www.livingspacereview.ca](http://www.livingspacereview.ca) that asks the same questions.

The Relocation Review report will be delivered by Third Party Public to the Relocation Review Steering Committee on February 29, 2024 and also distributed to all participants in the process. It will also be posted online at [www.livingspacereview.ca](http://www.livingspacereview.ca).