

## Working Session with Youth

Living Space Relocation Review – Part 3

Mon, Feb 5, 2024

4:00 pm – 6:00 pm

## SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

*The working session included seven youth, including members of the Youth Wellness Hub Advisory Committee, as well as a local student at Northern College who had seen the meeting advertised. Brian Marks (CAO, CDSSAB) and Jen Byrnes (Manager, Living Space) also participated. The participants brought first-hand experience with addictions issues, either personally and/or with close friends, family, and people they speak to when in public spaces (like transit).*

**Feedback from participants** (where there were questions, responses from Brian and Jen are *In italics*):

1. It would be helpful if the Relocation Review included more information about Living Space. There are also a lot of misconceptions about Living Space, for example it would be helpful to know:
  - What is the budget is for Living Space annually? What funding does it have and where does it go? *It's roughly \$2 million, with the largest part of that going to salaries. Living Space is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with 3 shifts of people. Each shift has 5 staff. There are also managers, janitorial maintenance staff, housing, and health workers.*
  - How many people are homeless in Timmins and how many are at Living Space each night? Is there enough space for people at Living Space? *There are about 250 homeless in Timmins (correction, the number for December 2023 was 216 in the City of Timmins and 349 District-wide), with about 30-40 each night at Living Space. We've never had to turn people away. If we need, we can put more beds out.*
  - Is there a curfew at 8pm each night at Living Space? *No, people are welcome into Living Space at any time. The doors are always locked, and people go through an intake process when coming in and they are free to leave at any time. There is a bell that clients can ring when they want to come in and there is a security camera. Beds are assigned at 7pm and each person with a bed also has a locker to store their things. The bed number matches the locker number. If someone leaves their bed for more than 2 hours and there is someone waiting for a bed, we would give up their bed for the person that needs it. People can bring substances in but are told they need to put them in their locker. They can go out and use substances off property and come back in.*
  - Are there services provided at Living Space? *There are meals every day, including breakfast and snacks. There are meals offered in the community every day, and if for any reason there is a day where a community meal is not provided, then Living Space provides another meal. There is a doctor on site every Wednesday. Canadian Mental Health Association staff are onsite. Social Services is on site once a week. There are 3 washrooms and 2 showers (there is a shower schedule) and laundry. Living Space is a co-ed shelter with a capacity for 63 people. There is an upstairs area with beds dedicated for women. Access to feminine hygiene products is provided and safe sex kits.*
  - Has Living Space ever asked people who don't use Living Space, why not? *Yes, and people told us they don't come because they don't want to be around drug use. Also, nearly everyone that is experiencing homelessness has been victimized and they don't want to go somewhere that their victimizer may also be. Living Space does have a separate area for people that identify as female and/or 2SLGBTQ+ for safety reasons.*
  - I agree with the Draft Outcomes of the Relocation Review, but they don't obligate anyone to do anything. What will the Steering Committee do with them? *Agreed, the outcomes do not obligate*

*anyone to do anything. They are simply facts about what people have said through the process. What we want is for the process to help create shared accountability. Everyone on the Steering Committee can identify how they can do their part to address the outcomes and end homelessness.*

- *Is there an opportunity to volunteer at Living Space? There was an initial volunteer program at Living Space that wasn't set up properly. A community volunteer program is currently in development through the United Way. I encourage you to make a list of ideas about a volunteer program that you would want to be involved with, including what you would want to volunteer for, and share it with us.*
2. I have experience with addiction. A lot of people trying to come out of addiction find it hard to be surrounded by addiction. Putting the shelter out-of-town, serviced by a shuttle that brings people to town in the morning and back to the shelter at night should be considered, may be a solution – for example, 2 shuttles a day, one at 8am into town and one at 8pm back to the shelter. It's also true that it would be difficult for someone in the height of their addiction to be aware of the dates and times of the shuttle. Maybe there could be two shelters, one for people who aren't using/trying not to use and another for people who are still using/dealing with their addictions. *The Good Samaritan Inn offers transitional housing with strict rules, and people need to help with cooking, cleaning, meal planning, etc. People also have to pay rent. People are typically there for 6 – 12 months.*
  3. It can feel a little scary walking around Timmins. I have been followed when walking downtown and had issues at the bus station. Security needs to do more. It would also be nice if other adults in the area would speak up.
  4. A lot of people see people with addictions as “less than” and adding stigma makes it even more difficult to come out of a place of addiction. It's similar to what people dealing with mental health issues feel like and deal with. People need help. They also need to have a moment of realization that they want help. And then when they do go to get help, people think that they are weak.
  5. Not everyone knows about the shelter. I travel a lot around Timmins to and from college and I see a lot of homeless people. I talk with them and have asked them how they are doing and if there is a place they can go. They said no. I suggest making more people aware of Living Space so they know they have a place they can go.
  6. Living Space should provide training to clients of the shelter – like help with life skills and an opportunity to earn money. For example, they could learn to crochet or knit (just as examples, there could be other skills training too), and then sell the things that they make. Life skills could help people earn money and maybe help with addictions. The accommodation costs in Timmins are very high.
  7. People who are complaining about Living Space could put their energy into helping instead of hating.

### 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).

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*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 prior to being finalized – no suggested edits were received.*