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DNSSAB CONTINUES SEARCH FOR PERMANENT SHELTER AND HOUSING HUB *Community offers input at Special Meeting*

North Bay, ON: The District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board held a special Board meeting this week to hear concerns and suggestions from the community regarding a suitable location for a permanent 24/7 shelter and housing hub.

Presentations were made from organizations representing the North Bay downtown business community, the Chamber of Commerce, a former employee of the Fraser Street warming center, and a resident in the downtown area. The Board heard about anticipated impacts on businesses should the location of a future hub be downtown; conversely easy access to other social services, many of which are located downtown, was also cited as a need.

The permanent hub would offer housing supports as well as connections to other needed social and health services and would incorporate overnight shelter services. DNSSAB has engaged a real estate agent to seek out potential locations that would meet the needs of the proposed hub, which include a space of a minimum of 4,000 square feet, within walking distance of North Bay's downtown core where other social services are located, or easily accessible to other services. Locations not considered ideal are areas directly adjacent to elementary schools, splash pads, wading pools, licensed child care centres or within a residential neighbourhood interior.

It is recognized there is no perfect location, so the search for a permanent shelter and housing hub will include strategies for managing potential concerns. The DNSSAB is fortunate to have the Crisis Centre North Bay engaged, as an experienced and knowledgeable shelter operator.

"The DNSSAB appreciates everyone who came to the special meeting, and they can be assured their concerns are being considered in this decision," says DNSSAB Board Chair, Mark King. The demand for the services and supports a shelter and housing hub will provide are needed in this community. Current data shows that 316 individuals are experiencing homelessness in the district.

At this time, none of the locations currently being investigated can be shared as this may impact the negotiations of any property being considered, however communication with neighbours and the community will occur when the Board arrives at a decision, and they are in a position to provide more information.

In the meantime, a temporary cold weather program will be located at the Northern Pines site at 590 Chippewa Street for the upcoming winter season. Answers to frequently asked questions can be found at www.dnssab.ca/housing-services/

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