

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Solutions Workshop Feedback

Peace Regional Mental Health Task Force Committee



***"Unity is a strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration,
wonderful things can be achieved."***

Mattie Stepanek

Participants recorded in attendance: 110*

** Numbers based on those recorded and chose to sign the registry sheet*

Hello Valued Community Leaders,

Peace River is facing a crisis that's touching every corner of our community. Homelessness, addiction, mental illness, and crime are not isolated problems. They're overlapping, compounding issues that are affecting our businesses, our safety, and our sense of belonging in this town. Local business owners are carrying a heavy burden from break-ins, vandalism, rising security costs, and rising insurance costs to a general sense of unease that's driving away customers and dampening our community spirit. Residents are understandably concerned about public safety and open drug use, and many feel their town no longer feels like home. The visible increase in homelessness, addiction, and crime is understandably creating fear and frustration across the community. These are not just statistics; they are real impacts being felt daily in our public spaces, storefronts, and homes. These experiences are valid and urgent, and they reflect a system that is not functioning as it should for anyone.

At the same time, frontline social agencies are doing everything they can with limited resources. Getting people access to mental health care, detox services, and safe transitional housing, especially for men, is a major barrier to recovery and reintegration. Service providers are being asked to respond to a crisis without the tools they need, while also trying to uphold the dignity of those they serve in the face of growing public anger and online misinformation. The release of individuals from correctional facilities into Peace River without adequate support is not just a gap, it's a serious failure that puts both them and our community at risk. We need better in-jail programming, better discharge planning, and better pathways to treatment and accountability. The Workshop was not just about naming the problems. It's about committing to a shared vision of where we go from here.

Our vision for Peace River is of a safe, resilient, and compassionate community, where people feel secure in their homes and businesses, where public spaces are welcoming and peaceful, and where those who are struggling have real opportunities to recover, rebuild, and contribute. To achieve that, we must come together across sectors—business, government, law enforcement, social services, Indigenous communities, and residents—to create a local action plan that is practical, compassionate, and coordinated.

That means:

- Developing a full spectrum of housing options, from emergency shelter to transitional and supportive housing;
- Strengthening partnerships between correctional services and local agencies to prevent people from falling through the cracks;
- Creating real consequences for criminal behavior while also supporting rehabilitation for those willing to engage in change;
- And most of all, separating myth from reality, listening to each other with empathy, building a strategy based on facts, not fear and collective action.

Yet even in the face of this crisis, there is remarkable work happening. Our Recovery Alberta team has implemented outpatient services, a mobile outreach program, new programs and have been doing tremendously important, compassionate, and often unseen work. Our frontline professionals are going above and beyond every day to support individuals in crisis, connect people to care, and hold the line in a system under strain. Their efforts deserve recognition. Without them, the situation would be far worse. They are doing what they can with limited resources and facing impossible choices while still working to uphold dignity, reduce harm, and foster hope. Moving forward, Peace River needs a coordinated, compassionate, and practical response. One that brings together government, law enforcement, healthcare, businesses, Indigenous partners, and community voices.

This means investing in treatment and housing options, adding mental health and addiction services, creating real accountability mechanisms for criminal behavior, and separating those in need of help from those actively choosing to harm others. Most importantly, we need to find common ground: a shared vision that puts safety, dignity, and recovery at the heart of our community. That's not easy, but it's the only way we can begin to restore the Peace River we all want to see. Together, we can restore safety, pride, and peace to our town. Not by turning away from those in need, but by building a system that works for everyone. Let's use this meeting not just as a place to express concern—but as the first step in building a stronger, safer Peace River together.

On behalf of the entire team, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the special guests and members of the public who attended our workshop. Your presence, participation, and thoughtful engagement made the event truly meaningful and impactful.

To our distinguished guests, thank you for sharing your time, insights, and expertise. Your contributions added tremendous value and inspired meaningful dialogue throughout the workshop. Thank you for taking the time to listen directly to our community members.

To the public attendees, your curiosity, questions, and enthusiasm created a vibrant and collaborative atmosphere. We deeply appreciate your interest and commitment to learning and growing with us. Thank you once again for being a part of this experience. We look forward to future opportunities to connect, collaborate, and learn together.

Thank you,

Marc Boychuk

Peace Regional Mental Health Task Force Committee Chair

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Group Work Question #1:

What stands out from the presentation? What are the facts? What did you learn?

Group Reported Back:

- **Takeaway:** *The need for accountability, making tough decisions, and to not worry about being perceived as “popular”, the amount of addiction with no supports, genuine concern for looking for answers, sense of concern businesses owners, family perspective is difficult to support, there is an overwhelming fear of the homeless community, why are the homeless being kicked out of where they are camping?, fed up, feel unsafe in our town, general concern, future of our kids because we want them to come back, like the new law about forcing people to go to recovery, we need to learn the source like trauma, we don't have enough therapists, we need to force people back to their own communities and families, we are being reactionary this problem has been growing for over 20 years, some crime is connected to gangs, how can we move forward together, nothing, funding needed for resources, clear definition of programs offered by Sagitawa, is Sagitawa the best option?, supportiveness at the beginning of the mat program verses now, nice to see the passion in the community, shelter stats were good, there was no mention of things like FASD impacts, there is a lot of polarization in the community, could have talked about RPACT, RCMP need more help and funding, we need to focus on rehabilitation and life skills so they can believe in themselves, lets help them because honestly and in a different way than before, not sure why they don't want to be employed, there are no more programs in the jail anymore and they miss it, “shocked the minister said we have to solve the problem in PR”, there is safety concerns living in PR because you feel nervous when you are being followed, “we don't have enough addictions and mental health in Peace River and people have easier access to liquor stores and drug dealers instead, we are always being asked to solve a problem that we don't know how to solve, we are dealing with very addicted people, they need connection and something to make them feel like they belong here, we need something for recovery so people can have showers and do laundry, we want to help but not support vegrancy, people need basic human needs, we don't want to keep enabling the bad behaviour, seems like things are getting worse and not better, there is nothing better for them to do like a good purpose, when they come to the soup kitchen we feed them but don't know how to handle them, they need something to believe in.*
- **Facts include:** *the town is a mess, the town is out of control, continued frustration over break-ins, many are not even local, it is no longer safe for kids, the fear of walking around town at any time of day, it is no longer safe for customers to enter businesses, drug use in playgrounds, no respect for people's equipments and businesses, all the presenters want the problem dealt with, attending the event for the community solutions we need, homelessness is not a specific “person” and that labelling and stereotyping against Indigenous, victims of crime are violated and traumatized, community narrative and misinformation about who is causing and committing the crimes, it takes a lot of money, less homeless foot traffic since the shelter closed, had to make lifestyle changes like locking doors and avoiding ATMs, “we want to be left alone”, “we want to*

feel wanted and have our own space", "we want safety from environment/weather/and other people, happy to hear the shelter actual stats, autonomy to choose to live unhoused, narrative about stats pre and post shelter being opened, inmate releases and transport numbers would have been good to hear about, most people think Sagitawa only offers the shelter, we have no transportation, non-stop damages, 2 major fires since the shelter was closed, the wet shelter only encourages people to be homeless, we have lots of resources, the security blinds are unsightly and now people don't know our business, there is too much pressure on first responders (EMS, fire, RCMP), we spent lots of money on security and still nothing is being done, every individual has different needs, there is not a "one size blanket fix", some people don't want to change so then what do we do?, the only option we give people is to live on our streets and they become vagrant, there are so many thefts and break-ins, it is not safe on the streets, "I have to take a dog with me everywhere I go to be safe", public places are being covered with drugs and pipes.

- ***What have you learned*** - *How many people use the homeless shelter, who the people are for agencies, didn't learn much, start of the shelter specifically how if it was volunteer based where it was supported and then went sideways, "I heard it was a choice we need to understand to better understand the complex problem", compassionate act, not much, it's all lies, surprised at the demographic stats from sagitawa, lots of people are criminals by choice, stealing happens to the homeless too, take "homeless" out of the equation and focus on the individual, public concern on encampments, "you be us and I will be you for one day" - statement by homeless community member, we need a long term reasonable plan, this isn't necessarily a Peace River problem, need to make small steps for progress, we have a crappy justice system, we need to get people off the streets, maybe we need to let people camp in tents outside of town, observation of the fear of the unknown and the homeless population, Sagitawa needs to do better at sharing their success and wins more, we have a very negative community image right now.*

Summarization of what we heard from Question #1:

The discussion revealed a community grappling with a complex and escalating crisis related to homelessness, addiction, and crime, leading to widespread fear and frustration. There's a strong demand for accountability, tough decision-making, and a shift away from perceived "popularity" in addressing the issue. Many feel unsafe in Peace River, citing rampant drug use, break-ins, and a decline in safety for residents and businesses alike, with concerns about the long-term impact on the town's future and its appeal to future generations. While there's a desire to help those struggling with addiction and homelessness, there's also a clear rejection of enabling vagrancy and a call for solutions that prioritize rehabilitation, life skills, and addressing root causes like trauma and lack of mental health support. The community feels burdened by the problem, with first responders and business owners facing immense pressure and financial strain. There's a recognized need for more resources, funding, and a clear, long-term plan that moves beyond reactive measures and addresses the diverse needs of individuals experiencing homelessness, while also tackling the criminal element and gang activity. The conversation also highlighted a significant polarization within the community, a lack of understanding about existing programs like Sagitawa's full scope of services, and a call for better communication and celebration of successes.

Group Work Question #2:

With the emergence of homelessness, mental illness, and crime in the community, what has changed for you specifically?

Group Reported Back:

- *"If I am alone, I am not comfortable downtown", homeless population is more belligerent with a sense of entitlement, very aggressive, visually seeing doing their drugs with no deterrent, and now it's getting normal to see crack in public, concerned about weapons, staff of businesses are drained by the issue and the concerns raised via email, calls, and a lot more, my family is scared to be downtown with kids, changed dramatically for how I can deal with this issue and the sense of powerlessness, downtown is not safe anymore and that women alone are not safe, had to spend a lot of money on security, never used to have lock doors, hide bottles and cans, have had people come into my house, "Property is not mine anymore, others feel entitlement to my stuff", even churches are being broken into, vandalism - rejected by businesses as they feel very disrespected and feel like some vandalism is retaliation because businesses have a right to refuse service, how can we build kindness and compassion?, affordability for businesses and the impacts of crime on them, homeless individuals care for each other, how can we as a community care for them also?, the RCMP are not following through on charges and courts, can they provide some follow up with the victim if they cannot prosecute?, there's a big financial burden on business owners because they have to spend so much money on security, repairs from constant break-ins, and higher insurance premiums, as well as replacement of property stolen, fear of being at home and for the patrons and clients, constantly having to lock doors and monitor who is entering and leaving, apprehension to walk down the street and even employees not wanting to enter and leave work, having to lock the public washrooms due to many using drugs in them, cameras are not deterring anyone anymore, amount of discarded items like hotplates and furniture, not fixing windows, civic pride has deteriorated, businesses are forced to expense and utilize grants for security rather than business development, downtown has changed and no one is walking anymore, businesses are suffering, feel bad for the young and elderly, always have to expect something bad, unknown people in personal space, not the town I grew up in, loss of sense of community, everything is getting wrecked, family members will not come to town anymore, bad reputation in town, no consequences or respect anymore, losing control of the town, might see vigilant behavior soon, younger people are more brazen, crime is becoming a career, society is getting soft, dropping property values, people panhandling door to door, increased business security methods like roll shutters, lots of theft from motor vehicles, defecation in public, a lot of activity and anti social stuff around Anglican and United Church, public bathrooms are now closed, do not feel safe, "nothing has changed because it's always been here, it's just more visible now", many that were on the fringe of being homeless are now just one paycheck away or in it, we are a result of breakdowns in other communities, lots of highlights on gaps of services like wrap around types, we need higher levels of care in our town, misinformation and fear of the unknown, unknown root*

causes have a domino effect, missing the trauma informed care approach, "I don't feel less safe in my community but definitely more frustrated", nothing, wants to be with community, has received positive supports from Sagitawa, pressure to save people, online bullying, negative conversations, seeing more angry residents, "not the community I moved into", no longer "Peace" river, ATM and post office access, vehicles left are never safe, more aggression, dyke is not safe, need to improve the dyke again, squatting in brand new renovated units, seniors not safe or comfortable, strangers approaching houses, people in psychosis, cleanliness of town is gone and full of graffiti, encampments, no information shared from the town, library staff being assaulted and having to get training to protect themselves, no respect for the elderly, cleaning up needs to happen from burnt down gas station, vandalism, trying to get to know the homeless but some don't want to be approached, catch and release program hasn't helped the situation, addiction fueled crime has increased, probation program isn't working, potency of cannabis has increased THC, low income housing not being utilized, problem is that we cannot continue glossing over the real issues, they are choosing to live like this, definitions of "them": person with the crowbar at 3 am; those not contributing to society; some Indigenous but not all; disenfranchised from the community; some with no homes to even go back to, "they" are staying in Peace River because we have resources and supports here and maybe not in their own community, "they" is a broad group, "they" are still trying to fit in, not knowing how to help "they" fit in.

Summarization of what we heard from Question #2:

Residents and business owners alike express a profound loss of safety, security, and civic pride. Downtown areas are now perceived as dangerous, with open drug use, aggressive behavior, and a palpable fear of encountering individuals under the influence or engaged in criminal activity. This has led to significant lifestyle changes, including constant vigilance, increased security measures, and a reluctance to use public spaces. Businesses are bearing a heavy financial burden due to repeated break-ins, vandalism, and rising insurance costs, impacting their ability to thrive and discouraging new development. There's a pervasive sense of powerlessness and frustration with the perceived lack of consequences for criminal behavior and a failing justice system. The town's reputation is suffering, with family members hesitant to visit, and a general feeling that the community they once knew is disappearing, replaced by a sense of chaos and a fear of vigilantism. The distinction between those genuinely in need and those engaging in criminal acts is a source of confusion and anger, as the community grapples with how to offer compassion without enabling destructive behavior.

Group Work Question #3:

In the community, what issues are residents, businesses, and social agencies facing?

Group Reported Back:

- *We need better addiction and mental health stuff like: local services, local detox and treatment, psychiatric services, and assessment services, no services for men, there is a lack of dignity for the homeless, we need a spectrum of options for individuals, can we support Sagitawa with their long term plans, can North Peace Housing reallocate space to individuals, crime and mental health has always existed, its a problem of increases in crime and criminals, APEX and CPO are just throwing away peoples personal belongings like they don't even care that they are people too, we need safe emergency housing and it needs to be monitored, we need transitional housing, we need detox, we need recovery housing, we need voluntary admission to a program and it will have better success because people want it, people who come to the shelter will not be the same people who seek help from Recovery Alberta, we need to get programming into the jail like recovery and detox, jails need to offer programs to help with job readiness and life skills so they have something when they come out, drug addiction and crime, calls to 911 are being laxed and ambulances are being called for non-emergent calls, unknown aggressive and belligerent people, lots of social disorder, inmates are being released, increases to insurance costs, lost revenue for businesses, increased threats with weapons, lack of resources with the closest being Grande Prairie thats two hours away, lack of funding, lack of housing, attacking organizations as a problem, enforcement needs more help, we have a bad healthcare system, no help for remanded inmates and non sentenced folks, community has a negative reputation and a lack of tourism, lots of racism, homeless are getting aggressive to ask for money and cigarettes, confronted at banks and fearful to enter or leave the bank, feeling of entitlement and no fear of the law, set up tents and stealing power to charge phones, "I am tired and frustrated, I just want my town back", so many threats of fire, going to lose more businesses and residents, insurance may not cover vandalism or theft due to higher overall claims, many financial impacts on businesses, increased costs for security for everyone like when the town hired APEX for the taxpayer, employment issues and no training, feels like no is watching out for business or resident concerns, many are still living outside even with the shelter, seems to be more than 28 homeless people, shelter seems to attract more than it can handle, shelter attracts people perhaps who pry on the homeless, reputation of having shelter and food and other enabling supports are attracting extra people to town, mental illness compounded by living homeless.*
- *Summary of issues reported include: Crime, funding, shelter, drugs, safety, vandalism, graffiti, social agencies, mental health services, lack of resources that are all being taxed severely, security, housing, and training.*
- *Single Issues: getting help for challenges, local unhoused people see those released from jail are a problem and being stereotyped, takes one person to ruin it for everyone, all words and no actions, garbage in community spaces, lack of public bathrooms, transportation, wet shelter, encampments, food security,*

stigma surrounding assumptions, discriminations), genuine and complex issue, empty buildings that need removal, RCMP and bylaw officers have no authority to deal with criminal activity because their hands are tied, give them purpose and connection in their community, community issues building relationships between homeless residents, the need to work together, different generation of homeless, need to separate support from enabling, some people are preying on the support, addiction is a core problem in homelessness, treatment is long and expensive, willingness and support from family and friends is essential to the success, and the vandalism is out of hand.

- *Overarching concerns heard from the business community: increase cost of security, the theft from businesses is being paid for by other consumers, business insurance costs are increasing, there is big time staff turnover, and significant deterrent to external and internal investment and economic development.*

Summarization of what we heard from Question #3:

The Peace River community, social agencies, and businesses are facing a multi-faceted crisis stemming from the increasingly visible and aggressive issues of homelessness, mental illness, and crime. Businesses are struggling with significant financial burdens from constant break-ins, vandalism, increased security costs, and higher insurance premiums, leading to a decline in business development and civic pride. There's a pervasive sense of fear and insecurity among residents, who feel unsafe in public spaces, even at home, and witness open drug use and threatening behavior, leading to a loss of the town's once "peaceful" reputation. Social agencies are overwhelmed by the lack of adequate local resources for mental health and addiction, particularly for men, and the need for a comprehensive spectrum of housing and treatment options, from emergency shelter to detox and transitional housing. They also face the challenge of providing dignity to the unhoused while navigating public frustration with perceived entitlement and the "catch and release" justice system. The community is also grappling with the influx of individuals released from correctional facilities into Peace River without support, compounding the problem and highlighting a critical gap in regional services. There's a strong desire for more effective intervention, including programming within jails, and a clear distinction between those genuinely seeking help and those seen as choosing a criminal lifestyle, all while navigating misinformation and online negativity.

Group Work Question #4:

What specific actions can we do to address the issues of homelessness, mental illness, and crime in the community?

Issue	Action	Details	By Who?	Date	Outcome
Housing	Provide housing options for all	-supports - individuals specifically			
Courts and Legal Proceedings	Need legal system to deal with crime and thieves	Charge and deal with the real criminals not just the homeless	Advocate to MLA		
Location for individuals to live stability	Permission and support to live differently, new thinking	-designate land -allow some kind of self governance -rules	-Town -RCMP -Sagitawa	All seasons	People are no longer displaced
Housing	-Assessment -Supported guidance -Funding	-Staff and support -Processes			
Homelessness	Need a place to go with meals and support	-Find the ones that want to help and learn their story -Social workers in schools -Relocate people	-Local investor?		
Crime	Citizens on Patrol program				
Addiction and Mental Health	Local Services	Getting adequate staffing and finances	Addiction and mental health provider	Now	When people who want help can get it
Crime and Safety	More enforcement and policing		Provincial and Federal	Before 2026	Less Crime

<i>Lack of offender accountability</i>	<i>-Make charges stick -Charge in first place</i>		<i>Federal and Provincial</i>	<i>Years because of the policy work</i>	<i>When offenders are held accountable</i>
<i>Safety at night</i>	<i>-Curfew -Increased coordinated patrols and responses</i>	<i>Bylaw, RCMP, COP</i>	<i>Town, RCMP, COP</i>	<i>Now</i>	<i>Our community is safer</i>
<i>Safety in the daytime</i>	<i>Security pressure downtown</i>	<i>Increased patrols and police presence</i>	<i>Town, RCMP, COP</i>	<i>Now</i>	<i>Safer, less group transients in parks and public places</i>
<i>Falling through the cracks</i>	<i>Start young and in schools</i>	<i>Need to start sharing information</i>	<i>All agencies and departments</i>		<i>One consent form for all supports</i>
<i>Addiction</i>	<i>-Rehab services -Designate hospital to have a mental health unit -Group therapy -A center where they can stay</i>	<i>-Assessment and referral at the hospital -Psychiatric help and meds</i>	<i>Mental Health and the province - Liked Marc's idea of Peace Valley Inn to be a rehab</i>	<i>2026</i>	
<i>Housing Supports</i>	<i>Permanent Housing</i>	<i>Homelessness cannot be solved until there are actually physically homes for people to live in</i>	<i>-Bylaws and zoning to mandate supported shelters -Someone to donate a hotel</i>	<i>-Everything takes money</i>	
<i>Business Support and Patrolling</i>	<i>Eyes on the street</i>	<i>Solution for aggressive and repeat offenders, catch & release issue</i>	<i>-RCMP, PRMHTF, Town of PR, COP, Community Police Officer</i>	<i>Start talking about it at next Task Force Meeting - May 29th -Now</i>	<i>Hope "they" get a purpose and a connection to the community</i>
<i>Encampments</i>	<i>Leave the encampments alone, and</i>	<i>More and different outreach</i>			

	<i>when stuff is taken it needs to be replaced</i>	<i>supports</i>			
<i>Not local people having the ability to use the wet shelter and no curfew</i>	<i>-Ask where home is -Day shelter only -Transport Options</i>	<i>-Ability to encourage people to their own town -Use meals and showers to encourage no drugs and alcohol -Introduce a curfew</i>	<i>Provincial and Federal Grants</i>		<i>-Reducing homelessness -Respect for themselves -Less opportunity for crime and more time for RCMP to do other things</i>
<i>Wet Shelter</i>	<i>Move to dry shelter</i>	<i>Enabling addictions and no incentive to change</i>	<i>Sagitawa</i>	<i>November 1st 2025</i>	<i>Increased funds addiction center and out of town</i>
<i>No Curfew</i>	<i>Set a curfew</i>	<i>11 pm - 6 am unless working</i>	<i>RCMP/Peace Officer</i>	<i>2 Weeks</i>	<i>Less crime and consequences of negative actions</i>
<i>Encampments</i>	<i>Remove</i>	<i>Fires, stolen property, drug use, garbage, kids see the mess</i>	<i>Peace Officer and RCMP</i>	<i>Immediately</i>	<i>Less crime, safer spaces, beautify town</i>
<i>Graffiti</i>	<i>Remove and Paint Over</i>	<i>Encourages gang activity and is ugly</i>	<i>Restorative Justice</i>	<i>Immediately</i>	<i>Accountability of graffiti artists actions</i>
<i>RCMP- No authority - Soft on Crime- Justice System</i>	<i>Advocate to Province and Feds</i>	<i>Approach MLAs, MPs, and town council to change the code</i>	<i>Federal, Provincial and Municipal Government</i>	<i>Now- 1 year</i>	<i>Consequences and accountability and mental health resources</i>
<i>Empty Buildings in Town</i>	<i>Remove and enforce removal of empty buildings and bylaws</i>	<i>Increasing homelessness by creating fires</i>	<i>Town Bylaw</i>	<i>NOW</i>	<i>Removes unsightliness of abandoned buildings and discourages places for people to squat</i>

<i>Parks and play areas</i>	<i>Checking for needles, underwear and clothes</i>	<i>Not safe for kids to play</i>	<i>Public Works</i>		<i>Safety for children to play.</i>
<i>Awareness and Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Money to fund workers -Inform with good data -Get into schools -New thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Info Sessions -Bias training -Trauma informed approach -FASD Awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Individual programs, FCSS and Recovery Alberta, Civil Society Summits 	<i>Fall 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Less hate on the General Forum -More empathy and compassion -Less RCMP Reports
<i>Housing (Transitional, Low Income, General, Recovery Housing)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Building needs to happen -Leverage -Habitat for humanity -Agencies to support skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More accurate needs assessment and actually do something with the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -TAP Root -Women's Shelter -Sagitawa -Providers willing to collab -NPHF -GoA 	<i>ASAP</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Less crime -Less people on the street -Social agencies will report shifts to successes
<i>Municipal Barrier</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Be development friendly -Rural/remote building scale hurdles -need muni support and buy in to collaborate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Community development -Modular and more economical options to build 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Contractors, muni leaders, and residents 		
<i>Crime</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Citizen request, victims services, support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will ensure that people actually show up to court and help get convictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens, victim services, police, restorative justice 	<i>Now</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business will start receiving money in restitution and accountability

Summarization of what we heard from Question #4:

The community is seeking a collaborative, accountable, and long-term plan that tackles the immediate safety and nuisance issues while simultaneously investing in comprehensive support systems for those struggling with addiction and homelessness, aiming for a safer, more compassionate, and thriving Peace River.

Suggestions that come from the workshop:

- *The building next to the shelter is for sale. It already has a clinic and it has commercial space for support programs. It would make a great spot for transitional housing!*
- *FASD Awareness needs to be considered. FASD is responsible for impulse control for addictions and poor decision making.*
- *Can the presentation be emailed to those who chose to leave their email addresses?*
- *Where will the final report be?*
- *Maybe North Peace Housing should do more!*

Summary of The Solution Workshop:

Key common themes include:

- ***Decline in Safety and Security:*** Residents and businesses feel unsafe in public spaces, downtown areas, and even in their homes due to open drug use, aggressive behavior, break-ins, and vandalism. This has led to lifestyle changes like constant vigilance and increased security measures.
- ***Overwhelm of Businesses:*** Businesses are facing significant financial burdens due to repeated crimes, increased security costs, higher insurance premiums, and property damage. This impacts their ability to thrive and discourages development.
- ***Inadequate Resources and Support Systems:*** There is a recognized lack of local mental health and addiction services, including detox, treatment, and psychiatric services. The community also feels there's a need for a comprehensive spectrum of housing options, from emergency to transitional housing.
- ***Frustration with the Justice System:*** There is a pervasive sense of powerlessness and frustration with perceived lenient consequences for criminal behavior, a "catch and release" system, and a lack of follow-through on charges.
- ***Lack of Accountability:*** There is confusion of who is responsible for what, at what level of government - (municipalities, provincial, federal) and with what level of enforcement (corrections, bylaw, RCMP, Citizens on Patrol, Corrections, Peace Officer). There was an overwhelming question of - if everyone is doing their job, what are the gaps that need to be addressed and by what jurisdiction?

What are tangible next steps the Mental Health Task Force Can Consider?

Housing & Support Systems:

- **Provide Diverse Housing Options:** This includes providing housing options for all, specifically individuals, and exploring options like assessment, supported guidance, funding, staff, and processes for housing.
- **Transitional and Recovery Housing:** Prioritize building and leveraging resources for transitional, low-income, general, and recovery housing. This could involve utilizing available buildings like the one next to the shelter for transitional housing, as it already has a clinic and commercial space for support programs.

Addiction & Mental Health:

- **Establish Local Services:** Focus on getting adequate staffing and finances for local addiction and mental health services, including detox, treatment, psychiatric services, and assessment.
- **Hospital-Based Mental Health Unit:** Designate a hospital to have a mental health unit, offering group therapy, a center for stays, assessment and referral at the hospital, and psychiatric help and medications. The idea of using Peace Valley Inn as a rehab center was also suggested.
- **Programming in Jails:** Introduce recovery and detox programs, job readiness, and life skills training within jails so individuals have support upon release.
- **FASD Awareness:** Incorporate FASD awareness, as it's responsible for impulse control, addictions, and poor decision-making.
- **Move to Dry Shelter:** Sagitawa could consider moving to a dry shelter by November 1st, 2025, as the current wet shelter is perceived as enabling addictions.

Crime & Safety:

- **Increased Enforcement and Policing:** Advocate to provincial and federal levels for more enforcement and policing to reduce crime before 2026.
- **Curfew Implementation:** Set a curfew, such as from 11 pm to 6 am (unless working), with enforcement by RCMP/Peace Officers within two weeks, to reduce crime and negative actions.
- **Advocate for Justice System Changes:** Approach MLAs, MPs, and town council to change the legal code at federal, provincial, and municipal levels to ensure consequences and accountability for offenders. This includes advocating for charges to stick and for real criminals to be dealt with.
- **Security & Patrols:** Increase coordinated patrols and responses by Bylaw, RCMP, and Citizens on Patrol (COP) at night, and increase patrols and police presence downtown during the day to enhance safety.

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- **Remove Empty Buildings:** The Town Bylaw should immediately enforce the removal of empty buildings to discourage squatting and fires.
 - **Graffiti Removal:** Immediately remove and paint over graffiti to discourage gang activity and improve aesthetics, potentially involving restorative justice.

Community Engagement & Education:

- **Awareness and Education:** Secure funding for workers, provide good data, get into schools, offer information sessions, bias training, and trauma-informed approaches. This could lead to less negativity, more empathy, and fewer RCMP reports.
- **Information Sharing:** Start sharing information between all agencies and departments, potentially using one consent form for all supports.
- **Support for Businesses:** Continue discussions about supporting businesses and patrolling, especially concerning aggressive and repeat offenders, with the RCMP, Peace Regional Mental Health Task Force (PRMHTF), Town of Peace River, and Community Police Officer.
- **Address Misinformation:** Work to combat misinformation and online negativity through education and open communication.

Administrative & Collaborative Steps:

- **Email Presentation:** The presentation should be emailed to those who left their email addresses.
- **Publish Final Report:** Clearly communicate where the final report will be available.
- **Municipal Support for Development:** Ensure municipal support and buy-in for collaborative community development, including modular and more economical building options.