



## Home sharing: a win-win for students and older adults

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Question: What's the quickest way to get new housing?

Answer: Make better use of what's already built.

And if you can help older Canadians stay in their homes longer at the same time, all the better.

That was the philosophy behind the creation of [SpacesShared.ca](https://www.spacesshared.ca), a new online platform that links students seeking housing to older adults with a spare bedroom, says Rylan Kinnon, Chief Executive Officer. The student usually gets housing at a more affordable rate and the older adult gets extra income, companionship and, if they wish, help with household tasks in exchange for discounted rent.

Home sharing is also a quick way to address housing shortages, particularly for vulnerable groups like international students and low-income earners who look for similar rental accommodation. The federal and provincial governments, says Kinnon, could encourage the rapid creation of home sharing space by exempting home sharing from income tax.

“That would both remove a barrier for some hosts and it would show that the government is serious about addressing housing challenges,” Kinnon says.

The SpacesShared.ca platform was launched in January of this year but really got off the ground in April when it reached an agreement with Georgian College to link students at its Barrie campus to people in the community. Humber College in Toronto joined in June and the University of Calgary followed soon after.

Megan Fenton, Director of Student Success at Georgian College, says it's still very early



in the process but the partnership with [SpacesShared.ca](https://www.spaceshared.ca) has gone well.

“We've got over 200 students that have created accounts in the space and we have 8 matches. We've heard really positive feedback. But we are definitely still in the process of really trying to build our host accounts to match the student demand and interest.”

Other platforms, like Sparrow Living Inc., offer similar services, although with a different cost structure. Sparrow charges the host a one-time fee from 1/4 - 1 month's rent, depending on the length of the homeshare contract. A 6-9 month term costs 75% of a month's rent while a 10-12 month term costs 100% of a month's rent. SpacesShared charges a \$25 monthly fee for the term of the contract but stays in touch with both parties to ensure the relationship is going according to expectations.

A typical rent may be \$750 per month, although many hosts charge less because they know students are particularly challenged by the housing crisis, Kinnon says.

The host and student are matched at SpacesShared according to factors like occupation, interests, personal habits and language. Both are encouraged to express their expectations. Co-founder Jackie Tanner, a gerontological social worker, helped design the process.

Once matched, a meeting is arranged on the platform where both parties can get to know one another before committing or any contact information is revealed. Safety is often the top concern of both parties, so SpacesShared addresses it head on, Kinnon says.

“First of all, we know who the student is. We verify their identity; we verify that they



are, in fact, registered at a post-secondary institution,” Kinnon says. “Before the student moves in, the host and the guest are required to complete a criminal background check.”

Many of the students in search of housing are mature, international students.

“It's an amazing opportunity to connect newcomers, in particular, to established Canadians who understand the culture, who've built careers and their lives here,” Kinnon says. “Our hope is that it can really be a glue in society. And society needs some glue right now.”