



## An Initiative of the Mental Health Commission of Canada

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- At Home/Chez Soi launched on November 23, 2009
- 2,285 people will participate in the study—of these 1,325 will receive housing
- Five Canadian cities involved: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton
- Each site is also studying unique research questions related to the local context
- At Home/Chez Soi is the result of collaboration with government, researchers, service providers and people with lived experience

### AT HOME/CHEZ SOI—LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

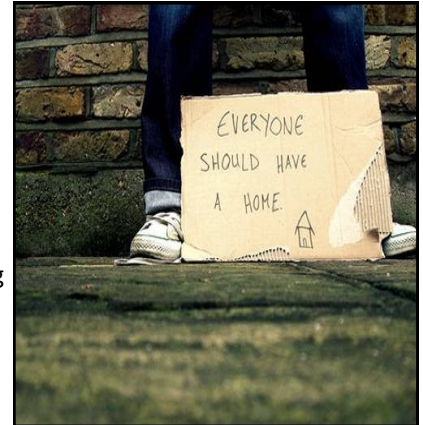
Homelessness is on the rise in Canada. More and more Canadians are living on the street where they can face hunger, violence, loneliness and limited access to needed health and social services and supports. For people living with homelessness and serious mental health issues, the challenges can be even greater.

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is tackling this issue through the At Home/Chez Soi project. At Home/Chez Soi is a research demonstration project that will help us learn how to end homelessness and provide better supports for people with serious mental health issues in Canada.

It is learning about ‘Housing First’, an approach that provides people with the housing and services they need to assist in their transition and recovery (see page 4). This approach is being compared to other models commonly used in Canada to end homelessness.

Over 150 people have already been housed

At Home/Chez Soi is the largest project of its kind in this country. It will involve 2285 Canadians living with homelessness and serious mental health issues. Over half of the people in that group will receive the Housing First intervention (housing & supports). They will be interviewed by researchers during the project who will learn about the participants’ experiences and outcomes. The project will help position Canada as a world leader in this area. Its success to date is due to the hard work and commitment of the many people involved. The collaboration that has happened within each city is fostering many new partnerships as people work together in new ways.



#### Project timelines:

**Feb 2008:** federal funding (received \$110 million)

**May 2009 :** national & local advisory committees initiated

**Sept 2009:** service and research staff trained; ongoing training offered

**Nov 2009:** all sites received Research Ethics Board approval; participant recruitment began

**Nov 23, 2009:** project officially launched

June 2010: Service and research staff training

Ongoing to 2013: data collection and analysis/service provision

Many service providers and researchers working on At Home/Chez Soi describe their involvement as a once in a lifetime opportunity; a chance to make a real difference

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## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE RESEARCH SITES

Each of the five sites is studying the Housing First approach, and each is also learning about what will work best within their unique local context

### Moncton

Moncton is a rapidly growing city. People from its surrounding rural areas are at risk of homelessness and are often forced to migrate to larger cities for services and supports. At Home/ Chez Soi is an opportunity for Moncton to provide services to people in their own community and for Canadians to learn about what works best for a rural population. The Moncton project has come together due to strong community involvement.



Downtown Vancouver, British Columbia

### Montreal

Montreal is the second largest city in Canada. Like most major cities it is facing an increasing number of people who are homeless. The Montreal team has included additional studies to learn more about existing services and how they affect the project. The Montreal team is also exploring the IPS (Individual Placement and Support) employment support model to learn how well we can support people who are homeless to enter the labor market. The team is also learning about ways to ensure the participation of people with lived experience in the project.

### Toronto

Toronto is the largest city in Canada and has an extremely diverse population. The City of Toronto has an existing program to address homelessness, called 'Streets to Homes'. The Toronto team has been able to build on this expertise in the context of how to best serve its diverse homeless population with mental health issues. Participants may receive ethno-racial services designed to provide culturally-based services to new immigrants and to people from diverse communities. People with lived experience have a hand in the planning and implementation of the Toronto site project through its "Persons with Lived Experience Caucus."

### Winnipeg

Winnipeg has a strong aboriginal community whose traditional teachings offer an holistic approach to addressing homelessness and mental health issues. Participants in Winnipeg will be offered this approach and Aboriginal persons in the Housing First group may receive a unique 'made in Winnipeg' service based on traditional Aboriginal teachings. This will help us better understand the experiences of Aboriginal people who are homeless and have mental health issues, and how to best support them.

### Vancouver

Many people in Vancouver's homeless population deal with complex mental health and substance abuse issues. Vancouver will pay particular attention to this population. Congregate living (*many people at the same location*)/single room occupancy (*SRO*) is a housing model that Vancouver has used to address homelessness. Participants in the Housing First group will receive housing in either private apartments or in a congregate setting. Through a partnership with Streethome and the City of Vancouver, the Bosman Hotel is available to At Home/ Chez Soi participants as a congregate setting option beginning in June 2010.

"My biggest hope is that people actually begin to believe that the outcome can be different for people"

Catharine Hume,  
Vancouver Site  
Coordinator

## PERSPECTIVES FROM PEOPLE WITH “LIVED EXPERIENCE”

The National Consumer Panel (NCP) is an advisory group for the At Home/Chez Soi project. The NCP provides a national perspective from people with lived experience of mental health issues and homelessness, also called “consumers”.

The NCP addresses issues that come up for consumers and shares its expertise and knowledge to help problem-solve and maintain the relevance of the project to people with lived experience. The team meets monthly, and uses that time to share developments in the project that relate to research, housing and service provision, peer and consumer involvement in the project, and to identify and offer solutions that members feel are of particular relevance to people with lived experience.

The NCP is made up of a wide variety of consumers. Members are drawn from all five project sites, and include Local Advisory Committee members, peer interviewers, peer support workers, and consumer organizers. All members bring forward local issues to the table, and work to exchange site-specific and national concerns that are of relevance to the project. The NCP is currently chaired by the Consumer Research Consultant, who takes national issues to the panel for discussion. Together they act on concerns and respond to inquiries from various interest groups.

An example of NCP participation in Commission work includes an in-person meeting in Vancouver this past fall. It coincided with the *Into the Light: Transforming Mental Health in Canada* Conference. Members were able to take part in the event, and some had the opportunity to make compelling presentations during a session called “Voices from the National Consumer Panel.”

“That’s what this project is about...finally we are all going to be there for them and we are going to make a difference”

*Claudette Bradshaw,  
Moncton Site  
Coordinator*



People listening to presentations at the National launch in Toronto

## HUNDREDS ATTEND NATIONAL AT HOME/ CHEZ SOI PROJECT LAUNCH

On November 23, 2009 an official project launch was held.

The launch celebrated the hard work that had gone into the project to date, and helped raise the public’s awareness of the research. The celebration generated excellent media coverage in local and national newspapers as well as extensive broadcast news coverage.

Each site had over 100 guests attend their launches.

Over 500 people were part of the events that day. Guests included government officials, people with lived experience, family members, researchers and service providers. The launch also provided a chance to celebrate the community partnerships and interest that have helped make At Home/Chez Soi a success so far.

***Please visit [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca) to see additional pictures from the launch***



## COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT AT HOME/CHEZ SOI

### What is At Home/Chez Soi ?

It is a project designed to deliver and study the “Housing First” approach to ending homelessness. It compares this approach to the usual housing and support services currently available in five cities.

A participant in At Home/Chez Soi is randomly assigned, like the flip of a coin, into the ‘care as usual’ or the ‘Housing First’ group; a person has an equal chance of being in either group.



- ‘Care as Usual’ - people in this group continue to access the services normally available to them
- ‘Housing First’ - people in this group are given a place to live as well as support services during the project (*Intensive Case Management for those with moderate needs; Assertive Community Treatment for those with high needs.*)

Some people may be offered a service unique to their site called the “Third Arm intervention.” In Vancouver a person could receive congregate or private housing; in Montreal a person could receive private or social housing; in Winnipeg a person may receive an Intensive Case management service grounded in traditional Aboriginal approaches; and in Toronto a person may receive an ethno-racial Intensive Case Management service.

### Who can be part of this project?

Participants must be 18 years or older, have a serious mental illness (*formal diagnosis not needed*), and be homeless (*defined as not having a place to stay for more than 7 nights and having little chance of finding a place to stay in the next month*). They must be eligible for provincial income assistance or have other equivalent forms of financial support.

### What is Housing First?

*Housing First* is one approach to housing people who have mental health issues. This approach has worked in other jurisdictions to help people find and keep housing. In At Home/ Chez Soi, the Housing First model has two components: housing and services. People have a choice as to where they’d like to live. They must agree to pay a portion of their rent and the only treatment requirement as a condition of housing, is to see a staff person once a week. Each person will have access to a range of professional services anyone who has high needs will receive Assertive Community Treatment. People with moderate needs will receive Intensive Case Management.



Mental Health Commission of  
Canada  
10301 Southport Lane, SW.  
Suite 800, Calgary, Alberta,  
Canada T2W 1S7  
[info@mentalhealthcommission.ca](mailto:info@mentalhealthcommission.ca)

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**More information can be found on the Mental Health Commission of Canada website, including a project video explaining the project in more detail at [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca)**