



NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ONE YEAR LATER: MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION OF CANADA'S MENTAL HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS PROJECT IN MONCTON PROVIDES HOMES AND SUPPORT TO MANY

Moncton, N.B., November 8, 2010 – One year after the launch of the *At Home/Chez Soi* project in Moncton and four other Canadian cities, and one year after a year helping homeless people living with mental health issues to get off the streets, the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC's) *At Home/Chez Soi* local project is seeing some positive signs.

"The goal for us is to give participants a choice to grow to their full potential," said Moncton Site Coordinator, Claudette Bradshaw. "When you see a landlord actually hiring a tenant to do a job, or hear about a resident who wants to pay full rent because they have found a job – that's what it's all about. But more than that, when a resident is simply living in their own apartment, doing well, that's such a hopeful sign," she said.

There are currently over 100 participants in the Moncton project. A total of 77 people now have new homes and access to a range of health and social supports to assist them toward independent living. Supports include primary care, psychiatric programming, computer access and group programming such as weekly art classes, cooking groups, social barbeques, movie nights and other life-skills training. People are also linked with community supports such as computer skills training and reading tutorials. The remaining participants are part of the "services as usual" group, and receive the traditional supports available in and around the city.

The Moncton project is part of the MHCC's national *At Home/ Chez Soi* initiative – the largest research project of its kind in the world studying mental illness and homelessness. In Moncton, *At Home / Chez Soi* is also focusing on people who live in rural areas and over the remaining three years of the project, will provide housing and support to a total of 125 homeless people living with a mental illness in and around the city.

Dr. Jayne Barker, *At Home/Chez Soi* Project Executive Lead, and the MHCC's Vice President of Research Initiatives said: "This is an exciting milestone. We've already learned some valuable lessons. As a result of this project, we will be able to provide evidence to help facilitate a dramatic change to our system of care."

Strong N.B. partners

The Moncton *At Home/Chez Soi* project has received tremendous support from local and provincial governments, and from the Moncton community. That support includes donations of furniture and equipment worth many thousands of dollars.

At Home/Chez Soi: Largest research project of its kind in the world

At Home/Chez Soi is a ground-breaking national research project in five cities –Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton – to find the best way to provide housing and services to people who are living with mental illness and homelessness. Using a ‘*Housing First*’ approach, the research project focuses on first providing people who are homeless with a place to live, and then the other assistance and services they require. The goal is to see if this approach is better than traditional care.

A total of 2,285 people who are homeless and living with a mental illness will participate in the study. Of these, 1,325 participants in the research project will be given a place to live and offered a range of housing, health and social support services over the course of the research initiative. These supports include help with maintaining a home, undertaking routine tasks like shopping or getting to a doctor’s appointment or securing opportunities for education, volunteering and employment. The rest of the participants will receive the services that are traditionally available to them in their cities. The two research groups will be compared to see which approach works best.

The research will help make Canada a world leader in providing better services to people living with homelessness and mental illness. Each test site is focusing on a specific target population within the overall study group.

The knowledge gained will be shared with other organizations and policy makers in Canada and around the world in the hopes of fostering new action plans or modifying existing ones to address these societal issues. Other countries are already interested in learning about the project outcomes.

For more information on the *At Home/Chez Soi* project, please visit <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/Pages/homelessness.aspx> (English) or <http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/Francais/Pages/Litinerance.aspx> (French)

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The Mental Health Commission of Canada is a non-profit organization created to focus national attention on mental health issues and to work to improve the health and social outcomes of people living with mental illness. In February 2008, the federal government allocated \$110 million to the MHCC to find ways to help the growing number of people who are homeless and have a mental illness. For more, visit www.mentalhealthcommission.ca.

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