



NEWS RELEASE
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Housing First: New Vancouver Residence Opens to Assist People with Mental Health Issues who are Homeless

Bosman Hotel Community provides home and support to 100 people

Vancouver, B.C., August 23, 2010 – In a major step forward in addressing the needs of homeless people in Vancouver who are living with mental illness, the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) and the PHS Community Services Society today officially opened the Bosman Hotel Community, providing stable housing and support to 100 residents.

Each resident at the Bosman will have his or her own room and bathroom and access to a comprehensive program of on-site health and social supports to assist individuals toward independent living. Supports include primary care, psychiatric programming, harm-reduction education, medication management, family-reconnect programs, and group programming such as yoga, art and music therapies, and life-skills training.

Located in the former Bosman's Motor Hotel in downtown Vancouver, the Bosman is an important part of the Mental Health Commission's *At Home / Chez Soi* initiative – the largest research project of its kind in the world studying mental illness and homelessness. In Vancouver, *At Home / Chez Soi* is focusing on people who also have substance abuse and addiction issues, and over the next four years will provide housing and support to 300 homeless mentally ill people in the city.

Louise Bradley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Commission of Canada, said: "So far we've recruited over 325 participants to the Vancouver *At Home / Chez Soi* study – and we've already learned some valuable lessons from them. The issues these participants have been facing by living on the streets are alarmingly common, including unmet health needs, safety fears, and frequent crises. Clearly, it's time for dramatic change to our system of care."

Liz Evans, Executive Director, PHS Community Services Society, said: "The Bosman project offers hope because it embraces the very values our society strives for – one that is inclusive and one that says that every life matters and every individual deserves a chance to be their best self. The Bosman is an exciting start to acknowledging that we can live in a community, in a city and in a country where fellow human beings living with a mental illness do not have to be sleeping on our streets."

Strong B.C. partners

The MHCC has received tremendous financial support from the Vancouver community for the Bosman project, including a \$500,000 grant from the City of Vancouver and a \$1.1 million contribution from the Streethome Foundation (www.streethome.org), which included a \$275,000 grant from the Vancouver Foundation (www.vancouverfoundation.bc.ca), and a \$250,000 contribution from BC Housing for building renovations and upgrades (www.bchousing.org).

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 currently available in the five test sites. Both 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.

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

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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.

The PHS Community Services Society provides affordable, low-barrier supportive housing and services to marginalized people, many of whom suffer from mental illness, physical disabilities and addictions. These services include a supervised injection facility, detoxification and addiction recovery services, an art gallery, life skills training, low threshold employment and banking.

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