

**NICE**National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly
Initiative nationale pour le soin des personnes âgées

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Ensemble pour le bien-être des aînés

**CANADA
HOMESHARE
PROGRAM**

Canada HomeShare Program: Municipal Pilot to National Expansion

Overview:

Older adults are a significant and growing part of the population of major cities across Canada¹. Adults aged 55 years and older currently represent about one quarter of the residents of Vancouver, Winnipeg, Halifax, Calgary, Toronto and Montreal¹. By 2041, it is estimated that this number will double¹. Concurrent with these demographic changes are housing challenges in these cities, accelerated by the increased costs associated with buying and maintaining homes^{2,3}, and compounded by long wait times for older adults to get into senior housing, long-term care and assisted living residences. As such, there is a clear demographic imperative to address the housing needs of older Canadians to ensure that this large segment of the population in major cities can maintain their independence and wellbeing in housing that supports their needs and preferences, while providing opportunities for engagement and inclusion.

Older adults may face challenges associated with diminishing social support systems, changing health needs and finances that may influence their choice of housing and lead to social isolation. As understood, social isolation refers to *a lack of meaningful relationships, social support, social network and social contact*⁴. In addition, not only are there environmental risk factors, for example, seniors living alone are the most at risk of becoming socially isolated, but those with a reduced social network of close friends and relatives or dealing with the death or separation from a spouse/partner, or family related risk factors, had a 65% chance of reporting isolation⁵.

Not surprisingly, mounting research evidence suggests that most older adults prefer to remain in their homes and to age-in-place in the residence of their choice⁶. Although older Canadians remain longer in their homes, with few housing options, this may be at the expense of their social or financial well-being. In other words, while more adults are aging-in-place, there are concerns about whether or not there are any viable alternatives and whether aging-in-place on its own is a positive experience. Municipalities worldwide have found a number of solutions to allow older adults to successfully age-in-place^{7,8} and to remain engaged, of which home sharing (or homeshare) programs are one promising example. Beyond sharing a physical space, homeshare 'transactions' are usually financial in nature similar to a rental situation. While many older adults do require financial support to age-in-place, and homeshare programs provide a means of obtaining additional income, the social support dimensions of communal living (companionship, help around the home) are important considerations not often part of homesharing agreements. What is clear is that homesharing programs can address a number of risk factors associated with social isolation such that older adults are not living alone, that older adults are connected to information, programs and resources, are provided with additional income to buy goods/services, are able to expand their social network, and an intergenerational approach may also address a societal risk factor for social isolation, which is ageism⁴.

Pilot Project to Program:

The Canada HomeShare Program began as a pilot project in May 2018 as a City of Toronto initiative arising out of Toronto's Seniors Strategy, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Seniors Affairs. In 2018, non-profit organization, The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE), in collaboration with the City of Toronto, piloted an innovative intergenerational homeshare project titled, "*The Toronto HomeShare Project*", that included 12 matches between older adults (55+) who were 'over-housed' (e.g. extra physical space in the home, social needs or supports for living at home), and post-secondary students (of any age) who were experiencing difficulty securing safe and affordable housing. After completing extensive research on barriers and facilitators for home sharing programs internationally⁹, a number of factors were identified that would need to be included in the design of the Toronto HomeShare Project, including the fact that older adults found it difficult to assess what they needed from someone who they shared a home with, and as such, the process of establishing a 'fit' between two individuals who would share a home would need to be 'facilitated'. Although the model was designed to be scaled and replicated to include any number of homeshare matches, for example, older adults living with other older adults, the Toronto HomeShare Pilot was designed to match older adults with postsecondary students for a number of reasons. First, while older adults may be 'overhoused', younger adults, especially those attending school full-time in a post-secondary setting were most likely to be 'underhoused' and priced out of expensive urban markets like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Second, having access to a housing office at a post-secondary school allowed for a gateway to reach students who would be interested in the program, and for students to be bound to the university or college's code of conduct as an extension of the agreements between the older adult and the student. Finally, intergenerational programs may help address societal risk factors associated with ageism and social isolation, not only for older adults but for students as well, and having access to a social worker as part of the program for both groups was seen as a beneficial element.

Based on the success of the pilot, on March 7 2019, City Council agreed to continue and expand the Toronto HomeShare pilot. In May 2019, Toronto HomeShare launched as a City of Toronto program, in collaboration with the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE), matching over 200 older adults (aged 55 and over) wishing to share a spare room in their home with post-secondary students seeking affordable housing in Toronto. In the fall of 2019, the Toronto HomeShare program expanded its network, partnering with the City of Barrie and Georgian College to launch Barrie HomeShare. In 2021, the Toronto HomeShare Program officially became a national program with the launch of Canada HomeShare, and 12 new homesharing sites across Canada. To further expand the reach of the successful intergenerational homesharing model, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has worked with NICE to explore additional options.

The Canada HomeShare Program is unique in that it is entirely facilitated by social workers who will match participants based on a variety of characteristics and preferences, will ensure all participants receive a vulnerable sector screening, and will be available for mediation and support throughout the entire home sharing process for both the home provider and the student. The program was built on the principles of social exchange, and not simply based on a financial transaction of rent. The student carries out agreed upon activities to support the older adult, based on the needs identified by the older adult, in exchange for subsidized rent between \$400 and \$600.

The Canada HomeShare Program is more than a way to share a room – it is a way to empower older adults to successfully age-in- place for as long as possible and remain engaged in their communities while providing safe and affordable housing for students. It is also a way to increase intergenerational connection and engagement.

Expansion

10 pilot sites (Barrie, Metro Vancouver Regional District, Region of Peel, Peterborough, Kingston, Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Oshawa, Ottawa), 10 matches per site. Pilot sites will launch throughout 2021 and will conclude 12 months after the MOU is signed.

Funding

\$22,500 per pilot site will be provided and administered by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly to run the program for one year. Funding provided by NICE (please see Appendix). This funding also provides the opportunity for the supervision of one practicum student per site to be supervised by the site coordinator in collaboration with the national manager. In the event that a pilot site wishes to contribute additional funding, a separate MOU will be drafted regarding the allocation of these funds.

Satellite Project Goals

Minimum of one community information session (likely held virtually due to COVID-19), screening of applicants, the creation of 10 matches lasting at least one semester, data collection (entry survey, mid-point qualitative interview, exit survey), data analysis, grant funding applications to secure funding for sustainability.

Research

The research in the area of intergenerational relationships in the context of homesharing is thin, and the national program provides an opportunity to collect data from a diversity of stakeholders. Data were collected during the pilot from 2018-2020, to help understand the experiences of older adults and students and to learn more about lifestyle characteristics of participants, financial well-being, motivations to participate, sense of community and connectedness to others, insights towards activities of daily living (ADLs) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), and general well-being. With a pool of stakeholders including students, seniors and researchers from across the country, research conducted as part of this program will collect additional info with regard to the above listed domains and other areas as identified by project partners. This will include surveys conducted prior to participation in the program and at the end, and in-depth interviews. For sites that would like to participate in research, approval will be obtained from the Research Ethics Board at each University or through a partner agency. Disclosure of this research, a discussion and written consent will be obtained from any student or home provider who would like to participate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE) - Distributes funding for the operation of all Canada HomeShare sites.

Dr. Raza Mirza - Network Manager/ Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for NICE and Lead for the Canada HomeShare Program. Signatory of the MOU on behalf of NICE, responsible for relationship development with partner sites, grant writing, research and evaluation and communications.

Jackie Tanner - Canada HomeShare National Manager. Oversees the day-to-day operations of set up and implementation of all Canada HomeShare sites.

James Hull - Canada HomeShare Technical Officer - Creates and develops tools for the management and implementation of Canada HomeShare. Technical support.

Pilot Site MOU Signatories - Dr. Carman Neustaedter (SFU) and Dr. Raza Mirza (NICE)

Pilot Site Coordinator (social worker or social service worker) - Contract position with NICE, up to 10 hours per week for one year. Collaborative hiring decision made by Raza Mirza, Jackie Tanner, James Hull, and the pilot site MOU signatory). Job advertisement distributed by MOU signatory to local stakeholders, also posted on Canada HomeShare website. Reports to Canada HomeShare National Program Manager.

Local Advisory Committee - Each pilot site will develop a committee of local stakeholders (8-15) to guide Canada HomeShare in ensuring that the values and goals of each community are reflected in the delivery of the program. MOU signatory will develop a list of known local stakeholders to be approached via a recruitment email from Raza Mirza via the MOU signatory.

Setup and Day-to-Day Operations for Burnaby

- **Memorandum of Understanding is signed between SFU and NICE May 7, 2021**
- **SFU contributed an additional \$10,000 with a separate MOU**
- **Job posting for site coordinator closed on June 1. Candidates have been screened by national manager.**
- **Virtual panel interviews for coordinator will be held June 17, 2021. Panel will be; Dr. Raza Mirza, James Hull, Kim Hockey, and Jackie Tanner.**
- **Assembly of local advisory committee has begun.**

For general inquiries on the Canada HomeShare Program, including how to join the Program, please call 416-978-2197. More information about the program is available at www.canadahomeshare.com

References

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[2] Statistics Canada. (2017b). *Population Projections for Canada and its Regions*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.

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[5] Government of Canada. (2017, April 26). Who's at risk and what can be done about it? A review of the literature on the social isolation of different groups of seniors. Retrieved August 17, 2020, from <https://www.canada.ca/en/national-seniors-council/programs/publications-reports/2017/review-social-isolation-seniors.html> [6] City of Toronto Senior Strategy Office. (2017). *Toronto Seniors Survey*. Toronto, ON: City of Toronto.

[7] Syed, M. A., McDonald, L., Smirle, C., Lau, K., Mirza, R. M., & Hitzig, S. L. (2017). Social Isolation in Chinese Older Adults: Scoping Review for Age-Friendly Community Planning. *Canadian journal on aging = La revue canadienne du vieillissement*, 36(2), 223–245. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0714980817000101> [6] Wiles, J. L., Liebing, A., Guberman, N., Reeve, J., & Allen, R. E. (2012). The Meaning of “Aging in Place” to Older People. *The Gerontologist*, 52(3), 357-366.

[7] Gutman, G. M., Doyle, V., Melliship, K., & Baldwin, P. (1989). Survey of Canadian homesharing agencies serving the elderly. Vancouver, Canada: Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University and MacLaren Plansearch Ltd.

[8] Homeshare International. (n.d.). *A Win-Win Situation* (Electronic version). Retrieved July 25,2020 from: <https://homeshare.org/>. [9] Pan-Edmonton Group Addressing Social Isolation of Seniors (PEGASIS). (n.d). Unwanted Social Isolation of Seniors, Social Vulnerabilities and Support. Accessed August 26th 2020, from <https://securservercdn.net/198.71.233.227/a32.39f.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/pegasis-journey-map-vulnerability-isolation.pdf>

Appendix

Estimated Cost Breakdown: Metro Vancouver Regional District 2021-2022 Pilot - \$22500 total allotted budget for 10 matches

Website costs - domain, hosting \$675	
Printing \$500	
Vulnerable Sector Screening (30 screenings) \$600	
VIOP phone line with answering service \$500	
Subscriptions - GSuite, Aitrable, Zapier, Survey Monkey etc.	\$456
Refreshments for in person info sessions \$80	
Apple Ipad \$452	
Interview transcription \$500	
Data analysis \$426	
After hours on call support 3 hrs/day/7days/wk (provided by national site)	\$2016
Site coordinator \$12253	
Home audits (20) \$1000	
Site coordinator irregular travel \$320	
Program Liaison support hours \$2688	
Total \$22,466	