

Canada HomeShare™ - Peel: Bringing Generations Together to Address Social Isolation on National Seniors Day

Social isolation among older adults has been identified as both a hidden problem and even when exposed one that is difficult to overcome

Peel Region, Ontario, October 1st, 2021— Social isolation in older adults extends beyond an empty social calendar, and has been labelled a “potent cause of early death”. In Peel Region, the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly (NICE), is taking up the challenge of addressing social isolation, recently identified as a priority area by the Canadian government through a homesharing program.

[Canada HomeShare](#), an intergenerational housing program that addresses social isolation by bringing together seniors and students, is bridging generational divides by providing students in Mississauga, Brampton and Caledon with an affordable and flexible off-campus housing experience in the homes of older adults. In 2021, the [National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly \(NICE\)](#), a not-for-profit housed at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, expanded the Toronto HomeShare program to cities and communities across the country as part of a new national program, Canada HomeShare.

“National Seniors Day allows us to not only reflect and acknowledge seniors’ contributions to our community, but to commit to action around housing and social supports. The Region of Peel is thrilled to support the Canada HomeShare program. This program is closely aligned with the Optimize Existing Stock strategy of the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan and will also provide meaningful social connections for seniors and students. As Peel’s senior population grows steadily, we will continue to work closely with our seniors and provide housing and social supports that match their unique needs.” – Nando Iannicca, Chair, Region of Peel

The population of seniors in the Region of Peel is growing and the need for affordable housing solutions is crucial. Between 2001 and 2016, the Region of Peel’s senior population increased by 124.4 per cent. It is expected by 2041, one in five residents in Peel will be over the age of 65. Such data makes the launch in Peel especially relevant as there is motivation from all sides to foster aging-in-place.

“When we saw the benefits of HomeShare in Toronto it really motivated us to try to bring the program to older adults and students across the country” says Dr. Raza Mirza, Network Manager for the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly, the non profit organization that runs Canada HomeShare. “We are so excited to mould the Canada HomeShare experience to fit the needs of the residents of Peel”.

In an increasingly age-segregated society, a primary focus of the Peel HomeShare program is to facilitate social engagement among people of all generations. The Scientific Director of NICE, Dr. Lynn McDonald, PhD, a professor in the Factor Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, stated that “There is good reason for prioritizing social isolation as a major issue affecting older adults. Social engagement and social involvement are important predictors of well-being at any age, and social isolation may become more common as one grows older and one’s social network shrinks”.

HomeShare offers older adults and students a unique opportunity for intergenerational engagement while creating benefits for both parties: students get safe affordable housing in a desired location, and home providers (older adults) receive assistance around the home and additional monthly income that can help them remain living independently in their communities.

The HomeShare model has been proven to potentially **prevent and reverse social isolation** for both home providers and students. The quality of matches made has led to the development of supportive networks for home providers and students who otherwise may have been at risk of social isolation. In many instances, the protective factors stemming from these networks remain, even after the match has ended.

As Canada moves towards a recovery phase from the COVID-19 pandemic there is an opportunity to leverage intergenerational relationships, and to ensure that our communities remain age-friendly for all. Many Canadians experienced social isolation and loneliness during the pandemic. Participants of Canada HomeShare will not have to face the recovery alone or in isolation, and in many communities and cities across our country students and older adults have welcomed National Seniors Day by embracing intergenerational living as part of the way forward.

The History of HomeShare

Toronto HomeShare launched in 2018 as a pilot project implemented by the City of Toronto and NICE. The initiative arose out of a recommendation from the Toronto Seniors Strategy's Accountability Table, a group of seniors, caregivers, and other community partners dedicated to adequately and effectively supporting Toronto's aging population. With the support of Councillor Josh Matlow, the City of Toronto's Seniors Advocate, the program was adopted and funded in 2019.

About NICE

[The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly \(NICE\) \(www.nicenet.ca\)](http://www.nicenet.ca), led by Scientific Director Dr. Lynn McDonald, PhD, FRSC, is a research knowledge transfer network in the field of aging, founded in 2006 through a National Centres of Excellence New Initiatives grant.

About Canada HomeShare

Please contact us if you or your community are interested in joining the Canada HomeShare network www.canadahomeshare.com

For more information about NICE, or for media inquiries about Peel HomeShare or Canada HomeShare, please contact:

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