

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Back-to-School with Canada HomeShare: Intergenerational Living Embraced by Students and Older Adults**

**TORONTO (September 7th, 2021)** – This year, back-to-school for many post-secondary students and older adults across Canada looks different. [Canada HomeShare](#), an intergenerational housing program that addresses social isolation by bringing together seniors and students, is bridging generational divides by providing students across the country 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.

Canada HomeShare has opened new pilot sites in addition to its existing programs in Toronto and Barrie. In the months to come, older adults and students from *Kingston, Oshawa, Peterborough, Mississauga, Brampton, Caledon, Ottawa, Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Montreal, and Halifax* will have additional opportunities to participate in this intergenerational cohousing initiative designed to **reduce social isolation and address the affordable housing crisis**.

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 push towards scaling and replicating the HomeShare program beyond Toronto and Barrie has been fueled by interest from cities across Canada, North America and beyond. In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) recognized the intergenerational initiative as an age-friendly best practice.

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.

"The pandemic has helped us better understand weaknesses in the social support networks for people of all ages," says Dr. Lynn McDonald, Scientific Director of NICE. "As part of our homesharing program, older adults and students have been not only connected to one another, but also to a larger pool of participants in the program and to our social work team that facilitates the entire process".

Like the programs in Toronto and Barrie, the Canada HomeShare program will provide social work support at each site. It will also build training for and enhance the capacity of social work and social service workers in the communities where the program will have expanded.

"We've spent the last two years learning what it takes to make long lasting, meaningful matches, and to foster intergenerational relationships," says Jackie Tanner, Program Manager and Clinical Lead of Toronto HomeShare. "We are so excited to have the opportunity to bring the HomeShare experience and the benefits it brings across Canada."

The fallout from the pandemic has highlighted the critical need for solutions to address issues of aging-in-place. Remaining at home is preferable to congregate care settings for most Canadians. However, without adequate support, accessibility and opportunities for social engagement, aging-in-place can feel like being stuck in place.

"The vision for Canada HomeShare is to assist older adults, especially the most vulnerable who are living with lower incomes and at risk for isolation and loneliness, to remain safe and independent in their own homes and communities, and to ensure they not only age-in-place, but that they thrive now and in the years to come while providing safe and affordable housing to students," says Dr. Raza M. Mirza, Network Manager for NICE.

Canada HomeShare is also building a network of "HomeShare" communities across the country that will be connected to researchers, health and community services, policymakers and clinicians, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange, data sharing, and the pooling of resources. The team at Canada HomeShare is also currently exploring opportunities to work with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and a CMHC and Accenture backed social enterprise to identify ways to further scale homesharing across Canada.

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 the new school year 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 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.

Building on this success, HomeShare later expanded to Barrie, with the support of Mayor Jeff Lehman and the City of Barrie's Age-Friendly plan. The City of Barrie and Georgian College partnered with NICE to bring Barrie HomeShare to life.

### **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](http://www.canadahomeshare.com)

### **For more information about NICE, or for media inquiries about Toronto HomeShare or Canada HomeShare, please contact:**

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