

MAINSTAY HOUSING RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR UNIQUE HOUSING PROGRAM

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 8, 2015– An international organization that focuses on integrated health care has recognized Mainstay Housing for its groundbreaking work in supportive housing.

The International Foundation for Integrated Care conference, held in Edinburgh, Scotland, brought together 500 delegates to exchange knowledge, experience and new ideas in the design and delivery of integrated health and social care. It featured more than 150 presentations focusing on the latest research, innovations and practices from around the world, as well as academic and private sector displays.

Volletta Peters, Director of Member and Tenant Services, represented Mainstay at the conference after a poster depicting the organization's unique approach to supportive housing was chosen for presentation to the delegates. Sixty posters from around the world were selected for a poster display over the three days of the conference, and of those, only nine participants, including Mainstay, were asked to make a three-minute oral defense of their posters to a panel of judges, followed by one minute of questions and answers.

The poster described a program in which Mainstay worked with the Jean Tweed Centre for Women and Families to provide permanent housing and support for 32 women living with complex addiction issues. Over three years, 75 per cent of the women were still housed in the same place, emergency room visits were reduced by 85 per cent and 100 per cent had been linked to a primary care service.

"The program demonstrates the value of our "housing first" approach," said Brigitte Witkowski, Mainstay's Executive Director. "This one small project saved thousands of dollars in social and emergency services, but more importantly demonstrated the resilience of those who choose to live at Mainstay and use the support we offer in conjunction with external clinical supports to create a better life."

At the Edinburgh event's closing banquet, Mainstay was named runner up to a presentation from the University of Waterloo. In making the award, the IFIC complimented Mainstay's focus "on using innovative methods to integrate housing support and case management, providing measurable outcomes, in the lives of women with complex mental health and harmful substance use issues achieve housing stability and improved quality of life."

"The project gave these women a renewed sense of hope, belonging and community, and we are pleased that it also brought international recognition to the valuable and innovative work we do at Mainstay," said Ms. Peters. "We are often called housings' best kept secret in the way we deliver support, but this will help to change that."

Mainstay Housing is the single largest non-profit provider of supportive housing in Ontario, operating 867 supportive housing units in its own 41 locations across Toronto as well as 88 rent supplement units in the private market. Based on its belief that stable housing is the foundation for success, Mainstay works with other community and health services to provide integrated, ongoing support for people who are deeply affected by poverty and living with mental health and addiction issues.

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