

Housing through an Autism lens

Project Q&As

- 1. How did this project come to be?** Ottawa Mom Pari Johnston was struggling to find supported but independent housing solutions in the city for her 18-year-old Autistic son. She found nothing really existed except a long wait on Ottawa's social housing list. Her family ended up converting their garage into a tiny home for her son but knew this was ultimately a short-term individual solution and certainly not one that all families in Ottawa could do. A public policy advocate at heart, she wanted to bring back what she was learning in other cities like Calgary and mobilize parents and community stakeholders in Ottawa to come together to identify more sustainable solutions. She found out about CMHC's Innovation Lab opportunity under the National Housing Strategy and brought together a team that developed a winning proposal.
- 2. Are the housing needs of Autistic adults different than those of others?**
Yes. Long-term housing and independent living are elusive concepts for many Autistic adults. Solutions must recognize the vulnerabilities and complex needs of many Autistic adults across their life span, with particular challenges in early adulthood and early seniorhood. Innovative, integrated and collaborative housing solutions are required.
- 3. What is the root of the problem?**
The current crisis-driven housing support model fails to meet the complex needs of Autistic adults. At the root of the problem is a disconnect between what an Autistic adult requires to live and thrive and what the housing market currently offers. For example, Ottawa currently has a 7-10 year wait on the social housing list and no dedicated housing solutions that are informed by the experiences and needs of Autistic adults.
- 4. Who is funding this project?**
The project is funded by CMHC through the National Housing Strategy.
- 5. What will happen with the solutions developed?**
Solutions will be co-developed by actors in the system, including self-advocates. They will be already on the path to adoption toward the end of the project, which will create a full roadmap to implementation. The project team and partners will ensure Ottawa-based solutions and strategies identified through this project are widely shared with Autistic adults, stakeholders and policymakers across Canada.
- 6. Will the project develop plans for specific housing projects?**
Likely not. It is beyond the scope of this project to develop plans for specific housing projects, but we hope to better inform and equip those who are in a position to create better housing options, such as policy makers, city planners, community housing providers and housing developers. The solutions developed by this lab will likely be in

the realm of pathways, person-centric tools, and policy recommendations, however at this early stage of the project we cannot know what the system will come up with!

7. What is a social change lab?

The project will use a 'social change lab' process to explore the problem and develop potential solutions. Social change labs are designed to address complex, sticky problems by including representation from the entire system in question. They are exploratory and evidence-driven in nature. This lab will prototype and test promising ideas as potential solutions to the housing crisis.

8. How is a Solutions Lab different from another kind of research project?

Solutions Labs operate on a few key differentiating principles: First, we must have representation from the entire system the project is aiming to impact take part. This method is built on the belief that all perspectives are required to understand what is, and to find ways of shifting together to what could be. Second, we don't start out having an idea of what we'll find. These labs are truly exploratory in nature, and we test out ideas through experiments to find out what will work.

9. Can I become involved?

Yes! We need Autistic adults, families and stakeholders to take part in various stages of the project. Help us create a picture of the current situation: From December 2020 to February 2021, we are gathering 300-500 micro-stories related to housing for Autistic adults using an innovative narrative research method, where you, the storyteller, are at the centre. This and other ways to get involved are outlined on our [website](#).

10. How will submitted experiences be used?

Once micro-experiences have been gathered, stakeholders and people with lived experience will work together to analyze the information and identify emerging insights. These findings will lead us into ideation workshops and a policy roundtable to share findings and generate potential solutions.

11. Are people with lived experience part of this project?

Yes. We have three Autistic self-advocates with lived experience on the project's Advisory Committee to help steer the project. All partners are working to ensure that the voices of Autistic adults are part of the process from the very beginning and throughout the research, the sensemaking, the generation of ideas, and the prototyping of solutions. The project believes in, and is aligned with, the spirit of 'nothing about us without us.'

12. Is there a focus on any particular geographic community?

Yes. While the project draws on experiences and insights from across Canada, we will look for solutions particular to Ottawa, where significant shortcomings in meeting the housing needs of Autistic adults have been identified. Findings will then be shared with

stakeholders across Canada, to support change and inform policy development in more communities.

13. When does the project end?

The project runs from Oct. 2020 to Feb. 2022.

14. Who leads this project?

A diverse group of individuals with various types of related expertise and lived experience are leading and advising the project. A list of project team members can be found [here](#).

15. How do you protect your information and privacy?

We are gathering micro-stories of experiences from anyone connected to the Autistic community, including Autistic adults as well as their families, friends, service providers, housing providers, professionals and other stakeholders.

These experiences are collected through a web-based questionnaire and eventually these many stories of lived experience will tell a bigger story that will help address barriers to suitable housing facing Autistic adults.

All submissions are anonymous. Through this process we are not collecting any names or other identifiable information. **Please do not include any names or information that might directly or indirectly identify you or anyone else. Any identifiable information that is accidentally included will be removed from experiences before the results are shared.**

If you sign up to get involved with the project through the website, we will not share with your information with anyone else. It will only be used to correspond with you.

The stories/experiences are collected using Spryng.io which is secure and has multi-layered password protection. The final data package will include both the stories and the signification data (all the questions asked following the story) to help other people understand both the experience of the teller and its context.

16. What are the risks of participating in this story collection?

There is no direct risk to you in taking part in this study. The benefit of participation is helping increase awareness around barriers to suitable housing and potential solutions.

There may be a risk that some of the questions may make you uncomfortable or trigger you in some way. If you are emotionally triggered beyond your ability to regulate, for support please call: [Crisis Services Canada](#) – 1-833-456-4566

You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer, or you may withdraw from participating at any time by closing your browser. If you are using a scribe, let them know you would like to withdraw.

If you close your browser prior to clicking the 'submit' button at the end of the survey, information you provide will not be used in the study.

17. Where is the data stored?

Spryng.io is a secure and multi-layered password protected the web-based tool being used to collect your stories.

Data will be stored on Spryng.io devices located outside of Canada in the European Union (EU), and so it not protected by Canadian privacy legislation. **Please do not include any names or information that might directly or indirectly identify you or anyone else.**

18. How can I get access to the results later if my input is anonymous?

There are 2 options for how to see the final Data Package of experiences and the significance of those experiences to the teller.

1) The Data Package will be posted on the website when it's ready, likely in April 2021. You can go there at that time and look at it.

2) If you would like an email alert when the Data Package is ready, there is a link to a Google form at the end of the questionnaire, where you may optionally provide an email address of your choice (this way it will not be linked to your questionnaire). We will only use this list of emails to send a link to the final results of the sensemaking process, which will share overall patterns of experiences, as well as access to all the micro-experiences shared (with any identifiable information removed).

19. How will your stories be used to make a difference?

Your story, along with the stories of many others, will become part of a bigger story about all the different experiences that are created for different people by the current system. The 'system' includes people, service providing organizations, governments, housing stock and housing providers, policies, cultures. Representation from every part of the system will work together to look for patterns, and better understand what could change in the system to produce better experiences for people.

The results of this research will be presented in a final report for Canada Mortgage and

Housing Corporation and the National Housing Strategy. It may also be used for conference publications, presentations, media and published articles.

It is powerful for decision makers is to be able to receive recommendations for what needs to change, with a data package of BOTH quantitative (how many people experienced this) and qualitative (the subjective story) data. The opportunity for decision makers to hear people's experiences first hand, underneath the aggregated meta-data, provides deeper understanding, new insights, and power behind actions.

20. What if I still have concerns?

If you still have concerns, you can get in touch with us by contacting: Fiona Wright, CTLabs/The Lansdowne Consulting Group 613.236.3333 x302, fiona@ctlabs.ca.

Further details is available on our [website](#).