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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Canadian Association of Residential Options for Women and St. Leonard's Society of Canada  
Partner to Advance Mental Health Resources for Canadians Leaving Prison**

VANCOUVER -- The Canadian Association of Residential Options for Women (CAROW) and the St. Leonard's Society of Canada have struck a national partnership to advance the development of mental health services in community residences for Canadians leaving prison and to promote ongoing access to mental health support for former inmates.

"There is an urgent requirement to provide for the mental health needs of former inmates transitioning to community life," said CAROW chair, Shawn Bayes. "We know one-third of women in prison have diagnosed mental health issues. People living in halfway houses and other residential options, face significant barriers to receiving the help they need. Mental health is a provincial responsibility, so resources vary. What remains constant is the need to bring mental health resources into those residences and to broker access to supports once people are back in the community."

CAROW and the St. Leonard's Society will assess mental health needs in each province and will promote strategies to meet them with governments and service organizations across Canada.

"We need solutions," said Elizabeth White, St. Leonard's Executive Director. "Many community residences in the country have developed particular mental health expertise meeting the needs of sentenced people or brokering their clients' access to provincial mental health services they would otherwise be turned away from. We need a standard research based approach to identify what is needed and to find solutions so that former inmates can successfully transition to community. It's vital to creating safe, healthy communities for us all."

In the coming weeks, CAROW and St. Leonard's will launch a pilot project for this initiative in Ontario. Once complete, the initiative will be expanded to other provinces.

The Canadian Association of Women's Criminal Justice Residential Options (CAROW) is a not-for-profit society dedicated to the establishment of gender-specific transitional housing in communities across the country for women coming from prison transitioning to the community.

St. Leonard's Society of Canada is a membership based charitable organizations dedicated to community safety since 1967. Serving a network of direct service agencies, it promotes a humane and informed justice policy and responsible leadership to foster safe communities.

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