



**Toronto Seniors
Housing Corporation**

Seniors



Speak

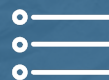
Summer 2024 Issue



Welcome to the Summer Issue



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Community Letter

Dear Tenants,

It is hard to believe it's been over two years since Toronto Seniors Housing was created in June 2022!

Our work with tenants has brought many improvements, as you will learn about in our latest Annual Report (page 9). I've visited all our buildings to learn of the community programs and services that are taking place. On top of that, hundreds of tenant-led events and programs have helped to continue to create the sense of community that we wanted from the start. I look forward to seeing how the Community Activities Fund continues to support these tenant activities.

On my return in April, I restarted the Connecting with the CEO tour. It's important to me to get out and meet with tenants to really understand the work that we do. I'm happy to report that so far, I've visited thirteen buildings. The regional tenant volunteer meetings have also been great opportunities for me to listen and learn from you on where we need to focus more.

We celebrated Seniors Month in June and asked tenants to share their words of wisdom on how to make the world a better place. If you have not seen that beautiful video yet, please take a moment to watch it at: torontoseniorshousing.ca/celebrating-seniors-month-2024/.

Have a wonderful rest of your summer,



Tom Hunter
Chief Executive Officer



Gardening into the golden years



The physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of gardening can help people stay young as they grow older. This is the case for Helen Bennet, who has been gardening ever since she was a young child living in Switzerland.

“It’s unbelievable how and why I learned to garden,” explains Helen. The Swiss government told everyone who had a home with land that they were responsible for putting in a garden, so that there was enough food to feed everybody when the border closed during World War II. That’s how Helen learned to plant seeds, water plants, pick weeds, and harvest.

When she moved to her building in Riverside on Thanksgiving Day in 2014, she was surprised to see bare planter beds and flowerbeds. She got to work right away. “I collected spring bulbs that people I knew got for presents and didn’t know what to do with them once they finished blooming.” Planting flowers from the previous year’s seeds collected before winter is something she grew up doing annually in Switzerland. As soon as spring came around, Helen bought tulips and daffodils. Her daughter helped her buy soil and more plants over the years.*



*Helen would like to thank her daughter, **Wendy**, for supporting the growth of the garden, as well as members of her extended family for making it a success.

Today, the garden is a lush green oasis for tenants and those passing by to enjoy. There are daffodils, tulips, irises, and sunflowers. Helen starts her day every morning tending to the garden, alongside her neighbour, Lee Lanham, who oversees the vegetable garden and helps her water the plants. Helen's favourite plant is the sunflower. "They make me smile. I try to put the same smile on everybody who goes past my flowerbeds. Life can get tough sometimes and everybody needs a joyful reminder that there is hope. I like to think my flowers help do that."

"Life can get tough sometimes and everybody needs a joyful reminder that there is hope. I like to think my flowers help do that."



Tenant Experience Survey results



Tenants had the opportunity to share their experiences living at TSHC by completing the Tenant Experience Survey from December 2023 to February 2024.

Surveys were mailed to each TSHC household. The survey was made available in 13 languages. A total of 3,223 households responded, achieving a 24 per cent response rate.

Overall, tenants said they feel positively about TSHC services, and most of them are proud to be tenants. In addition, tenants feel safe and are happy with their interactions with TSHC staff.



4 in 5 tenants are happy with TSHC services



82% are proud to be a tenant at TSHC



83% feel safe in their home



87% feel staff treat them with respect

Who lives at TSHC?



60% of tenants are women



79% were born outside of Canada



51% reported having one or more disabilities



37% prefer speaking a language other than English

Respondents commonly identified as:

White - 28%

East Asian - 21%

Black - 10%

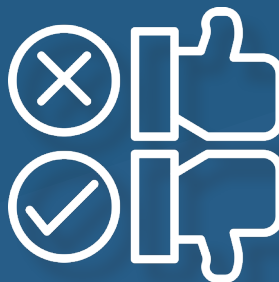
What can make a difference?

We analyzed tenants' responses to identify key actions that may have a significant impact on overall satisfaction. We determined that by focusing on the key areas below, TSHC can make a meaningful difference to tenants' general sense of satisfaction.



Program Offerings

Explore ways to expand program offerings to better meet tenants' needs and interests.



Sharing Concerns and Complaints

Work with tenants so that they feel more comfortable sharing their concerns and complaints with staff.



Accessing Services

Provide more assistance to tenants to get information to access the services they need.

You may qualify for **ODSP support**

The Responsible Personal Accessibility in Toronto Housing (R-PATH) Committee is committed to sharing information with tenants that can help improve the quality of life for people with physical disabilities.

Did you know?

If you receive CPP, Old Age Security, or Guaranteed Income Supplement, then you may qualify for the extended health benefit from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). This is outlined in Sections 44 and 45 of the ODSP Regulation (General).

This benefit can help you be able to afford the supplies and equipment you may need, including:

- prescription drugs
- basic dental care
- vision care, routine eye exams, hearing aids
- medical supplies (such as diabetic, dressings, or incontinence supplies)
- transportation to medical appointments
- 25 per cent of the cost of a mobility aid provided by the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) in cases where ADP pays the other 75 per cent of the cost.
- the assessment you need to apply for ADP funding
- repairs and batteries for mobility devices

To learn more about this program and how to apply, contact your local ODSP office. Find the office in your area by calling **416-326-3344** (TTY: **416-326-2914**) or online at www.officelocator.mcass.gov.on.ca.

2023 Annual Report

Toronto Seniors Housing continued working hard in 2023 to achieve our vision of creating safe, diverse, and vibrant communities for tenants.

Some highlights from 2023 included:

- introduced our Interim Strategic Directions, Key Performance Indicators, and Roadmap, which all guide us towards achieving our goals
- acted on the recommendations from the Quality Improvement Projects (QIPs) and made improvements in the areas of pest management, safety and security, and staff and tenant relations
- worked with the Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity (OCHE) to avoid eviction for 91 per cent of the tenants we engaged with
- reduced vacancy rates by filling vacant units faster
- worked with Toronto Community Housing to deliver 141 capital projects to improve living conditions for tenants in buildings
- gave \$134,686 to tenants to support local projects in their buildings, which was up 120 per cent from the total given in 2022
- created more open communication and involved a diverse group of tenant voices in Seniors Speak, at Tenant Town Halls, and at Regional Tenant Leaders' meetings

We are grateful to the tenants who have joined us on our journey, who we continue to listen and learn from.

You can read the full 2023 Annual Report at:

torontoseniorshousing.ca/2023-annual-report



Educating communities through Indigenous storytelling

For Indigenous communities, storytelling has long been part of their culture and tradition.

After the buffalo hunts and winter solstice, families would return to their winter camps and wait out the cold weather by telling stories passed down for generations.

Jim Meeks grew up in one of those Indigenous communities, in the Appalachian Mountains of

Alabama. He self-identifies as a Melungeon, a descendant of people with mixed ethnic (European, Native American, and African) ancestry. “I grew up during segregation,” explains Jim. “Black and White children would meet on Snake Island to play together.”

After moving to Canada in 1968, it was one of his five children who approached him and asked him to come tell stories at their school. It was later while telling stories at a storytelling festival run by the Storytellers School of Toronto that Joe Jacobs of Harbourfront Canoe and Kayak Centre approached Jim to tell stories on wilderness canoe trips. He spent the next decade telling the stories he grew up with in the wild, as well as at public schools, universities, festivals, and night clubs.



He believes storytelling is important to educate people about cultural appropriation, especially children. Indigenous families own their stories, and therefore, should be allowed to tell their own stories to recount their own cultures and histories. When stories are appropriated, and changed by other cultures and retold, they get lost along with their meaning to Indigenous peoples.

Today, Jim can be found in East Toronto, still telling stories. He moved there in 2017, after he was displaced from the George Street fire. When he's not telling stories, he's a vocal advocate for tenants as one of two Tenant Directors on Toronto Seniors Housing's Board of Directors. "It's important to me that tenants' voices be heard before any decisions are rolled out," he says. Jim has made his life's work about being a voice for underrepresented communities. His story is one of resilience, advocacy, and hope.

"It's important to me that tenants' voices be heard before any decisions are rolled out"





Your community





at a glance!



Senior Tenants Advisory Committee **update**

Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) members continued to be active and engaged over the last three months:

- Members provided comments on the results of the Tenant Experience Survey, and shared their suggestions for how to improve them, as well as how to communicate results with tenants.
- Members advocated and guided staff to improve the process to bring live entertainment to buildings.
- Many members participated in the Regional Tenant Volunteers meetings in April to discuss the Use of Space Policy, vote on the new logo for Community Connect+, and share stories about activities taking place in their buildings.

Remembering Ramalingam Kanapathipillai and Michael So

We recently lost two active tenant volunteers and community members lost their friends.

Ramalingam (Ram) Kanapathipillai was a STAC member and a champion for seniors at Neilson Hall Apartments, where he lived since 2018. He helped many tenants remain active and engaged, especially during the pandemic. He organized vaccine clinics, Tamil newspaper deliveries to the building, and food drives. He also helped communicate on behalf of tenants who were not fluent English speakers, writing letters to get them the help they needed.

Michael So was an energetic tenant representative and a willing aide to tenants at Tam O'Shanter Towers, where he lived since 2015. He was the president of the Social Club there and received many Certificates of Appreciation from tenants for creating a sense of community and making the building a better place to live.

We will miss Ram and Michael's presence in our communities but will remember them fondly.

Understanding the difference between a service request and a complaint

Service Request:

You can make a service request if you need help with a maintenance issue, like fixing a leaky faucet or a non-maintenance issue, like getting a referral to a Seniors Centre.

You can make a service request by:

- Contacting your building staff (e.g., Superintendent, Seniors Services Coordinator). Their contact information is posted on the Rent Safe (blue) bulletin board in your building.
- Filling out a work order form for maintenance issues, available from your building office.
- Contacting the Tenant Support Centre at **416-945-0800** or support@torontoseniorshousing.ca. They will provide a reference ticket that you can use to follow-up on your service request.

Tenant Complaints

If you have not received a response to your service request after two business days or have issues with the status or outcome of the service request, you can file a complaint with the Solutions Team at: **416-945-0888** or solutions@torontoseniorshousing.ca.

They will contact you within two business days to address your complaint. Decisions by the Solutions Team are considered final. If you disagree with their decision or would like more support, you may contact the Ombudsman at ombudsman@toronto.ca.

Keeping herself busy well after retirement

When people retire, they lose the main reason they had for waking up every day and getting out of the house. For Tyra Mead, however, that was never a problem. At 80 years old, she has a packed weekly calendar.

Tyra has always been busy. She moved to Canada from Jamaica in 1968 to work as domestic help. After a year, she went to George Brown College to study and work as a punch key operator. When Microsoft took over the market for spreadsheets, she was out of her job, and found herself back in school studying hospitality. When she couldn't find a job in Canada, she moved to the United States and spent the next 16 years working in New York, Massachusetts, and Florida. Her job kept her busy, helping the elderly with personal care, meal preparation, and light housekeeping.





In 2014, Tyra moved back to Toronto to retire in the city. She lived independently, renting apartments across the city before Toronto Seniors Housing approached her with a vacant unit in June 2023. At the age of 79, she moved again. This time, for good, in her new home in Lurette Manor in the west end.

Her Christian faith keeps her grounded. “Every day I wake up and I thank God,” she says. When she gets some quiet time to herself, she writes poetry. It is important for her to keep her mind active, so she doesn’t develop Alzheimer’s or dementia. Although she admits, she also loves staying up late watching Hollywood action films.

In a society addicted to their smartphones and speed, Tyra reminds us of the importance of going slow and enjoying life.

Seasons by Tyra Mead

Snow flakes drift softly from distant realms

Kiss warm lips waiting to herald the Advent News

Tender shoots peep from soggy earth
Remind hearts to rejoice for the new birth

Hot summer days hold pulsing rays beaming

Down to earth with energy for life
Dazzling colors of varying hues spinning
down down to ground

With the wind provoke sisyphian challenge to make mounds.

Seniors Resources

Building Profiles

Our corporate website now provides more detailed information on all Toronto Seniors Housing buildings. Information about your building and community programming is now easier and faster to find. You can view the new Building Profiles page by going to this website:

www.torontoseniorshousing.ca/building-profiles



Seniors Speak

At the Regional Tenant Meetings in April, we asked for your input on renaming Seniors Speak. We brought fourteen names forward for tenants, including Seniors Speak, to vote on. There were many creative names put forth by tenants, but at the end, tenants voted to keep Seniors Speak. Thank you to everyone who shared their ideas! We have drawn one lucky winner to receive a \$25 grocery gift card. **Congratulations, William Tan!**



New film sheds light on the importance of building community around seniors

Buddy Services Centre for Seniors has released a video project, called Save Our Seniors, which advocates for seniors in Toronto. The documentary sheds light on the challenges faced by seniors and their caregivers and emphasizes the importance of community support in ensuring their well-being.

Toronto Seniors Housing tenants and staff, along with members of the Toronto community, participated in the documentary. You can view the full film online at bit.ly/3Vkj1b.



In Case of Emergency (ICE) information sheets

An important resource is available to tenants to be prepared in case of an emergency. The In Case of Emergency (ICE) medical information sheet can be found on the next page. Please fill it out and put it on the back of your apartment door. The form is also available in 18 other languages on the City of Toronto's website: bit.ly/3yV3mi7.

Update on the Community Activities Fund and Community Connect+

Thank you to everyone who submitted Community Activities Fund (CAF) applications this year. We are happy to report that we received 235 applications, and 204 applications have been approved so far for events, activities, and equipment.

Due to the volume of applications that we received, we ask for your patience as our regional Community Services Coordinators (CSCs) reach out to tenants in order of event/activity/equipment priority with next steps. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need help, please contact your CSC. They will be happy to help you.

Thank you for your application and dedication to enhancing your community. We look forward to seeing the positive impact your projects will have on our shared spaces.

Branding Update



Thank you for providing your input on a logo for Community Connect+ at the Regional Tenant Meetings in April. We are happy to share the winning logo design with you below that most tenants voted for! Future communications about Community Connect+ will use this logo for easy identification.





INFORMATION SHEET IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL 911

CONTACT INFORMATION

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____ Apartment Number _____

City _____ Postal Code _____

Main Phone (____) _____ - _____ Alt. Phone (____) _____ - _____

Health Card _____ - _____ - _____ Birth Date ____ / ____ / ____
day month year

Primary Language(s) _____ Gender M F

Advanced Care Directive → On file with _____

Emergency Contact 1 _____

Main Phone (____) _____ - _____ Alt. Phone (____) _____ - _____

Emergency Contact 2 _____

Main Phone (____) _____ - _____ Alt. Phone (____) _____ - _____

Primary Care Provider _____

Phone (____) _____ - _____

RELEVANT MEDICAL HISTORY

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cardiac (angina, heart attack, bypass, pacemaker) | <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetic (Insulin / Non Insulin Dependant) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cancer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stroke/TIA | <input type="checkbox"/> COPD (emphysema, bronchitis) | <input type="checkbox"/> Alzheimer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypertension (high blood pressure) | <input type="checkbox"/> Seizure (convulsions) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dementia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Congestive heart failure | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma | <input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric |

Other _____



Seniors Speak is available in many languages

Call **416-945-0800** to request this document in an alternate language or format.

இந்த ஆவணத்தை வேறு மொழி அல்லது வடிவத்தில் கோர **416-945-0800** ஐ அழைக்கவும்.

Llame al **416-945-0800** para solicitar este documento en otros idiomas o formatos.

Καλέστε το **416-945-0800** για να ζητήσετε αυτό το έγγραφο σε εναλλακτική γλώσσα ή μορφή.

Для запроса этого документа на другом языке или в альтернативном формате позвоните по телефону **416-945-0800**.

Для запиту цього документа іншою мовою або в альтернативному форматі зателефонуйте за номером **416-945-0800**.

다른 언어 또는 형식으로 된 버전은 **416-945-0800** 으로 요청하십시오.

请拨打 **416-945-0800**，以其他语言或格式索取此文档。

Xin gọi **416-945-0800** để yêu cầu có tài liệu này bằng một ngôn ngữ hay bằng một dạng thức thay thế khác.

برای درخواست این اطلاعات به زبان یا فرمت دیگر، با شماره **416-945-0800** تماس بگیرید.

Zadzwoń pod numer **416-945-0800**, aby poprosić o ten dokument w innym języku lub formacie.

Appelez le **416-945-0800** pour demander ce document dans une autre langue ou un autre format

वैकल्पिक भाषा अथवा फॉर्मेटमा आ दस्तावेजनी विनंती करवा माटे **416-945-0800** पर कॉल करो

Ligue para **416-945-0800** para solicitar este documento em um idioma ou formato alternativo

Stay connected!



To stay connected and updated with the news and events of Toronto Seniors Housing, make sure to follow us on social media. You can find us on Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), and LinkedIn. You can also learn more on our website at [TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca).

Want to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Prefer to get Seniors Speak in your email inbox? Contact us at SeniorsSpeak@torontoseniorshousing.ca.

Get in touch

You can call these numbers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or reach us via email at support@torontoseniorshousing.ca.

Tenant Support Centre: 416-945-0800

Community Safety Unit: 416-921-2323

Crime Stoppers: 416-222-8477

Acknowledgements

Toronto Seniors Housing values the diversity of our city and the tenants we support. We also acknowledge the history, both positive and negative, that has led to this rich variety of people living together in Toronto.

Please visit torontoseniorshousing.ca/acknowledgements/ for Toronto Seniors Housing's Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements.

