



Toronto Seniors
Housing Corporation

Seniors Speak

Fall 2023 Issue



Welcome to the **Fall Issue**

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A Message from **CEO Jill Bada**



Dear Tenants,

As we come close to the end of another year, it is remarkable to see the progress we have made together.

The fall was busy with tenants, staff, and community partners working closely together. We held co-design workshops in September and October to help guide the way for a new Tenant Engagement Model.

Thank you to all of the tenants who took part in helping us develop a proposal for an approach to tenant engagement, connection and participation and getting us started down this new path.

There have also been ongoing tenant consultations on policies. As a result, updates to the Tenant Action Funds Policy will be going to the Quality and Tenant Engagement Committee in November and the Board in December, along with the proposal for a new approach to tenant engagement.

Tenant leader meetings continued into the fall with topics focused on better community programs, access to Tenant Action Funds, as well as policies such as those around the use of community spaces. As of the end of October, we completed 46 Tenant Town Halls with the rest scheduled. By year-end, we will visit all Toronto Seniors Housing buildings. Town Halls offer a chance for tenants to connect with staff, share information, and exchange ideas and feedback.

We look forward to getting further input from you, including where we should be focusing our work, with the launch of our first Tenant Experience Survey in December. Please look for the survey in your mail.

We continue to look for new and improved ways to support you. As you will read in this issue, the Complex Tenancies Team is in place to make sure more serious tenant challenges are addressed quickly and supported in a timely manner.

There is still so much to learn as I continue on my journey leading the organization. I look forward to continuing to meet with as many of you as I can and to find out how we can better support you.

Wishing you a safe and healthy fall and upcoming holiday season,

Jill Bada
Interim Chief Executive Officer

What's New

Contest: Renaming Seniors Speak We want to hear from you!

We have heard that you would like a new name for Seniors Speak. If you have an idea for a new name, please email SeniorsSpeak@torontoseniorshousing.ca. The deadline is **Sunday, December 31, 2023**.

If you do not have email, you can tell your Seniors Services Coordinator or Community Services Coordinator your idea. Anyone who submits a possible name will be entered into a draw for a gift card.

We look forward to hearing your ideas!



Watch for your Tenant Experience Survey in the mail!

Toronto Seniors Housing is surveying tenants to better understand your experience as a tenant and how you feel about Toronto Seniors Housing services and programs.

Surveys will be mailed out in December. You will have about one month to complete your survey using one of three options: mail, telephone, or online. Surveys are available in other languages.

If you have any questions please contact:

(416) 613-8225 or tshcsurvey@forumresearch.com.

We hope you will participate.



Reduced Price Fitness for those 60 and over !

The City of Toronto's new FitnessTO membership program offers flexible 12-month, three-month and one-month membership terms for older adults. Participants 60 years of age and older receive a 50 per cent discount on the regular price of memberships and fitness programs including lane swims and group fitness. More details at toronto.ca/fitness.

For more information about other free, low-cost, or discounted programs for seniors please visit the City's Seniors Recreation & Things To Do webpage.

Toronto Health and Social Services Online Directory Now Available

The Toronto Health and Social Services Directory is an easy-to-use online resource with listings for 8,000+ health, social and community services in Toronto. Users can easily search the directory to find services in their area using topics or keywords and information is available in multiple languages.

The Directory can be accessed online at: torontoservicedirectory.ca.



A lifetime spent supporting Latinos in social housing

Reyna Lopez migrated to Canada with her Guatemalan grandmother in 1970. Reyna's Latino-Christian upbringing taught her to take great pride in being of service to others. The single mother of five has seen Toronto transform over the decades that she has lived here, having spent 20 of those years in social housing.

Social housing gave Reyna a second chance at life after her divorce when she needed affordable housing to work part-time and support her children.

That is where she saw a chance to help her community. A native Spanish speaker, Reyna attended English as a Second Language (ESL) classes when she arrived in Canada. The classes inspired her to take more ESL courses at Seneca College. She eventually graduated with her Ontario Secondary School Diploma from Bathurst High School and went on to graduate from George Brown College. "I've always wanted an education, so I could do something for myself and my children," she explains. Living in the Lawrence Heights community at the time, she saw many Spanish-speaking tenants struggling to communicate with staff. She took it upon herself to be their translator and help her neighbours get the supports and services that they needed.



Soon she was bringing Latino tenants together to form a community group in Lawrence Heights called Voces Latinos (Latino Voices). The group worked together to improve their neighbourhood. "I saw a need to bring people together who were all committed to a common goal,"

"I saw a need to bring people together who were **all committed to a common goal,**"

she explains. "I believe that it's our job as tenants to take care of each other and create the community we want through communication and collaboration." While working full-time in retail, Reyna led Voces Latino for four years making changes to improve safety and foster belonging in Lawrence Heights. After retiring, Reyna moved to Bathurst Place, where she currently lives.

These days, Reyna enjoys spending her free time doing tai chi and attending local community music and theatre shows. If anyone needs help, she is always there to lend a helping hand – or voice – to the situation. It is all about love for Reyna. "The more you love, the better person you will be," she exclaims.

Meet Toronto Seniors Housing's



Complex Tenancies Team

The Complex Tenancies Team formed in January 2022. This team supports tenants who need extra help for things like preparing for pest treatments.

“We meet them where they live and we go from there,” says Sandra Mageau-Marsh, who supervises the team of four Seniors Services Coordinators (SSC), one in each region.

The Complex Tenancies Team acts as a facilitator, communicating with family members, community partners and first responders to put a circle of care around tenants to live independently while following a tenant’s rights and responsibilities.

“As a regional SSC (those with office hours in each building), you don’t have the time, but as a Complex Tenancies SSC, you can easily spend a day serving a tenant... but it all begins with building trust,” says Nikki Dziama. “That’s my goal: to build a trusting relationship with my tenants so that they are engaged throughout the process,” explains Elda Zhilla.

“That’s my goal: to **build a trusting relationship with my tenants** so that **they are engaged throughout the process,**”



“It’s never boring,” says Nadia Juma. For her, being able to help tenants has been the most rewarding part of the job. “When you’re able to put supports in place for a tenant who did not have access to supports and was on the brink of eviction, that’s extremely rewarding.”

Sandra is also there to support her team when they are physically and emotionally exhausted, reminding them that there is a circle of care team around them too. “The team understands the stressors on the job and the importance of setting boundaries between work and life, because we are all going through similar situations with our tenants,” says Rodney Harding.

The feedback the team has received from colleagues and community partners has further reassured the team that this system works. Tenants are asked to please work with their building’s Seniors Services Coordinator (SSC) to engage with the Complex Tenancies Team.

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A Recipe for Community Building: Ask Bill Lohman

We met Bill Lohman in the garden outside Saranac Apartments where he was blowing giant bubbles using a homemade bubble wand and mix. It is a sight to see and shows his fun and creative side.

At a young age, Bill learned to focus on what he could do well. A professionally-trained chef, he worked with top people, including Claudio Aprile (of MasterChef Canada fame), at an exciting time when the farm-to-table movement and modern cooking methods were just beginning. Bill would later go on to start his own catering business. After a major surgery, Bill applied for social housing.

Since joining social housing, Bill has been an advocate for tenant voices and is committed to improving tenant conditions. He has been a member of the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) since its founding, and served as a tenant representative for his community. While living at Byng Towers, Bill had a chance to get involved with the community to address the conditions and issues tenants were living with. “I learned a lot while there,” he says. “And that’s how I started becoming more involved as a leader in my community.” Bill has lived in three Toronto Seniors Housing buildings.



Bill was not always the vocal community member he is today. Before, he preferred to keep quiet and mind his own business. “One of the best things about being a chef for me was if I didn’t agree with something, I could always leave and get a job next door.” In social housing, he found a way to use his skills to help make things better. As a chef, it was ideal that he host BBQs for tenants, initially on a tight budget using his own kitchen. Today, the BBQs have grown to include the support of tenant volunteers, and the building’s community room is fully equipped to entertain crowds.

Bill is also an avid reader of housing literature that the City of Toronto creates, so he can have informed talks with Toronto Seniors Housing tenants and staff. Bill has seen changes in himself. “I’ve become more proactive and assertive since moved into housing, and I’m happier,” says Bill. Having a stable community has helped him feel grounded and engaged. “My mother’s humanism rubbed off on me. I feel a sense of fulfillment being engaged,” he tells us. “It’s like the bubbles. When people see bubbles, their eyes light up and they smile. It’s a good feeling knowing that I touched something.”

I feel a sense
of fulfillment
being
engaged,”



Bill Lohman's Banana Cake with Caramel Glaze Recipe



This moist cake is wonderful on its own, however, for an extra-special treat you can add Bill's glaze for the perfect pairing of bananas and caramel!

Cake Ingredients

- 3 bananas, medium ripe
- 2 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 3 eggs
- 6 tablespoon plain yogurt
- 2 cups + 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 tablespoon dark rum

Glaze Ingredients

- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1/2 cup icing sugar, sifted

For the cake:

- Preheat oven to 350F. Butter and flour two nine-inch cake pans and set aside.
- Peel and mash bananas and set aside.
- In a large bowl, mix the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy.
- Add the eggs, yogurt, vanilla and rum. Mix well.
- In a smaller bowl stir the flour, baking soda and salt together.
- Gently fold dry ingredients into the batter, then mix in the mashed bananas.
- Transfer batter into floured pans and bake at 350F for 35-40 minutes until done. Let the cakes rest.

For the glaze:

- In a saucepan, melt the butter, add brown sugar and cook until the sugar has melted and the mix is bubbling.
- Cook on medium-high heat stirring constantly for two minutes. Avoid burning.
- Add the milk and continue stirring for one more minute.
- Remove from the heat and add the icing sugar. Whisk until smooth, then stir in the vanilla.
- Quickly pour the liquid glaze evenly over the cake, then let it cool.



A “Rosie” outlook on life for Cliffwood Manor’s Tenant Representative

When you visit Cliffwood Manor, you cannot help but notice Nauroze Malik, a tenant representative in the building. Always smiling, Nauroze is a well-known friendly face for tenants in the building.

But behind her smile is a woman who has faced many struggles to get to where she is today.

Nauroze, affectionately called “Rosie” by tenants, immigrated to Canada in 1973 as a 22-year-old bride-to-be. Her sister-in-law had arranged a marriage for her to a Canadian man who she had only met once. The middle child of seven brothers and sisters, Nauroze saw this as a chance to have a better life in Canada.

After moving to Canada, Nauroze had three children, but she soon found herself in an unhappy marriage. Despite barely speaking English and having few immigrants around to go to for support, Nauroze was determined to develop the skills to be independent. In 1976, she got her driver’s license and started working as a school bus driver, an unlikely choice for a woman in her community at the time. Even though her dream of a better life seemed distant, she was already achieving things she could not have imagined back in her home country.



Her strong faith helped her stay hopeful in times of hardship. Her local mosque hired her as an editor where she was able to pursue her childhood passion for writing and give back to her community. In 1987, she made the difficult decision to separate from her husband. With the help of a lawyer, she moved to a shelter with her children and eventually divorced her husband.

The Ontario housing system gave her stability while she figured out how to start over again, this time as a single mother. After a year at the shelter, her friend recommended she apply to Toronto Community Housing, a choice that changed her life for the better. “For 22 years, Toronto Community Housing and Toronto Seniors Housing have helped me,” she exclaims. “I’m so happy, I’m so grateful.” Meeting Nauroze today, it is clear that she has found peace in her life.

Now, her three grown children take care of her, while she takes care of the tenants at Cliffwood Manor. Despite all that she has gone through, Nauroze has built a life that she is very proud to call her own.

“I’m so
happy,
I’m so
grateful”





Your Community at a Glance!



Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) Update



Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) members continue to be active and engaged. Some of the activities they participated in over the last three months include:

- Attending regional tenant leadership meetings to provide input on the proposed changes to the Tenant Action Fund model. Attendees also had an opportunity to meet and engage with Arlene Howells, Interim Director, Engagement, Partnership and Communications, for the first time in person while also engaging with other tenant representatives and leaders.
- Attending and participating in the co-design process to develop a new Tenant Engagement Model together with other attendees across Toronto Seniors Housing and providing valuable input regarding the final proposed model.
- Providing input related to Toronto Seniors Housing's current and future programs and partnerships work.
- Meeting with Toronto Seniors Housing staff representing various divisions to get a better understanding of staff roles and responsibilities.

We are sorry to lose Lise Gervais, a long-standing tenant representative at 9 Haldon and a valued Senior Tenants Advisory Committee member who recently passed away. Lise was a strong advocate for her community and passionate about tenant-centered programming to build a sense of community and address isolation and loneliness within her building. We will fondly remember Lise for her cheerful spirit, diligent advocacy and community development efforts.



Seniors Speak is available in many languages

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

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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 www.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 bit.ly/3sfMLIU for Toronto Seniors Housing's Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements.

