



**Toronto Seniors  
Housing Corporation**

# Seniors Speak

**Summer 2025**



# Seniors Speak Summer Issue




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## Message from the CEO

### Dear Tenants,

The sun is out, and I am excited to share the summer issue of Seniors Speak with you! This issue is full of stories about tenants who have made a big difference in their community, and inspired others to do the same.



I am always amazed by the enthusiasm of tenants to engage their communities. Tenant Circles are taking full advantage of the Community Activities Fund (CAF) in so many creative ways. They are organizing everything from coffee chats and games nights to drag bingo and Dragon Boat Festival parties. For the summer, there are 44 BBQs planned!

We also celebrated tenant efforts in our 2024 Annual Report, which was shared with the City in July. You can find highlights from the report in this issue. We are now working on our 2026 budget. Thank you to all who registered to attend our consultations in early August. We value your time and input.

Later this year, we will also be asking you to share your thoughts in the second edition of the Tenant Experience Survey. We want to know where we are doing well, and where we can get better. Our last survey showed that you wanted better programs in buildings and more information about services and supports. We are working closely with City partners to improve these areas and just released an updated Tenant Welcome Guide in June that includes information about different types of supports.

A big thank you to the tenants who helped with the new Translation and Interpretation Policy, which will launch this fall. We look forward to using your ideas to better support the diverse tenants at Toronto Seniors Housing.

As always, I enjoy meeting with you and hearing your ideas. I hope to see many of you during my CEO tour this fall and at the next Regional Tenant Volunteer meetings.

**Have a great summer, and I hope to connect with you again soon!**



**Tom Hunter**  
Chief Executive Officer



# Bridging cultures, **building community**



**In the heart of Kensington Market**, a vibrant seniors community is flourishing. Less than a year ago, a small group of tenants decided to revitalize social connections in the building, hosting the first event in the building since COVID. This was a challenge, as many tenants had become isolated or speak different languages.

Connie, a tenant volunteer, was determined to bridge these barriers. She worked with other volunteers, her Community Services Coordinator, and community organizations to communicate with tenants about Tenant Circle meetings and events well ahead of time, and in different languages. This has allowed everyone to take part. The Tenant Circle now has over 10 members, speaking multiple languages.



Connie is inspired by her fellow tenant volunteers, stating that “even in illness and old age, life is not without joy — if we know how to live with optimism, positivity, and actively engage in the community around us.”



After hosting only one event in 2024, the tenants have already held two events in 2025, with two more planned for later in the year. The recent Dragon Boat Festival was a huge success, with over 100 tenants attending! The Tenant Circle had to quickly get more food because so many people came.



Cathy, one of the volunteers, loves crafts and put together 100 snack bags for their Mother's Day event. While decorating, she was happy that the tenants who came down immediately wanted to help. Some have since joined the Tenant Circle.

The popularity of the events is undeniable. Recognizing this, the Tenant Circle decided to spend a little less of their Community Activities Fund on garden supplies so they would have more money for exciting events in the fall.

Through these events, many have found new friends. There are more smiles in the elevator, and hand waves in the hallway. Neighbours working together can truly create a wonderful feeling of community. As Connie wisely said, "Together, everything is easier."

**"Together,  
everything is  
easier."**





# Community Connect+ update



## Regional Tenant Volunteer Meetings

We had 107 tenant volunteers attend Regional Tenant Volunteer Meetings in April and May.

Tom Hunter provided updates on Toronto Seniors Housing, including our work strengthening partnerships to ensure tenants have better access to support within their communities, building seniors-focused policies, and training for staff to help them better understand the issues seniors face.

The City of Toronto presented at the meetings to get input for their third Seniors' Strategy. Toronto Paramedics also gave a workshop on how to 'beat the heat' in preparation for the summer weather.

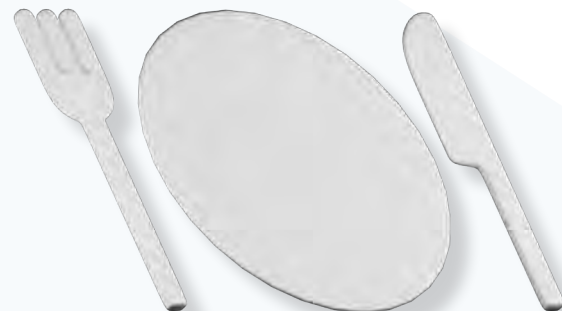
Tenants shared their own stories, highlighting both successes and challenges. Everyone was encouraged by the increased social activities through the efforts of the Tenant Circles, such as arts and games activities, movie nights, BBQs, and more.



## Community Connect+ summer update

Across the city, we will be hosting 44 BBQs and serving 4,600 meals.

As of the end of June, we received 291 Community Activities Fund (CAF) applications for events and activities planned for the whole year, as well as games and gardening tools. With 280 applications approved, tenant volunteers have decided how 96% of 2025 funds will be spent.





In the **first three months** of the year, we had:

**57**

agencies under  
contract

**91**

different  
programs

**11,740+**

tenant participations  
within those programs

## STAC update

Thank you to everyone who applied to join the Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC). We are delighted to welcome 16 new members! You can find photos of STAC members on pages 8 and 9 in this issue.

The committee has been busy this spring. May's meeting focused on getting new members settled in through introductions, outlining the work STAC does, and reviewing the committee's work plan.

In their June meeting, STAC focused on Community Connect+ and updates on the Use of Space Policy and Toronto Seniors Housing partnerships. Staff also gave an update on our collaboration with the City of Toronto to offer more programming for tenants. This enhanced collaboration is an outcome from a report to the City's Economic and Community Development Committee on April 8, 2025 (EC19.2 - [bit.ly/4f630WT](https://bit.ly/4f630WT))



## In Memoriam

We recently lost two active tenant volunteers and community members in the North East Region: Bibi Maimoon Nesha Ally and Margareta Carr. They will be lovingly remembered for their dedication and spirit that brought so much joy and connection to their communities.



# Meet the **Senior Tenants Advisory Committee**

The Senior Tenants Advisory Committee recently welcomed 16 new members. Please meet the new members as well as the continuing alumni members below.

## **North East** ..... **North West**



**Christina Luta**  
North East



**Kiara Fine**  
North East



**Bill Lohman**  
North West



**Arnold Margulis**  
North West



**Naima Siddiqui**  
North East



**Colleen Duhart**  
North East



**Ingrid Collins**  
North West



**Liz Turner**  
North West



**Javad Helalee**  
North East



**Marrita Abunda**  
North East



**Seyed Safavi**  
North West



**Sheila Farr**  
North West



## South East

## South West



**Lynn Xie**  
South East



**Liz Ryan**  
South East



**Terry Coulson**  
South East



**Jim Meeks**  
South East



**Gerry Lamberte**  
South East



**Jesse Cohoon**  
South East



**Robera Butler**  
South West



**Suran Selladurai**  
South West



**Alan Duddin**  
South West



**Norah Jardine**  
South West



**Debbie O'Brien**  
South West



**Jane Yang**  
South West



# Tenant poetry

## Who Said It's Golden

Tyra Mead, Tenant

I walked into the medical waiting room

With the senior I had charge of  
Another senior already waiting  
Looked at me, blurted out

"Don't get old!"

I can't avoid it I said

It's ever reminding me,

Tapping my shoulders

Nipping at my heels

She continued to murmur and complain

"Who said it's golden"

Or even rosy

It's more like iron

Stiff and aching

Rusting, and crumbling

And falling apart

Ha they said with age comes wisdom

I know I acquired some

But when I need it

It shifts and hides

She got up, leans on her cane

Then tapped away

Still murmuring and complaining

Many times I thought of that encounter

How do I prepare for my aging?

And it's debility

I will renew my mind with pleasant things

I will meditate good thoughts

I will the One who gives me life

Be less complaining

And more be more in giving thanks





# Community in action



Across Toronto Seniors Housing, Tenant Volunteers are building thriving communities, one event at a time. Highlights and photos for some of these events can be found in the **next few pages**.

- **West Lodge:** This spring, tenants at West Lodge participated in a joyful community arts project with the support of West Neighbourhood House and Making Art Making Change (MAMC). The piece created is more than just art; it is a heartfelt “love letter” from the tenants to their beloved Parkdale neighbourhood. Check out the West Lodge webpage featuring this inspiring art project: [bit.ly/4mtYunF](https://bit.ly/4mtYunF)
- **9 Haldon Avenue** hosted an elegant afternoon High Tea in May, with 40 tenants dressing up and enjoying the treats.
- **717 Broadview** continues to host movie nights, with 12 planned for 2025. A bottle drive is planned to help pay for this and their bi-weekly coffee club that started in May.
- **17 Brimley** holds weekly crafting sessions, where tenants created a Canada Flag made from recycled water bottles for their Canada Day BBQ.



## Summer celebrations are here

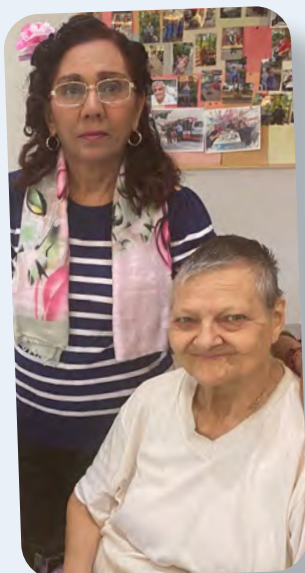
Tenants have been busy planning over 40 summer BBQs and Canada Day events. Please enjoy a few photos on the next page from 600 Rogers Road, with about 70 tenants attending; 4455 Bathurst Street, with over 170 attendees; and 71 Merton, with 65 attendees .







# Your community at a glance!









# Love through shared stories



Shared stories make up the fabric of Thiagarajah Sivasunderam's life. Known better as Siva, his life and love were linked to his wife, Uma, from the very beginning. A passionate reader, she would delight him with summaries of the stories she had read and amaze him with her knowledge as they watched game shows like Jeopardy.

**“Help ever,  
hurt never.”**

- Sai Baba

Together, they explored the world, traveling to places like Paris, Switzerland, and Singapore. Even now, two years after her passing, he finds comfort in leafing through their travel photo albums, pulling them out whenever he needs a boost.

Both Uma and Siva have lived their lives guided by the timeless quote of Sai Baba, “Help ever, hurt never.” In 1989, when they moved from Sri Lanka to Canada, Uma began working for Mainstay Housing. There she dedicated herself to supporting those struggling with mental health and addiction.

When they moved into Neilson Hall Apartments in 2016, Uma transformed the small building library into an overflowing collection, even donating her own Harlequin Romance books. Siva became president of the social club, where he met his best friend, Ramalingam (Ram) Kanapathipillai.

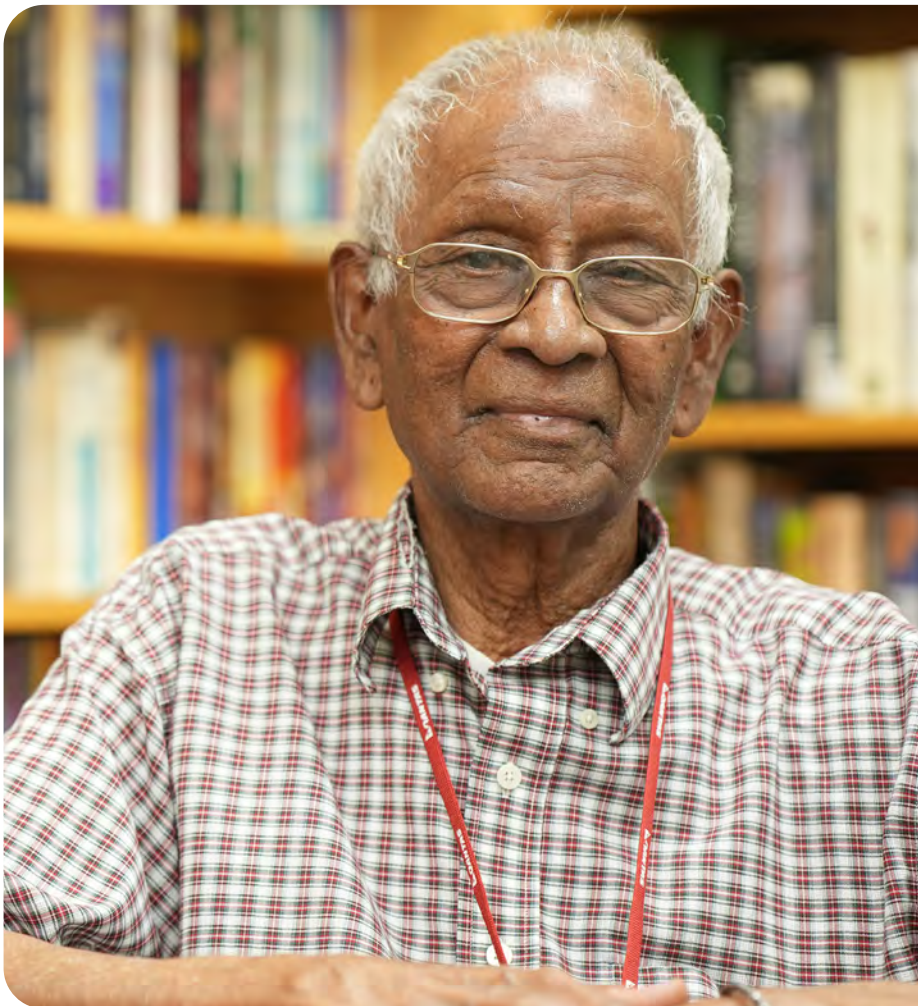




Ram and Siva's shared story involved supporting the community, especially during COVID. Ram advocated for tenants with politicians and community organizations, ensuring food and other necessities, and provided interpretation for Tamil-speaking tenants. Sadly, Ram passed away in 2024.

After his wife's passing, Siva took over managing the library, continuing her legacy of shared stories. He even learned to cook from a 1931 Sri Lankan cookbook found in the library. He feels Uma is always with him, guiding and watching over him.

Recently, Siva has stepped back from social planning and is now seeking new volunteers for the library. He was delighted when a tenant recently offered to help and hopes more will follow. Siva advocates for reading physical



books to help with stress and depression. He never discards a book and is looking to donate some of his excess books other buildings at Toronto Seniors Housing, ensuring their stories can continue to be shared.

Siva recommends starting volunteer work at a young age, as sharing your story with others through service creates a connection you will never want to break.

If you are interested in books from Siva's library for your building, please contact your Community Services Coordinator.



## R-PATH Reports:

# A letter to Prime Minister Mark Carney



When Prime Minister Mark Carney announced his new cabinets in May 2025, it did not include a Minister of Disabled Persons. For the first time in 10 years Canada does not have a federal minister dealing with issues that affect the eight million Canadians who live with a disability.

The R-PATH Committee is a strong advocate for accessibility. We have sent a letter to the Prime Minister that shares our disappointment about this decision. When there is no minister who is responsible for this area of government, the needs of disabled Canadians are being forgotten.

In this letter, R-PATH also spoke about the accessible housing crisis. Canada has large social housing programs, such as Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation, but they cannot keep up with the need for inclusive housing. Most of the homes and condos built by private companies are not accessible.

Mr. Carney's government has developed a Housing Plan to make it easier and more affordable for Canadians to find housing. Unfortunately, the plan does not mention accessibility. R-PATH told Mr. Carney that it is essential to include accessible housing.



We asked Mr. Carney to appoint a Minister of Disability. This will include the voices, issues, and needs of disabled Canadians in federal policies and programs .

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R-PATH has authored “Accessibility Is for You”, a booklet on the process involved in getting your unit modified. You can get a copy from your Seniors Services Coordinator, or online at:  
**[TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/AccessibilityIsForYou](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca/AccessibilityIsForYou)**

The Responsible Personal Accessibility in Toronto Housing (R-PATH) Committee is a tenant-led group, celebrating 12 years this summer! The committee’s goal is to improve quality of life for people with physical disabilities and to support Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) and Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) in being leaders in accessible housing. R-PATH provides content for tenants in every second issue of Seniors Speak.

## R-PATH: Advocating for Accessible Housing



The

# Garden Girls



At Sheppard Place in North York, there is a group of amazing women who have been quietly changing their building's grounds into a garden paradise. They call themselves the Gardening Club, and every spring and summer, you will find them outside – watering, weeding, and watching their flowers grow.

All the women live in the building and share a strong bond through their Russian backgrounds. The group includes **Valya Nemkova, Galina Zybaikina, Jorjeta Khalation, Nona Bibik, Vera Tserlivrevich, Natalia Baronova**, and their oldest gardener, 95-year-old **Viktoria Gjunurce**. Among them are fascinating life stories: Galina is a former engineer from Russia, Jorjeta a retired hairdresser from Armenia, and Vera a former cosmetologist from Belarus.

Galina, with **Valya Grischuk** (now passed), started the group in 2005. Jorjeta, a former Tenant Representative, started by providing supplies before joining. Natalia, the youngest, now helps tend the plants.

“We started by cleaning up the building front,” says Galina, “then we added flowers and bushes along Bathurst Street, **winning twice the city’s best garden awards**. Now, we have gardens on all four sides!”





Over the years, they have had support from generous people and programs. Local City Councillor **James Pasternak** helped in the early days with tools, soil, and plants, and still does today. **LEAF**, a local non-profit group, has donated advice, trees, and shrubs. Funding from building operations supplies flowers and the Community Activities Fund brings gardening tools.

Their favourite plants? Peonies, roses, lilacs, hydrangeas, and gardenias. “What makes us happiest is seeing people smile when the flowers bloom,” says Galina. “That’s why we do it.”

They garden almost every day it is nice out, with rainy days spent doing web research. Other tenants help, like **Lady Tonelly**, who enjoys working on a special rose garden. Even some children and grandchildren help during visits. **Sophia Burman** is a timeless translator, and **Arnold Margulis** prepares applications and connects the group to support networks.

A gardener’s life is beautiful, but not always perfect. “It’s sad when someone damages the gardens or when we disagree about supplies,” says Jorjeta. “But we keep going.”

Their hope for new members, tools, soil, plants, and maybe a watering system motivates them.

The Garden Girls of Sheppard Place are a blooming reminder of what can grow when a community comes together, with care, effort, and love.

“What makes us  
happiest is seeing  
people smile  
when the flowers  
bloom.”



# 2024 Annual Report highlights



## Community Connect+: Building tenant engagement

A new approach to tenant engagement, called Community Connect+, was implemented in 2024 with the goal of strengthening tenant voices, reducing isolation, and improving staff-tenant relationships.

**172**

Tenant Volunteers as of December 2024

**58**

Tenant Circles established

**\$240,000**

to support tenant-led activities through the Community Activities Fund

**206**

tenant-led activities

**176**

agency-led recurring programs

**78%**

increase in spending on tenant-led activities over 2023

## Spotlighting tenants' voices



**70**

tenant town halls



..... **1,600**

attendees



..... **150+**

interpreters provided for corporate events

**i 264 i**

tenants took the NORC (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities) Ambassador Training Program



## Keeping tenants in their homes



**98.43%**

occupancy  
rate



**107**

households got help to resolve  
tenancy-related issues



**91%**

of households in good  
standing

## Maintaining Toronto Seniors Housing Buildings

Completed

**123**

Capital projects  
worth

**\$24.3m**

- Accessibility upgrades
- Water conservation initiatives
- Laundry room upgrades
- Upgrades to electrical, heating, and plumbing systems
- Exterior envelope work, such as windows, roofs, structural, and parking garage repairs

## Creating safe communities



**759**

Welfare checks  
conducted



**980**

Resolved disputes between  
neighbours



**1,026**

Answered calls for  
disturbance incidents

You can read the full 2024 Annual Report at:

**[TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/2024-annual-report](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca/2024-annual-report)**



# Resources for tenants

## Toronto Seniors Housing Welcome Guide is now available

Our updated Tenant Welcome Guide is now available on the Toronto Seniors Housing website to read, print, or download. It covers many important topics to help you as a tenant, including your rights and duties as a tenant, how to pay your rent, how to ask for repairs, how to contact Toronto Seniors Housing staff, and so much more.

The guide is available in 14 languages. Tenants can contact their Seniors Services Coordinator or the Tenant Support Centre if they need a printed copy or a different language or format.



View the new guide at [TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/Tenant-Welcome-Guide/](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca/Tenant-Welcome-Guide/)

## Food resources

Our Health and Community Connections page on the Toronto Seniors Housing website now includes links to support tenants facing food insecurity, including food banks and food hamper delivery. Find out more at [TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca/health-and-community-connections/](https://torontoseniorshousing.ca/health-and-community-connections/)

## Directory of Services for Seniors and Caregivers in Toronto

The City of Toronto offers a directory of services you can use to find information about transportation, recreation, employment and volunteering, housing issues, health care, legal questions, and more. View the guide at [bit.ly/4m3ZtKN](https://bit.ly/4m3ZtKN)

## Parks and Recreation updates from the City of Toronto

Interested in getting updates and information about recreation programs, services, and upcoming events in Parks, Forestry, and Recreation? Subscribe to the **Recreation** e-newsletter at [Toronto.ca/e-updates/](https://toronto.ca/e-updates/)





## 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**.

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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

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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 and LinkedIn. You can also learn more on our website at **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 by 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.

