

### Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) COVID-19 Response Summary

The latest reported data has shown that Black residents make up 23% of the city's COVID-19 cases despite being 9% of the population<sup>1</sup>. Reports also show that neighbourhoods with the highest population of Black residents have the highest rates of COVID-19. Newly reported data also highlights that Black Canadians are experiencing layoffs, reduced work hours, and reduction in household incomes at higher rates. The impact of systemic anti-Black racism on economic mobility results in Black residents being concentrated in frontline jobs and employment that make them more susceptible to COVID-19 transmission. Black Canadians also report that their daily commutes put them at risk for transmission at higher rates, which is exacerbated by living in more densely lived in homes, buildings and housing developments. Without robust response COVID-19 will deepen and entrench the effects of increasing unemployment and underemployment, housing and food insecurity, and long term physical and mental health challenges which unduly increases the likelihood of unnecessary and disproportionately violent and deadly police contact.

In March 2020, the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Unit anticipated the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black residents and immediately began to coordinate with Black-serving, Black-led, and Black-focused (B3) organizations responding to community needs. The Unit's response was in meaningful part informed by the Black to the Future Community of Practice (COP) COVID-19 Emergency Aid Report led by community partners, the Center for Youth Black Professionals (CEE) and the Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC)<sup>2</sup>. By way of background, it is important to recall that the Black to the Future COP was established in 2019 as an outcome of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. The COP originated as a group of 19 B3 organizations that collaborated and engaged in capacity-building initiatives to enhance the quality and coordination of resources, services and supports to Black Torontonians. The Black to the Future now has a membership of over 30 B3 agencies.

The Black to the Future COP COVID-19 Emergency Aid Report identified and anticipated COVID-19's early damaging impacts of the pandemic on the health and sustainability of Black organizations, food security, income security, housing security, and mental health and the increased vulnerability of Black youth and students, the formerly incarcerated, and undocumented Black residents.

This Report helped the CABR Unit support the City in mounting an early emergency response to the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on Black communities. The Unit's key intervention responses to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on Black Torontonians have been as follows:

#### **Enhancing Black COVID-19 Resilience:**

Following the March 2020 emergency orders that were undertaken to initially flatten the COVID-19 curve, the City of Toronto created the Community Coordination Plan (CCP), a joint initiative between the United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) and the City of Toronto's Social Development Finance & Administration (SDFA) division. This resulted in all staff of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit being re-assigned to support the implementation of the CCP and pandemic response work. From March to September 2020, the CCP was the structure and framework through which Black Torontonians who are vulnerable received social services supports from the City and its various partners. The CABR Unit staff contributed to the CCP by continuing to advocate internally on behalf of Black Torontonians during the pandemic, particularly through the Black Resilience Cluster.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Toronto "COVID-19: Status of Cases in Toronto". Retrieved October 28<sup>th</sup> 2020. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-latest-city-of-toronto-news/covid-19-status-of-cases-in-toronto/>

<sup>2</sup> Black to the Future COP "COVID-19 Emergency Report". Retrieved October 28<sup>th</sup> 2020. <https://blacktothefutureto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/COVID-19-EMERGENCY-AID-REPORT.pdf>

Rec#	COVID-19 Initiative	Description	Key Outputs and Short-term Outcomes
13.2	<b>The Black Resilience Cluster</b>	The CABR-led Black Resilience Cluster (BRC) facilitated collaborative coordination, communication, problem-solving, and issue-identification between the City, UWGT and agencies and organizations supporting African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities in Toronto. The BRC included 26 B3 organizations and met weekly to collaborate, coordinate and resolve urgent and immediate issues in areas such as food security, housing and shelter, health and wellness, social services and other needs identified as critical to an ACB COVID-19 resilience response. Thematic areas of the BRC included food security; policing & justice; mental health; health promotion; Black business; housing & shelter; and community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between March and August 2020 the BRC hosted 40 regular emergency response communication and coordination calls hosting approximately 20 B3 organizations per call:</li> <li>• <i>BRC organizations included:</i> Taibu Community Health Center, Black Health Alliance (BHA), BlackCap, Tropicana, Midyanta, Black Legal Action Committee (BLAC), Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA), Caribbean African Canadian Social Services (CAF CAN), Network for the Advancement of Black Communities (NABC); African FoodBasket (AFB), Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA), African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO), Delta Family Resource Center (DFRC), CEE Center for Young Black Professionals (CEE), Heritage Skills Development Centre (HSDC), Harriet Tubman Community Organization, Across Boundaries (AB), Success Beyond Limits (SBL), Belka Enrichment Centre.</li> </ul>
	<b>B3 COVID-19 Response Funding</b>	City of Toronto with the guidance of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit provided COVID-19 emergency relief funding to B3 organizations. Funding recipients utilized the funds to support Black community emergency response intervention in the areas of mental Health, emergency food, social supports and safety and wellbeing. The funding also offered core staffing supports to the organizations with an aim to be responsive to the fact that chronic underinvestment in B3 organizations in the past led to unprecedented levels of stress on Toronto's Black-led COVID-19 frontline agency responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided \$1.29 million in emergency funds to B3 organizations including: TAIBU Health Centre, Harriet Tubman, La Passerelle – I.D.E, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, Caribbean African Canadian Association (CAF CAN), Delta Family Resource Centre (DFRC), Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF), African's in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA), Across Boundaries, Centre for Young Black Professionals (CEE), Sound Check, Generation Chosen, Jean Augustine, Centre for Young Women's Empowerment, Afri-Can Food Basket, Mommy Monitor, Lifted by Purpose, and Young and Potential Fathers</li> </ul>
	<b>TO Support Response</b>	Social Development Finance & Administration (SDFA) established and led the TO Supports initiative to deepen systems alignment and divisional collaboration for a coordinated City response to serving the City's most vulnerable populations during the COVID-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a result, Black communities and residents received increased and targeted levels of support in the areas of housing and homelessness, income support, family support, food access, mental</li> </ul>

		19 pandemic. TO supports active input on the needs of Black Torontonians with the effect of mainstreaming a focus on Black residents and communities throughout the TO Support model	health, safety and wellbeing, social connection and community sector support and resources to vulnerable priority residents.
	<b>Black Mental Health Services</b>	The CABR Unit's participated in the City's TO Supports initiative helped facilitate COVID-19 emergency investments in culturally responsive mental health supports for Black residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnered with Across Boundaries and CAFCAN to provide warm-line emergency supports to Black residents.</li> <li>Actively contributed an anti-Black racism lens to TO Supports Food Access, Mental Health, Community Safety and Wellbeing and Community Cluster response</li> </ul>
	<b>Black COVID-19 Information &amp; Education Campaign</b>	The Black Health Alliance (BHA), Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, and the Black Medical Students Association (BMSA), in partnership with the CABR Unit developed and launched an awareness campaign to address the gap that was noticed in Toronto-specific, Black-focused COVID-19 information, education, and communications materials disseminated through social media platforms including twitter, Instagram, and web platforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partnership produced a monthly COVID-19 bulletin offering key emergency resources and supports to Black communities: <a href="https://blackhealthalliance.ca/covid-19/">https://blackhealthalliance.ca/covid-19/</a></li> <li>The partnership produced over 10 COVID-19 emergency resources lists and social media focused on <a href="#">food support</a>, <a href="#">mental health</a>, <a href="#">parenting support</a> and, <a href="#">COVID-19 safety protocol</a>,</li> </ul>
	<b>COVID-19 Response Micro-Grants for Emerging Black-Led &amp; Black-Serving Organizations</b>	The CABR Unit worked with the City's Community Funding Unit to partner with CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals to offer COVID-19 response micro-grants to emerging Black-led and Black-serving organizations in Toronto. Priority was given to organizations that primarily serve continental African populations in the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The partnership provided \$50 000 in micro-grants to the following grantees included: Art+Health; Rexdale Youth Mentorship; Say Somaali; Point Anorage Jeunesse/Youth Anchorage Point; Hey Black Girl!; Toronto West Youth Coalition; Fulani Cultural Association (FUCA) of Ontario; Power of Love Foundation Canada; Develop Me Youth; and, Youth Forward Toronto.</li> </ul>
	<b>Mayor's Tele-Town Hall on Black Communities and COVID-19</b>	The Unit supported the Partnership and Accountability Circle to organize a tele-town hall with Mayor John Tory with Toronto's leading Black-serving organizations. The purpose of this engagement with the Mayor was to discuss and provide guidance on the City's emergency response and recovery plans and share with him, Black communities' priority needs and expectations during the pandemic. Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson (Ward 21 Scarborough Centre) and Councillor Cynthia Lai (Ward 23 Scarborough North) also participated in the town hall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The tele town hall engaged the following organizations TAIBU Community Health Centre; Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce; CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals; Toronto Community Benefits Network; Black Business and Professional Association; Black Legal Action Centre (BLAC); and FoodShare.</li> <li>Through the town hall the PAC and Black community representatives were able to secure the following initiatives: Black representation in City's COVID recovery and rebuild processes; enhanced food security supports for Black residents; advancing the collection and reporting of race-based disaggregated data in relation to COVID-19 infections, deaths and recoveries; enhancing employment and income supports</li> </ul>

			for Black workers; increased the number of Black-owned businesses on the City's Diverse Vendors list to augment the number of Black businesses awarded procurement contracts from the City.
	<b>Ontario Government's Tele-Town Hall on Black Communities and COVID-19</b>	The Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit's Partnership and Accountability Circle partnered with the Black Canadian Chamber of Commerce (BCCC) and the Black Business and Professional Association to host a tele-town hall that featured Premier Doug Ford and Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, and Minister of Finance Rod Phillips.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The forum included 600 virtual attendees who were represented by various Toronto-based B3s which informed Premier Ford and his attending Cabinet ministers of the important and pressing issues facing Toronto's Black communities</li> <li>Several commitments to address issues of job security, support for Black businesses and enhanced social well-being supports were made during the call</li> </ul>
	<b>Toronto Rebuild and Recovery Office Meeting on Black Communities</b>	The CABR Unit supported the Partnership and Accountability Circle with the senior leadership team of the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild (TORR) office. TORR is mandated to coordinate engagement and research to develop the City's recovery strategies and actions to rebuild and re-imagine the way we deliver programs and services in light of COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CABR Unit supported the PAC in reiterating the ongoing social and community, economic and health services deficits that the City of Toronto urgently needs to address to create a more equitable city during the recovery and rebuilding phases of addressing COVID-19.</li> </ul>
	<b>COVID-19 Anti-Black Racism Analysis Toolkit</b>	The Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit responded to mounting requests for Black-focused COVID-19 guidance and analysis by creating the Anti-Black Racism COVID-19 Analysis Toolkit. The toolkit expanded on the Unit's existing anti-Black racism analysis tool shared in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, and provides direct guidance to staff, teams, and organizations inside and outside of the City of Toronto aiming to apply an ABR analysis to their COVID-19 recovery and response activities, planning and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The toolkit has been requested as Anti-Black Racism resource by a number of organizations and the unit delivered a number of internal City staff and divisions and external partners</li> </ul>

**COVID-19 Key Takeaways**

COVID-19's disproportionate impact on Black Torontonians and neighbourhoods with high concentrations of Black populations has exposed the need for intensified policy planning and implementation, as well as funding and investments that enhance the resilience and well-being of Black communities. The pandemic's impact on Black communities will be long lasting. The impacts of unaddressed systemic anti-Black racism, ongoing policy and investment deficits, and the socio-systemic shock of the pandemic could deepen Toronto's persisting and growing racialized socio-economic and spatial divide in our city. This would cement growing racial segregation, creating neighbourhoods with a socially and fiscally untenable level of vulnerability to the kinds of economic and social pressures emerging from and intensified by COVID-19. Disproportionate Black food insecurity is cycling into a Black food crisis. Heightened housing insecurity is resulting in dramatic increases in Black homelessness and hidden homelessness. Disproportionately

high and unnecessary police contact is remains a chronic outcome of these dynamics. Realizing a racially just and equitable society requires a dramatic acceleration in systemic change and investment to redirect Toronto's current trajectory.

Black Serving, Black Led, and Black focused (B3) organizations have served as the frontline response to COVID-19 for Black communities, filling in critical gaps despite resource constraints and chronic underinvestment. The Black Resilience Cluster, COVID-19 B3 funding, the City of Toronto's engagement with Black communities demonstrated how essential and vital a thriving and sustainable Black organization eco-system is to health and resilience of Black Toronto.

Black organizations located in neighbourhoods with high populations of Black residents served as the City of Toronto's early warning system, identifying critically vulnerable Black populations including Black queer and trans youth, students, seniors, formerly incarcerated, undocumented residents and residents with pre-existing conditions.

B3 organizations are the best positioned, most informed and most culturally responsive intervention pathways for emergency response and will continue to be crucial contributors to efforts to recover and rebuild post COVID-19.