

A photograph of three elderly people, two men and one woman, smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman in the foreground is wearing a white headscarf and a light-colored patterned top. The men are in the background, one with a white mustache and the other with glasses.

# Toronto Seniors Strategy Version 2.0 **ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE**



[www.toronto.ca/seniors](http://www.toronto.ca/seniors)



Prepared by Seniors Services and Long-Term Care, City of Toronto (Oct. 2020)

## Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0 – Progress Update (November 2020)

### **Introduction**

2020 has been a challenging year for seniors, for those that care for them and for the organizations that support them. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted seniors, and deepened social, economic and health crises faced by vulnerable individuals including isolation, food access, financial insecurity, digital divide and mental health, in addition to the health risks of the virus itself.

However, during this unprecedented time, organizations, volunteer groups and City staff members showed resiliency and creativity as they rapidly put into place meaningful responses to support seniors to meet their essential needs, reduce isolation, address mental health needs, and beyond that, to connect virtually and meet seniors' needs in new ways.

Many City-led recommendations of the Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0 were paused during COVID-19, as City staff were redeployed to support emergency response in public health, long-term care, shelters and more. Despite this slowdown, and the incredible amount of work put into other seniors-related COVID-19 initiatives, progress continues on the Toronto Seniors Strategy. This report provides an overview of that progress and a brief summary of the City's and partners' COVID-19 response for seniors.

### **Background – Toronto Seniors Strategy Version 2.0**

In May 2018, City Council unanimously adopted Version 2.0 of the Toronto Seniors Strategy (TSS2.0), with 27 high-impact recommendations that built upon the original Seniors Strategy to improve the wellbeing of seniors across Toronto. The domains of action included in the TSS2.0 are: Transportation, Housing, Health, Employment and Income, and Access to Information. TSS2.0 was developed through an extensive community engagement process that reached 10,000 Torontonians – mostly seniors and people who care about them.

TSS2.0 is closely monitored by the Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table, the City's multi-sector stakeholder table focused on seniors and aging, that includes service providers, seniors and caregivers, health care providers, researchers, provincial and federal partners, advocacy groups, City/agency staff, and many others.

Every year, the City of Toronto publicly reports on the progress of the recommendations of TSS2.0. The goal is to fully implement all recommendations by 2023 (a 5-year term).

TSS2.0 complements other key initiatives underway at the City to support the quality of life, involvement, access to services, and health and wellbeing of older adults in Toronto. This includes a new Integrated Service Model in TCHC seniors' buildings, improved information-sharing and access to services, a focus on understanding the specific needs of Black and Indigenous seniors and elders and other racialized and vulnerable groups, and the ongoing COVID-19 response to support seniors.

### **TSS2.0 Progress in 2020**

Before COVID-19, progress of TSS2.0 was well underway with all 27 recommendations actioned and at various stages of implementation, with over half fully implemented. Although progress has slowed as City staff and partners pivoted to lead COVID-19 emergency response, recommendations continue to move forward, with 18 fully implemented (67%).

In tandem with COVID-19 related seniors' initiatives, City staff members and external partners have continued to advance TSS2.0 priorities, including:

- Growing the HomeShare program to match seniors with student housemates
- Visiting seniors through Community Paramedicine while reducing 911 calls
- Creating "Seniors Safety Zones" on roads and construct kilometers of new sidewalk
- Approving/building new affordable housing for seniors, some with support services
- Providing much-needed property tax and utility bill relief to low-income seniors
- Developing a training curriculum to support Toronto Police working with seniors.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the need for additional efforts in certain areas such as access to technology (hardware, internet connection and training/literacy/confidence for seniors), and addressing disproportionate social, economic and health disparities facing Black, Indigenous, racialized and other seniors. These and other key emerging issues will influence future Accountability Table agendas and longer-term planning.

See [Appendix A](#) for the status of each TSS2.0 recommendation, with COVID-19 updates.

### **COVID-19 Response for Seniors in 2020**

The immediate and real impacts of COVID-19 on many vulnerable seniors – mental health, social isolation, disconnection and the digital divide, lack of access to essentials (e.g. food, medication, pet supplies, banking, PPE), and difficulties navigating complex health information – highlighted the urgent need for supports. The community sector and multiple City divisions stepped in to identify, track, and respond to the needs of vulnerable seniors across the city, in addition to Federal and Provincial responses.

This is in addition to the City's response to COVID-19 in its directly-operated long-term care homes. Early phase 1 initiatives are summarized in [COVID-19 Pandemic in the City of Toronto Long-Term Care Homes](#) with resurgence plans now in place for phase 2.

See [Appendix B](#) for examples of COVID-19 response initiatives for Toronto seniors led by the City and Accountability Table partners, ranging from food access programs, to mental health supports, virtual programming, friendly phone calls, porch visits, wellness package drop-offs, on-site health clinics, and much more. This work continues to evolve.

### **Next Steps and Thank You**

Given the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus for the City will be to slow the spread of new cases, improve outcomes for vulnerable populations such as seniors and ensure the City continues to deliver its important services. Progress will also continue to be made on specific TSS2.0 recommendations.

Going forward, issues identified or magnified during the pandemic (e.g. access to technology) and highlighted through the [Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild](#), will become key strategic focus areas for the City and partners, to support seniors through and beyond this pandemic.

The City of Toronto would like to acknowledge its Accountability Table partners, Co-Chairs Dr. Samir Sinha and Cllr. Matlow, City and agency staff supporting seniors throughout COVID-19, the broader seniors-serving community sector, health care partners, and all Torontonians (including many seniors) who volunteer to support older adults throughout this challenging time. Your ongoing leadership, hard work and service to others is deeply appreciated, and will continue to make a meaningful impact on the wellbeing of seniors and others in our city.

## APPENDIX A - TSS2.0 Progress Update Details (as of October 1, 2020)



### INTEGRATED CITY SENIORS HOUSING AND SERVICES ENTITY

Recommendation (and Lead Division)	Status	Progress Update	COVID-19 Update (if applicable)
1 - The City of Toronto will initiate a process to develop a seniors housing and services entity at the City dedicated to taking a service system management approach to the needs of all seniors and integrating City services for seniors. <i>(Seniors Services and Long-Term Care - SSLTC)</i>	Fully Implemented	The Seniors Services team was established within the newly-renamed SSLTC division in 2019, with responsibility for numerous priority projects including: Integrated Service Model for seniors housing in TCHC, review of 40+ City services for seniors to improve and coordinate access, driving the Seniors Strategy and Accountability Table network, and ongoing support to other divisions, seniors, partners, Council.	Since March 2020, many SSLTC staff members were redeployed to support essential LTC operations, as well as to lead and support COVID-19 initiatives for seniors in the community such as: clear, centralized information-sharing for seniors, caregivers, Councillors, housing providers, agencies; partner engagement to track and escalate issues, coordinating donations (cloth masks, technology, staff gifts), etc.



### HEALTH

Recommendation (and Lead Division)	Status	Progress Update	COVID-19 Update
2 - The City of Toronto will explore how to expand access to free dental health services for low-income seniors through Toronto Public Health. <i>(Toronto Public Health)</i>	Fully implemented	The Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program was launched in 2019 to help low-income seniors to access dental care. TPH was provided with capital funding to enhance 4 existing clinics and procure 2 mobile dental clinic vans. Further, in August 2020, the Province announced \$25M capital funding for expansion of access including 6 projects in Toronto.	COVID-19 paused some of the work on procurement of 2 new dental vans but this has now resumed. 4 clinic enhancements are all in progress currently, targeted for late 2020/21. TPH is also in the process of developing funding agreements with partners for the 6 new projects in Toronto.

<b>Recommendation</b> <i>(and Lead Division)</i>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
3 - The City of Toronto in partnership with Toronto Community Housing will seek provincial funding for additional Seniors Active Living Centres in Toronto. <i>(SSLTC)</i>	Partially implemented	The Province is not currently receiving applications or providing funding for additional SALCs. However, Seniors Services is strengthening connections with the SALC sector and Province, and the Accountability Table also welcomes new members including a Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility SALC lead for the Province and 2 new SALCs (in addition to having OACAO as a key member). New opportunities for funding and support will be explored and widely promoted.	Many SALCs have been offering virtual programming throughout COVID-19 as well as Seniors Centres Without Walls (phone call programming, no internet required) and the City has been compiling and promoting these through the <a href="#">Stay, Play &amp; Learn @ Home</a> webpage and through frequent communications to seniors and other stakeholders.
4 - Toronto Public Library will support social connectedness by expanding digital literacy programs for seniors in libraries. <i>(Toronto Public Library)</i>	Partially implemented	In addition to the successful Seniors Digital Literacy pilot programs in 2019, and the community librarian pilot program in select TCH seniors buildings, TPL continues to support digital literacy. TPL received funding [Computers for Success Canada] for 6 youth interns to offer digital literacy support over the telephone or virtually for fall/winter 2020-21, and continues to seek funding to implement a permanent program. TPL continues to expand its formal partnerships in support for seniors, most recently with CanAge.	Beginners' digital literacy classes have not been reinstated in branch or online; limited 1:1 digital instruction has been offered in reopened branches. TPL also conducted wellness checks by phone with seniors, and offered numerous webinars for seniors including financial literacy, service navigation, legal issues and health and wellness. Additionally, TPL offered donated WiFi hotspots and refurbished laptops for community agencies to deliver to individuals and families in need, including seniors.
5 - The City of Toronto will expand Community Paramedicine programming in order to better support seniors who are high-volume 911 callers with non-emergency community care and supports. <i>(Toronto Paramedic Services)</i>	Fully implemented	Community Referrals by EMS, the Home Visit Program (CP@Home) and Wellness Clinics in TCH buildings all continue to support seniors. In follow-up assessments, clients report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved daily activity 70%</li> <li>• Decreased pain 64%</li> <li>• Better mobility 61%</li> </ul>	For the CP@Home visiting program, this slowed in 2020 due to COVID-19 impacts; however, virtual assessments were conducted and follow-ups were made with existing clients. In addition to continuing with these 3 Community Paramedicine programs, the team also added a

<b>Recommendation (and Lead Division)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better self-care 57%</li> <li>• Less depressed/anxious 50%</li> </ul> <p>In 2019 there were 5116 Community Referrals by EMS, and 261 wellness clinics with over 3800 assessments.</p>	COVID-19 response which includes testing for Fire, Police and Paramedic services and assisting LHINs with mobile testing.
6 - The City of Toronto will work with the Province of Ontario and community partners to develop a Toronto Caregivers Strategy with an emphasis on the needs of senior caregivers. <i>(SSLTC)</i>	Partially implemented	Alzheimer Society of Toronto (AST) is working with partners and leading the development of the City of Toronto Caregivers Strategy and are currently well underway with focus groups and a literature scan. The Strategy is expected to launch in April 2021.	To ensure the safety of all participants, AST has moved to a virtual format for all focus groups, already hosting 8 caregiver groups, 4 upcoming health care provider groups and 2 service provider groups.
7 - The City of Toronto will consider senior-friendly outdoor fitness equipment in the design and refurbishment of parks. <i>(Parks, Forestry &amp; Recreation)</i>	Fully implemented	PFR installed new senior-friendly fitness equipment in 16 parks in 2019 and an additional 4 are completed or underway for 2020. The public can now locate parks that have outdoor fitness equipment using a <a href="#">new interactive map</a> . PFR has also completed a condition assessment of the ~600 km of improved parkland trails and paths, to help users decide on trails that best fit their needs. Users will be able to access information on trail width and length, maximum gradient, closest TTC stop, surface type and amenities in proximity (e.g. washroom) in spring 2021.	
8 - The City of Toronto will work with Toronto Community Housing and FoodShare to establish healthy food access initiatives that are accessible to seniors living in social housing through Toronto Public Health and the Toronto Food Policy Council. <i>(Toronto Public Health)</i>	Fully Implemented	In partnership with TCH, FoodShare's Mobile Good Food Market made 35,000 lbs of affordable produce available through 227 markets at 5 seniors-designated TCH buildings in 2019. In 2018, through a partnership with Seed to Table, TPH developed a Toolkit for other agencies hoping to establish Food Buyers Club.	TPH also helped develop the <a href="#">Red Cross Food Hamper Delivery</a> program for seniors and other vulnerable residents with challenges accessing food during the pandemic, in operation since April. TPH receives weekly reports from the Red Cross on the number of residents served and a heat map of where the hampers are delivered.

Recommendation (and Lead Division)	Status	Progress Update	COVID-19 Update
9 - The City of Toronto will develop Housing Opportunities Toronto: Housing Action Plan (2020-2030) accounting for the evolving demographics and needs of older Torontonians over the next decade. (Housing Secretariat – HS; and Shelter, Support & Housing Administration - SSHA)	Fully implemented	The HousingTO Action Plan was approved by Council in December 2019 and its implementation plan was approved in September 2020. The main approaches included in the plan to address the needs of seniors over the next 10 years include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping seniors where they are – through providing a range of financial assistance programs, renovation programs, and layering in other health care /support services to promote independent living for seniors.</li> <li>• Supporting the creation of new affordable, supportive housing and LTC homes appropriate for seniors.</li> </ul>	COVID-19 has impacted various actions of the HousingTO Plan in different ways. For example, the deadline to apply for the Property Tax, Water & Solid Waste Relief Program for low-income seniors has been extended to October 30, 2020. Further, the Provincial Government announced a \$1.75 billion province-wide investment to create more long-term care beds and redevelop older ones in addition to other LTC funding investments. Many projects were able to continue, including planning for the George Street Revitalization project, and funding approvals for the redevelopment of the City's Carefree Lodge LTC home.
10 - The City of Toronto will address the specific and growing needs of older Torontonians by continuing to create new affordable housing and fund housing repairs and accessibility modifications for seniors by delivering federal-provincial-City funding and City incentives. (HS & SSHA)	Fully implemented	The City continues to support the creation of housing that is affordable and suitable to low-income seniors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City-owned land at 140 Merton Street will be used to create approximately 180 seniors affordable rental housing units, also providing community space for seniors-serving community agencies.</li> <li>• City is providing incentives for up to 303 affordable rental homes with support services for seniors to be created at 1250 Markham Rd. Additionally, \$1.5 million was invested through Toronto Renovates in 2020 to</li> </ul>	

<b>Recommendation (and Lead Division)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
		assist low-income senior homeowners make accessibility modifications and repairs in their homes.	
11 - The City of Toronto will seek funding from the HomeShare program in Toronto to connect seniors with a spare room with university and college students seeking affordable housing. (SSLTC)	Fully implemented	Although City of Toronto initial innovation program funding has come to an end, the HomeShare program, delivered by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly, continues to grow, with 212 matches (between seniors and post-secondary students) made to date. Additionally, NICE has been looking into expansion, sharing best practice and supporting other cities to launch similar homesharing programs.	Program social workers do check-ins with program participants and these continued during the pandemic, giving participants an opportunity to voice any concerns with respect to health and safety.
12 - The City of Toronto will develop a new homeless shelter that provides specialized services for seniors and older adults. (SSHA)	Fully implemented	Two new homeless shelters for seniors have opened in Toronto: 2671 Islington Avenue (opened in December 2018, with 45 beds and another 47 beds planned to be added by Q4 2020) and 3306 Kingston Road (Scarborough Village Residence, opened in April 2019 with 93 beds). Many shelter clients have now been permanently housed including 17 from Islington Seniors Shelter in 2020, 36 from Scarborough Village Residence in 2020 and 32 in 2019.	All shelters are currently operating with reduced capacity due to physical distancing requirements. SSHA has implemented strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system, as well as partnered with health partners to assess client risk of COVID-19 and prioritize moves to safer spaces including hotels and permanent housing for those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, particularly seniors.
13 - The City of Toronto will implement the provincial Home for Good program funding to create and maintain housing with supports that meet the needs of formerly homeless persons including seniors. (SSHA)	Fully implemented	\$25M in annual funding was allocated to support homeless people to move into housing, including 308 seniors. Two programs with access to 40 new units are funded specifically for seniors. Housing with supports funding continues. Qualitative feedback indicates that seniors are	Support service delivery has been adapted to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols including physical distancing, providing masks and sanitizer, and replacing some support visits with calls and video meetings.

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		benefitting from housing with supports and are receiving a variety of support services.	
14 - The City of Toronto will amend the Official Plan to recognize the City's commitment to age-friendly principles. <i>(City Planning)</i>	Partially implemented	City Planning will recognize the City's commitment to age-friendly principles in the Official Plan review, which is underway. They have also incorporated language to reference seniors and age-friendliness in Secondary Plan studies.	
15 - The City of Toronto will negotiate the use of Section 37 benefits to develop new neighbourhood facilities to meet the needs of seniors as appropriate. <i>(City Planning)</i>	Partially implemented	In 2019, \$8.4 million in Section 37 benefits were secured specifically for new community or social facilities; to date in 2020, approximately \$3 million were secured for this. Included in the funds secured for 2019/2020 was \$3,050,000 for the creation of a multi-purpose community space at 20 Brunel Court, and a Community Agency Space (minimum 465 square metres) at 1467 Bathurst Street, which can be programmed for senior activities.	
16 - The City of Toronto will provide seniors with new and customized information and tools that will empower them to ensure that they and their neighbours are living in a fire safe environment. <i>(Toronto Fire Services)</i>	Fully implemented	Toronto Fire Services has been adapting its fire education and outreach strategy for COVID-19 including conducting in-person static displays at 83 TCHC high-rises, along with fire safety educational announcements within the building over the emergency voice communication systems, as well as visits to all 83 seniors housing sites prior to the end of 2020.	Toronto Fire Services was unable to continue its regular education program in TCHC high-rises during COVID-19 as public gatherings were restricted. However, they have been working with TCHC on the new strategy detailed here.



## TRANSPORTATION

<b>Recommendation (and Lead Division)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
17 - The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) will develop and launch a new public awareness campaign to advance a culture of respect and civility for the benefit of seniors and other riders. (TTC)	Fully implemented	The "Share the Space" campaign was launched in Summer 2018 and continued into 2019. This campaign encouraged riders to offer their seat to seniors, those with disabilities and pregnant women. It included posters and advertisements on video screens in subway stations, posters onboard TTC vehicles, etc. TTC is planning another campaign for the future, with exact timing TBD. In the interim, TTC continues to run the campaign.	Future similar campaigns have had to be deferred as COVID-19-related advertising and education has taken priority.
18 - The City of Toronto will, as part of its commitment to Vision Zero, identify and install additional Seniors Safety Zones in conjunction with the Road Safety Plan. (Transportation Services- TS)	Fully implemented	Council adopted Vision Zero 2.0 on July 16, 2019. 64 Seniors Safety Zones have been identified to date by Transportation Services across the city. Transportation Services is actively engaging seniors to understand their transportation concerns in Vision Zero locations.	
19 - The City of Toronto will construct new sidewalks on roads where they are missing to improve walkability, mobility and accessibility of City streets. (TS)	Fully implemented	Since the adoption of Version 2.0 of the Toronto Seniors Strategy, 38 new sidewalks totalling over 15 kilometers of sidewalks have been constructed and an additional 3 kilometers are planned for completion by end of 2020. Funds were made available from the Federal Government's Public Transit Infrastructure Fund.	
20 - The Toronto Transit Commission will develop a travel	Fully implemented	Based on the success of its 2018 pilot program, TTC/Wheel-Trans has	The TTC made a decision to temporarily suspend in-person travel training in

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training program to support increased senior access to public transit. (TTC)		permanently implemented a Travel Training program. Seniors and persons with disabilities are provided with expert training to improve the skills and confidence needed to use the conventional TTC (bus, streetcar, and subway). The program includes: one-on-one, personalized training, orientation sessions, subway station exploration days, group presentations, online /telephone training modules and print materials. Participants receive “please kneel the bus” flashcards and “please offer me a seat” buttons. There have been 350 participants to date. As of June 2020, over 1,400 customers have expressed interest in travel training, with 510 receiving training (including 190 receiving in-person training).	March 2020, and all travel training in June 2020. TTC is targeting December 2020 to re-launch, depending on the evolving COVID situation/restrictions.



## EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

<b>Recommendation (and Lead Division)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
21 - The City of Toronto will work with community partners under Toronto For All to develop a workplace anti-ageism campaign. (SSLTC)	Fully implemented	The Anti-Ageism campaign ran in Toronto from Nov 4-Dec 1, 2019. It was well received by the public and the media. The campaign was created by the City in concert with an Advisory Committee, a community partner and PUBLIC Inc.	
22 - 519, Senior Pride Network and other community partners to develop a public awareness and education campaign addressing	Partially implemented	City staff have met with The 519 to initiate a work plan for the campaign, which includes the identification of relevant community partners. Once identified,	This recommendation had to be paused in 2020 due to SSLTC staff re-assignment to support emergency COVID-19 response.

Recommendation (and Lead Division)	Status	Progress Update	COVID-19 Update
homophobia and transphobia affecting seniors. (SSLTC)		partners will be invited to an exploratory meeting. Funding opportunities are being explored.	
23 - The City of Toronto will expand employment support services to further address the needs of older workers, focusing on those in receipt of Ontario Works. (Toronto Employment and Social Services)	Fully implemented	As of Sep 21, 2020 TESS provided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and employment programs to 380 clients (aged 45+), and</li> <li>• Wrap around supports to 216 clients (45+) through a new program stream with non-profit and community based providers for Ontario Works clients who are facing challenges compounded by the COVID-19 crisis.</li> </ul>	Due to COVID-19, TESS had to suspend many workforce development programs and onsite activities such as tax clinics and information sessions, in order to focus on meeting the urgent financial needs of OW clients and low-income and vulnerable city residents including seniors. Overall, applicants aged 45+ make up approximately 35% of Toronto's monthly OW caseload. This composition has not seen significant changes as a result of COVID-19 and takeup of CERB.
24 - The City of Toronto will enhance public awareness of property tax deferral and cancellation programs. (Revenue Services)	Fully implemented	Revenue Services has redesigned their program brochure with clear messaging and full colour graphics, providing information on how to apply for property tax deferral/ cancellation programs, and distributed 7,100 brochures to all Libraries, Community Recreation Centres, Mayor and Councillor's Offices, Customer Service Counters in TCH and Civic Centre locations. Additionally, the Property Tax, Water Rebate and Solid Waste Relief Programs will be obtaining income verification through an automated process with the CRA in the near future, with a goal to create a simpler, quicker and more efficient process of determining program eligibility. Applications will also be offered online. (This <a href="#">passed through Council in 2020</a> ).	Due to COVID-19, the application deadline for 2020 has been extended to end of October, 2020, to enable more seniors to access this program. Progress on implementation of automated income verification and online application form has been slower due to COVID-19 and its impacts on staff and service levels.

<b>Recommendation (and Lead Division)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Progress Update</b>	<b>COVID-19 Update</b>
25 - The City of Toronto will work with the Seniors Strategy Accountability Table and other community partners to update and circulate the new Services for Seniors in Toronto directory. (SSLTC)	Partially implemented	SSLTC is actively working with partners such as 211 to build on the inventory of City, provincial, federal and community-sector services that have been identified through SSHA's research and the 211 Database. The goal is to present the information in a clear and simple way that can be easily kept up to date and shared widely with a range of linguistic communities. Seniors will be actively involved in reviewing and developing.	This recommendation had to be paused in 2020 due to staff re-assignment to support critical LTC home operations and other COVID-19 urgent response initiatives. However, it is now underway again and will help many seniors to navigate support services available to them, a key need further highlighted during COVID-19.
26 - The City of Toronto will work with all Ward Councillors to hold Seniors Active Living Fairs in order to facilitate outreach and communication of the burgeoning range of diverse products and services available for seniors. (SSLTC)	Partially implemented	In 2018-19 and 2019-20, 32 Seniors Active Living Fairs were held (or planned) in 16 wards – a spread to 4 new wards, and increase of 15 new fairs. Unfortunately COVID-19 made Seniors Active Living Fairs impossible this year, however the City will continue to support virtual options too.	While Seniors Active Living Fairs are not currently permitted given COVID-19 restrictions, the City continues to support and promote the virtual and telephone programming offered by many SALCs (listed on " <a href="#">Stay, Play, Learn @ Home</a> ") and is committed to reaching agencies and seniors in all wards across the City.
27 - Toronto Police Service, in collaboration with key partners, will create a seniors-inclusive training curriculum aimed at increasing officer awareness around ageing related issues and increasing officer capacity to connect seniors to appropriate community services. (Toronto Police Services & SSLTC)	Partially implemented	Dr. Samir Sinha has received a federal New Horizons Grant of 25K to assist in the development of a Toronto Police Services Curriculum to Support Better Working with Older Adults. Dr. Sinha, SSLTC and TPS had meetings over the summer to discuss the design of the curriculum and COVID-19 implications on implementation. Further, a literature review has been completed and a logic model has been created to guide the project.	The necessity for virtual/online education and training is one of the impacts of COVID-19. Virtual training and tools will be considered during the development of a seniors-inclusive training curriculum.

## APPENDIX B – COVID-19 Response for Seniors – City and Accountability Table

COVID-19 had significant impacts on vulnerable seniors in our communities, in addition to the impacts in long-term care homes. Based on public health orders emerging in March 2020, all seniors age 70+ were directed to stay home and self-isolate. Many agencies serving vulnerable seniors in the community, as well as City-run programs, had to scale back or suspend operations meaning that many seniors were unable to access the same level of support that they usually depend on for aging in place. This is in addition to closures of libraries, Seniors Active Living Centres, community recreation centres and other locations that often form an important part of healthy, active living for many seniors. Even accessing basic necessities such as a bank machine or a laundry/mail room became challenging, as well as being able to safely travel to and use Emergency Cooling Centres on heat alert days.

The isolation recommendations and closure of seniors programs and services, although important for maintaining safety, further exacerbated social isolation and in turn mental health challenges, as well as challenges accessing food, prescriptions and other essentials. Intersecting vulnerabilities including race, background, income, housing situation, health and mobility, sexual orientation, immigration status, and many others further exacerbated the challenges faced by many seniors throughout COVID-19. There can also often be language and cognition barriers for seniors trying to navigate so much complex information about health guidance, supports available, and other constantly-changing messaging. Heightened risk of elder abuse and frauds, as well as financial insecurity, were compounding challenges.

There was a rapid shift during COVID-19 with programs and services, medical appointments, access to benefits, and social visits all moving to virtual platforms which has allowed many seniors to stay connected to their social network, medical care, finances, and more. However, this shift has also exacerbated existing digital access challenges faced by many vulnerable seniors. This may lead to increased social isolation, disconnection from necessary health and community support services, difficulty applying for benefits and other programs, and lack of full and equitable participation in society.

Immediately, the community service sector, the City, and other orders of government began to implement initiatives to respond to these and other serious challenges facing seniors. (This is in addition to the City's continuing [response to COVID-19 in its 10 long-term care homes](#)).

COVID-19 response initiatives by the City, City agencies (e.g. Library) and TCHC include:

<b>City &amp; Community Sector Partnership</b>	The City-United Way Community Coordination Plan offered an effective model for community agencies (grouped by neighbourhood/ thematic cluster) to solve issues together or to escalate for City support; The City also held a daily phone call with hundreds of agencies at 1:30 pm
<b>Technology</b>	Installation of free WiFi in long-term care homes and shelters and in 25 apartment towers in low-income neighbourhoods; Distribution of donated phones/tablets and WiFi hotspots to seniors and senior-serving agencies
<b>Check-in phone calls for clients</b>	Many teams whose in-person programming was cancelled/paused did wellness checks with service users by phone (e.g. Library, Adult Day Programs, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Fire Services, etc.)

<b>Food hampers</b>	In partnership with Red Cross, regular delivery of free food hamper baskets for those in need who did not have other food supports
<b>Mental health supports</b>	In partnership with 211 and mental health service providers, a program offering free, immediate, culturally-responsive mental health supports by phone, text or online (and for some seniors in crisis, in person)
<b>Supplies for pet owners</b>	In partnership with PetSmart Charities of Canada, financial supports for pet owners who need assistance getting pet food and supplies
<b>Information-sharing</b>	For seniors, caregivers, Councillors, housing providers, agencies – e.g. webinars, translated flyers, ChatBot, presentations, Q&A sessions, more
<b>Virtual programming</b>	Development of " <a href="#">Stay, Play &amp; Learn @ Home</a> " webpage – centralized list of free virtual activities, including many activities specifically for seniors
<b>Staff redeployment</b>	Staff across the City volunteered to support critical operations in the City's 10 LTC homes as well as in shelters, Public Health and other areas
<b>Multi-tier Homelessness Response</b>	Strategies to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system, including prioritizing moves to safer spaces like hotels, and permanent housing for those particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, particularly seniors
<b>Donations coordination</b>	Accessing and coordinating donations to distribute to seniors and seniors-serving staff, including technology, cloth masks for Supportive Housing
<b>Supporting TCHC tenants</b>	Conducting over 12,000 wellness checks with all Seniors Housing households, accessing and delivering food, working with partners to offer on-site health clinics, and enhancing cleaning/IPAC and info-sharing
<b>Other</b>	This is a non-exhaustive list of examples of City-led COVID-19 response

Agencies and organizations on the Seniors Strategy Accountability Table, as well as on the Community Coordination Plan and the City-Community Response Table, led so much of the on-the-ground response supporting seniors in the community, with their large and growing volunteer bases mobilized. Examples of initiatives included:

- Delivery of food, medications and essentials
- Phone call or porch visit wellness checks
- Rapid move to offer online virtual programs
- Senior Centres Without Walls (by phone)
- Delivery of wellness packages and activities
- On-site, virtual health care pilot programs
- Sharing donations of technology/essentials, and
- Many more initiatives to reach and support clients as well as unconnected seniors.

These organizations also continued to provide critical in-person programs to support vulnerable seniors using PPE and other safety protocols (e.g. personal care support, crisis support, transportation to medical appointments).

**NEED HELP DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK?**

We can help you pick up essentials like groceries and household items.

Call the **Friendly Neighbour Hotline**

Toll-free • available in 160 languages  
**1 (855) 581-9580** between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday  
\*Service is only available for seniors in low-income housing in Toronto at this time.

**Here's how it works:**

1. Connect with a volunteer by calling the Hotline.
2. Let the volunteer know what you need.
3. Pick up and pay in the lobby. No delivery fees! (cash preferred)

\*Due to volume, we ask that you keep your order to 8 items or less.

Call 2-1-1 for information and referral to community and social services  
 Call 9-1-1 if you have a health emergency

ORGANIZED BY  
**UHN** **OPENLAB**

The Federal and Provincial governments offered financial supports (e.g. GIS, OAS, GAINS increases), funding for community support initiatives, free virtual tax clinics, and more.

As the pandemic progresses, City, community sector and others will continue to play a key role in supporting and enabling vulnerable seniors to stay safe and healthy, have essential needs met, stay connected, and adapt to the ongoing and evolving impacts of the pandemic.



## COVID-19 Supports for Seniors in Toronto

Informational Webinar for  
Tower Renewal & Rent Safe Housing Providers  
Thursday, May 28, 2020 – 10 am

**Toronto** Seniors Services and Long-Term Care



### COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM

#### FOOD PANTRY AND HOUSEHOLD ESSENTIALS

- We need donations of non-perishable foods and other essential items. See back of page for list of key items.
- We need volunteers to sort and package items for seniors.

#### GROCERY DELIVERY

- We need volunteers to deliver food and essentials for seniors who are not able to shop, or do not feel safe leaving their homes.

#### MEALS ON WHEELS

- We are continuing this essential program during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Hot and frozen meals delivered to seniors' doors 7 days a week for a low cost.
- We need additional volunteer drivers with access to a vehicle.

## New Horizons for Seniors Webinar Series 2020

### Seniors: Let's Talk COVID-19 & Reopening

**Thursday, August 6, 2020**  
**12:45- 1:45 PM**

**Featuring Dr. Vinita Dubey**  
Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Toronto Public Health

In this session, Dr. Dubey will answer your questions regarding COVID-19, reopening in Phase # 3 and what that means for seniors in Toronto.

**Please forward your questions by August 4 to:**  
[tcanhwebinars@gmail.com](mailto:tcanhwebinars@gmail.com)

Cost: Free  
Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/lets-talk-covid-19-re-opening-tickets-115215990128>

For help registering please call 416-630-7000

## COVID-19 Chat

Hi! I'm the COVID-19 chatbot. I'm programmed to help you find resources and provide answers to your COVID-19 questions.

Please don't include any personal or health information in your questions. Learn more about me and [how I work](#).