

— 2020 —

SHA

Annual Report

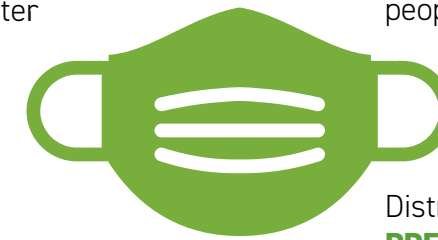


2020 Accomplishments

Land Acknowledgment for Toronto

We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Launched a **three-tiered response to COVID-19** in the shelter system in March and the **Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy** in September



Opened Canada's **first COVID-19 isolation and recovery site** for people experiencing homelessness and served 1,600 people

Distributed **4 million pieces of PPE** across the shelter system

Redeployed over 700 non-frontline City staff to open **42 temporary shelters sites** to enable physical distancing

Assisted just over **6,000 people to move from the shelter system** into stable housing



Supported just over **6,100 people on the Centralized Waiting List** to move into rent-gear-to-income housing or access housing through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit

Provided close to **20,000 people with emergency shelter** in City-run and -funded shelters and 24-hour respites



Issued a request for proposals for the **George Street Revitalization project**, which will transform the City's Seaton House men's shelter

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Message from the GM



The past year has been a whirlwind for everyone at Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA). In a way, this year's annual report is a story about remarkable resilience in the spirit of public service. Under extreme personal and public pressure, as a team, we have consistently stepped up and delivered. We extended our shelter system to allow for physical distancing at record pace. We successfully integrated hundreds of redeployed staff into our network of service locations, further demonstrating the important work we conduct to our inter-divisional colleagues. We renewed our commitment to confronting anti-Black racism and addressing Indigenous homelessness. We continued our commitment to improve the way people access the housing supports they need.

As I look back on everything we have faced together, I am overwhelmed with sense of pride and deep respect for each of you and your outstanding efforts in 2020. This has not been an easy year for anyone, yet I am confident that together we will take what we have learned in 2020 and use that knowledge to strengthen our organizational culture, the health of our division and the effectiveness of our service system as a whole.

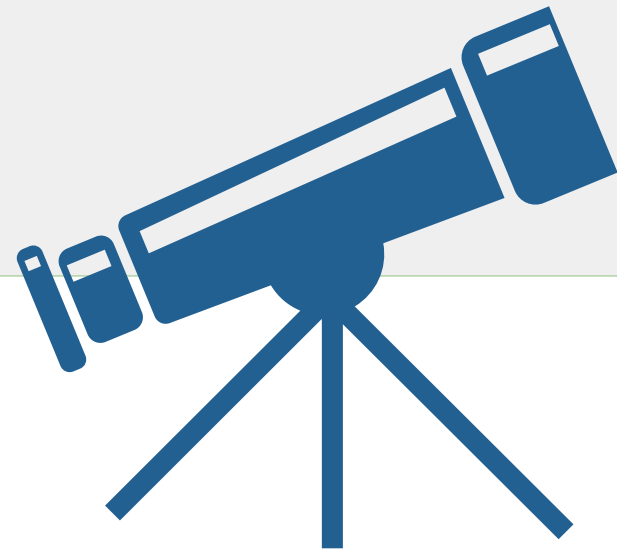
The achievements highlighted in these pages are a direct result of the dedication and professionalism of the staff within SSHA, our redeployed staff and our many community agencies whose partnerships are ever so vital. Thank you all for your continued dedication, your sacrifice, your strength.

Looking forward, our work will continue to be guided by a commitment to our values of inclusiveness, building a positive workplace, being client-centred, solution-focussed, accountable and collaborative.

As always, with respect and appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MAB'.

Mary-Anne Bédard



VISION

Toronto is a city where everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home



MISSION

SSHA manages a coordinated and effective system of shelter and housing services to improve the housing stability of people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Toronto

OUR VALUES

We are building a positive workplace:

We will develop engaged, high-performing, and diverse employees by building capacity and embracing inclusion.

We are collaborative:

We will work together with service users, colleagues, service delivery partners, and stakeholders to achieve common goals.

We are accountable:

We will manage resources responsibly and work with integrity and transparency to provide service delivery excellence.

We are client-centred:

We will treat service users with respect, dignity, and kindness and provide services that are responsive to their unique and changing needs.

We are inclusive:

We will ensure that all individuals have fair and equitable access to all of our services and will work to eliminate barriers.

We are solution-focused:

We will be bold in seeking creative ways to improve services and outcomes, working from an evidence and strengths-based approach.

What We Do

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING FIRST SOLUTIONS

Homeless Outreach and Overnight Services

We provide overnight accommodation and related support services to assist people experiencing homelessness to move into housing. We do this through emergency and transitional shelters and low-barrier 24-hour respite sites.

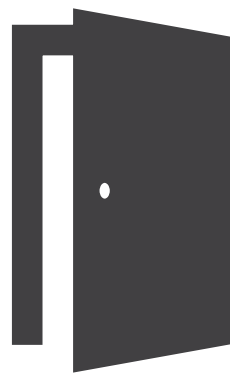
We do street outreach to engage people experiencing homelessness who are sleeping outdoors, with a focus on establishing supportive relationships to address immediate health and safety needs and provide supports to move into housing.

Finding Housing and Preventing Homelessness

We assist people to find housing and prevent homelessness by connecting them to community services and resources. This includes assistance with housing applications; informal mediation with landlords; access to information on tenant rights and responsibilities; and referrals to legal clinics, Toronto Rent Bank program, and financial trusteeship programs.

Housing Support Services

We help people maintain their housing and achieve greater housing stability. Our supports can be linked to a housing unit or can move with the tenant, and can be used in the private market or with non-profit housing providers.



SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING SYSTEM

Housing Benefits

We provide monthly financial benefits to make rental housing more affordable, including rent-geared-to-income subsidies, commercial rent supplements, housing allowances and portable housing benefits.

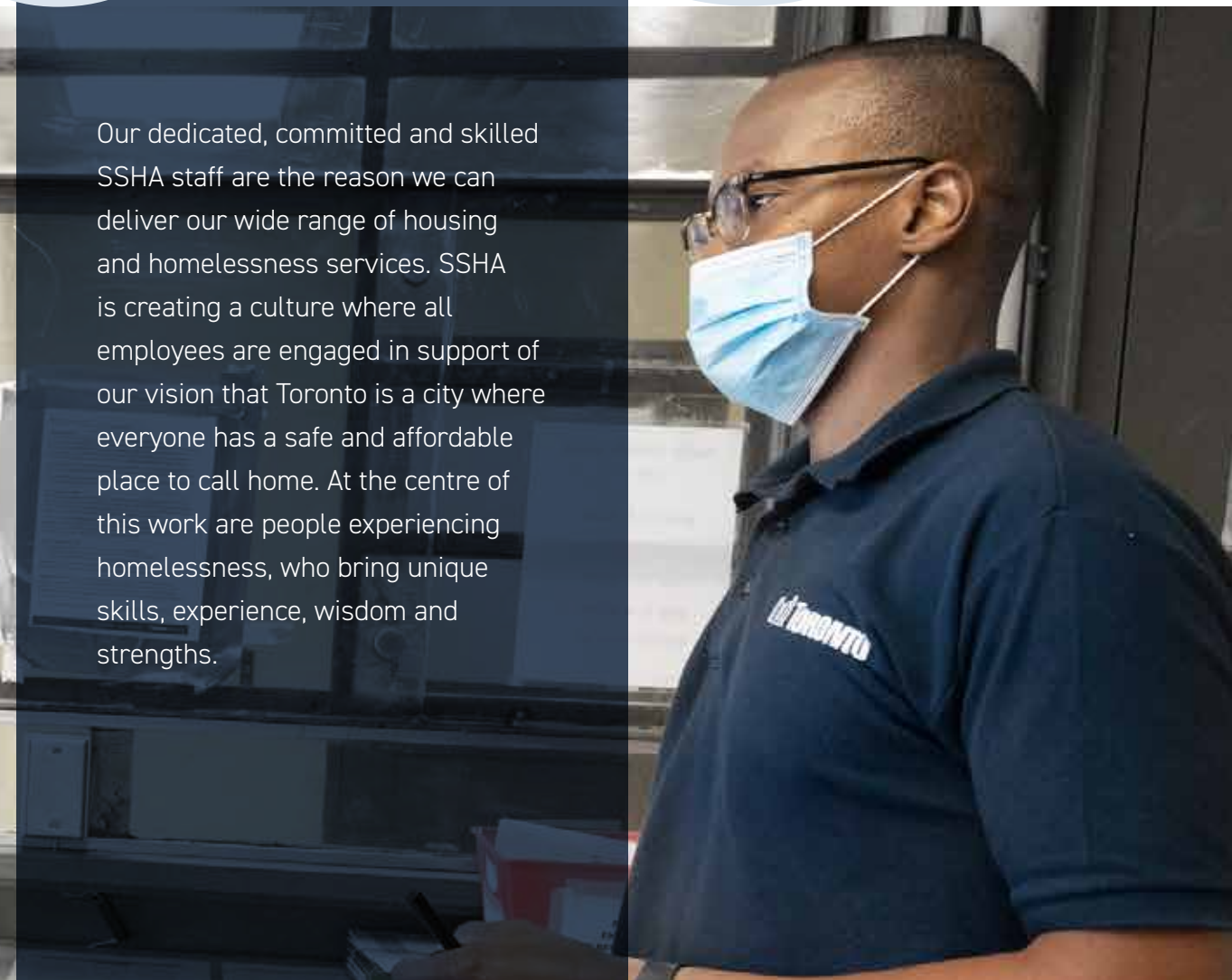
Social and Affordable Housing

We fund and oversee social and affordable housing that is developed with the assistance of government so that rents are more affordable for low-income households. This includes social housing, Toronto Community Housing, co-operative housing and the affordable rental housing program. The assistance can take various forms, such as capital or operating funding, land, or access to lower mortgage rates.



Image: City staff engaging with a shelter resident at Seaton House

People



Our dedicated, committed and skilled SSHA staff are the reason we can deliver our wide range of housing and homelessness services. SSHA is creating a culture where all employees are engaged in support of our vision that Toronto is a city where everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home. At the centre of this work are people experiencing homelessness, who bring unique skills, experience, wisdom and strengths.

Who We Are

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Mary-Anne Bédard

General Manager

Gord Tanner

Director, Homelessness Initiatives and Prevention Services

Doug Rollins

Director, Housing Stability Services

Justin Lewis

Director, Infrastructure, Planning and Development

Laural Raine

Director, Service Planning, and Integrity

Mina Fayez-Bahgat

Director, Program Support

Hussain Haider Ali

Manager, Strategic Management Services

Sinead Canavan

Project Director, Issues Management



Section Mandates

Homelessness Initiatives & Prevention Services (HIPS)

delivers, coordinates, and oversees an integrated system of direct services for individuals and communities impacted by homelessness.

Housing Stability Services (HSS)

develops housing options and supports for diverse communities through partnerships, funding, and oversight of housing and homelessness programs and services.

Infrastructure, Planning & Development (IPD)

strategically plan, develop and support all homelessness services as they relate to the life cycle of divisional assets, and partner assets while engaging communities and stakeholders to support the successful operation of new services. Ensure assets are maintained to best serve shelter users, staff, and the community.

Program Support (PS)

provides divisional financial services, procurement office administration, people services, and information & technology business systems creating new innovations and enabling the effective and sustainable delivery of housing and homelessness programs and services.

Service Planning & Integrity (SPI)

is responsible for coordination of service system planning and improving the effectiveness of homelessness and housing services through policy and program development, data analysis, risk management, and quality assurance.

General Manager's Office (GMO)

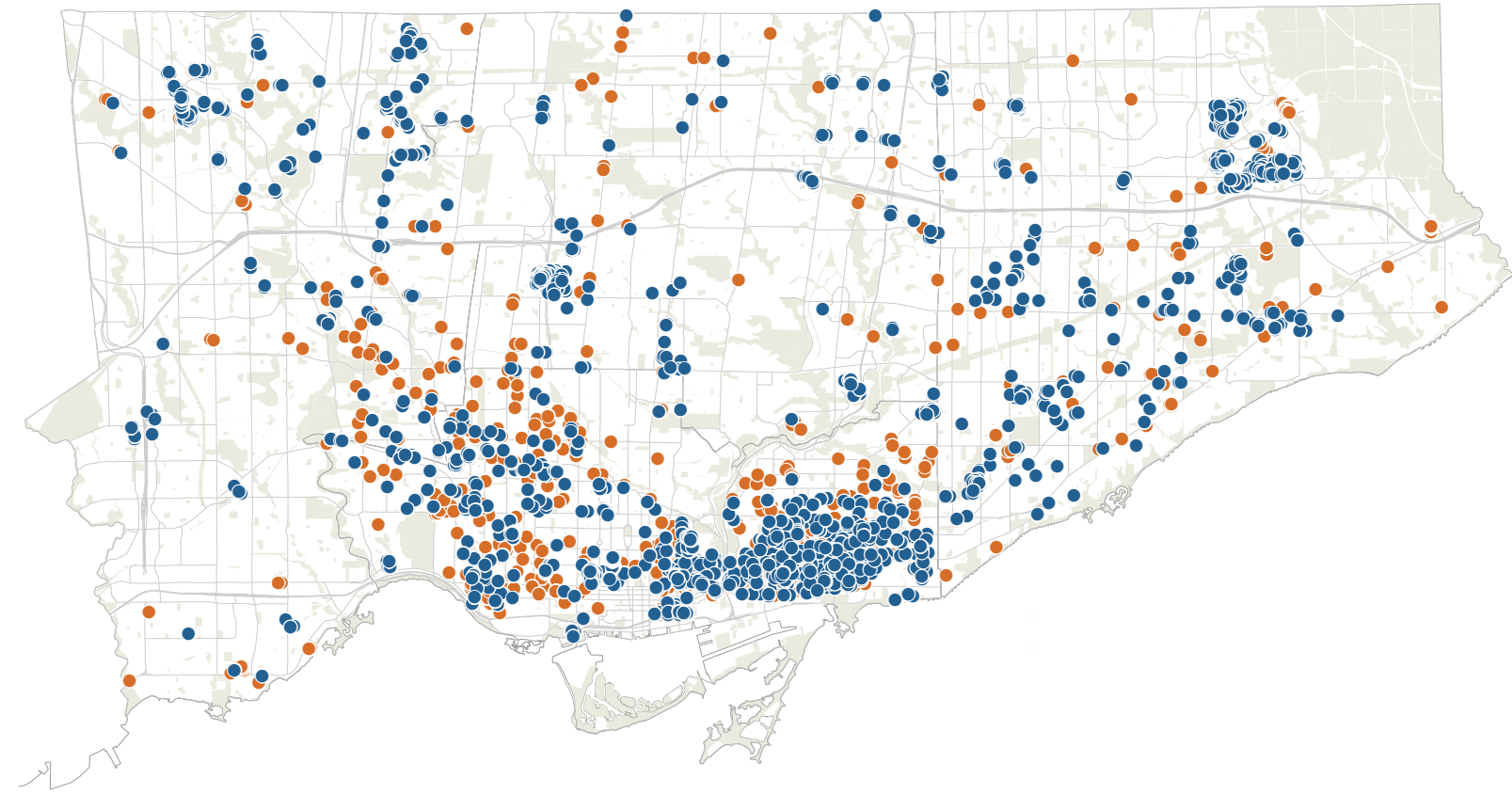
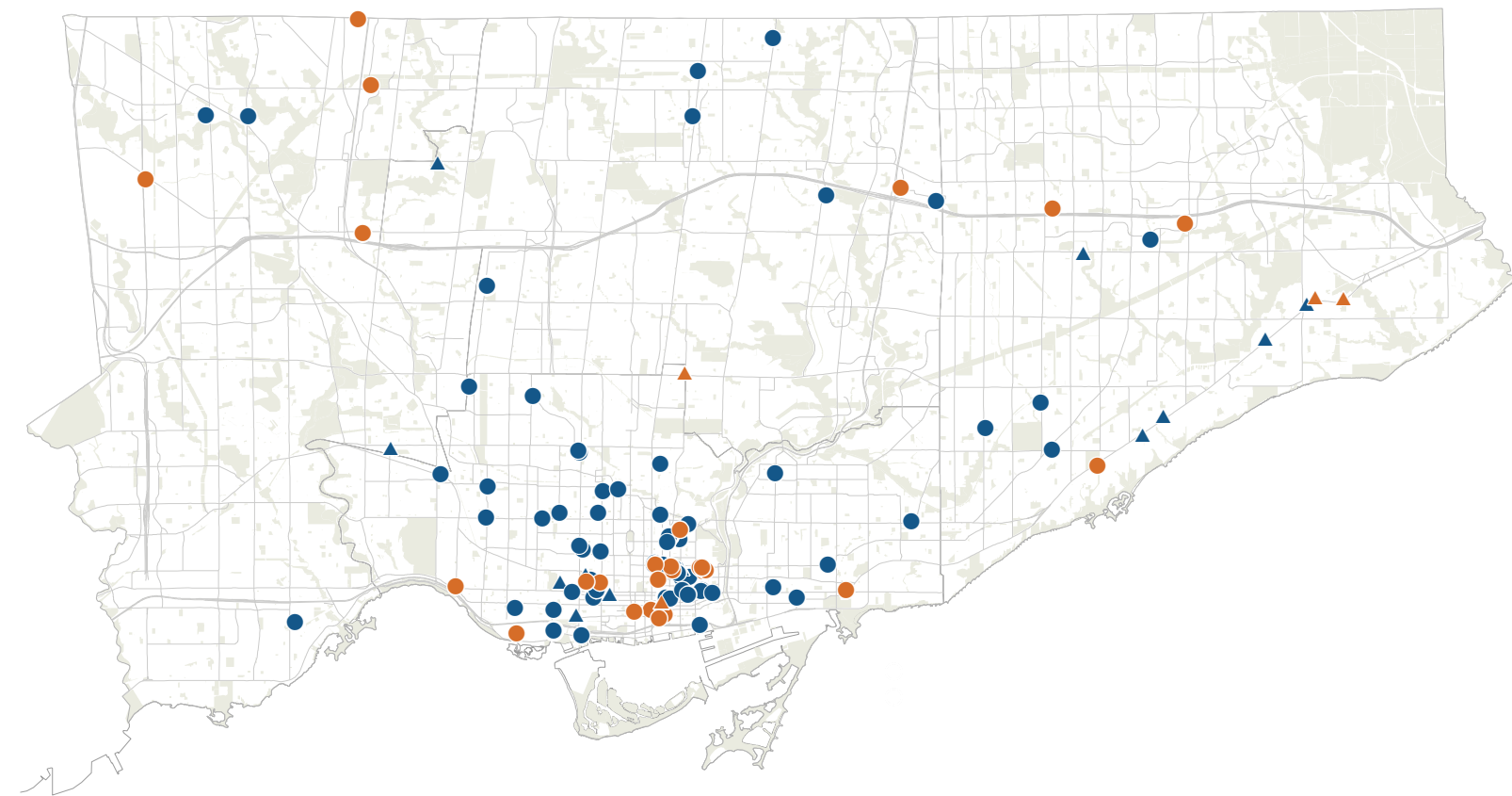
provides integrated, solution-focused support and oversight to drive and align the division's strategic priorities across all sections, while striving to bolster equity and inclusion in our work.



Image: Staff at Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre preparing refreshments.

City-funded shelter system

Social housing system in Toronto



- Temporary shelter sites **opened in 2020** as part of COVID-19 response
- Base programs
- ▲ / ▲ City-run shelters
- / ● City-funded shelters and 24-hour respites

- Toronto Community Housing
- Other social housing providers

Spotlight on Innovation: Rapid Rehousing Initiative

In 2020, SSHA created a new program called the Rapid Rehousing Initiative. The initiative accelerated the movement of people experiencing homelessness and on the Centralized Waiting List into vacant units in Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). It is a partnership with TCHC, the Furniture Bank and 20 City-funded community agencies providing follow-up supports to tenants.

Phase one of the initiative helped 459 people move into permanent and fully furnished housing with supports. Phase two of the initiative will continue in 2021 with up to 450 units, based on availability of additional support funding.

This initiative helped people move from the shelter system into stable housing during the pandemic, which is the best option for people experiencing homelessness and which created space in the shelter system. It addresses concerns raised by the Auditor General in July 2019 about significant delays in filling vacant rent-geared-to-income units. It also helped fill vacancies in TCHC buildings that were hardest to rent.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORTS FROM START TO FINISH

The initiative provides people with wrap-around supports to move into and keep their housing. SSHA staff were redeployed to allocate units, deliver furniture, view units, and help with lease signings and move-ins. SSHA and Toronto Office of Partnerships collected donations from the public and local businesses to set up furniture and housewares in each of the units.

Once people moved in, community agencies provided a follow-up supports program. Case workers provided landlord mediation, community mapping, crisis intervention, harm reduction, and referrals to other programs.

459 people who were homeless were housed in Phase 1

Who are they?

- 51% were homeless for over a year
- 26% are Indigenous
- 58% are men
- 10% are refugees
- 36% are seniors (55 years old or older)
- Read two of their stories on page 24.

PROVIDERS OF FOLLOW-UP SUPPORTS

- Coordinated Access/Streets to Homes
- Agincourt Community Services Association
- Albion Neighbourhood Services
- Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre
- CMHA
- COSTI Immigrant Services
- COTA
- Eva's/YMCA
- Fred Victor Housing Access and Support Services & PIH
- Homes First Society
- John Howard Society of Toronto
- Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
- Native Men's Residence NaMeRes
- Neighbourhood Information Post
- Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (PARC)
- Reconnect Community Health Services
- Sistering
- St. Stephens Community House
- The Housing Help Centre
- The Neighbourhood Group
- Unison Health & Community Services
- Wigwamen
- Youthlink



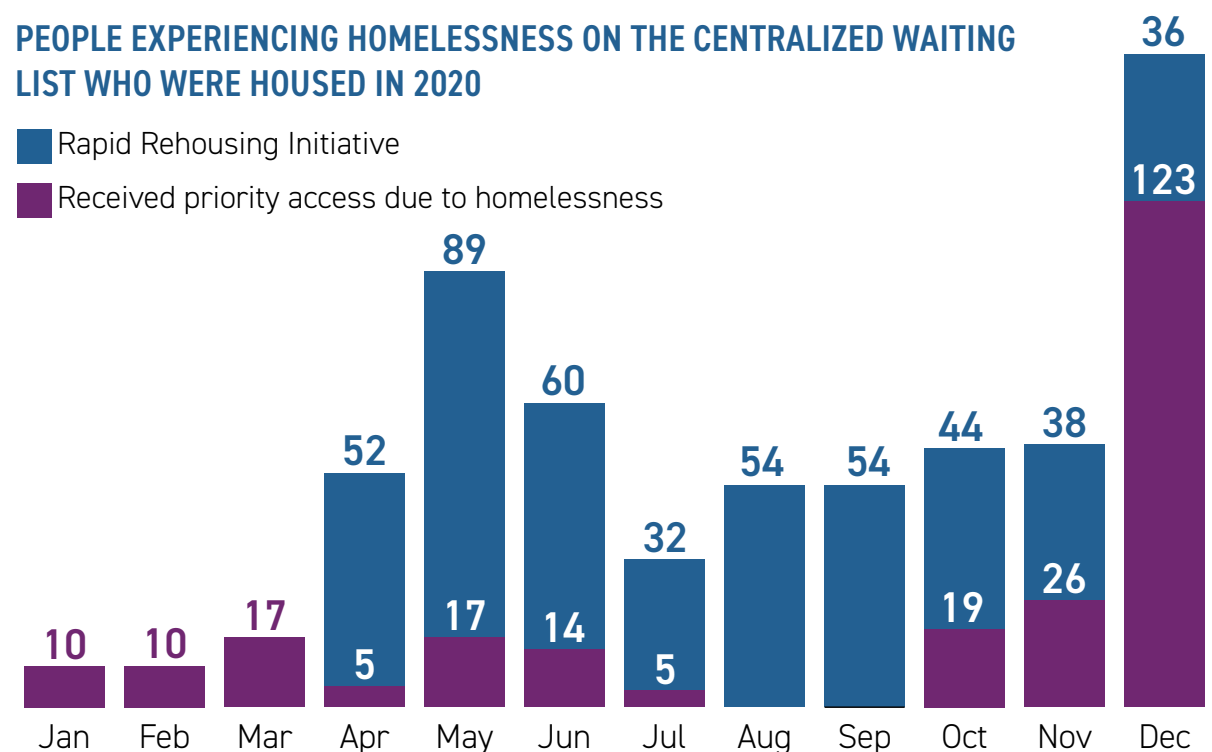
Eugene's story

Eugene was homeless for the past four years. Despite not having a fixed address, Eugene maintained his commitment to volunteering, which ultimately helped him acquire full-time employment. SSHA's Streets to Homes team connected with him and supported his move into interim housing while they worked to secure permanent housing. He was offered a one-bedroom unit through the Rapid Rehousing Initiative and has since moved in.

Image: TCHC Rapid Housing Unit at 330 Jarvis

PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ON THE CENTRALIZED WAITING LIST WHO WERE HOUSED IN 2020

- Rapid Rehousing Initiative
- Received priority access due to homelessness



Spotlight on Innovation: COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Program

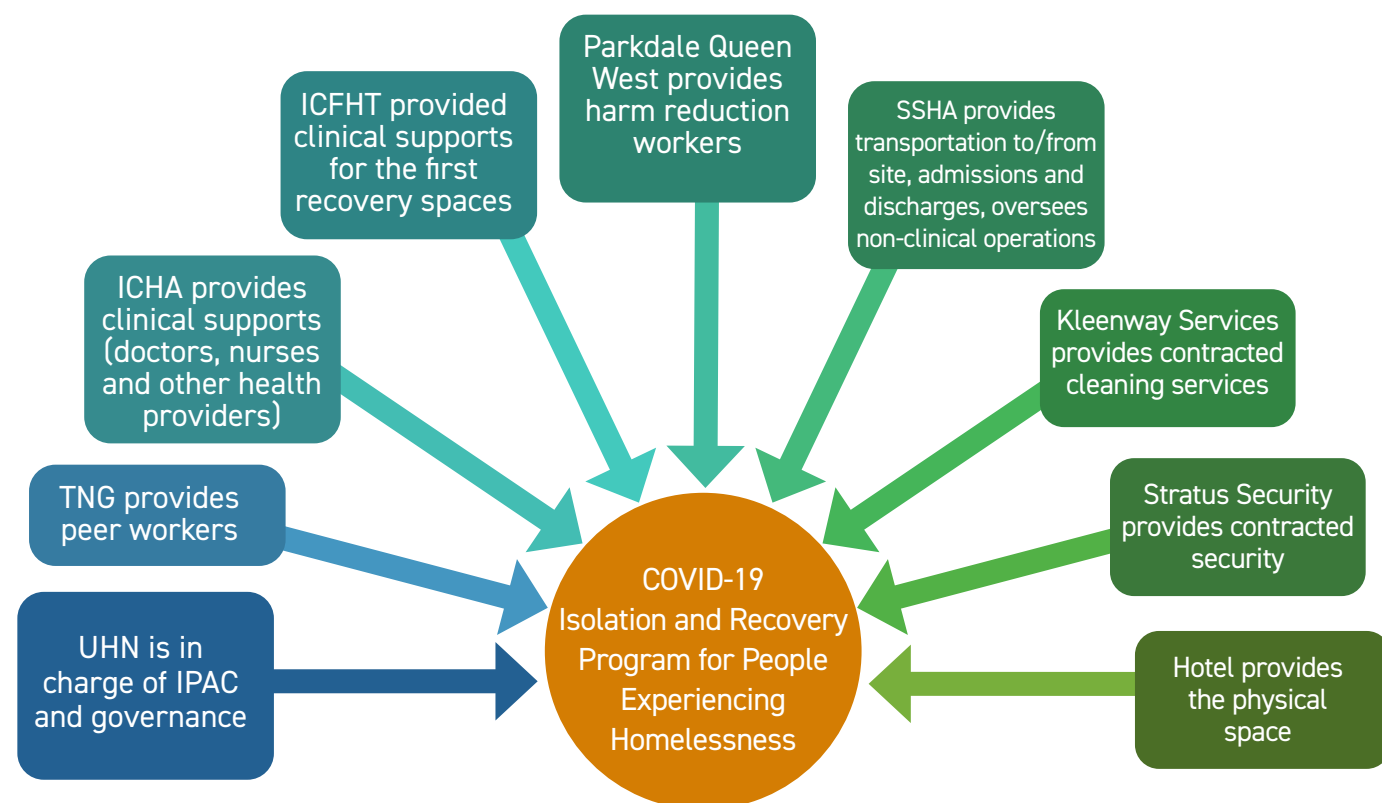
LAUNCHING THE FIRST COVID-19 ISOLATION AND RECOVERY PROGRAM IN CANADA

SSHA and partners launched the COVID-19 isolation and recovery program for people experiencing homelessness as part of SSHA's

three-tiered response to COVID-19 (see page 56 for more details). The program was put in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system and provide a space to recover for those who contracted COVID-19.

Through collaboration and swift action, SSHA partnered with the Inner City Health Associates (ICHA), Inner City Family Health Team (ICFHT), University Health Network (UHN), Parkdale Queen West, and The Neighbourhood Group (TNG) to open the first site of the program, the first of its kind in Canada. The first isolation and recovery spaces opened at SSHA's Family Residence on March 15. The first dedicated site opened on April 16, 2020, and the

MAJOR PARTNERS INVOLVED WITH COVID-19 ISOLATION AND RECOVERY PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



second site on May 6, 2020. While originally the isolation and recovery sites were in separate locations, the partners decided to consolidate all sites into one program for those who are COVID-19 positive, awaiting a test with symptoms or have been potentially exposed to the virus through contact in the shelter system. Incorporating elements of a hospital with wraparound health supports while serving people who do not require acute care, the program is a unique hybrid hospital-shelter model for people experiencing homelessness to recover from COVID-19 in a safe and dignified way.

A NEW INTEGRATED MODEL

Feedback from people staying in the program has been positive. They have appreciated the privacy of their own room, bathroom, TV, shower and living space that were previously not available to some who have experience in congregate shelter settings or who have been living outdoors. The site is pet and family-friendly. The higher level of robust health services on-site have benefited those within the program, as some with chronic health issues received enhanced medical care, some even for the first time. The program also offers a safe injection site and managed alcohol program to ensure patients with complex needs have the ability to self-isolate while on-site rather than having to leave to access their needs.

People staying at a shelter or outside who need to access testing and then a place to isolate are driven where they need to go by SSHA's transportation team. Direct transport ensures people going for testing and isolation arrive quickly and conveniently and that COVID-19 is not spread to others during transit.

Establishing this program has helped SSHA and partners learn key lessons and has been invaluable in re-thinking the way care is provided. Through the integration of so many needed services, SSHA has shown that providing services to people with different needs and demographics within the same program can be successful. Our partners have also learned more about the complex needs of those experiencing homelessness. All of this learning can only help improve outcomes that we all want for people experiencing homelessness, which of course is securing permanent housing.

"This recovery site is not a hospital, nor is it a shelter. Rather, it is a new housing and healthcare initiative. Jointly developed by the City, the Province, the hospital sector, and community partners, it is an essential component of Toronto's COVID-19 response."

- Councillor Joe Cressy, Board of Health Chair, Spadina-Fort York (Ward 10)

“People experiencing homelessness face a disproportionately high risk of harm during this pandemic. [The recovery site] will help mitigate that harm and save lives... We thank the City for providing and supporting the site, the province for funding our nurse-led, physician-supported teams, and our health partners for their expertise and collaboration.”

-Dr. Andrew Bond, Medical Director, Inner City Health Associates

KEEPING THE FOCUS ON HOUSING OUTCOMES

Even as a COVID-19 isolation and recovery program, SSHA and our partners still operate with housing first approach.

364 of the 1,664 people experiencing homelessness who accessed the isolation and recovery program moved into permanent housing in 2020.

Despite all of the challenges posed by the pandemic, the COVID-19 isolation and recovery program has been an example of what government and community agencies can achieve together in the fight to end homelessness and protect people experiencing homelessness.

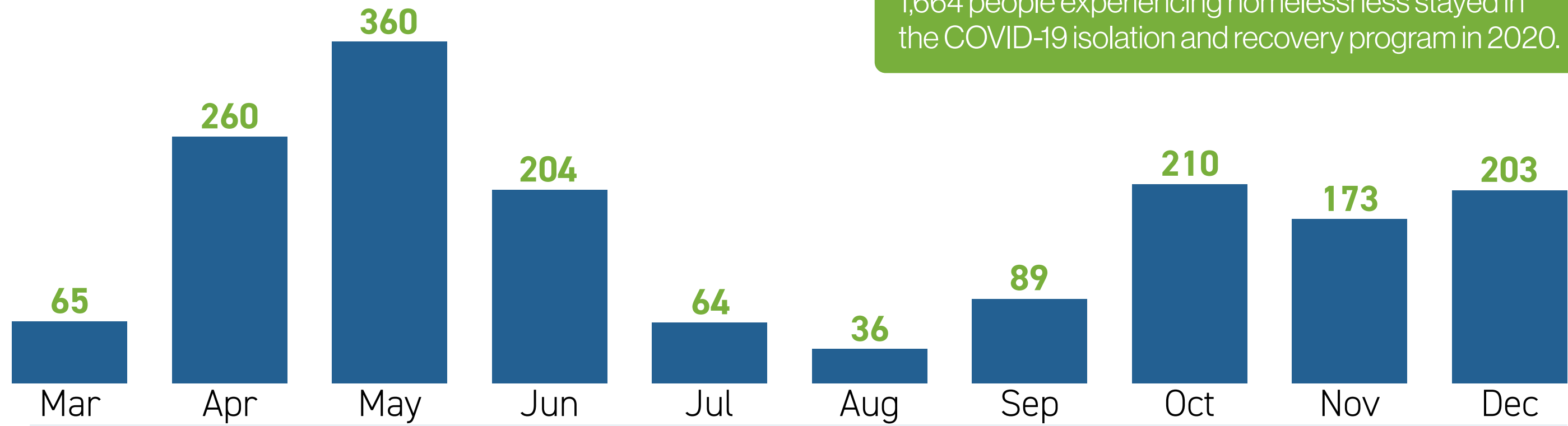
“Homelessness and health are inextricably linked—even more so during a pandemic. We need all partnerships and solutions in place to better address the disproportionate burden of COVID-19, and to ultimately reshape the social determinants of health.”

-Dr. Andrew Boozary, University Health Network



Image: City staff preparing to transfer patients to the COVID-19 Isolation Recovery Site

TOTAL PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS WHO ACCESSED THE COVID-19 ISOLATION AND RECOVERY PROGRAMS, BY MONTH OF FIRST ADMISSION



In 2020, the program served people experiencing homelessness who are:

- confirmed COVID-19 positive
- symptomatic with pending or negative COVID-19 test results
- close contacts of known COVID-19 cases

1,664 people experiencing homelessness stayed in the COVID-19 isolation and recovery program in 2020.

Who We Serve

At the centre of our work are the people we serve. Here are stories from people who accessed our services this year to find or keep a safe place to call home.

A bridge towards permanent housing

A service provider shared that they secured a portable housing benefit for Erica and her three children through the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) program.

Erica lost her job due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently lost her housing. By accessing the bridging grant, she was able to pay first and last month's rent and has now moved into permanent housing. Read more about the COHB on page 64.

Rebuilding from grief

Peter, a single father of a four-year old, was referred to the Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) program by his landlord. Although he had been a tenant for four years, he had been unable to pay rent for seven months and his landlord filed for eviction. Peter shared that his wife had been diagnosed with cancer, which resulted in losing her employment. Shortly after, he took six months off from work to provide end of life care for her, and adapt to being the primary caregiver for his daughter. Peter lost his job and struggled to find new employment due to the pandemic. His arrears continued to increase as Peter's focus shifted to his immediate situation. After he exhausted Canada Emergency Response Benefit, EPIC supported him to create a detailed plan that included: acquiring an income source, applying for childcare, establishing a repayment plan to allow his family to remain housed. Peter was also supported to begin grief counselling. Read more about EPIC on page 63.

Frank



A fresh start

Frank has been homeless for more than 20 years. Frank was a college professor until he lost his job due to budget cuts two decades ago. His loss of employment was followed by the death of his brother and separation from his wife and child. This started a downward spiral that turned Frank's life upside down. He spent years in and out of housing and within the shelter system from time to time. Frank is easy to get along with and has spent a number of years as a peer harm reduction worker at safe injection sites, giving talks about harm reduction and substance abuse. Streets to Homes worker Brent helped Frank establish a long-term housing plan and Frank was able to successfully move into a permanent TCHC apartment. Frank is looking forward to a fresh start to life.



Image: Shelter resident at the SSHA's Broadway Residences program enjoying a meal.

No one really knows how it feels unless you have been homeless

"I ended up homeless after 17 years in my rooming house and I lost faith. I lost my belongings and my whole life.

I ended up camping outside by Lakeshore Blvd. I used a couple of tarps for protection from the elements. I was living and surviving day by day, looking for water and food and I lost 30 pounds while being homeless on the street for two months. I had to buy four gallons of water daily for \$4 a day. To use the washroom, I had to spend money to buy a coffee.

After that I was at Seaton House for a year and half, and then came to Travellers Hostel. Working with my counsellor here it took less than two months to get a place of my own. He helped me work through my problems with Housing Connections so I could reapply for rent-geared-to-income housing and helped me settle in. I cannot thank him enough.

I feel safe here now. I can turn on my pot of coffee instead of spending \$2 on coffee. I can budget much better, major reduction in spending.

I cannot be happier. I'm safe for the first time in two years. No one really knows how it feels unless you have been homeless."

Building trust

Mary had been accessing supports from the Streets to Homes team for a while. Mary lived outdoors for many years, sleeping behind a church. Mary was supported to access an interim housing program and after repaying her arrears, she was supported to move into a bachelor apartment she now calls home.

Joel



Joel worked with our Streets to Homes (S2H) team and housing counsellor Pauline to secure a permanent home. Joel's journey to homeless started when he lost his apartment six years ago. The landlord terminated the lease without a proper notice and rented the unit to a new tenant. With no place to go, Joel stayed with friends & family, in several shelters, and ended up sleeping outside in a tent. Joel was eventually offered one-bedroom unit through the Rapid Rehousing Initiative with TCHC (learn more on page 14). He is looking forward to his own home and having his kids visit.

Robert



Robert worked in restaurants and construction for most of his life. About a decade ago, there was a lag in work opportunities ultimately resulting in him becoming homeless. Since then, Robert has stayed on and off in rooming houses. Robert left his last rooming house due to challenges with the behaviour of other tenants. He then started sleeping outside. After connecting with the Streets to Homes outreach team, working very hard with his Street Outreach Counsellor Andrea to get all the required documentation to secure a permanent housing. Robert's new home is in a unit available through the City's Rapid Rehousing Initiative (learn more on page 14). He's looking forward to starting his new life.

Celebrating Frontline Workers

SSHA extends a warm and sincere thank you to all frontline workers with SSHA and our partners who have and continue to provide direct service delivery during the pandemic. Your heroic contributions improved the lives of those you serve, and we remain grateful for your collaboration, spirit, resilience and deep compassion.

We thank you for the invaluable work you do every day to support many vulnerable individuals and families, this year more than ever. Your unwavering commitment to support the continuation of critical and essential services is deeply valued.

With respect and appreciation,
SSHA



"As shift leaders we work alongside our case workers to advocate for the needs of our clients. It is a privilege to work with a team of passionate people who are deeply invested in providing the best services available to our most vulnerable clients during challenging times."

-Janani Athithan, shift leader with Central Intake



"The most inspiring thing about my job is working with a team of counsellors that give their all to house, support and help maintain housing for clients. I find it impactful to notice positive changes in clients when we can bring them inside and help them be housed. What motivates me is the energy my peers and team bring to work daily. I feel like I'm blessed to work with this team."

- Ricardo Simoes, supervisor at Streets to Homes



"I enjoy helping clients and supporting the team...We've created a culture of looking out for each other & clients. I enjoy being a leader, helping staff contribute to the program."

Keith Sweeney, shift leader. Keith was redeployed to SSHA in April after working at the City for 13 years. He applied and was successful in landing the shift leader position in SSHA shortly after.



"Using a Housing First approach, shift leaders work to create a supportive and equitable temporary shelter space to allow individuals and families facing homelessness to focus on finding permanent housing."

Dayapari Senthilnathan, shift leader at Robertson House



"I have been with the City for almost 18 years...Starting work at Seaton House changed my life...Everybody works as a team: supervisors, cleaners, shift leaders, social workers, managers, and clients. I... found myself putting in more effort because I saw how we were helping our clients. Being able to support people helped me know I was doing something good with my life and keeps me positive...I look forward to continuing to provide service with respect, kindness, and responsibility."

Konstantinos (Kosta) Miminis, Heavy Duty Cleaner at Seaton House

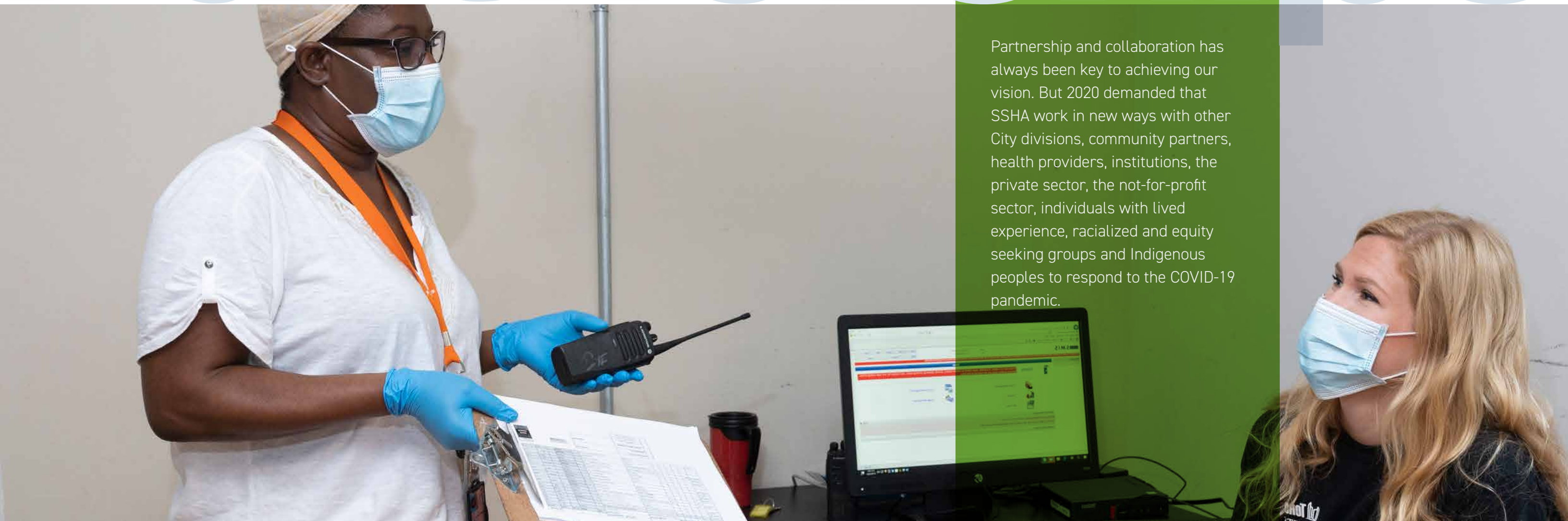
Superheroes work here!

Thank you, SSHA



Image: Staff at Central Intake dressed up as superheroes as a tribute to all frontline staff during Toronto Public Service Week 2020.

Partnerships



Partnership and collaboration has always been key to achieving our vision. But 2020 demanded that SSHA work in new ways with other City divisions, community partners, health providers, institutions, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, individuals with lived experience, racialized and equity seeking groups and Indigenous peoples to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with City Divisions

The support of other City divisions helped SSHA respond to the COVID-19 pandemic safely. Divisions continued their existing partnerships, helped deliver SSHA's emergency COVID-19 response, and developed new programs that were needed due to the pandemic.

23 divisions also paused or modified their operations to redeploy 545 staff to the shelter system. SSHA needed this immediate increase in frontline staff to run the additional 40 temporary sites that were opened to achieve physical distancing.

Thank you to all City divisions for their invaluable partnership throughout 2020.

Provided seven community centres that were used as temporary shelter sites to achieve physical distancing in the shelter system

Supported encampment response through Parks Ambassador program and by cleaning encampment sites

Coordinated public and corporate donations of furniture and other housing needs to support people moving from homelessness to permanent housing through the Rapid Rehousing program.

- Accounting Services
- Children's Services
- City Clerk's Office
- City Manager's Office
- City Planning
- Corporate Real Estate Management
- Court Services
- Deputy City Managers' Offices
- Economic Development & Culture
- Employment & Social Services
- Engineering & Construction Services
- Environment & Energy
- Financial Planning
- Fleet Services
- Housing Secretariat
- Legal Services
- Municipal Licensing & Standards (MLS)
- Office of Emergency Management
- Park Forestry & Recreation
- Pension, Payroll & Employee Benefits
- People & Equity
- Purchasing & Materials Management
- Revenue Services
- Social Development, Finance & Administration
- Strategic Communications
- Technology Services
- Toronto Office of Partnerships
- Toronto Public Health
- Toronto Water
- Transportation Services
- Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

Helped identify and secure 42 temporary shelter sites to support physical distancing in the shelter system

Provided vehicles to transport people experiencing homelessness to provincial COVID-19 testing centres and to our SSHA's COVID-19 Isolation and Recovery Program

Developed housing and homelessness recovery strategy to create 3,000 units over next 24 months

Worked with SSHA and other divisions to coordinate the COVID-19 emergency response through the activation of the Emergency Operations Centre

Ensured 545 redeployed staff were always paid appropriately and on time

Developed a new process to distribute Ontario Works income supports at shelters, allowing people to stay at the site to reduce the spread of COVID-19

Led corporate redeployment of staff, including 545 staff to the shelter system

Purchased and distributed 4 million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline staff.

Issued 60 press releases and responded to 475 media requests (up from 160 in 2019!) about SSHA's work

Provided buses and drivers to help move larger numbers of people in the shelter system to the new temporary shelter sites.

Provided expertise and guidance on how to adapt the shelter system in response to the pandemic to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19

Staff were deployed to SSHA from these divisions

Community and Sector Partners

Below is a snapshot of a few key partnerships with the housing and homelessness sector in 2020:

COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy

SSHA partnered with the United Way Greater Toronto (United Way) to develop the COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy, adopted by City Council on September 30. The goal was to combine the collective lessons learned in the first phase of the pandemic with existing evidence on solutions to prevent and end homelessness to develop a plan to guide action over the following 12 months.

Based on lessons learned from our response to date and the advice from the Recovery Task Force, SSHA identified Interim Recovery Strategy actions in five key areas:

- Ensure shelter system is prepared for potential resurgence of the pandemic
- Adapt service models to the COVID-19 context and ensure sufficient shelter capacity
- Expedite efforts to move people from shelter into housing
- Minimize flow of people into homelessness
- Ensure recovery planning is rooted in Indigenous Reconciliation and Confronting Anti-Black Racism

“The City of Toronto’s partnership with United Way Greater Toronto to engage shelter and housing sector agencies and the Indigenous community will help inform how we can continue to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the homeless population [and]...how we can best move forward in the next 6 to 12 months.”

– Mayor John Tory

The advice in the report was generated through a process led by a task force of leaders in the homelessness service system. The task force had representatives from the Toronto Shelter Network, Toronto Drop-In Network, Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, Ontario Health Toronto Region, Community Health Centre Network, Toronto Public Health and the Housing Secretariat, as well as a range of community partner organizations.

The task force’s input was supplemented with consultations with shelter residents and people with lived experience of homelessness, frontline staff, and other partners. The task force engaged Black-serving and Black-led organizations to develop priority actions to address homelessness experienced by Black people. SSHA and United Way also convened a separate process to engage the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board to create a separate, parallel strategy for Indigenous people experiencing homelessness.

“The community sector plays a critical role in the solutions for people experiencing homelessness... United, we stand with our City partners to imagine a region where people no longer struggle to find stable and secure housing.”

– Daniele Zanotti, President and CEO, United Way Greater Toronto, from the COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy: Advice from the Homelessness Service System

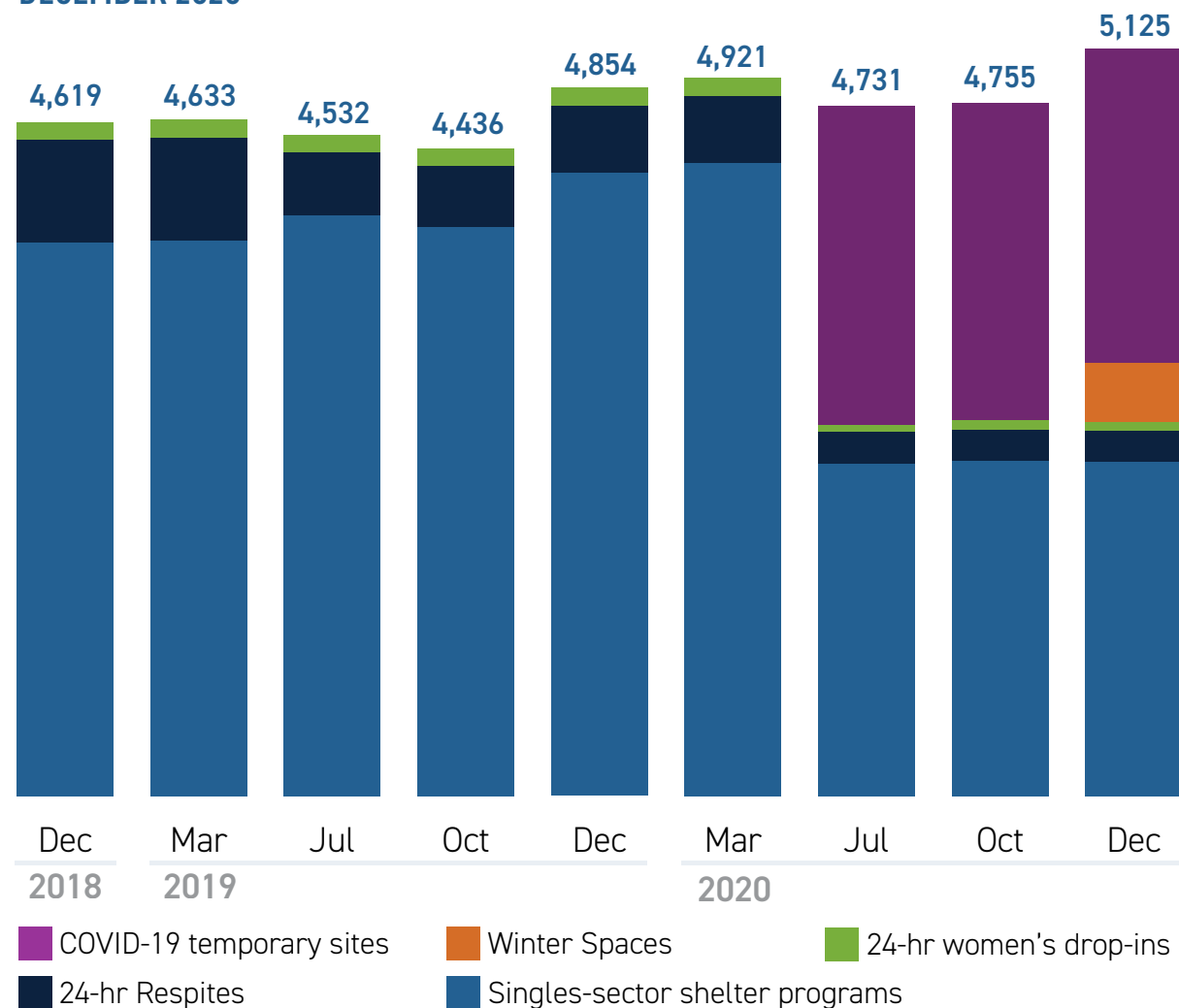
Opening temporary shelter sites to ensure physical distancing in the shelter system

At the start of 2020, SSHA and homelessness service organizations were expecting to open a handful of new shelters and respite sites.

By March 17, SSHA had launched its three-tier response to COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness, which included the need to achieve physical distancing in

the shelter system. SSHA and community partners opened 42 temporary sites and created close to 2,300 spaces in community centres and hotels. 31 of these sites were opened in the first 90 days of the pandemic. Homelessness service organizations began running these sites, growing their staff complements to assume the operation of the new sites and working under very tight timelines. City staff were also redeployed to run sites – around 190 non-frontline SSHA staff and 545 City staff from other divisions.

SHELTER AND RESPITE CAPACITY FOR SINGLE INDIVIDUALS - DECEMBER 2018 TO DECEMBER 2020



Toronto Shelter Network (TSN), an umbrella organization whose members are agencies that represent the majority of shelters and hostels in Toronto, provided crucial planning for temporary site openings. TSN worked to co-ordinate the move of youth from six different shelter sites into two motel locations during the height of the pandemic's first wave. They also provided the large number of screened staff needed to operate the new temporary shelter sites through their Shelter Sector Pipeline Project. Funded by the Metcalf Foundation, the Project supports Toronto's homelessness sector to hire, retain, and promote people with lived experience of homelessness.

Thank you to all the staff, facilities and service providers who stepped up to run temporary shelter sites in 2020, and to all the existing shelter providers for maintaining services throughout the year.

Temporary shelter site service providers:

- Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre
- COSTI
- Covenant House
- Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services
- Eva's Initiatives for Homeless Youth
- Fred Victor
- The Good Shepherd
- Homes First
- Kennedy House
- Native Child and Family Services of Toronto
- The Salvation Army
- Sistering
- St. Felix Centre
- Street Haven at the Crossroads
- YMCA of Greater Toronto

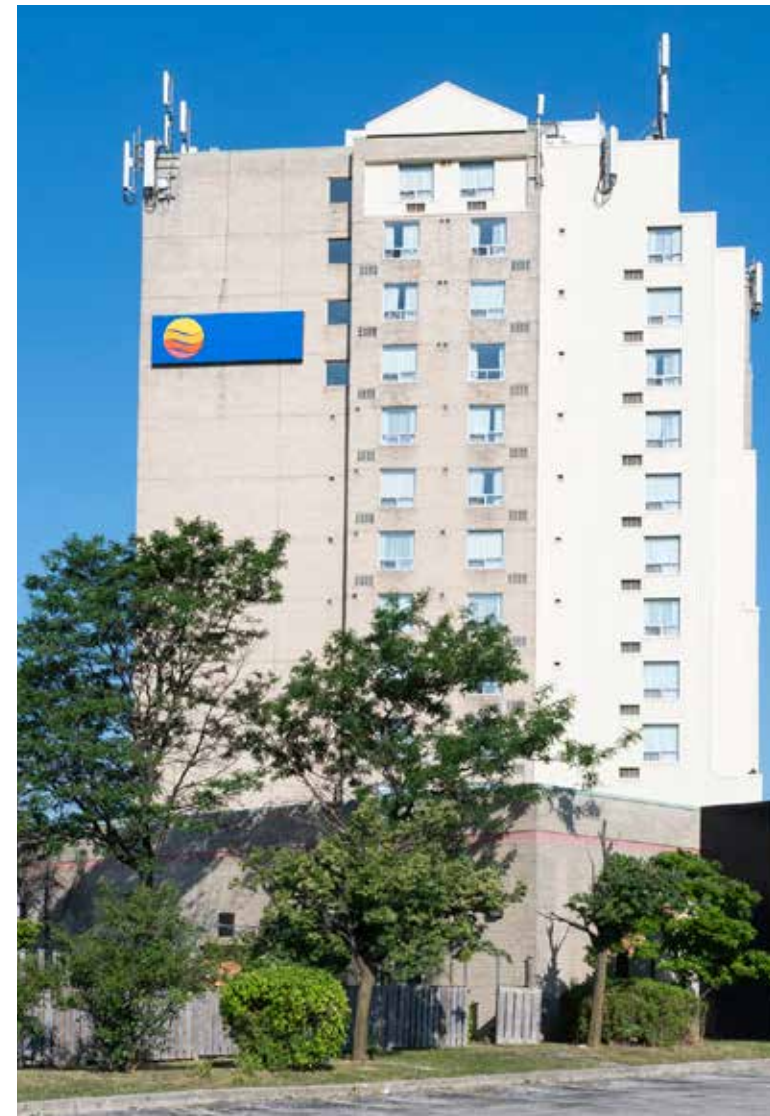


Image: Christie-Ossington Neighbourhood Centre Etobicoke Hotel Program

Sharing Missteps and Lessons Learned in our Relationship with Indigenous Partners

The challenges and pressures on the housing and homelessness sector in 2020 tested the strength and resilience of SSHA's partnership with the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB). At the outset of the pandemic, SSHA worked quickly to develop its COVID-19 response and did not engage TICAB according to the commitments made in *Meeting in the Middle*, a plan co-developed by SSHA and Indigenous partners in the housing and homelessness sector in 2018 to more meaningfully address Indigenous homelessness.

Indigenous partner organizations were frustrated by this misstep and raised the issue with SSHA through honest and productive communication. SSHA met with Indigenous partners to listen to concerns and take steps to address them. Lessons learned from these conversations strengthened our partnership with TICAB and challenged us to ensure our COVID-19 response was responsive to the needs of Indigenous organizations and people experiencing homelessness. SSHA is grateful to Indigenous partners for their patience and for bringing these concerns forward.

This was aligned with the collective commitments around relationship-building that both groups made in Meeting in the Middle. These commitments include "We accept that mistakes will be made along the way" and "We address mistakes with respect and in a way that is solution-focused."

Throughout the pandemic, our work in partnership with the TICAB has resulted in a number of successful collaborations to create initiatives that are responsive to the needs of Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, such as the Rapid Rehousing Initiative, the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, the Indigenous Shelter Recovery Strategy (**part of the COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy described on page 34**), and the Meeting in the Middle Second Annual Gathering (described on page 70).

Image:

SSHA staff smudging in their office. Smudging is a tradition, common to many First Nations and Métis, which involves the burning of one or more medicines gathered from the earth.



**We asked
frontline
workers,
health care
workers, and
leaders in the
homelessness
sector which
partnerships
helped them
respond to
COVID-19:**

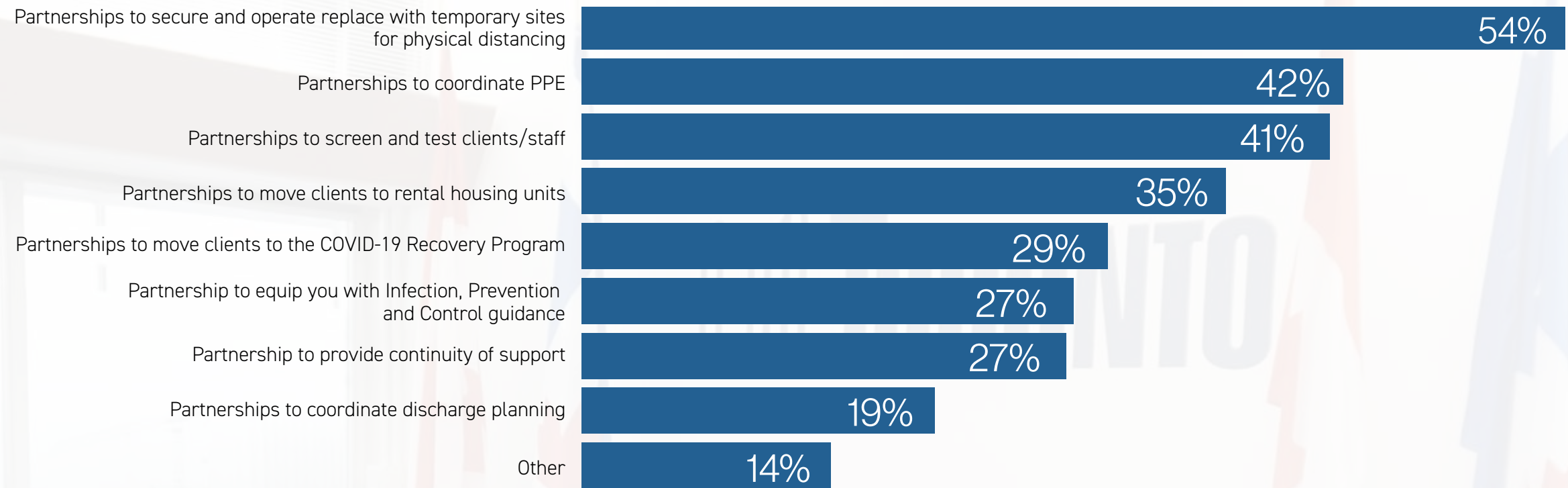
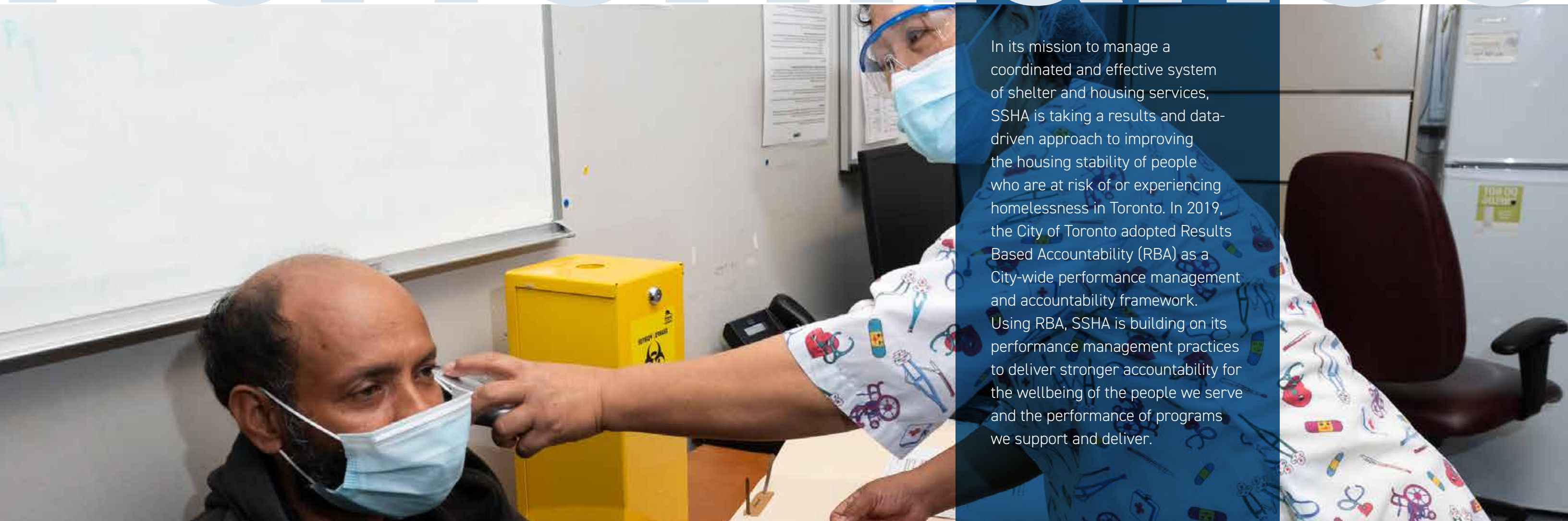


Image: Mary-Anne Bédard, along with Councillor Gord Perks and Michelle Dixon, accepts a financial donation towards the opening of a new men's shelter at 2299 Dundas St. W by Roman Ugovsek. Mr. Ugovsek owned the property prior to the City's acquisition. He had always hoped that the building would continue to serve the community in a positive way and appreciated the need for emergency shelters in Toronto. (image taken on January 20, 2020, before COVID-19 pandemic)

Performance



In its mission to manage a coordinated and effective system of shelter and housing services, SSHA is taking a results and data-driven approach to improving the housing stability of people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Toronto. In 2019, the City of Toronto adopted Results Based Accountability (RBA) as a City-wide performance management and accountability framework. Using RBA, SSHA is building on its performance management practices to deliver stronger accountability for the wellbeing of the people we serve and the performance of programs we support and deliver.

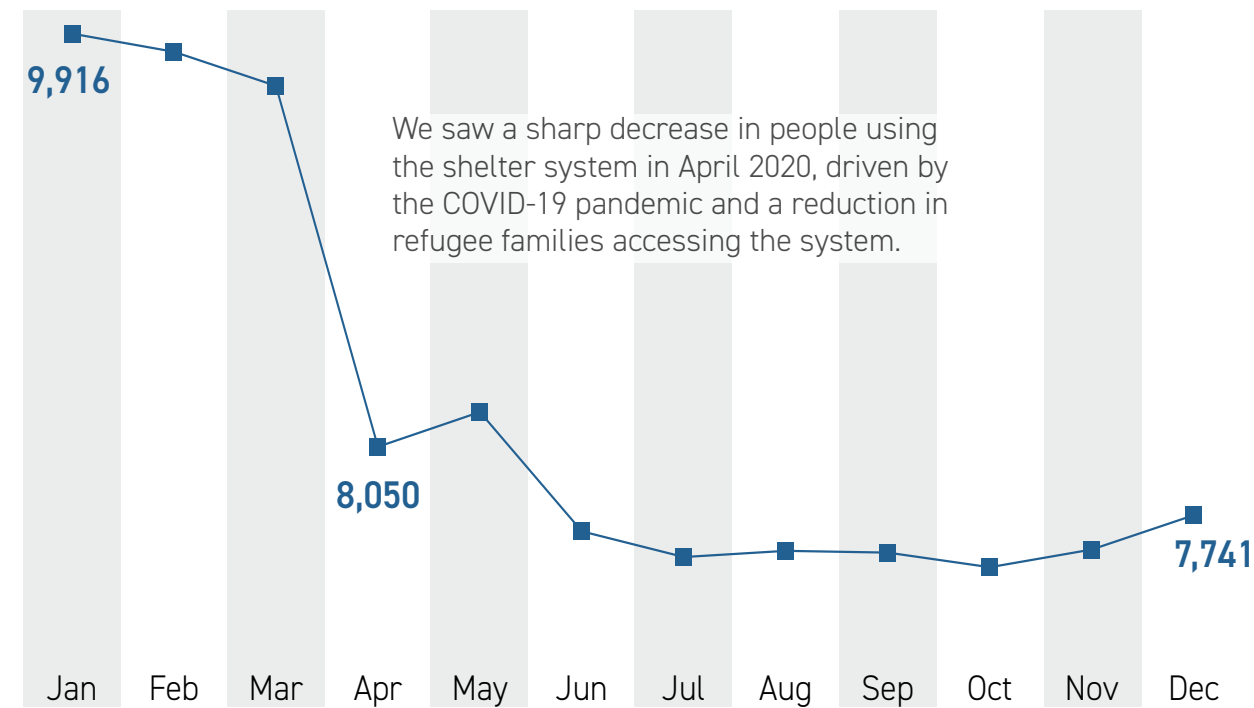
Telling Our Story Through Data

Shelter System Flow: New Data on Homelessness in Toronto

In 2020, SSHA developed a new approach to sharing data on people experiencing homelessness, known as the Shelter System Flow.

The new data provide information about people experiencing homelessness as they access and transition through the City's municipally-funded shelter system. The data also provide a more comprehensive picture of the shelter system than the traditional measures, which only looks at nightly occupancy and capacity.

NUMBER OF UNIQUE PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTIVELY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND HAVE USED THE SHELTER SYSTEM IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS, 2020



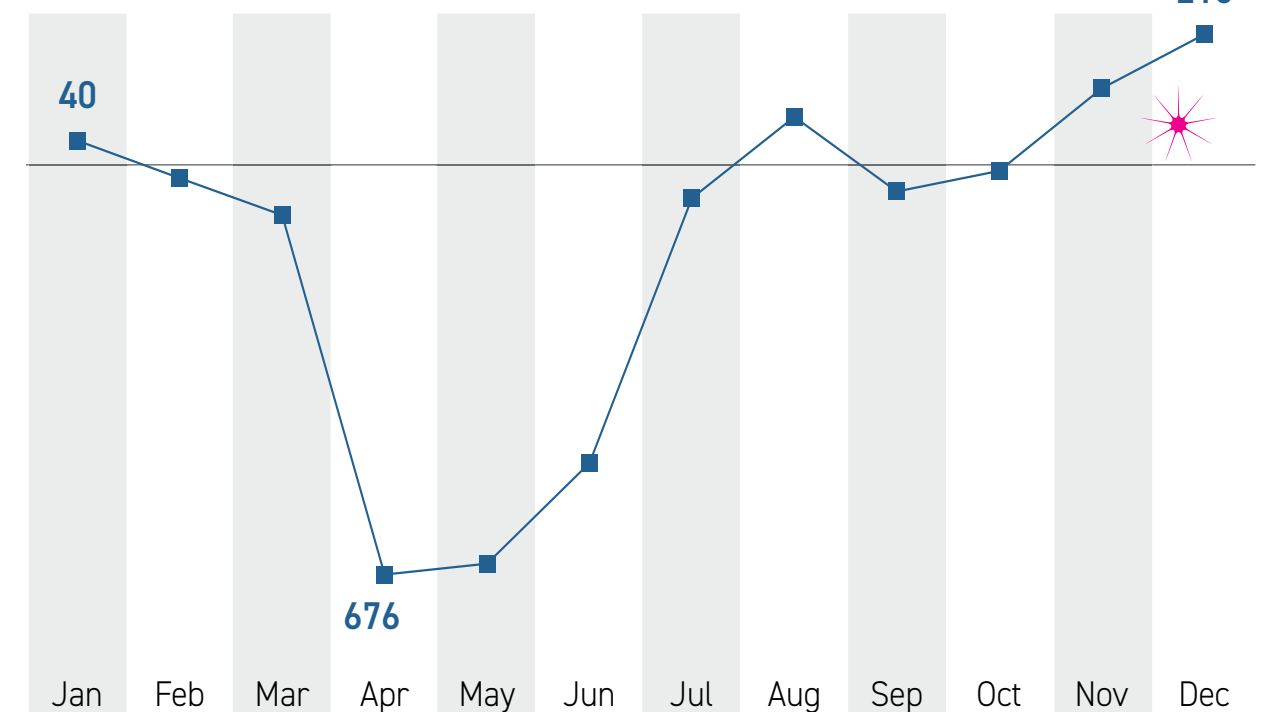
The approach supports the City's HousingTO Action Plan commitment to develop and regularly report on performance indicators that measure progress towards ensuring that experiences of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurring. It is aligned with and supports Toronto's participation in the Built for Zero campaign, led by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH). It is based on North America best practice of creating a 'by-name list' of all people experiencing homelessness, and is part of creating Coordinated Access System for housing with supports in Toronto and a requirement of the federal Reaching Home program.

The data was launched publicly on March 1, 2021, through an online dashboard that will be updated monthly and on the City's Open Data portal.

"The Shelter System Flow data...is the most comprehensive and transparent public dashboard of its kind in Canada. Armed with this real-time, person specific data, Toronto will now be able to better target resources, improve homeless system coordination and most importantly, accelerate reductions in homelessness."

-Tim Richter, President and CEO, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

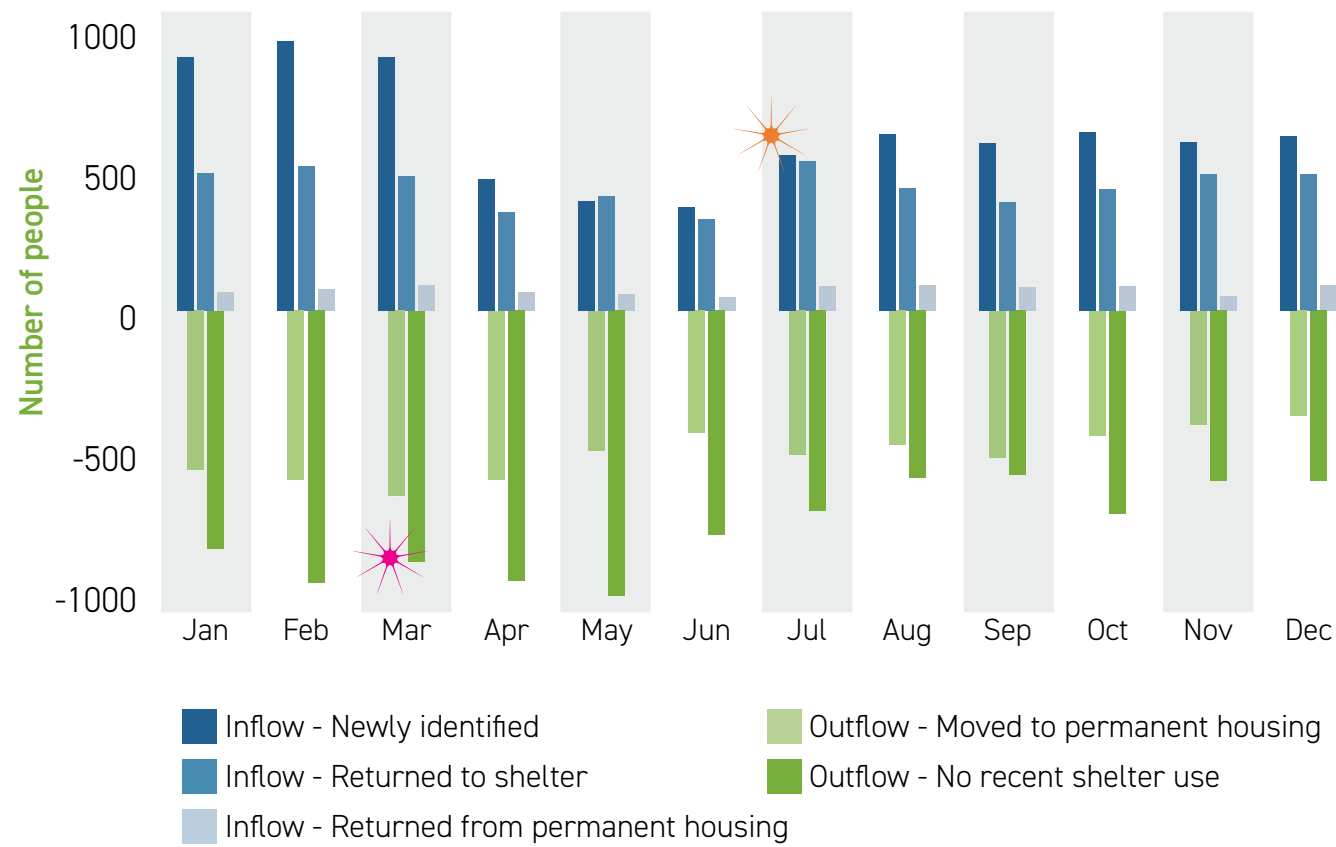
NET CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AT THE END OF EACH MONTH (INFLOW MINUS OUTFLOW)



Most months in 2020 saw more people exit the shelter system than enter, with March and April seeing the highest number of people moving to permanent housing. However, near the end of the year, more people were entering than exiting as we implemented the winter plan and added shelter spaces.

INFLOW AND OUTFLOW OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE SHELTER SYSTEM EACH MONTH, BY STATUS

This chart shows the inflow to the shelter system by three categories (newly identified, returned from permanent housing, returned to shelter) above the line, and the outflow from the shelter system by two categories (moved to permanent housing, and no recent shelter use) below the line, for each selected month.

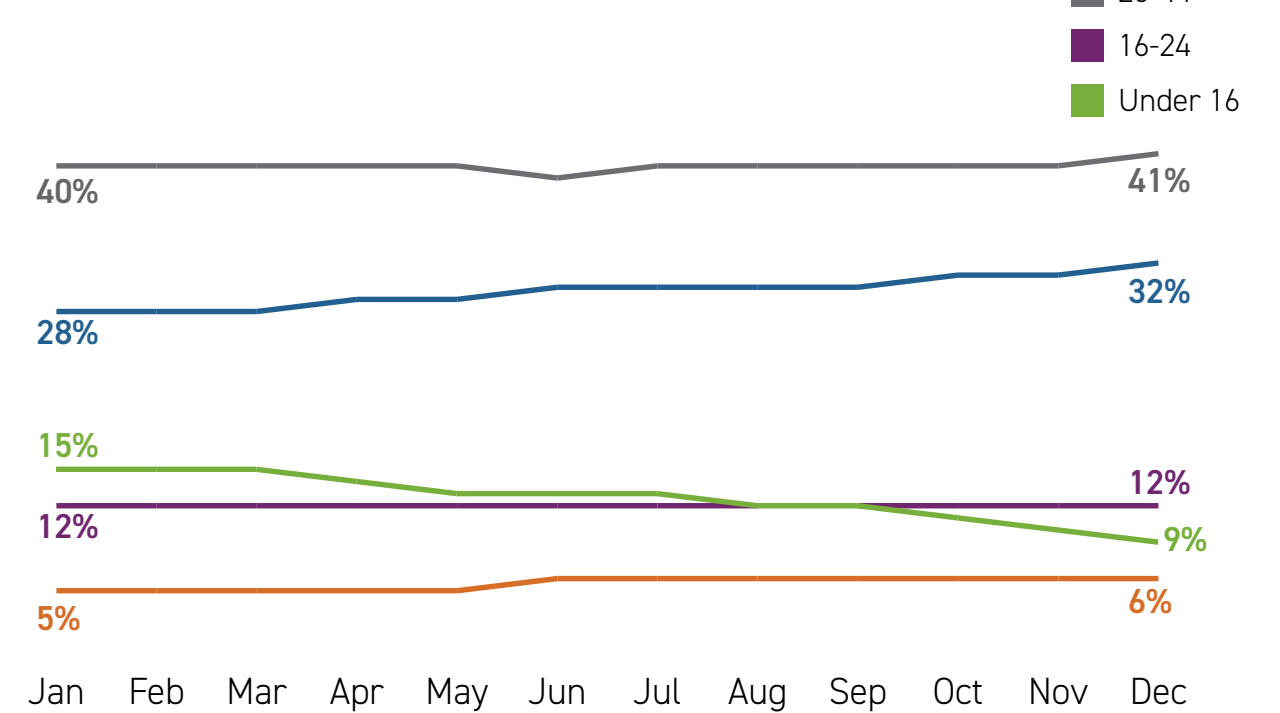


- ★ March 2020 saw the highest number of people recorded as having moved to permanent housing (660 people).
- ★ Since June 2020, there has been an increase in the number of people who are entering the shelter system for the first time, though we did not reach pre-pandemic levels seen early 2020.

Knowing the number of people who are returning to the shelter system from permanent housing every month will help SSHA and our partners to understanding which housing solutions are most successful and which are not, and make service adjustments in future.

AGE OF PEOPLE ACTIVELY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS EACH MONTH

The steady decrease in children under the age of 16 is driven by the decrease in refugee families throughout the course of the year.



DEFINITIONS

PEOPLE WHO ARE ENTERING THE SHELTER SYSTEM (INFLOW):

Newly Identified: People who entered the shelter system for the first time.

Returned from Permanent Housing: People who previously used the shelter system, then moved to permanent housing, and have now returned.

Returned to Shelter: People who were previously using the shelter system, then did not use the system for 3 months or longer, and have now returned. Some other communities may call this indicator "Returned from Inactive"

PEOPLE WHO ARE LEAVING THE SHELTER SYSTEM (OUTFLOW):

Moved to Permanent Housing: People who were using the shelter system and have moved to permanent housing.

No Recent Shelter Use: People who were using the shelter system previously, but have not used the shelter system in the past three months. Some other communities may call this indicator "Moved to Inactive".

PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTIVELY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS:

People who have used the shelter system at least one time in the past three months and did not move to permanent housing.

Decrease in Refugees and Asylum Seekers Accessing the Shelter System in 2020

At the end of January, there were just under 3,000 refugees and asylum seekers active in Toronto's shelter system, making up approximately a third of people actively experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

By the end of the year, there were just over 1,000 refugees and asylum seekers active in the shelter system.

This change was as a result of significantly fewer refugees and asylum seekers entering Canada due to border restrictions that began on March 18. The number of refugees and asylum seekers already in the shelter system steadily decrease throughout the year as they found housing.

Shelter spaces that had been previously used for refugees and asylum seekers were repurposed throughout 2020 to provide additional space to ensure physical distancing in the shelter system and provide safer indoor spaces for people living outside.

NUMBER OF REFUGEES AND NON-REFUGEES WHO ARE ACTIVELY EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND HAVE USED THE SHELTER SYSTEM IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS, 2020

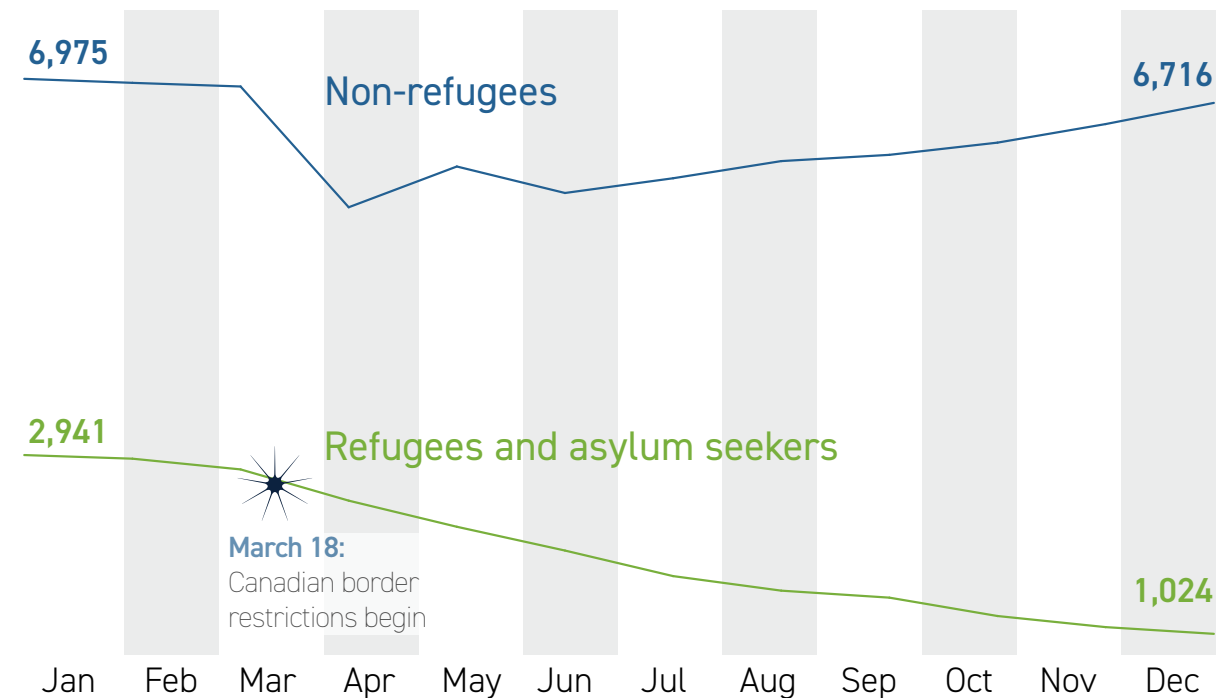


Image:

Staff at the temporary Christie-Ossington Neighbourhood Centre (CONC) Etobicoke Hotel Program distributing meals to residents.



Results-Based Accountability

SSHA continued to integrate Results-Based Accountability into its performance management practices in 2020.

The City of Toronto adopted Results-Based Accountability (RBA) in 2019 as a City-wide performance management and accountability framework. RBA is an approach used around the world in other public sector organizations to:

- Help earn trust and confidence by measuring performance and demonstrating value.
- Support more thoughtful, upfront conversation on the best strategies and partnerships needed to achieve well-being for our city.
- Use data and transparency to provide accountability for quality of life results and the performance of programs and services.
- Adopt a simple, common sense approach to get quickly from talk to action.

In 2020, SSHA identified three outcome statements to support the division's mission:

1. People experiencing homelessness in Toronto have access to safe, high quality emergency shelter
2. People are provided housing-focussed supports that ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring
3. Low-income households have access to housing benefit programs that provide affordability and stability

SSHA is planning to develop indicators in 2021 to measure and track how well we are doing at achieving each outcome statement.

While the indicators are being developed, SSHA has identified interim measures that can help the division gauge its performance.

One of these interim measures is the number of calls received by SSHA's Central Intake service, which helps quantify demand for access to emergency shelter options (outcome statement 1).

Central Intake is SSHA's telephone-based service that offers referrals to the shelter system and information about other housing stability services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During the pandemic, some services that provided in-person referrals to the shelter system were paused, and Central Intake became the main way people experiencing homelessness accessed the shelter system.

Higher call volumes at Central Intake is an indicator of demand for shelter programs. When spaces are scarce, people seeking shelter have to call back more often, driving call numbers up. Note that call volumes do not show how many people accessed a shelter space.

As shown in the figure below, call volumes almost double in the first few months of the pandemic.

CALL VOLUMES AT SSHA'S CENTRAL INTAKE SERVICE, 2020

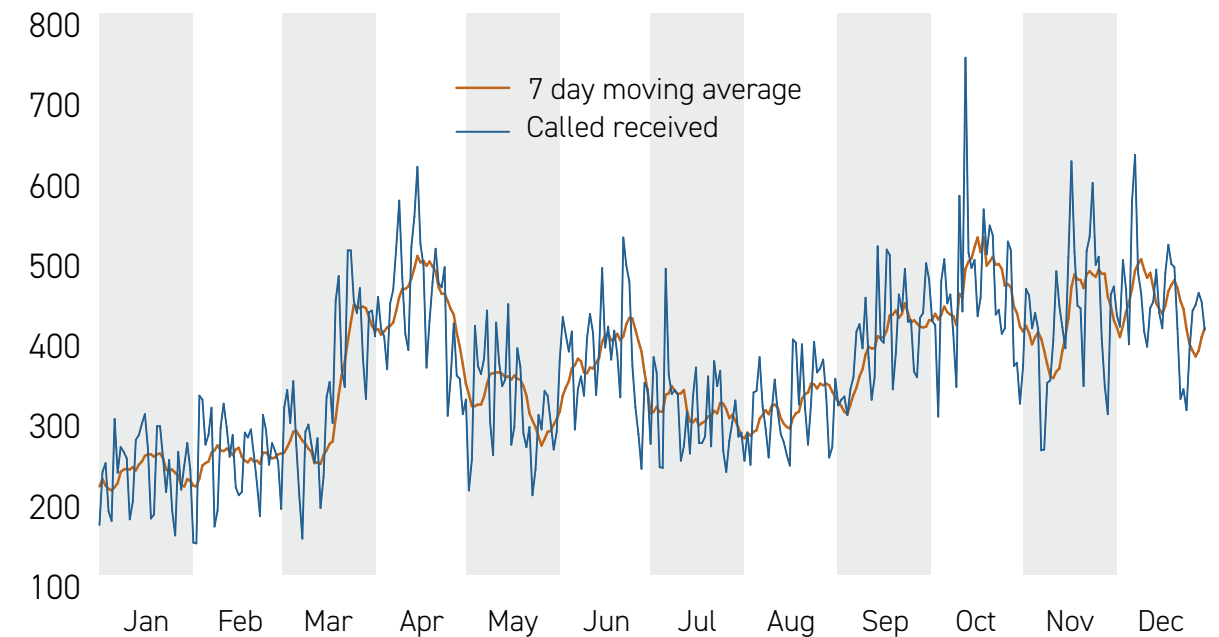


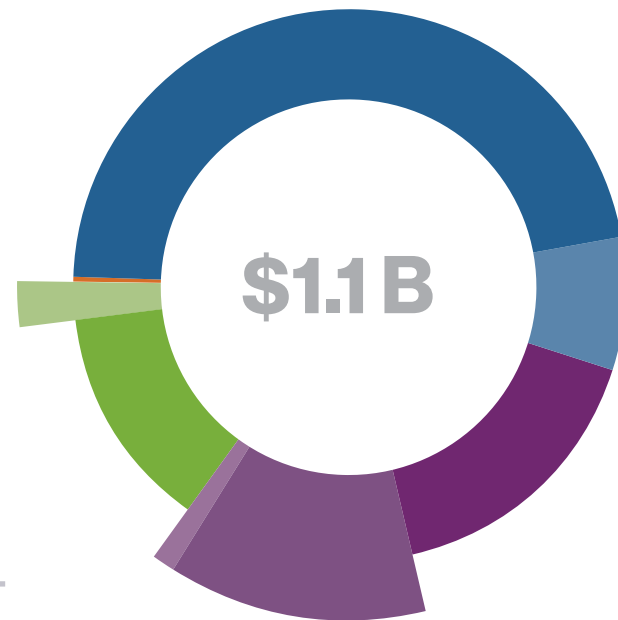
Image: Staff at Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Centre distributing a warm meal to a resident

Financial Highlights

2020 Operating Budget

WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM (IN MILLIONS)

City of Toronto tax base	528.3
Other City of Toronto revenue sources	88.5
Provincial funding:	
Base funding	185.3
COVID-19 response funding	141.5
Pandemic pay	12.4
Federal funding:	
Base funding	150.4
COVID-19 response funding	25.0
Donations	0.02
Total	1,131.4



WHERE THE MONEY WENT (IN MILLIONS)

Homeless and Housing First Solutions	545.4
Social Housing System Management	586.1
Total	1,131.4



SSHA spent \$170.9 million on its response to COVID-19, which was funded by:

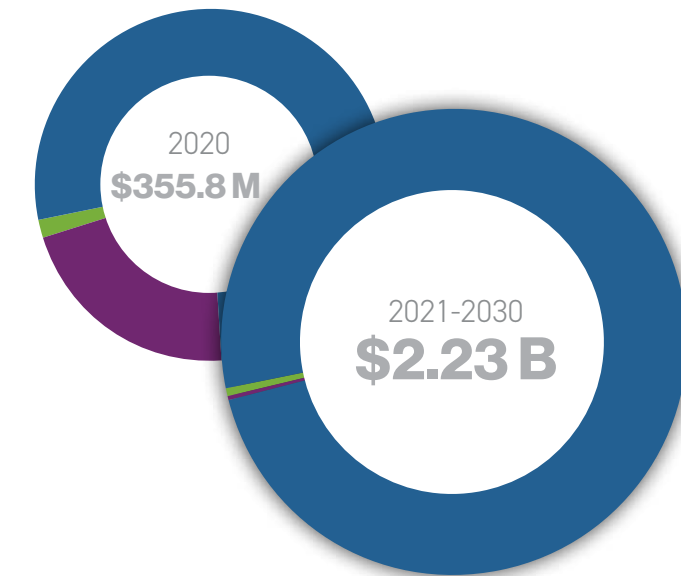
- Provincial Social Services Relief Funding: \$141.5 million
- Federal Reaching Home program: \$25.0 million
- City: \$4.33 million
- Donations: \$0.02 million

The average cost of a shelter bed was \$110 per day per person before COVID-19. This cost was approximately \$220 per day per person as a result of measures put in place to protect people in the shelter system from COVID-19.

2020 Capital Budget

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM (IN MILLIONS)

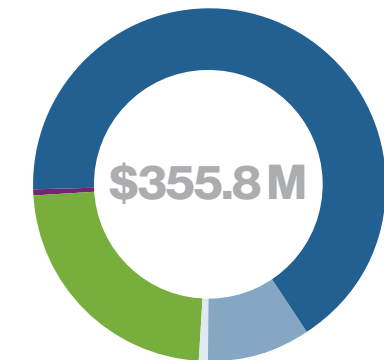
	2020	2021 to 2030
City of Toronto	274.8	2,219.2
Provincial funding	75.5	2.2
Federal funding	5.5	6.2
Total	355.8	2,227.6



WHERE THE MONEY WENT IN 2020 (IN MILLIONS)

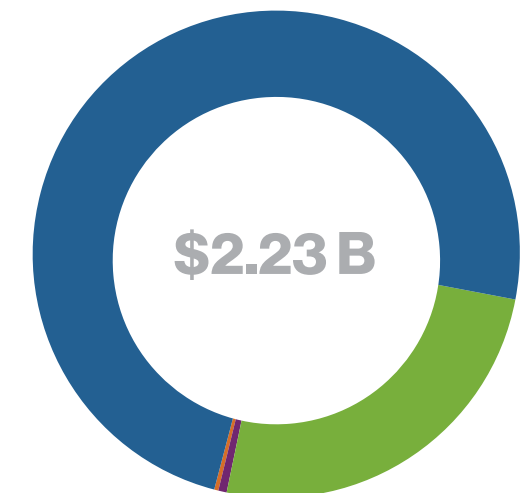
State of good repair:

State of good repair at TCHC	235.5
TCHC revitalization	34.3
Other state of good repair	2.7
New shelters and housing	81.9
Improvements to address health and safety, legislated requirements	1.4
Total	355.8



WHERE THE MONEY WILL GO 2021 TO 2030 (IN MILLIONS)

State of good repair	1,651.5
New shelters and housing	563.0
Modernization, including AODA updates	10.1
Information technology	3.0
Total	2,227.6



*All 2020 budget information is projected actuals based on the third quarter variance report, and rounded to the nearest hundred thousand.

Priorities



SSHA's priorities for 2020 changed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Toronto. Our work became focused on three priorities:

1. Respond to the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Help people access housing
3. Improve how we work

Image: Staff at the COVID-19 transportation centre wearing PPE

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

THREE-TIERED RESPONSE TO COVID-19

While not part of our plan at the start of the year, SSHA's response to COVID-19 quickly became our most urgent priority in 2020. As the virus started to be identified within Canada, it quickly became clear that keeping people accessing SSHA's services safe required a nimble response to stay one step ahead of the pandemic.

The City developed a three-tiered response to COVID-19 in the shelter system in partnership with provincial and federal governments, the healthcare sector, and community non-profits. Much of this response was delivered in the first 90 days of the pandemic.

Tier 1 – Prevention

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system through implementing infection prevention and control measures.

IMPLEMENTED INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL MEASURES (IPAC)

- Implemented all IPAC measures recommended by Toronto Public Health and the Province
- Issued a Toronto Shelter Directive requiring use of masks and face coverings for all frontline shelter, outreach workers and people accessing the shelter system
- Distributed more than **2.7 million** pieces of PPE to City shelters and 1.3 million to the homelessness sector, and provided \$6.1 million in funding to the sector for additional IPAC measures and PPE
- Advocated to the federal and provincial governments to prioritize access to PPE for frontline shelter workers

SSHA USED 2.7 MILLION PIECES OF PPE:



ADDED TEMPORARY SHELTERS TO ENABLE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Issued a Toronto Shelter Directive confirming that all sites are required to maintain physical distancing, based on Ministry of Health guidance for congregate living settings during the pandemic
- Opened 40 temporary shelter sites in community centres and hotels (more details on page 36)
- Enhanced street outreach response strategies with a focus on COVID-19 safety in encampments

Tier 2 – Mitigation

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter system through screening, testing, and isolating.

SCREENING AND TESTING

- Implemented standard screening processes using Ontario Ministry of Health guidelines at all points of entry
- Transported more than 1,121 clients to assessment centres for testing
- Advocated to prioritize testing in shelter and respite settings.
- With TPH and partners, implemented mobile testing at shelter locations as part of outbreak management strategies with more than 4,900 individual tests administered through 98 mobile testing sessions

ESTABLISHING CANADA'S FIRST COVID-19 ISOLATION PROGRAM

Created Canada's first dedicated isolation program with appropriate health supports for people experiencing homelessness, more details on page 57

Tier 3 – Recovery

Contributing to Toronto's recovery from COVID-19 by supporting people in the shelter system to move into housing.

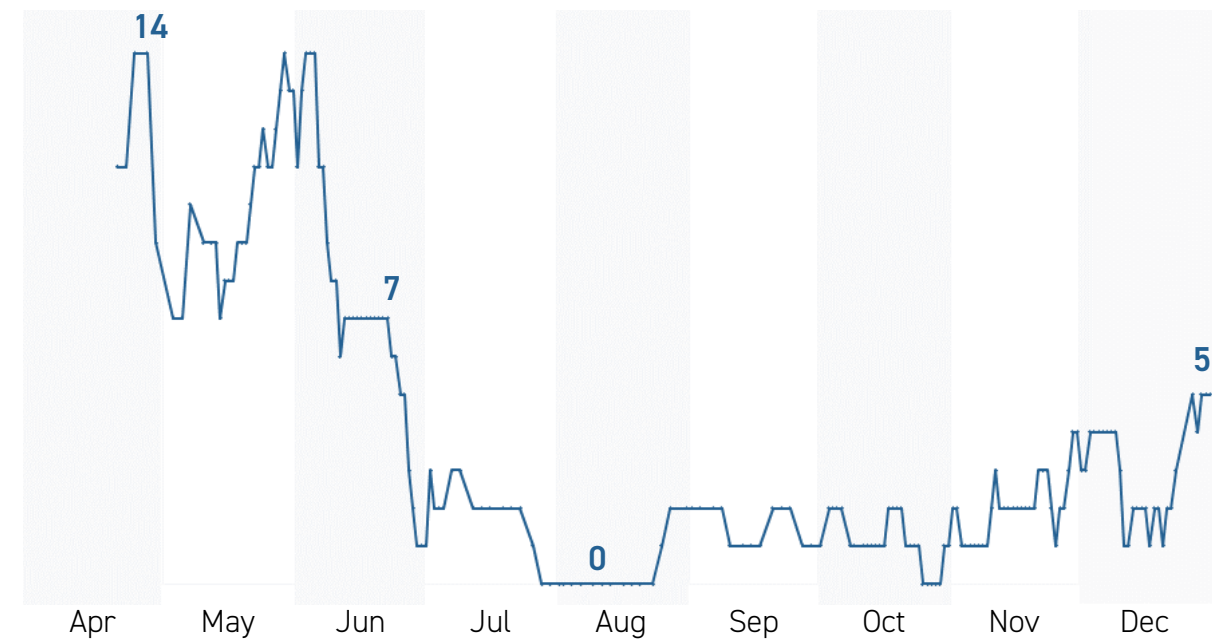
Launched the Rapid Rehousing initiative to move people in the shelter system into vacant Toronto Community Housing units, more details on page 14

- Launched a new Interim Housing Program to move people sleeping outdoors into interim housing located in a vacant apartment building with up to 130 units that were leased from a local developer. The program closed on August 28, 2020, and people were relocated to other temporary programs or permanent housing.
- Worked to begin to identify properties that could be purchased and transitioned to future affordable and supportive housing

“This is not easy work – it involves many sectors and levels of government – but it is absolutely critical that we all get it right”.

– Councillor Joe Cressy, Spadina-Fort York (Ward 10), Board of Health Chair, on the City's response to COVID-19 in the shelter system

NUMBER OF CITY-FUNDED SHELTERS IN OUTBREAK OF COVID-19, APRIL 20 TO DEC 31, 2020



Note: Data retrieved from Toronto Public Health and only available starting April 20.



Image: Streets to Homes staff conduct outreach and provide supplies to people experiencing homelessness outdoors.

Encampment Outreach

There was a noticeable increase in the number and size of encampments in Toronto in 2020. This is due to a number of reasons, including:

- reduced options due to the pandemic for people to stay with friends, family or other temporary accommodations
- fears related to COVID-19 in the shelter system
- increase in the number of people discharged from provincial correctional facilities due to COVID-19 who do not have housing
- the closure of other provincial programs and services (i.e. detox, withdrawal and mental health facilities)
- people moving from ravines and more remote locations into more visible areas

SSHA's Street-to-Homes and partner agencies operate 24/7, 365 days a year, engaging with people living outside, building relationships, and creating individual plans for housing. In 2020, through Streets to Homes and partner agencies, SSHA connected with people living in encampments and offered:

- immediate access to safe, inside spaces
- COVID-19 education, screening and referrals to provincial COVID-19 assessment centres
- help with accessing ID
- health care including mental health and harm reduction supports
- help developing a housing plan
- water and help accessing nearby meal programs or food banks
- blankets, sleeping bags and warm winter clothing in November and December

In 2020, Streets to Homes and partners referred 1,201 people sleeping in encampment to safer indoor spaces and helped 305 people sleeping outside access permanent housing.



58 **Image:** Staff donning PPE at COSTI Etobicoke Hotel Program

Community Engagement During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged SSHA to explore new ways to introduce and operate new homelessness services in communities around the city. SSHA quickly opened 40 temporary shelter sites, 31 in the first 90 days of the pandemic, meaning community engagement had to be done concurrent to, or even after new services opened. This was difficult for some communities, and we didn't always get it right. SSHA had to immediately change our engagement process, which was based on face-to-face interactions, and was designed to take place weeks or months before services opened.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 and follow public health recommendations to stay home, SSHA hosted virtual engagement sessions using new approaches and technologies, hosting WebEx Information Sessions and developing open house videos.

While online engagement can be difficult, it also yielded unexpected benefits. For example, virtual sessions were better attended than past in-person sessions, with one reaching nearly 1,000 attendees. These sessions were recorded and available to be viewed later on YouTube, further increasing reach.

The challenges posed by the pandemic required SSHA to innovate and engage differently. The division is continuing to improve virtual engagement, including exploring ways to better address privacy and accessibility concerns. Also, SSHA is currently reviewing all engagement processes since 2018 to identify enhancements for 2021 and beyond.



Image:

Thousands of flyers, like the ones pictured here, were sent out to neighbourhoods across Toronto inviting members of the community to learn more about new shelter openings virtually.



Image: Modular housing living space at 321 Dovercourt

Help People Access Housing

Through the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that the solutions to homelessness and the spread of COVID-19 are one and the same. Safe and adequate housing is the best defense against spread of the virus. While COVID-19 has affected everyone, it has had a greater impact on those in our community who face greater health inequities, including people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, women experiencing domestic violence, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, and Black people, Indigenous people and people of colour (BIPOC).

When SSHA and sector partners were working on the Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy, we looked at what recovery from the pandemic could look like and saw that we needed a “pivot to housing.”

A “pivot to housing” is a commitment to shift from a focus on emergency response to homelessness to a focus on permanent housing solutions.

An emphasis on permanent housing solutions to homelessness recognizes that housing is inherent to the dignity and well-being of a person, that housing is a determinant of health, and that housing is an efficient and cost-effective use of resources.

“Pivot to housing” is a commitment and an approach that is underpinning SSHA’s work, as shown in the following sections

- Preventing evictions
- Modernizing the Centralized Waiting List for Subsidized Housing
- Strengthening and preserving social housing
- Implementing the Rapid Rehousing Initiative (see page 14)

6,094 people experiencing homelessness moved from the shelter system into housing in 2020

Preventing Evictions

In the context of COVID-19, when many households are facing economic uncertainty, eviction prevention programs are critical strategies to minimize the flow to people into homelessness. Eviction prevention is also identified in the City’s HousingTO Action Plan as a key strategy in ensuring positive outcomes for households in Toronto and reducing pressure on the shelter system.

SSHA has two key programs that focus on eviction prevention: the Rent Bank and the Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) program.

The **Toronto Rent Bank** provides interest-free loans to Toronto residents who are behind in their rent or need to move to more suitable housing.

In an effort to respond to an anticipated increase in demand for Rent Bank loans for rental arrears during COVID-19, the SSHA expanded the Rent Bank program with an additional investment of \$2 million and changed program rules to increase maximum loans and defer loan repayment.

These changes supported 1,150 households in rental arrears with no-interest loans of up to \$4,000 to remain in their homes.

Rent Bank granted 1,060 rental arrear loans and 90 rental deposit loans in 2020 – up 34% from 2019. The total value of all loans granted was \$3.53 million – up 66%.

The **EPIC program** assists vulnerable households facing imminent risk of eviction by offering intensive case management services to prevent the loss of housing and avert homelessness. People are referred to the program through pre-determined referral sources who interface with low-income and marginalized tenant households and are often tenants’ first point of contact upon receiving a notice of eviction.

EPIC helped 638 people remain housed in 2020.

As a result of the pandemic, referrals to the EPIC program in 2020 were lower than anticipated. Contributing factors included the Provincial moratorium on evictions and the closure of the Landlord and Tenant Board from March to August 2020 and subsequent backlog of cases.

SSHA expects that demand for eviction prevention services will increase in 2021 due to economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic, and the subsequent accumulation of higher than average rental arrears by many vulnerable Toronto tenants.

“The pandemic has demonstrated that access to safe, secure and affordable homes is essential to the health and well-being of our people and our communities...it is critical that governments at all levels combine and accelerate their efforts to create new, affordable homes for everyone.”

– Deputy Mayor Michael Thompson, Scarborough Centre (Ward 21), Chair of the Economic and Community Development Committee

Modernizing the Centralized Waiting List for Subsidized Housing

SSHA is undertaking a multi-year project to modernize the Centralized Waiting List for subsidized housing (also called rent-geared-to-income housing).

There were over 151,000 people on the waiting list at the end of 2020. These applicants often spend years on the waitlist, and must provide documents manually and wait to hear about offer for housing once they reach to top of the waiting list. There is limited online access to these processes.

To modernize the waiting list, SSHA will roll out a new online portal called MyAccessToHousingTO. The portal will provide households with a convenient and secure way to apply to the waiting list online. This change is scheduled for April 2021.

This update will allow for a major change to the way applicants accept housing offers towards a choice-based model. The choice-based model will allow applicants to see information (photos, move-in dates, accessibility features and more) about available units and express interest on units that meet their needs. This change is scheduled for June 2021.

2020 was spent planning for these changes and developing the new online system that will be launched in 2021.

While this development was happening, staff continued to support people on the waiting list through the existing system, and helped 3,300 people connect to rent-geared-to-income housing.

PEOPLE ON THE CENTRALIZED WAITING LIST WHO ACCESSED RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME HOUSING IN 2020

Applicant category	Jan to March	April to June	July to Sept	Oct to Dec	Total
Survivors of domestic abuse and human trafficking	177	215	296	418	1,106
Terminally ill	50	31	38	66	185
Over-housed	5	6	5	1	17
Homeless, youth, and vulnerable families	96	200	178	167	641
General list	366	293	248	439	1,346
Total	694	745	765	1,091	3,295

SSHA also launched the [Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit](#) in 2020, which supported just over 2,800 on the waiting list to permanently stabilize their rent. The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit is a new funding program announced by the federal and provincial governments in December 2019 that provides a portable housing benefit to assist with rental costs to people on the Centralized Waiting List.

Strengthening and Preserving Social Housing

The social housing supply is an essential component of the housing stability system, contributing to the City's purpose-built rental housing stock, and providing both lower end of market units and subsidized units. Preserving over 80,000 units of existing affordable rental units continues to be a viable and cost-effective approach to maintaining the supply of affordable rental housing in Toronto.

SSHA advanced two key projects to help sustain this critical asset: SSHA developed the new [Community Housing Partnership Renewal Program](#) (CHPR) and enrolled the first four social housing providers, securing a total of 360 affordable rental units for 20-year terms. The new program incentivizes former federal housing providers with expired operating agreements to enter into new agreements with the City. The program provides a property tax exemption in exchange for secured affordability and provides the opportunity to deepen affordability and mix of rental unit sizes through the provision of housing benefits.

SSHA, in partnership with the Housing Secretariat, is administering a new federal housing program, the [Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative](#) (COCHI) that will assist in maintaining social and affordable housing. Toronto's social housing stock ranges from 30 to over 60 years old, with buildings that require extensive and ongoing capital repairs as they age. Building Condition Audits of the portfolio make it clear that current reserves are inadequate to fund the capital requirements of these buildings. COCHI supports non-profit community housing providers with repair or renovations to their building systems to carry out health and safety repairs. In 2020, the City distributed \$13 million to housing providers for needed repairs.



Image: Rent-geared-to-income housing unit at TCHC used in the Rapid Rehousing Initiative. The City partnered with the Furniture Bank and donors to furnish the units.

Improve How We Work

Responding to the Opioid Crisis

Toronto has seen a devastating rise in fatal opioid overdoses and related shelter deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is due to a combination of factors, including:

- increasing toxicity of the unregulated drug supply as carfentanyl and other substances are added to the supply
- to ensure physical distancing, the City has reduced the number of beds in congregate settings, and opened more single-occupancy hotel spaces, which can be isolating
- more people consuming drugs alone
- some shelter residents have moved to ensure physical distancing, which means they may be purchasing from dealers they do not know and may not have access to their regular support services
- Some services in the community (i.e. consumption and treatment services, detox, withdrawal and mental health facilities) have had to reduce their service hours and capacity

In 2020, to respond to the escalating opioid poisoning crisis and help save lives, SSHA continued to implement the SSHA Harm Reduction Framework and partnered with Toronto Public Health and community agencies to launch iPHARE, (Integrated Prevention and Harm Reduction initiative).

iPHARE introduced a range of harm reduction measures in all shelter locations. This includes:

- creating an overdose response program for shelter residents who use drugs, which includes opening Urgent Public Health Needs Sites at select shelters
- ensuring on-site harm reduction supplies are available, including naloxone
- mandatory staff training on drug use, overdose prevention and response
- grief and loss support services for shelter staff and residents
- investigating options to support a safer supply of drugs
- working with people with lived experience to develop and deliver services whenever possible

iPHARE programming will be delivered as follows and will run until March 31, 2022:

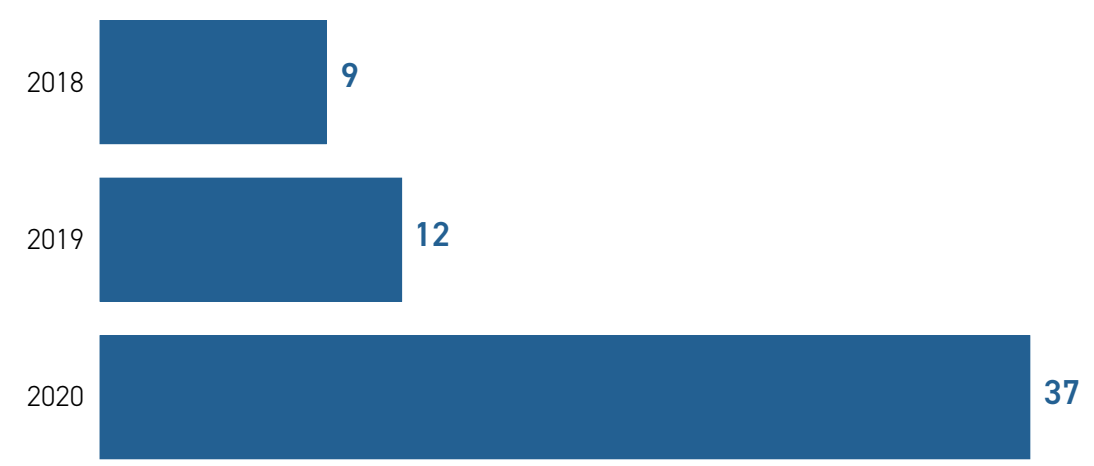
Lead	Role	Funding
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre	provide a range of harm reduction supports across the shelter system	\$2.76 million
LOFT Community Services and Toronto North Support Services	enhanced intensive mental health case management supports	\$1.47 million
SSHA, Toronto Public Health, Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre	expand the range of harm reduction services and embed Urgent Public Health Needs Sites into selected shelters across the city, allowing residents at the location to consume drugs under trained supervision to reduce the risk of overdose fatalities	\$3.38 million



Image: Flyers developed and distributed by Toronto Public Health, Sherbourne Health Centre and SSHA for all temporary hotel sites in 2020 to support shelter residents who use drugs

The first Urgent Public Health Need Site opened at the Dixon Hall Bond Place Hotel Program in December 2020.

OPIOID TOXICITY DEATHS OR SUSPECT DRUG RELATED DEATHS OF PEOPLE STAYING IN TORONTO SHELTER SYSTEM, 2018 TO 2020



Confronting Anti-Black Racism

Anti-Black racism gained significant public and political attention in Toronto in 2020, with the expansion of the global movement to end racial injustice after the killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others by police in the United States in summer 2020. In solidarity with Black staff, SSHA's Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Interim Steering Committee held a series of support circles, two of which were dedicated to Black staff. The support circles were intended to enable staff to process their emotions and trauma, and share valuable information to shape SSHA's actions toward confronting anti-Black racism. As a result of the consultations with Black staff and work by the CABR Interim Steering Committee, SSHA:

- appointed a Director to act as an executive sponsor for this work,
- committed to creating dedicated positions to lead the division's efforts to confront anti-Black racism,
- established an informal steering committee and created a Terms of Reference document and staff application process to establish a formal steering committee in 2021
- advanced the SSHA CABR Site Ambassador program, and
- developed guidelines to confront anti-Black racism initiated by people in the shelter system towards staff (which were launched in February 2021).

SSHA remains dedicated to confronting anti-Black racism and ensuring that Black staff and Black people accessing the shelter system feel respected and valued.

SOLIDARITY

FOR BLACK LIVES AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS



The City of Toronto strives to be responsive to the distinct yet interconnected histories and continued struggles of Indigenous and Black communities.

We recognize our responsibility to create a city that works for Indigenous and Black communities.

We are committed to creating a stronger culture of inclusivity and encourage our employees to be supportive of Indigenous and Black solidarity in their words and actions.

[Toronto.ca/Toronto-For-All](https://toronto.ca/toronto-for-all)



Meeting in the Middle Second Annual Gathering

“A lot of people put our good intentions into this. We all share those good intentions as a group so we want to keep passing it back and forth. Reminding ourselves of the good intentions we have and working together and collaborating.”

- Steve Teekens, speaking about the ceremonial bundle.



Image: Steve Teekens, speaking about the ceremonial bundle

In November 2020, senior leadership from SSHA and members of the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) met for the Meeting in the Middle 2nd Annual Gathering.

The annual gathering was unique this year in that we gathered virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were honoured to open the gathering with a blessing by Frances Sanderson, a Qulliq lighting ceremony by Inuit Elder Meeka, followed by a blessing by Métis Senator, Suzanne Brunelle. Mary-Anne Bédard provided a land acknowledgement and opening remarks. We were pleased to be joined by City Manager Chris Murray and Deputy City Manager Giuliana Carbone who re-affirmed the City's broader commitment to reconciliation and supporting Indigenous communities in Toronto.

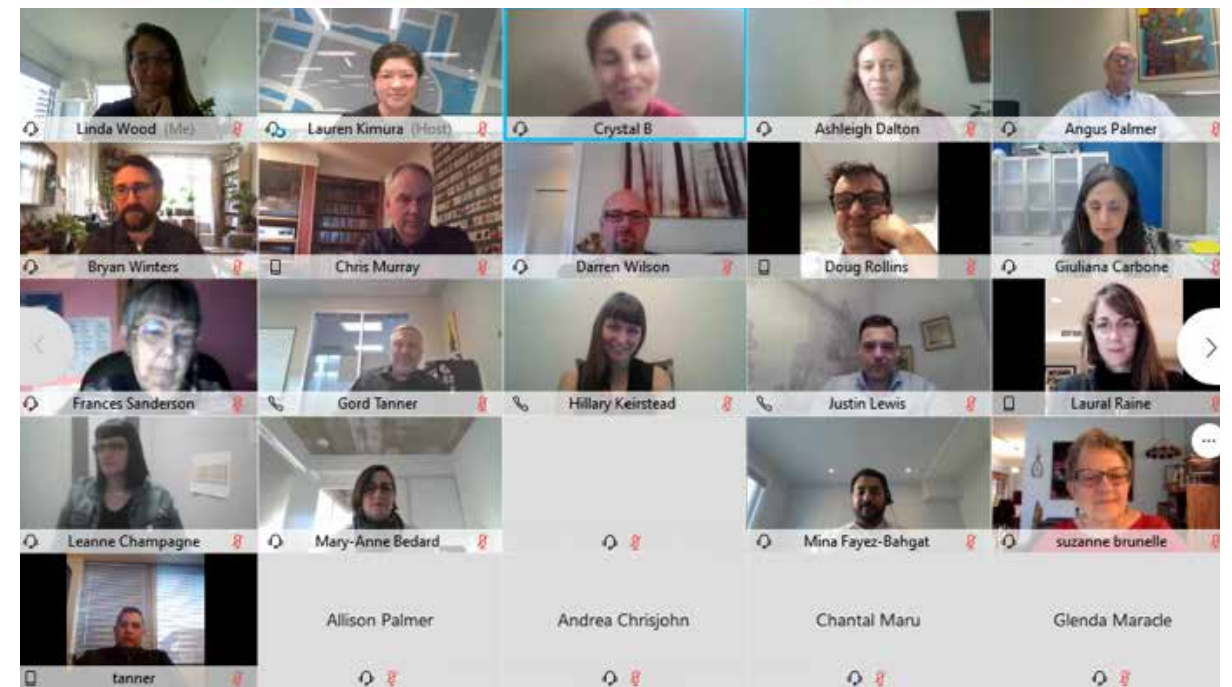


Image: Screenshot from virtual gathering

The resilience of the relationship between SSHA and Indigenous partners can be seen in the commitment to work on the most pressing issues facing Indigenous people experiencing homelessness and the long-term goals of the community. All participants felt the relationship was on track despite facing missteps along the way. Participants agreed that COVID-19 has provided the City of Toronto opportunities to leverage their new partnerships with different levels of government and advocate for stronger recognition and support for urban housing initiatives for Indigenous people in Toronto. COVID-19 has also provided examples of where relationships can be strengthened. SSHA's Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy and five year service plan present opportunities to ensure our programs and services meet the needs of Indigenous organizations and communities.

Looking Ahead to 2021

SSHA developed its second annual Divisional Workplan for 2021 (DW2021). 2021 is a crucial year for the division, as we maneuver through the COVID-19 pandemic and move towards recovery. DW2021 has three divisional priorities that will support the division's foundation internally and will deliver results for the people we serve:

- Strengthening the organization
- COVID-19 pandemic response
- Pivot to housing

Here are key deliverables that we are looking forward to in 2021. The full list of deliverables is in DW2021.

STRENGTHENING THE ORGANIZATION

- Improve communication processes to enable the division to speak clearly and consistently about our work
- Develop and implement programs, resources and tool for client-facing services and staff to confront anti-Black racism
- Improve wellness supports for staff when critical incidents occur
- Modernize Central Intake, with 311



COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

- Support roll-out of COVID-19 vaccine to people experiencing homelessness and frontline workers in the homelessness and housing sectors
- Enhance harm reduction supports in the shelter system
- Implement the Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy



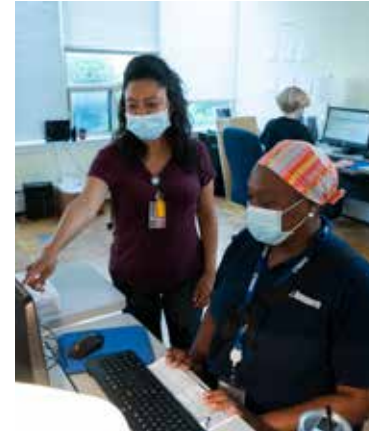
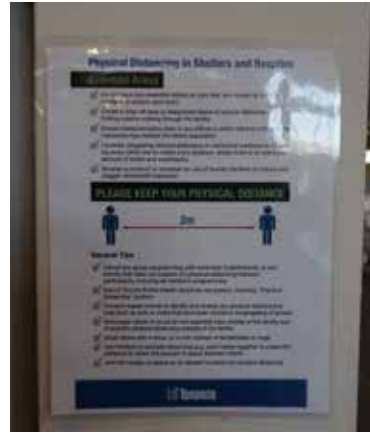
PIVOT TO HOUSING



- Modernize Access to Housing and implement a new choice-based access model for rent-geared-to-income housing
- Develop the division's next 5-year Service Plan
- Continue Rapid Rehousing Initiative and emergency housing plan for supportive housing
- Conduct shelter portfolio review to identify housing opportunities
- Expand Coordinated Access system implementation, including a Landlord Engagement Strategy and Equity review

"Now more than ever we are keenly aware of the connection between affordable housing and public health. People need to have access to a range of housing solutions...to protect their own health and the health of others. Our City has been quick to act but there is much more work to do together."

- Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão, Davenport (Ward 9), Chair of the Planning and Housing Committee





Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 2020 Annual Report.

