

Winter 2017

Housing Update

Your city, your community and you



Toronto
Community
Housing

Norma Gomez
“I believe in
giving back”

Enhancing fire safety

Win: four AGO tickets

Tenant Charter

Sign up to receive this newsletter in your inbox! Just email: news@torontohousing.ca



Message from Kathy

As I write this message, it’s just over two months since I joined Toronto Community Housing. I am grateful to all the people who have reached out to me to offer congratulations and support and, in some cases, shared their experiences and candid comments about how to improve our services. I have visited several communities and engaged directly with many of you, and will continue to do so over the coming months.

Since my first day at Toronto Community Housing, I have been impressed by the passion that members of our team have for making a difference for tenants. There is nothing like passion to fuel positive change!

The results of the tenant survey (please see page 13) conducted this past April are encouraging, but we have much more to do. Our challenge is increasing the momentum and creating a stronger tenant-centric culture, and we are committed to doing this.

In this context, we have a number of initiatives underway, including accelerating our capital repair program for our buildings, and reviewing and updating our procedures to provide more responsive service delivery, and timely access to services.

We know safety and security are key concerns for you, and we are implementing a more robust fire safety program in our buildings through a range of measures, including a tenant education and awareness campaign on fire prevention. We are also adding 12 more special constables to our Community Safety Unit to provide greater presence in our communities.

In summary, we will continue to work to provide safe, secure and well-maintained homes across our portfolio. We hope you will continue to see the positive difference.

I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy holiday season.

Kathy Milsom
President and CEO

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Tenant Charter

The Tenant Charter will be posted in your building and in Operating Unit offices soon. Toronto Community Housing staff is currently completing training on the Charter to help them provide better and more tenant-centric service. See page 8 to read the Charter.



Meet: Norma Gomez

Limitless Heights

Norma Gomez won a Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) Limitless Heights Scholarship in 2015 and she has been doing incredible work ever since.

“The scholarship helped me continue my education at York University and give back to our communities. Leading by example is what I believe!”

While completing her studies, Norma was hired at TCHC as a Senior Program Leader for the Active Living team. Shortly after, she earned a promotion to part-time Building and Community Facilitator, the position she currently holds.

“I have been able to create and deliver many programs in two different communities, including a Spanish and French Tutoring Program, Gardening, Arts and Crafts, Seniors Lunch Program and more.

The focus is building self-sustainable programs where tenants can continue the

programs and create more opportunities for other tenants.”

Being a long-time tenant advocate as well as an employee has given Norma a unique perspective. “We need a humble and passionate heart. We must love what we do and strive to do our best.”

“The scholarship helped me continue my education at York University and give back to our communities...”

To learn more about TCHC scholarships contact Vanessa Solorzano at **647-461-1065** or **vanessa.solorzano@torontohousing.ca**

Let us know

Who do you think we should write about next?

Email news@torontohousing.ca





Enhancing fire safety

Fire prevention tips

To enhance fire safety in all buildings, Toronto Community Housing is developing a new fire safety awareness campaign for tenants in partnership with Toronto Fire Services. The campaign will begin this winter with a mail-out of important fire safety information to tenants. The information covers how you can prevent fires and what to do in the event of a fire based on your building's fire safety plan.

Candles



- Keep matches and lighters out of children's reach.
- Always stand candles in stable candle holders before you light them.
- Never leave burning candles unattended or near pets, small children or decorations.
- Put out candles by wetting the wicks before going to sleep or leaving a room.

Decorative lighting



- Check tree lights for damage each year. Replace worn sets.
- Unplug all decorative lighting before going to sleep or leaving your home.
- Use decorative lighting and extension cords that have a Canadian Standards Association (CSA) label. Check the packaging to see if they are safe to use indoors or outdoors.

Christmas trees



- Water a live tree regularly.
- Use fire-safe decorations such as tinsel or icicles.
- Avoid smoking near the tree or decorations.
- Turn tree lights off before going to sleep and when you leave your home.
- Dispose of your tree when it begins to turn brown or dry out.
- Keep your tree away from heat sources such as candles, heating vents or radiators.
- If you have a balcony, never store your tree on it. This is a fire hazard. You will be asked to remove it if you do.

Space heaters



- Keep all heaters at least 1 metre (3 feet) away from anything burnable, such as paper, drapes, loose clothes, furniture, bedding or wallpaper.
- Never place clothes on a heater.
- Turn off heaters when you leave the house or go to sleep.
- Keep children well away from heaters.
- Space heaters and extension cords must have a CSA label.



In an emergency, always call **911**.

Looking back at summer

The soil beds alongside the buildings on 176 The Esplanade used to be littered with garbage and looked unwelcoming. People would walk on the other side of the road to avoid them.

“We’re a close community and we want people to be able to enjoy where they live.”

All that changed when Rhonda and Andrew decided to do something about it. Andrew is a horticulturalist and Rhonda enjoys being active in her community. They came together and planted what they could. First they cleared

all the weeds and garbage and then they found plants others were throwing away.

“We do what we can with what we have...a lot of this is borrowed,” said Rhonda. “We’re a close community and we want people to be able to enjoy where they live.”

After some love and care, the garden bloomed into a sprawling work of art.

“This shows respect and caring.”

The garden is funded and maintained by Rhonda and Andrew, who each spend about three hours per week tending to it. They also had help from youth in the YouthWorx program and St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Association whose contributions live on.

Now people stop to admire the garden. Tenants tell Rhonda and Andrew how much they appreciate the garden, saying “It’s so nice now” and “This shows respect and caring.”



Ellen, Andrew and Rhonda

Seniors fitness program

Seniors sweat it out!

Building and Community Facilitator Niko Young has made a big impact on tenants in Operating Unit A through the Seniors Program he leads from Monday to Thursday in three locations (2950 Lawrence Ave. E., 17 Brimley Rd., and 120 Town Haven Pl.). Some of the activities include chair yoga, music exercise and dance, games and stretching, and health and wellness workshops.

“[These tenants] defy the stereotype of a senior. They are living active and productive lives, and they take initiative.”

Elaine Philomene Alles said she had misgivings when she first started the program because she hadn’t exercised for a while. “At the beginning, it was difficult to move my body, but the regular exercise has helped me walk better,” she said. “Before, I could hardly lift my left arm, and now I have better use of it.”

“I think I can speak for all of us when I say our health has improved since we started with the program.”

Tenants have learned a lot from Niko—but he has learned a lot from them. “They defy the stereotype of a senior. They are living active and productive lives, and they take initiative,” he said.

“Niko is talented, kind and he knows what he’s doing,” Elaine said. “I think I can speak for all of us when I say our health has improved since we started with the program.”

Niko is teaching the seniors how to do the program themselves. He is also producing a DVD so they can work out on the days he is off. “I love teaching the program,” he said. “The tenants are incredible, and they appreciate what we are doing.”

Photo credit: Niko Young



New scholarship supported by Kathy Milsom

Toronto Community Housing CEO Kathy Milsom believes in a tenant-centric approach and giving back.

Kathy is an engineer and she studied at the University of Toronto. In honour of her parents, who were also engineers, she has launched a new scholarship for a student admitted full time in the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering at the University of Toronto. A student will be selected based on residency in Toronto Community Housing and financial need. Academic merit will also be considered.



"My parents made significant sacrifices to provide me with the opportunity to attend university, which provided the foundation for my career," said Kathy, "and I welcome this opportunity to pay it forward."

The University of Toronto will administer the scholarship. Tenants applying for admission should reach out to TCHC's Community Economic Development Unit for a letter of support and confirmation of residency by calling **416-981-6300** or emailing **economic.opportunities@torontohousing.ca**. The deadline is February 1, 2018.

Stay safe on ice and snow

The risk of slipping and falling is higher in the winter. Use these tips to help you stay safe:

- Take your time and pay attention
- Walk with your feet pointed slightly outward
- Extend arms to the side
- Adjust your pace
- Walk slowly and take short steps
- Make wide turns at corners
- Hold the handrail when using stairs
- Wear comfortable shoes with good grips
- Walk, don't run

Adapted from Workplace Safety and Prevention Canada

A new community food bank in Scarborough

Toronto Community Housing partner, Daily Bread Food Bank, has opened a new and accessible community food bank at 4205 Lawrence Ave. E.

More than 1,000 people have benefited from the food bank since it was launched in July 2017. About 80 tenants, including seniors, parents and young adults, stopped by the food bank on the Friday before Thanksgiving weekend to get hot food and grocery items to celebrate the holiday.



If you need food for yourself or your family this upcoming holiday season, you can call **416-203-0050** from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday. If you email **info@dailybread.ca**, Daily Bread staff will refer you to a food bank in your area.



Tenant Charter

The purpose of the tenant charter is to communicate Toronto Community Housing’s service commitments and set out accountabilities for all tenants and employees.

Everyone working at, living in or visiting Toronto Community Housing shares the responsibility of maintaining a culture of respect, safety, equity and inclusiveness.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION	INTEGRITY	ACCOUNTABILITY
<p>All employees will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support community engagement by sharing opportunities to participate in activities that help create healthy communities• Promote and communicate environmentally friendly activities• Provide access to common spaces in a fair and equitable manner• Work collaboratively with community partners and provide relevant information to tenants to maintain successful tenancies	<p>All employees will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work to earn, develop and maintain trust of tenants through honest, accountable and transparent service• Provide service in an unbiased and equitable manner• Support an inclusive environment that promotes dignity and respect• Show commitment and dedication to any task being undertaken	<p>All employees will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support our mission to provide clean, safe, well-maintained, affordable homes• Make information about service standards and processes for addressing service requests or complaints readily available• Take ownership and update tenants in a timely manner on the status of their request or complaint according to the applicable service standard• Hold service providers working on Toronto Community Housing

All tenants will:

- Have the opportunity to vote for position(s) in Toronto Community Housing's Tenant Engagement System
- Have the opportunity to participate in meetings and community activities
- Have the opportunity to take a leadership role in organizing local initiatives and represent the needs and wishes of their communities

All tenants will:

- Support an inclusive environment that promotes dignity and respect

RESPECT

All employees will:

- Provide respectful, professional and courteous service at all times
- Listen to and acknowledge issues and concerns raised by tenants
- Communicate in a clear and open manner

All tenants will:

- Communicate and interact with all persons who live in and work at Toronto Community Housing in a polite and courteous manner

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Toronto Community Housing is and will continue to be committed to providing accessible service. This includes meeting its duty to accommodate disabilities under the *Human Rights Code* and the standards set out in the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*.

Nothing in this charter should be seen to take away from the rules set out in any laws, such as the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, Toronto Community Housing policies, or any other legal commitments, such as a lease.

properties accountable

- Take appropriate tenancy management action to address illegal activity and antisocial behaviour on Toronto Community Housing property
- Provide language interpretation at tenant engagement meetings upon request

All tenants will:

- Be transparent and accountable when they represent other tenants via the Tenant Engagement System
- Maintain their own units, keep common spaces clean and be responsible for their own conduct as well as the conduct of occupants, guests and all pets they bring into the community
- Report safety issues and/or hazardous conditions to staff

Have your say...

Here are some of the improvements we've made after hearing from you.

YOUR COMMENT:

TCHC does not properly notify tenants about upcoming meetings, planned major repairs or service disruptions. Posters are cluttered, ripped off, often outdated or sometimes not even put up at all.

OUR SOLUTION:

We have started planning a bulletin board strategy that will include tenant input. By next year, each building will have a bulletin board that will be monitored to make sure all information is correct and up-to-date. We will keep you posted on the progress of the bulletin board project.

YOUR COMMENT:

Pest infestations are getting worse and when they are finally treated, they always come back because of other problems.

OUR SOLUTION:

The Environmental Health Unit (EHU) will now have a role in the annual unit inspection process. They will assess each household and treat pest problems at the source by taking preventative measures. Early intervention and follow up will provide better outcomes for tenants and communities.



TELL US HOW WE'RE DOING



Want to send a compliment or make a complaint? Here's how:

Call **416-981-5500**

Email help@torontohousing.ca

Remember to ask for your reference number.



As of Oct. 31, 2017, we have completed **51,914** capital repair projects as part of our building capital repair plan launched in 2013.

“The pest is a symptom. We can either treat the symptom or treat and manage the root cause.”

—Senior Manager of Environmental Health
Richard Grotsch



Chester Le community celebrates new mural

“Tough times don’t last, but tough people do.”

This was the message Chester Le tenants were determined to tell visitors, including Mayor John Tory and Toronto Community Housing’s new President and CEO Kathy Milsom, at the unveiling of a new mural in October.

The mural’s theme, “We are Chester,” is an expression that symbolizes the resilience of the tenants. The symbols used in the mural represent the diversity of the community and its personalities.

Under the mentorship of visual artist Adrian Hayles and mural worker Raeetha Raveendranathan, five Chester Le youth created the mural: Randy, 19; Thomas, 17; Bennita, 16; Shuley, 19 and Zakaria, 17.

“I’ve learned a lot from Chester Le growing up. I felt that this was one of the best opportunities I’ve ever taken to help illustrate

a positive image that is hardly ever spoken of or seen,” said Randy. “I want people to know that the Chester Le community does not live in the negative times, but tries to focus on the positive which the mural project allows us to demonstrate; it’s a sign of resilience.”

“I felt that this was one of the best opportunities I’ve ever had to help illustrate a positive image that is hardly ever spoken of or seen...”

The mural was made possible with funds and support from the City of Toronto’s Mural and Street Art Grant Program, StreetARToronto, Agincourt Community Services Association and Ward 39 Councillor Jim Karygiannis.



Annual unit inspections have started

Once every year, your superintendent inspects your unit to make sure:

- Smoke alarms are working
- If you have a carbon monoxide alarm, that it is working
- Window screens are not damaged and window locks are in place
- Your front door closer is working
- The "In case of fire" sign is on the back of your front door
- Appliances are clean and working
- No flammable items are on or near your stove
- No damages or fire hazards
- No clutter in the unit or excessive use of extension cords
- No air conditioners are in townhouses
- No antennas or satellite dishes have been installed without permission
- No dishwashers, dryers or washing machines are in high-rise units

Before inspection, you will receive a written 24-hour Notice of Entry. Please make sure pets are secured and there is no clutter on the floor. Please remember that installing additional locks on the unit door is not permitted.

This document is available in other languages

للحصول على نسخة مترجمة، الرجاء الاتصال بهذا الرقم
اتصل على الرقم 416-981-5500 لطلب نسخة مترجمة.

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bản dịch.

UPDATE: Tenants First

Tenants First is an opportunity for Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) to work with the City to make strategic decisions that will support better homes, better service to tenants, better access to services and better financial performance.

City and TCHC staff have been working together to define which services we, as a social housing provider, are responsible for providing to tenants. We are also working on how to provide access to other support services that are outside TCHC's core mandate.

The next Tenants First report is scheduled to go to City Council in January 2018.

For more information go to [Toronto.ca\tenantsfirst](http://Toronto.ca/tenantsfirst)

Closing the Loop starts soon

After a successful pilot program in 2015–16, Closing the Loop, ongoing tenant survey program, will be implemented across TCHC in 2018. The ongoing surveys will provide a feedback loop so TCHC management can continually make improvements based on tenants' feedback.

Office of Diversity and Human Rights at TCHC

We are committed to an environment free from discrimination and harassment. If you feel like your rights have been violated based on any human rights grounds, you can file a complaint online at torontohousing.ca/human-rights-complaint-form

2017 tenant survey results show improvement

Thank you to the more than 3,500 tenants who completed the 2017 Tenant Survey.

The survey found that overall satisfaction improved by three percentage points to 67 per cent compared with the 2015 survey. Satisfaction with the condition and cleanliness of buildings, staff being respectful, keeping tenants informed of changes and connecting tenants to community services all improved.

Building safety and security remains a top concern, particularly among seniors. More tenants said drunken/rowdy behaviour and illegally parked vehicles are a problem in their community.

“The survey identifies the greatest opportunities for improvement and gives us a solid foundation to build on,” said CEO Kathy Milsom. “There is more we need to do to improve service delivery to our tenants, but we are headed in the right direction.”

The survey, which was done by a third-party firm, was voluntary and completely anonymous. TCHC will conduct the survey every year to monitor and report on our progress towards increased tenant satisfaction.

If you have questions about the survey, contact survey@torontohousing.ca or call the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500.

Free community events

I Am Canada: Celebrating Canadian Picture Book Art

Every Sunday until Jan. 21, 2018
1 to 5 p.m.

Toronto Reference Library, TD Gallery
(1st Floor) 789 Yonge St.

416-393-7131

Board Games Night: Gibson House Museum

The last Thursday of each month is Board Games Night. All ages welcome!

5172 Yonge St., North York, 5 to 8 p.m.

416-395-7432

The Toronto Light Festival

Lighting up the long winter nights with works from local and international light artists.

The Distillery District, 55 Mill St.

Jan. 19 to Mar. 11, 2018

info@torontolightfest.com

2018 Black History Month at Toronto Public Library

Events planned for February 2018 include concerts, workshops, talks, discussions and lectures on Canada's hip hop scene, jazz and poetry.

tpl.ca/blackhistorymonth, 416-393-7131

Contest winners of backpack full of school supplies!

Congratulations to last issue's 14 winners. We have contacted all the winners.

Thank you to everyone who entered a submission.

Volunteer opportunities

Invest in yourself! Make industry connections, learn new skills and build your résumé.

Luminato 2018: various positions
luminatofestival.com/Volunteer

Hot Docs

www.hotdocs.ca/p/volunteer-for-hot-docs

Volunteer Toronto

www.volunteertoronto.ca

CNIB

All volunteers are engaged in meaningful and rewarding work that meets the needs of their local community.

www.cnib.ca/en/ontario/Volunteers/Pages/default.aspx



AGO

WIN: You have a chance to win four Art Gallery of Ontario general admission tickets!

Tell us in 50 words or more about your favourite piece of art (painting, book, movie, song, etc.) and why it is your favourite.

Submit your entry by January 30, 2018. Tickets courtesy of the AGO.

- Email: news@torontohousing.ca
- Message: [facebook.com/TorontoCommunityHousing](https://www.facebook.com/TorontoCommunityHousing)
- Mail: Housing Update, 931 Yonge St., 7th floor, Toronto, ON M4W 2H2

Get connected

Free Dental Care

Toronto Public Health has a fully-equipped Mobile Dental Clinic that travels to community agencies across the city. It provides free dental care for eligible clients who have difficulty accessing dental services. For information on how to access this service, please call **416-338-7600**.

Free English Classes

If you are a Permanent Resident, Citizen or Refugee Claimant, you can take free English classes offered at many libraries and centres in the city. You can find a location near you here: www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/new-to-canada/esl.jsp

Toronto Youth Job Corps – Free

Are you between the ages of 16 to 29, out of work and out of school? The Toronto Youth Job Corps program might be exactly what you need. This program is a full time, 6- to 24-week paid employment preparation program for youth, especially those who are facing a difficult life situation or having a hard time getting a job.

Contact Ruth Antwiwaa at **416-397-1752** or Ruth.Antwiwaa@toronto.ca

Food Banks

There are dozens of food banks throughout Toronto, each serving their own area. Please note that most food banks require proof of address, identification and income verification. When calling to make an appointment, ask about food bank rules. Call Daily Bread at **416-203-0050** for a referral to a member food bank near you.

Toronto Public Health eCounselling Service – Free

Toronto Public Health now offers free, private and anonymous online counselling for Toronto residents. Their nurse and dietitian can provide information on a wide range of topics, including parenting, depression, sexual health, nutrition and more. Service available: Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (except statutory holidays). If you have questions about this service, please call **416-338-7600**.

Income changes

If your income, assets or household composition changed outside of your normal annual review time, you must report the changes in writing or in person to your Tenant Services Coordinator or Property Administrator within 30 days. If you do not report these changes, you could be charged back rent and lose your rent-geared-to-income subsidy.

Get in touch

You can call the numbers below 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Client Care Centre

416-981-5500

Community Safety Unit

416-921-2323

Toronto Crime Stoppers

416-222-8477

Email: help@torontohousing.ca

Website: torontohousing.ca

@TOHousing 

TorontoCommunityHousing 

@torontohousing 

Did you know...?

1. You can call the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500 24 hours a day, seven days a week about building emergencies, service requests, complaints and your tenancy.
2. You can email help@torontohousing.ca for non-emergencies.
3. When you submit a service request you will be given a unique EasyTrac reference number. You can check on the status of your request by giving staff the EasyTrac number.
4. You can call the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323 anonymously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week about security issues.
5. You are welcome to bring someone to support you at a meeting or event.



Read the Tenant Charter on **page 8**

