

MARCH 2021

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turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

**PARENTING IN
A PANDEMIC**

**A NEW HOME ON
CHURCH STREET**



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
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A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Heather M. McGregor,
YWCA Toronto Chief Executive Officer

As I look back on the last 12 months of this pandemic, there is one word I return to again and again – resilience.

I am struck, first and foremost, by the incredible resilience of YWCA Toronto's frontline workers and community members. In this issue, we hear from staff and residents in our supportive housing programs who are juggling the pressures of work and family, all amid the growing isolation and anxiety of a pandemic that is affecting communities who face marginalization disproportionately.

As you will read in the coming pages, we recently opened a new 120-unit supportive housing community on Church Street. I could not be prouder that, even amid the challenges of

COVID-19, we are still striving to do more to address this city's affordable housing crisis.

Finally, I am thankful, as always, for the unwavering support of you, our donors. Time after time over these strange and difficult months, you have stepped up to show your care and generosity for those in our community who need it most.

In a difficult year full of unexpected costs that saw many charities having to close their doors, it is you who have boosted our resilience. Your thoughtful support has not only kept YWCA Toronto afloat, but given us a strong start as we look towards the uncertain months ahead. I look forward to continuing this journey together. Thank you.

PARENTING IN THE PANDEMIC

While this gruelling year hasn't been easy for any of us, for parents trying to balance work, home schooling, and their children's mental and physical health, it has been a real test of resilience.

Below, some of YWCA Toronto's frontline staff and participants talk about the difficult decisions they are making to support their children's learning, while also keeping them safe.

Tammy, Interim Manager, Elm Supportive Housing

Tammy's son is 13 and in grade 8. They both live with Tammy's mother, who has a compromised immune system, so he has been learning at home since the start of the pandemic.

"This is his last year before high school so it's very important, but he's really unengaged. He just wants to be with his friends."

Tammy considered sending her son back to school this February, but since she is also potentially exposed to the virus at work, that's not feasible.

"I feel guilty about leaving him at home but there's not really another option at the moment. It's hard."

Dela, Community Support Worker, Pape Housing

After initially sending her daughter back to school in September, Dela also decided to make the switch to online learning in the fall.

"With two essential workers in the home, along with someone who has an underlying health issue, the risk was just too high."

Dela's daughter, who is 15 and in grade 10, is thriving in her new routine. Her grades have improved and she is taking on more responsibility at home.

"I do struggle with not being able to support her more, but this situation has given her an opportunity to explore and bring out her strengths. She even cooks now! I'm proud of how she's stepped up."

Nicole, Tenant at Pape Housing

Nicole, a visual artist, has three children: a son, 17, and daughter, 14, who live at home, and an older daughter, 25, who has her own place but often comes back to study.

"The main struggle is having room for online learning. The dining table is our space to do everything. Even when I'm trying to work, the kids' learning is still the priority."



Nicole has underlying health problems, so the family has only been going out for essentials. The move to online learning has been especially hard for her son, who usually goes to a specialized school to support his autism and mental health challenges.

“My other kids are keeping up with school, but my son is struggling. I’m trying to support him as best I can, but it’s hard. I’m hopeful that things will improve soon, for my son’s sake.”

Amanda, Community Support Worker, Bergamot Housing

For Amanda and her husband, who are both essential workers, supporting their two young daughters (ages 7 and 9) with home learning has been challenging. “We rely on school being open, so their schedules have shaped what work life is like for me,” she says.

New class teachers and periods of self-isolation have also been disruptive for the family. “It’s been such a jumbled year. But my girls are strong and resilient, I know they’ll be okay.”

PHOTOS | Polina Tankilevitch (left), Ketut Subiyanto (right) both from Pexels

Together we can make change

Save the date:
JUNE 3 VIRTUAL GALA

YWCA
Women of Distinction
TORONTO



Looking for a way to champion women in these times of global crisis?

As a 2021 YWCA Toronto member you will have a voice and a vote at our Annual Members Meeting on May 18th — help shape our advocacy, improve our programs, and change lives.

You will be part of a vibrant feminist community championing women everywhere. Join today!

EXTENDED LOCKDOWN'S IMPACT ON **WORKING MOTHERS**

The extension of virtual learning in southern Ontario disproportionately impacts women.



HERE IS HOW



30% of parents with children under 18 report feeling depressed.



64% of women say they are responsible for homeschooling during the pandemic compared to **19%** of men.



Between February & October of 2020, 20,600 **women fell out** of the labour force, while nearly 68,000 **men joined**.



Indigenous (49%) & Black (55%) Canadians report greater challenges due to increased house & care work caused by COVID-19 than their **white peers (34%)**.



12% of working mothers were still struggling to recoup job losses by August, 2020, while fathers had fully recovered their job losses by then.

2.5x

Women spend **2.5x** more hours a week on child care during the pandemic than men.



A NEW HOME ON CHURCH STREET

In a year of lockdowns, limited social contact and closed public spaces, the safety of home has never been more important. Yet for a growing number of Torontonians, access to decent housing remains unaffordable and out of reach.

At this time of incredible need in our community, YWCA Toronto is extremely proud to have opened the doors to 389 Church Street – a new permanent, supportive housing building for 120 women and their children to call home.

Living in self-contained one- and two-bedroom apartments, women and gender diverse people who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing homelessness will be part of a safe, inclusive and supportive community in downtown Toronto.

To support residents' long-term stability, wrap-around services such as harm reduction and acute mental health services will be provided on site. An in-house pottery studio, Inspirations Studio, will offer opportunities for creative self-expression and healing.

The building will also be a welcoming home for Indigenous women and their families, and will include resources, workshops and programs focused on celebrating the Indigenous cultural heritage of residents, provided by the Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto.

This vital new housing program will support the resilience of some of the most vulnerable in our city to cope with and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We are excited to have welcomed our first residents in February and look forward to seeing the community grow and strengthen over the coming months.



DONOR LOVE



Zanana Akande, former Minister of Community and Social Services in Ontario and a YWCA Toronto Woman of Distinction, talks about why she is a donor to YWCA Toronto.

I have followed and supported the work of YWCA Toronto for over 40 years.

It was in the 1970s, while I was working in the education sector, that I first began referring women in need to the Association's various programs. It was clear then that the services offered at YWCA Toronto were supportive, progressive and comprehensive, often leading to goals some women thought they could never achieve, or to the rebirth of plans they had reluctantly released.

From refuge for those fleeing abuse, to programs supporting girls' development and leadership, through to training for women seeking better employment opportunities, the range of services offered through YWCA Toronto are key to providing greater resilience and equity for the communities in which we live.

“...programming is constantly adapted to respond to the changing needs and demands of our society.”

Although YWCA Toronto has been delivering services to support the advancement of women and girls for years, programming is constantly adapted to respond to the changing needs and demands of our society. YWCA Toronto maintains its relevance because it is dynamic, a strength that is demonstrated through its programs to the immediate and lasting benefit of the women and girls who access them.

I am proud to support YWCA Toronto, particularly during this most trying time, and look forward to seeing how the organization continues to adapt and evolve in the months and years to come.

In the midst of worldwide disaster and despair, we have been boosted and heartened by the generosity of our family of donors. You have reached above and beyond your regular generosity to stand with us and support our participants during COVID-19. **Our heartfelt thanks go out to all of you.**