

NOVEMBER 2020



turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

DONOR
LOVE

PHYSICAL
DISTANCING
IN A SHELTER

BLACK
LIVES
MATTER



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TORONTO

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COVER PHOTO | SHOWS DEDICATED YWCA TORONTO STAFF ON THE DAY
THE CHILD CARE PROGRAM REOPENED DURING COVID-19.



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Heather M. McGregor

Heather M. McGregor,
YWCA Toronto Chief Executive Officer

Since our last issue of Turning Points, the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the world in ways we could not have imagined.

YWCA Toronto has continued to support thousands of women, gender-diverse people and children during this crisis. Our four emergency shelters and 557 units of permanent housing have remained open, with enhanced health and safety measures, while other programs have adapted quickly to deliver new virtual forms of support. You can read about the action we took to protect residents and staff at our 1st Stop Woodlawn Shelter later in this issue.

This crisis has also exposed and deepened existing inequalities in our city. There is so much opportunity for change, and YWCA Toronto stands in solidarity with Black communities who are bravely speaking out against decades of inequality and racism.

Our report includes shocking statistics that highlight the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and racialized people. Teshia Allen, our Manager of Housing Supports and Special Projects, writes powerfully and personally about the Black Lives Matter movement.

These past months have been hard on us as an Association, too. We lost significant planned revenue through the cancellation of our annual Women of Distinction Awards fundraiser, as well as camp and venue rentals programs. We continue to feel the impact of those losses.

At the same time, we are heartened by the unprecedented show of support we have received from our sponsors and you, our community. From homemade masks and meal deliveries, to incredible financial contributions, your generosity has blown us away. Thank you.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN A SHELTER: 1ST STOP WOODLAWN RELOCATION PROJECT

Life in a shelter can be challenging at the best of times. With shared washrooms, common areas, and sometimes even bedrooms, personal space is often hard to come by. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, those challenges became much more serious.

New to Toronto and still finding her feet, Beamlak was living at YWCA Toronto's 62-bed 1st Stop Woodlawn Shelter for women experiencing homelessness when the pandemic started:

I was sharing a shelter room with two other girls, and one of them developed a bad cough. Luckily, it wasn't COVID-19, but she still had to spend time in isolation, and it was a scary reminder of how quickly the virus could spread.

As an Association supporting some of the most at-risk women in our city, we were extremely concerned about the potential impact of a virus outbreak among our 1st Stop shelter residents – many of whom are particularly vulnerable due to

age, chronic health conditions and mental health challenges. While we implemented rigorous cleaning procedures and offered on-site testing, the reality is that there are few opportunities to self-isolate in a full shelter.

At the height of the pandemic in early April, we took urgent action to

reduce the capacity, and therefore the risk of infection, at our 1st Stop shelter.

With the incredible philanthropic support of the Slaight Family Foundation, we were able to



PHOTO | UNITED NATIONS - UNSPLASH

relocate 14 shelter residents to the Intercontinental Hotel, which generously offered significantly reduced room rates.

The relocation freed up critical space for physical distancing at 1st Stop, with many women able to move into their own bedrooms, which left shared areas significantly less busy. The move also offered greater privacy and support for the women staying at the hotel – including Beamlak.

After sharing everything at the shelter, it was such a relief to have my own space. My family back home were happy I was safe too. It was amazing – I've never stayed in a nice hotel before!

During their three-month stay, the 14 women received round-the-clock support from shelter staff. Vivienne Glenn, a mental health specialist at 1st Stop, describes the impact of the relocation on residents:

Being away from the shelter with a smaller group really helped to lessen anxiety around the pandemic. As staff, we were able to support women through any challenging moments, and it was also an opportunity for more one-on-one support around long-term goals such as financial planning and finding employment. We are very proud that seven of the 14 residents who stayed at the hotel have now found permanent housing.

Beamlak moved into her own apartment last month. She is grateful for the self-care and self-development opportunities her time at the hotel provided.

I want to say thank you to YWCA Toronto, the hotel staff and all the donors who made this experience possible. I'm excited to start the next chapter of my life in Canada.

**A MESSAGE FROM
OUR GENEROUS DONOR,
THE SLAIGHT FAMILY
FOUNDATION:**

"The Slaight Family Foundation understood the urgent need to relocate some of the most vulnerable women in the city to safer facilities in order to maintain their health and safety during the height of the COVID-19 virus. We are proud to have been a key part of such a vital project and are thrilled to hear that the participants are moving forward, with increased security and stability."

THE
SLAIGHT
FAMILY FOUNDATION

COVID-19 DOES DISCRIMINATE

STATISTICS SNAPSHOT

WOMEN ARE ON THE FRONTLINE OF THIS PANDEMIC
WOMEN MAKE UP:



90% of
Canadian
nurses

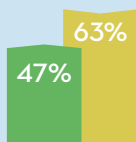


75% of
respiratory
therapists



90% of Personal
Support Workers
in care homes

WOMEN ARE ALSO BEARING THE BRUNT
OF ECONOMIC LOSSES



Women account for
47% of paid workers
in Canada, but 63% of
job losses at the height
of the pandemic

2x

Women workers
ages 25 to 54 years
are losing their
employment at **TWICE**
the rate of men

RACIALIZED COMMUNITIES ARE
DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTED



83% OF COVID-19

cases in Toronto are among
racialized people, who account
for just 52% of the population

LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS
ARE ALSO OVERREPRESENTED

51% OF CASES

in Toronto are affecting people
living in low-income housing

YWCA Toronto's comprehensive programs that help women and girls escape violence, move out of poverty and find meaningful employment are needed now more than ever to support 'she-covery' efforts in our city.



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CONTINUED RESISTANCE IN THE FACE OF OPPRESSION

BY TESHIA ALLEN, YWCA TORONTO'S MANAGER
OF HOUSING SUPPORTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS



Over the summer, my spirit shattered. Left stunned by the media footage of Black men and women being modern-day lynched. Bodies of Black transgender women found scattered in the streets, brutalized for their identities, hated for who they were. In horror, we magnified our voices as communities often plagued by violence and racial injustice do in these moments; and we demanded that we want justice for these lives because Black Lives Matter.

These dehumanizing killings of unarmed Black men, women and Black trans women reminds us that there is still much more work to be done to dismantle a system that has upheld the oppression of particular groups of people and benefited a vast majority.

As Black and Indigenous people demand liberation from racial injustices, we celebrated Pride Month. While I reflect on the history of the LGBTQI2S movement, I also acknowledge those who paved

the way to give me the freedom of expression so many of us need.

Those who played a central figure in giving a voice to Black queer identities such as lesbian author Audre Lorde, known for her transformative feminism, and Marsha P. Johnson, a transgender woman at the centre of the Stonewall riots. We march in solidarity, Black and queer identities fused together, out of homage to the legacy of these strong women leading the resistance against systems of oppression, in the pursuit of freedom and inclusivity.

In these revolutionary times, it brings me hope to know that our ancestors prevailed through their adversities and trauma. It is in our DNA to forge ahead and fight back, speak out loudly, and continue to be resilient against all odds, and yell, All Lives Cannot Matter until Black Lives Matter.

**Please visit YWCA Toronto's blog to read the full version of this article.*

DONOR LOVE

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.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all, but women and children like those who are served by YWCA Toronto are disproportionately affected. I decided to offer my support, and I feel confident that it will have a substantial impact on people's health and wellbeing."

~ MARTHA LA MCCAIN

"We recognized that this year was going to be very difficult for the women and children who are using YWCA Toronto's essential services, as well as for the dedicated, hard working staff. We wanted to be there for them, so decided to increase our support this year."

~ JOAN AND JERRY LOZINSKI

"When it became clear that COVID-19 was a serious threat to the normal operations of community service organizations, like YWCA Toronto, and that it was likely to be with us for an extended period of time, Grey Birch Foundation suspended its normal granting procedures and instead focused on providing support to emergency COVID-19 response measures. One of the first organizations we reached out to was YWCA Toronto. We knew the impact of this pandemic could be catastrophic for the women & families that YWCA Toronto serves. We encouraged them to direct our gift to where it was most urgently needed."

~ NANCY COXFORD,
GREY BIRCH FOUNDATION

"Women's Health is the social purpose of Shoppers Drug Mart - we call it LOVE YOU. That's why continuing our support of YWCA Toronto is important now, more than ever. We turned our Women of Distinction Presenting Sponsorship into a donation and from October 3-31 many Shoppers Drug Mart locations in Toronto are fundraised for YWCA Toronto in response to the surge of COVID-era gender-based violence cases - 100% of all donations from select stores. And that's what you do when you Put Women's Health First - you support those who do it best, like YWCA Toronto."

~ LISA GIBBS, DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FOR
SHOPPERS DRUG MART INC.