

Mental Health **Peer Support**  
 Improving our Core Services **Housing Transitions**  
 Turning the Tide on Homelessness

Supports  
 Community Kitchens  
 Supportive Employment  
 Values  
 Communicating our Impact  
 Partnerships  
 Collaboration  
 Recovery  
 Best Practices  
 Sustainable  
 Respect  
 Social Recreation

Integrated  
 Road to Employment  
 Community Development  
 Permanent Affordable Housing

Dignity  
 Steps to Support



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Design: cmohr.ca | Photography: brunocrescia.com

# Fueling the Conversation

IMPACT REPORT 2018-2019



**1210**

people served by Houselink programs



**275**

Social Recreation Program participants



**117**

people secured work through Supportive Employment Program



**143**

people are on the Road to Employment



**8000**

healthy meals served through Meal Program



**80**

evictions prevented by Steps to Support Program in 3 TCHC sites



**83%**

tenant satisfaction survey participants are satisfied with staff support



**93%**

dedicated housing tenants remain stably housed through Support Teams



**98%**

people previously homeless remain stably housed through Housing Transitions Program

Houselink Community Homes wishes to thank all of the many donors whose contributions help us to offer vibrant, community centred programs of which we depend on your financial support and whose gifts have made a strong and lasting impact upon those we serve.

### Patrons and Supporting Donors \$5,000+

Carole Tanenbaum	Ontario Trillium Foundation	Alice & Murray Maitland Foundation	Thomas Bogart
Anonymous	ECHO Foundation		
Peter Gilgan Foundation	Natalie Ochrym	Harold Ballard Foundation	

### Leadership Donors \$1,000+

Brian Davis	Anonymous	Luis Maida-Tejada	CHUM Charitable Foundation
Tom Thomas	Alternia Savings	Raising the Roof	Peter Adamson
Peter Marra	Stephen Nunn	Joann Sochor	KAJE Events

### Friends of Houselink \$250 - \$999

Collette Schnyder	Prentice Yates & Clarke	David Fiege	Pascal Murphy
Tony Lanzillotta	Peter Myers	Paul O'Donnell	Carol Thames
Elizabeth Taylor	Carole Fischer	Teresa Rodriguez	Patricia Malcolm
Claude LeGrand	Carl Melvin	Charlie Loir	
Dorothy Harraher	Florence Akol	Janice Kluwak	
Bruce Lewis	Patricia Malcolm	Vickie Hansen-Richardson	
Jennifer McLeod	Ben Younesi	Nancy Marra	
Anonymous	Habitat Services	Liz Guccione	
Extreme Cleanup	Carlos Aedo	Andrew Pott	



*“Houselink feels very much like a community; everyone supports each other and spends time together. I have made lifelong friends here.”*

## Thank you to our donors and friends

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, members, participants and volunteers at Houselink, we wish to extend our heart-felt thanks to the many friends, patrons and advocates who make our work possible.

## And thank you to our core funding partners



## Advancing our mission in transformative times

Two elections, a new provincial government, a new 25-member Toronto City Council, a major provincial health-care restructuring and the release of 11 City-owned sites for housing development.

These transformative times have bolstered our resolve to **“Fuel the Conversation”** to achieve real solutions for the more than **16,000** people on Toronto’s supportive housing wait list.

This year, Houselink advanced our strategic plan across four key priorities. To turn the tide on homelessness we have taken an active role in the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH), and gained the resounding support of our residents and the Ministry of Health to re-purpose some of our shared housing into self-contained units. Our challenges in working with the City’s Planning Division led us to both pursue other avenues and work with TAEH partners to address the systemic barriers that impede our development goals.

To improve our core services, we expanded Mental Health Peer Support services to support 81% more Houselink residents in their personal recovery. We made significant strides in strengthening our Supported Employment Program with a focus on sustainability as well as health and safety,

and we designated a Houselink property for five men leaving the shelter system, supported by the Canadian Mental Health Association. We also helped test a Supportive Housing Core Competencies On-line Training Course supported by the Toronto Mental Health and Addiction Supportive Housing Network.

To ensure our services are integrated and sustainable, we helped pilot a new tenant satisfaction survey designed specifically for the mental health and addiction supportive housing sector in Ontario. Researchers from McGill University selected Houselink as the Toronto site for a national research study on implementing Mental Health Recovery Guidelines developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. And our efforts to better communicate our work and impact attracted over 100 new volunteers.

It is a deep privilege and pleasure for us to serve Houselink Community Homes in our roles as Chair and Executive Director. Thank you to our staff, participants and volunteers who advance Houselink’s mission on a daily basis. And thank you to our dedicated Board of Directors for their strategic thinking and oversight within an ever-changing environment.



*Brian Davis*  
Brian Davis, Executive Director



*Phillip Dufresne*  
Phillip Dufresne, Board Chairperson

# Advancing our Strategic Plan 2017-2020



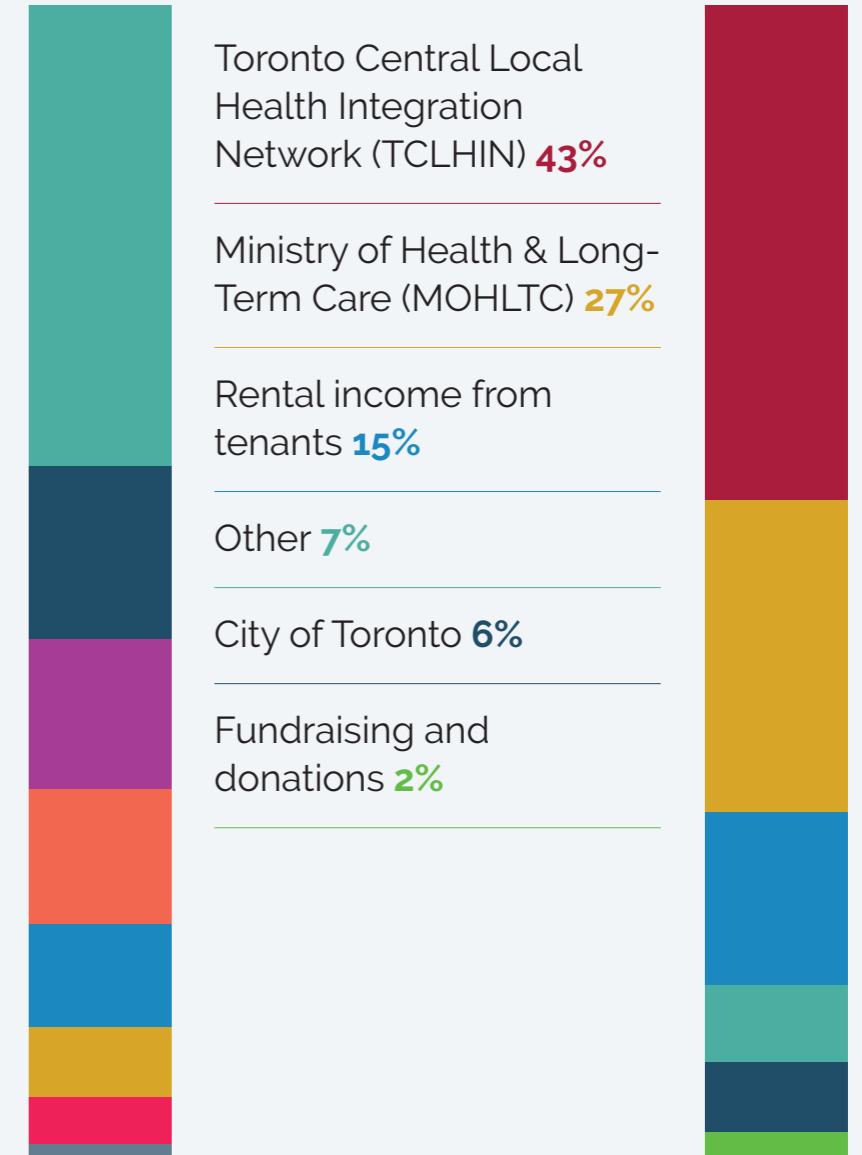
## Financial highlights

### Expenses

- Staffing **40%**
- Head lease rent **15%**
- Mortgage & depreciation **13%**
- Administration **12%**
- Programs **9%**
- Maintenance Materials and services **6%**
- Utilities **4%**
- Allocation to major repairs and replacements reserve fund **1%**

### Revenues

- Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN) **43%**
- Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) **27%**
- Rental income from tenants **15%**
- Other **7%**
- City of Toronto **6%**
- Fundraising and donations **2%**





## Our Board of Directors

Charles Finlay

*Director*

Colette Snyder

*Director*

Douglas Jordan

*Director*

Joann Sochor

*Treasurer*

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*Vice Chair*

Mark Guttridge

*Director*

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Natalie Ochrym

*Director*

Phillip Dufresne

*Chair*

Richa Jagota

*Director*

## Management Team

Brian Davis

*Executive Director*

Carl Melvin

*Manager of Property Services*

Carlos Aedo

*Support Manager*

Carol Thames

*Program Manager*

Charles Lior

*Finance Manager*

Colleen Vandeyck

*Manager of Human Resources & Administration*

Helen Cheung

*Director of Support Services*

Jody Ridson

*Support Manager*

Peter Marra

*Fund Development Manager*

## IN FOND MEMORY

We were deeply saddened with the passing of two participant Board Members this past year. Nicole Tushingam and Hugh Cameron were vibrant and active members of the Houselink Community who will be missed by participants, friends, family and staff.

### Nicole Tushingam

Nicole lit up any room she entered. She was an optimistic, reliable and genuine person, even when faced with various challenges in life. Nicole was a resident of Houselink since 2014. She enjoyed community kitchens, participated in peer led groups, attended Town Halls and really enjoyed herself at the annual Houselink participant camp-out.

### Hugh Cameron

Hugh was an active member of his community, and had been volunteering his time with the Dream Team to advocate for rights and reduce stigma around mental health. Originally, from Glasgow, Scotland, Hugh relocated to Toronto along with his family in 1981. Hugh was a comedian, a drum player with Samba Elégua, and an active member of the Toronto United Mennonite Church in the Beaches.

## Turning the tide on homelessness

Toronto cannot solve its homeless crisis without more permanent, affordable, supportive housing -- and that means collaborating with our supportive housing colleagues.

This year, Houselink's Executive Director Brian Davis assumed the Chair of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness' (TAEH's) first Development Working Group. The group is working with City of Toronto with optimism and inventive ideas to begin to create new housing for over 16,000 people now on supportive housing waiting lists.

*Since the working group was formed, it has:*

▶ identified the obstacles to new development. TAEH and the City of Toronto are now planning a charrette to enable the City to meet its target of 18,000 supportive housing units over the next ten years

▶ made the case for allocating 1/3 of the estimated 10,000 new homes created through the City's new "Housing Now Initiative" to people who have been chronically homeless

▶ begun to identify the sector-wide resources, strategies and solutions that will increase the sector's capacity to acquire, develop and renovate more supportive housing.

## Peer support reaches more participants

Houselink completed its Excellence through Quality Improvement Project (E-QIP) with Quality Improvement Ontario and now offers formal peer support throughout the organization. Mental Health Recovery Workers provide mentorship, emotional support, problem solving, goal setting, crisis risk assessment, and referrals to other community supports. They promote empowerment and self-determination through non-judgmental listening and person-directed goal setting.

This year, **94 people received individualized peer support**, and **80 group activities**, such as Conversation Circles and Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) groups, were organized.

**81% more**

people receive individualized peer support

**51% more**

recovery-focused group activities over previous year

## Integrated and sustainable services

Houselink works with mental health experts and sector colleagues to ensure our own practices meet the highest standards and to inform the evidence base for the entire sector.

This year, we worked with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) to pilot a new Ontario-wide tenant satisfaction survey, the "Ontario Perception of Care - Mental Health and Addiction Supportive Housing" (OPOC - MHA-SH). Over eighty Houselink tenants completed the survey with **83%** of respondents reporting "**high satisfaction**" with support services. In particular, participants feel that their living situation is contributing to their overall well-being (**85%**), that staff are caring and compassionate (**84%**) and that they are treated with respect (**88%**).

Houselink was selected to participate in a three-year, national research study led by Dr. Myra

Piat of McGill University. The study will be used to implement national Mental Health Recovery Guidelines developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. This initiative involves Houselink management, staff and tenants, and a representative from Addiction Mental Health Ontario (AMHO). The research goal is to implement these recovery guidelines to inform best practices for supportive housing across Canada.

We have also taken an advisory role with the Toronto Mental Health and Addiction Supportive Housing Network to test and develop a new online training tool. The "Supportive Housing Core Competencies Training" will use the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's online platform to equip front-line workers with the competencies they need to effectively and stay current with the sector's best practices.



## Overcoming the loneliness of the Holiday Season

A group of women participants came together with a plan to overcome the loneliness often felt during the Holiday Season. The Peggy Birnberg Fund enabled them to create a dinner party for

themselves, and visit the Christmas Market in the Distillery District and the Cavalcade of Lights at Toronto's City Hall.

## Alert, smiling, happier

A ten-year-old participant was bullied at school. His family noticed that his self-esteem and confidence were "not in a good place." The boy's sisters researched many local after-school programs, applied for Families Moving Forward funding, and

enrolled their brother in a youth karate club. After several months, the family noticed that the boy was more alert, smiling, engaging his family more playfully and generally happier than before. Now his sisters want to take karate too!

## It was the right time to pursue a coaching certificate

She grew up in a household playing sports, rising to become one of Canada's top-ranked young squash players. Circumstances and life situations changed all of that for her. After settling into Houselink, she began to feel a sense of stability in her living situation and in addressing her

recovery from addictions, and felt it was the right time to pursue a coaching certificate. The Education Fund allowed her to complete her certificate. She is now a squash instructor for children at a Toronto squash club.

# 83%

*of tenants surveyed report "high satisfaction" with Houselink's supports*



# Your donations at work

Each year Houselink provides financial assistance that makes the difference between “just getting by” and living with dignity.

## The Peggy Birnberg Fund



This year the fund distributed **\$8,100 to 19 individuals**, four families and one group applicant. Emergency funds went to vision care, medical devices, dental care, furniture, medications, pet care and one group activity. The fund also referred another seven applicants to partnering agencies for assistance. We are indebted to the exceptionally generous financial contribution of the Tanenbaum family for making this fund a reality!

## Families Moving Forward



This year, the fund distributed over **\$5,800 to 16 applicants** to enable children to go to summer camp, take music lessons, receive sport and recreational instruction and pay college fees.

## Education Fund



This fund enables participants to improve education or build new skills through courses and workshops. The MEF committee approved **36 applications totaling over \$13,000** for:



**11 continuing education/ general interest courses**



**8 personal health and wellness courses (including fitness memberships)**



**3 mental health conference fees**



**9 skills upgrade for employment opportunities**



**2 for arts and craft, or music programs**



**3 for the Education Bursary to assist with enrolment into a fulltime educational program**

## Communicating our work and impact

This year, Houselink significantly extended its community presence, sharing our impact with an every-widening array of stakeholders.

A marketing review by Management Advisory Services (MAS) led to a new design for our website and a strategy for broadening our reach.


We sponsored the film “Wasteland” as part of the Christie Pits Summer Film Festival, attracting over 250 viewers. Over 100 new volunteers joined Houselink to support our annual participant Holiday Party and our first year as a partner for the **Coldest Night of the Year** annual fundraising walk.

We also had the great pleasure of working with KAJE Events this past fall. This team volunteered to facilitate art workshops for participants and to display their work in the “Walk in their Shoes” art show and sale. Over 100 guests, joined by Houselink’s Board, staff and a guest speaker from the Dream Team, came to purchase art and meet the artists.

And finally, we have been working with the Bloorcourt BIA to plant and maintain the flower beds along Bloor Street West between Montrose and Dufferin. This landscaping service, provided as part of our Supported Employment Program, helps us to give back to one of our local business communities.



*“ I am not sure where I would be without Houselink. They not only provided me with a permanent affordable home, they helped me build new friendships, find part-time work and improved the quality of my life overall*



**Housed,  
connected,  
healthy  
and in charge  
of our own lives**

## The Dream Team

For the past 12 years, Houselink has sponsored the Dream Team: people with lived experience engaged in public speaking, research and advocacy to promote more quality supportive housing, ensure the tenant's voice is central in all supportive housing issues, fight stigma and promote economic justice, inclusion and human rights.

This year, the Dream Team enhanced and expanded its educational portfolio. The Team gave 50 unique presentations that reached an audience of over 3,000 people including students, front-line workers, and policy makers.

Through these presentations, the team formed new relationships with a variety of Toronto-

based university faculties including medicine, urban planning and law; to support advocacy and research efforts in the future. In addition, the team delivered internal workshops aimed at leveraging and enhancing members' skills and knowledge, focusing on public speaking, constitutional law, and government policy.

Building on the organization's heritage of conducting innovative community based research; it expanded its work on Housing Unit Takeovers (HUT) to reach new partners. The Dream Team received a new grant from the City of Toronto to host a series of community events to raise awareness about HUTs from their powerful consumer survivor research-based perspective.

## Community Development Program

With the support of the Community Development Coordinator, participants were engaged in civic actions that fostered the critical analysis of social issues. We have been active in advocating alongside of the ODSP Coalition, the Fair Fare Coalition, and most recently, the Toronto Seniors Forum. We anticipate a significant increase in participation, especially as we head into a federal election this fall.

The program has encouraged new engagements through a Participant Advisory Forum and will be adding a new Tenant Ambassador Initiative to provide a forum for tenant input into Houselink's operations and promote leadership in the organization. We also are planning a Participant Environment Team to promote environmental issues, offering both training and support around the 3R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.





# An effective advocate

Mental health recovery starts with a safe and stable home, food security, a community of support and opportunities to make a meaningful contribution. Houselink's combination of supports and programs helps ensure that those most at risk of homelessness never again face life on the streets.

## Supportive Employment Program

*The program:* offers part-time or casual employment. Participants expand their skills, gain a sense of belonging and supplement their income

This year: **117 people** – almost one/fifth of Houselink tenants – were employed through the program.

## Road to Employment

*The program:* helps people living with mental illness, addictions or homelessness – including people not living in Houselink – access employment information, education and training opportunities

This year: Houselink facilitated 49 employment skills workshops, information sessions and field trips to job fairs attracting **143 participants**. Among these, **25 found jobs**, **4 found volunteer positions** and **3 completed education or training**.

## Social Recreation

*The program:* Houselink's signature program provides meaningful activities to reduce social isolation and promote recovery. Participants help define and plan the annual activity calendar.

This year: the program offered **73 ongoing planned activities** and **88 workshops and outings** to **275 enrolled participants**. An additional 162 people from the broader community participated in singular events.

“

*It makes me feel good when people enjoy the food that I make. My main philosophy in life is we should just try to help one another, and so that's what I'm doing with this job.*



## Food Program

*The program:* affordable, nutritious meals through our community kitchen meal program and special Houselink events.

This year: **377 people – 63%** of Houselink's enrolled participants – joined their peers to enjoy the over **8,000 meals served**.

## Steps to Support

*The program:* on-site eviction prevention, mental health support and care co-ordination for tenants in five Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) buildings and adjacent townhomes in Moss Park.

This year: **80 evictions prevented** and **237 tenants supported** for mental health, addictions and other challenges. We strengthened our partnership with TCHC, Regent Park Community Health Centre, Moss Park Overdose Prevention Site, and "Building Roots", a local group addressing the need for affordable food options and health education to those living on low fixed incomes. We also played an active role with FOCUS Toronto Situation Table to support vulnerable tenants.

## Housing Transitions Team

*The program:* a dedicated five-member Transition Team helps long-term clients of homeless shelters transition in to private market housing, and offers expanded support to a Toronto Community Housing seniors' building in the downtown core. Staff provided informal counseling and service referrals that addressed poverty, food insecurity and other issues.

This year: among 85 people served, **97.6% retained their homes**.



**"He began to share pieces of his story..."**

In our work, the term informal counselling comes up often but few talk about what it means. Not much is said, yet our experience supports the program and helps to strengthen our daily work.

As example, I reflect upon a war veteran who has recently transitioned to affordable housing from the shelter system. My first approach was to help refer the participant to services available to veterans. He was not accustomed to sharing his feelings and the sense of vulnerability this brings. Over the course of the year, he began to share pieces of his story with me, including the trauma, which deeply marked his perception of self. Although he continued to refuse suggested referrals, I sensed that maybe I began to gain a level of his trust, simply by listening.

This process (and it is a process) soon led to a breakthrough in sharing his long felt shame and guilt during his time in combat. This opened the door to a long awaited opportunity to give him permission to forgive himself, and that it was okay to face these difficult emotions.

For me, I accept this moment with profound gratitude for being there and listening. I walked away thinking that we can all make a difference in the lives of those struggling and as part of Houselink's Transitions Team.

*Houselink Transitions Team*

## We are grateful for our partners

The Access Point  
 Building Roots  
 Centre for Addiction and Mental Health  
 Centre for Innovation in Peer Support  
 Christie-Ossington Neighbourhood Centre  
 CMHA Toronto & Ontario  
 Compost Council of Canada  
 C.S. Info  
 Fred Victor  
 George Brown College  
 Gerstein Centre  
 Habitat Services  
 Hearing Voices Network  
 Mainstay Community Homes  
 Moss Park Overdose Prevention Site  
 Our Place-Community Of Hope  
 Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre  
 Regent Park Community Health Centre  
 Ryerson University  
 Sistering  
 Salvation Army  
 South Riverdale Community Health Centre  
 St. Clare's Multifaith Housing  
 Streets to Trails  
 Toronto Christian Resource Centre  
 Toronto Community Housing Corporation  
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