

TORONTO SHOULD BE
HOMELESS
FULL

CASE FOR SUPPORT



HOME IS SO MUCH MORE THAN A HOUSE.
IT'S WHERE WE HOST BIRTHDAY PARTIES,
TRY NEW RECIPES, ESCAPE THE CHAOS OF
DAILY LIFE AND DREAM ABOUT OUR FUTURE.

Not having a place to call home robs thousands in our city of the dignity and quality of life that we all expect and desire for ourselves and those we love.

Homelessness in Toronto is on the rise. We believe Toronto should be *Homefull*.

A city where everyone experiences the warmth, comfort, stability and security that a home provides. We believe a *Homefull* Toronto is a place where

everyone experiences health and wholeness and has access to the opportunities, support and resources they need to thrive.

A city FULL of homes. A city FULL of hope.

***Homefullness* =**
basic needs + safety + security +
opportunity + community + hope.

“Home is wherever
you leave everything
you love and never
question that it will be
there when you return.”

— Leo Christopher

Toronto should
be *homefull*.
We believe it can be.
We believe it will be.

But it will require all of us who call this great city home to come together with generosity and commitment to make it a reality for all.
This pursuit is our mission.

HOME - FULL

Having a place to live and thrive.

A place that makes you feel hopeful for the future.



A ROOF ISN'T ENOUGH

The challenges of homelessness reach beyond simply needing a roof over your head. Everyone who faces homelessness has personal and complex emotional, physical and spiritual needs. Housing is an important first step in solving homelessness in Toronto. But our vision is to go beyond this, restoring quality of life through ongoing support for our growing population of senior clients.

A GROWING PROBLEM THAT CAN'T BE IGNORED

In Toronto alone, over 8,700 people don't have a home today.

As you read this,

81,000 PEOPLE ARE ON THE WAITLIST FOR SUBSIDIZED HOUSING IN TORONTO.

Picture a sold-out crowd at Scotiabank arena - now multiply that by four.

For a simple bachelor unit,

THE CURRENT WAIT TIME IS 7 YEARS.

For a one bedroom unit,

IT'S 12 YEARS OR LONGER.

This is an impossible amount of time to wait without the safety and security of a place to call home and simply unacceptable in a city like ours. Toronto deserves better. We must find solutions to make Toronto *Homefull*.

THE SNOWBALL EFFECT

The challenges of homelessness are compounded by the lingering effects of the pandemic and the current economic environment - skyrocketing costs of living and the worst inflation Canada has experienced in more than 30 years.

This perfect storm is forcing more and more vulnerable people into impossible situations, increased substance use and unraveling mental health.

AGE IS MORE THAN A NUMBER

While these current conditions may impact people at all socio-economic levels, one group is disproportionately at risk. **Seniors.**

An alarming number of seniors in our city are lacking adequate support from family or their communities. This is a critical issue that demands our attention and requires a specialized approach.

Toronto's senior population has more than doubled in the last 5 years. Many of these seniors experience mental and physical health challenges, live on fixed incomes and must navigate more and more barriers to access the support they require as they age.

**TORONTO'S
SENIOR
POPULATION
HAS MORE THAN
DOUBLED IN THE
LAST 5 YEARS.**

WE ARE NOW FACING A **CRISIS OF HOMELESS SENIORS** IN OUR CITY.

More than 50% of the current residents in Homes First supportive housing are seniors. In fact, people aged 50 years and up are the fastest growing population who are accessing our services. We define “seniors” as 50 years and up because the challenges of homelessness speed up the aging process and increase vulnerability.

Many of these seniors are isolated, with few close friends or family nearby. Most feel overwhelmed by new technology and find it difficult to navigate - keeping them from accessing critical resources or care.

On top of age-related medical challenges, over 30% of those experiencing homelessness in Toronto live with mental illness. Seniors experiencing homelessness struggle more than any other homeless population with deteriorating mental health, social isolation and loneliness, estrangement from family, limited mobility, substance-use challenges, threats of violence and daily new trauma.

MORE THAN 50% OF THE CURRENT RESIDENTS IN HOMES FIRST SUPPORTIVE HOUSING **ARE** **SENIORS.**



FROM HOMELESS TO HOUSED TO HOMEFULL

To be *Homefull*, seniors need more than a roof over their heads. They need support in accessing the services available to help them begin to heal and thrive. They need connection, community and compassion.

We have identified 3 key challenges that the seniors in our supportive housing consistently face on their journey to be *Homefull*:



01 Food Security

Many vulnerable seniors lack access to healthy meals. They may also lack knowledge on budgeting, nutrition, healthy cooking, safe food storage and need practical help with grocery shopping.



02 Healthcare Access

Many seniors have ongoing physical and mental health struggles that require access to healthcare. They need to know who can help them and how to access these services.



03 Social Connection

More than anything, hope is found in community. Many seniors struggle to find friendship and community and rapidly evolving technologies can be intimidating and inaccessible, further inhibiting their connection to family. Supporting our seniors in finding connections, either through virtual resources or in-person communities is essential to increasing their quality of life.

HOW WE HELP OUR SENIORS

Caring for seniors lies at the heart of everything we do. Some of our seniors have experienced homelessness from a young age —many others end up living on the streets later in life. All of our seniors have overcome multiple hardships; each have a unique story to tell. Here are a few of the people we have helped.

Story 01: Social Connection

John's story of homelessness is one we hear too often; situated in a stable job for over 20 years, his world turned upside down when the market did. Soon after, he was out of work. John applied for Employment Insurance and planned to use the money to travel to British Columbia for a job prospect. However, at the last moment, the money was denied. At the age of 55, John was homeless for the first time in his life.

When his friends began to distance themselves, John fell into a deep depression. After several years of bouncing between the shelter system and streets, his feelings of isolation intensified. John had lost hope that he would

ever regain his previous quality of life, that is, until Homes First offered him a place to live. Homes First was not only able to provide a roof over John's head, but also the supports vital to his wellbeing. It wasn't long before John started feeling like himself again. Staff were able to connect him to mental health supports and encouraged him to participate in on-site programs, where he's made several new friends. John and his neighbour are so close that they celebrate every holiday together, taking turns to host. Thanks to Homes First, John not only has a place to call home; he has a new lease on life.

Story 02: Healthcare Access

From a very young age, Harry was exposed to substance abuse. Growing up in a household where both his parents struggled daily, it wasn't long before Harry faced his own substance use challenges. At the age of 16, Harry left home. He spent years working odd jobs, couch surfing with friends or sleeping on the streets – something he told very few people. Eventually, Harry stopped working altogether. He had grown to distrust medical professionals and had become accustomed to the shame he felt when prodded about his drug use.

Harry was 51 when he was in his eighth year of waiting to receive housing; this is when he also started experiencing chest pain. It had been at least ten years since he'd seen a doctor.

When he finally received the call from Homes First that he was accepted into a supportive housing unit, Harry quickly gathered his few possessions and moved in the next day. Upon settling in, Harry's case manager noticed the grey hue of his skin. She suggested that he see a doctor and offered to attend the appointment to support him further. Harry would come to appreciate that extra support: he was diagnosed with congestive heart failure just one week later. Treatment of Harry's condition is complex; Harry will need countless follow up appointments with specialists, prescriptions filled, and considerable support relating to his substance use challenges. Without the housing and support from Homes First, Harry doesn't think he would be with us today.

“While the doctors are the ones treating my heart, it's Homes First that saved my life.”

Story 03: Food Security

Food banks were always a place that Paula donated goods to, but never did she think she would become reliant on them. After 40+ years of working hard, at the age of 62, Paula was forced to stop working because she fell ill. Paula found herself struggling to pay for rent and her day-to-day bills; her living costs far exceeded the frequent, yet modest, disability cheques she received. Food banks were her saving grace, but as her health continued to rapidly decline, so did her ability to travel to and from the food bank.

Eventually, a worried neighbour knocked on Paula's door, and immediately she knew that Paula needed medical attention. Paula was rushed to the hospital where she was told she had to include more nutrient-dense foods into her diet—the very foods she was no longer receiving from the food bank. Paula was barely able to pay her bills and rent prior to her health issues, let alone follow the doctors' new recommendations. Paula made the hard decision to move into her sister's house to save money, but the situation had already taken its toll on her mental health. After yet another fight, her sister kicked her out. Paula knew she needed to take her diet seriously or risked being

re-hospitalized. With no where else to go, she applied for supportive housing. However, due to limited availability, she ended up in the shelter system.

Paula was grateful for receiving three meals a day, however, was still unsettled that she did not yet have a place to call home. Just as her hope and health were waning, Paula got the call from Homes First that she secured an apartment. Once moved in, she received enhanced food security supports in the form of ready-made meals that accommodated her dietary needs. With the supports she received from Homes First staff Paula was able to slowly able to start rebuilding her strength and presence within her community.

Having personally experienced the unforeseen challenge of meeting some of her most basic needs, Paula now seeks to bring awareness to the barriers that many face in acquiring nutritious food. She volunteers at the very food bank that she once was reliant upon, providing nutritional information and support to others who have fallen on hard times. It's her way of paying it forward.

OUR SOLUTION

Being housed is an important and necessary first step. But the supportive services that help vulnerable people thrive physically, emotionally and socially are what really help us move people from homeless to *Homefull*. In our experience, without adequate support, programs and community, many seniors are unable to maintain their housing, heal and flourish.



THEY SHOULD BE PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT.

WHY HOUSING FIRST?

Housing First is a multi-sector approach that combines housing, health and social services to provide people experiencing homelessness with a place to call home. Once housed in a safe, secure and stable place, they can begin their journey of healing. With personalized case management, they can access ongoing medical services and medication, manage mental health challenges, pursue their goals and build connections.

With appropriate and specialized support, most seniors experiencing homelessness will stay successfully housed. When they are no longer expending all their energy on day to day survival, they can thrive in the fullness of life we all desire. They can become *Homefull*.

**THEY SHOULD BE PLANNING
FOR RETIREMENT, NOT GETTING
EVICTED FROM AN APARTMENT.
THEY SHOULD BE PLANNING FOR
RETIREMENT, NOT SLEEPING ON
THE PAVEMENT.**

WHY NOW? WHY IS THIS OUR BIGGEST PRIORITY?

Seniors experiencing homelessness in Toronto have never been more vulnerable than right now. As the senior population rises, the rate of those experiencing homelessness increases every day and the gap between resources and needs is continuing to grow.

The housing crisis in Toronto is an overwhelming obstacle for seniors living on fixed incomes. 81,000 people in Toronto are waiting for subsidized housing and will remain on that list for years — some for more than a decade. Long term care housing options are competitive and hard to get into, especially for those who are struggling financially or need specialized care.

In addition to the lack of affordable or specialized housing for seniors, many are still wrestling with the long-term impacts of COVID-19. Isolation, loneliness, anxiety and barriers to services are very real challenges for many seniors.

Options for seniors living in poverty are decreasing as the demand grows exponentially.

Our seniors need us to act now.

WHY HOMES FIRST?

For 35 years, Homes First has been meeting the unique needs of Toronto's most vulnerable homeless populations. Homes First is one of the largest providers of safe shelter, supportive housing and people-centred services in Toronto. We are committed to breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness. On any given night, we provide a bed to over 1,600 individuals across six shelters, three temporary hotel sites and one emergency respite centre. We provide permanent supportive housing across 14 properties to over 425 people including children, youth, women, single parents, adults, seniors and large families.

We specialize in supporting those experiencing chronic homelessness and people with complex needs ranging from mental and physical health to substance use challenges. We support as many residents as possible by meeting their individual needs, improving their housing stabilization and increasing their personal mental well-being. Through service integration and individualized planning, we are renewing hope, restoring dignity, reviving potential and saving people's lives.

We are committed to meeting the emerging needs of our residents by designing and developing specific programs tailored to them with the purpose of improving quality of life and ensuring dignity.

We are deeply concerned about vulnerable seniors in Toronto. We have a plan. We need your help to transform lives.



The Plan

WE CAN BREAK THE CYCLE OF HOMELESSNESS FOR TORONTO'S MOST VULNERABLE SENIORS. WE CAN CREATE A HOMEFULL TORONTO.

We invite you to partner with us to help support Homes First's largest campaign dedicated to Toronto's most vulnerable seniors. With over half of our residents over the age of 50, our *Homefull Seniors* campaign addresses the three key needs of seniors in our housing facilities: food security, healthcare access and social connection.

We believe that addressing these three key needs of our senior clients will pave the way for them to become *Homefull* for good. Here's how we will do it:

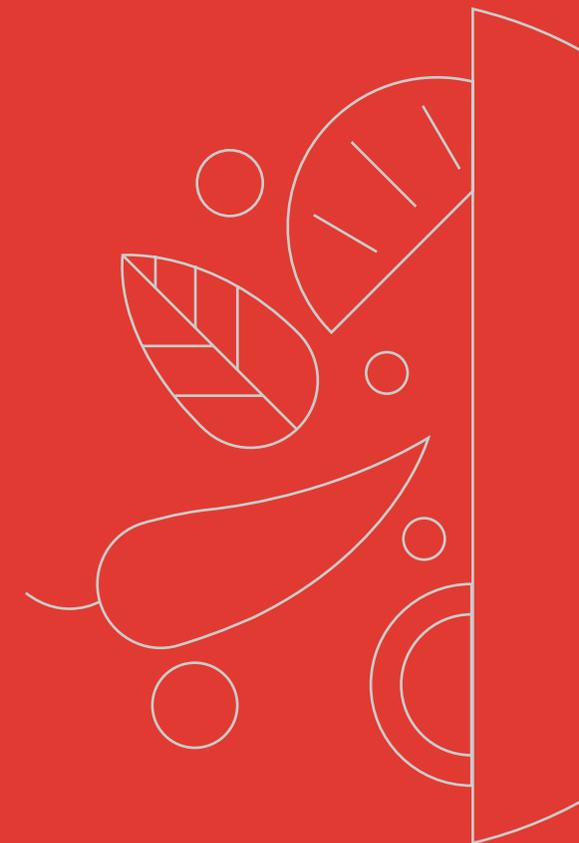
01

Food Security

Build an on-site commercial kitchen to provide our senior clients direct access to healthy meals without the barriers of grocery shopping, affordability of food and meal preparation.

Host nutrition and recipe workshops including tips for storage & purchasing.

Facilitate workshops for budgeting, financial literacy and choosing healthier food options.



02

Healthcare Access

COVID-19 has changed the way we all access primary healthcare. In order to help our seniors adapt to this new environment, we plan to develop a specialized team to assist seniors with booking virtual healthcare appointments, including helping to schedule in-person follow-ups.



03

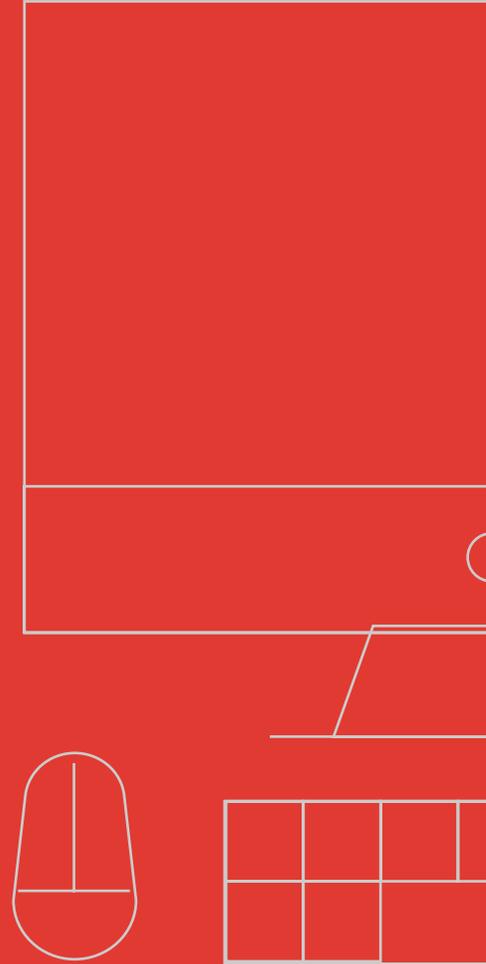
Social Connection

Host digital literacy workshops to increase virtual connectivity and help seniors reconnect with family and friends.

Provide workshops to increase understanding of online services such as banking, grocery shopping and accessing government documents.

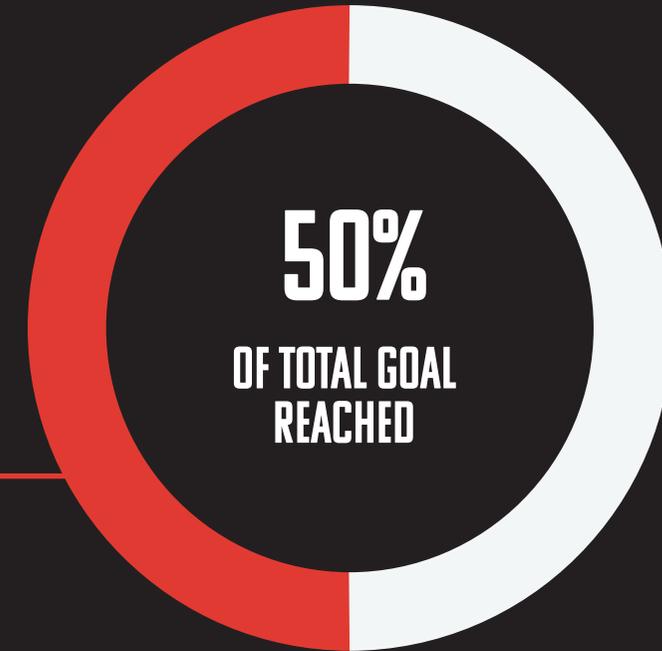
Increase partnerships with seniors' activities in the area to provide affordable and free physical activity and social programs for clients.

Build community through enhanced social and recreation programming to lower isolation.



FUNDRAISING GOAL AND PROJECT COSTS

The *Homefull Seniors* campaign requires a **\$2,000,000** investment.



\$1MILLION

Foundation contribution already secured for:



Food Security



Healthcare Access



Social Connection

ALREADY **HALFWAY** **THERE!**

Thanks to the generous commitment of one of our Foundation partners we are already halfway to our goal. The Spratt Foundation has committed \$1,000,000 to improving the food security of Homes First's most food insecure residents; our seniors are amongst this population.

You can make a difference too! Join us in building a *Homefull* Toronto for our seniors.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Your generosity will increase housing stability and quality of life for vulnerable seniors. You will be meeting practical needs of access to food security, healthcare and social connection.

Beyond that, you will be creating infrastructure to ensure that seniors in need of housing have both a roof over their head and the resources they need to flourish. Ultimately, we are taking steps together to end chronic homelessness in the city of Toronto.

You will be creating a *Homefull* Toronto.



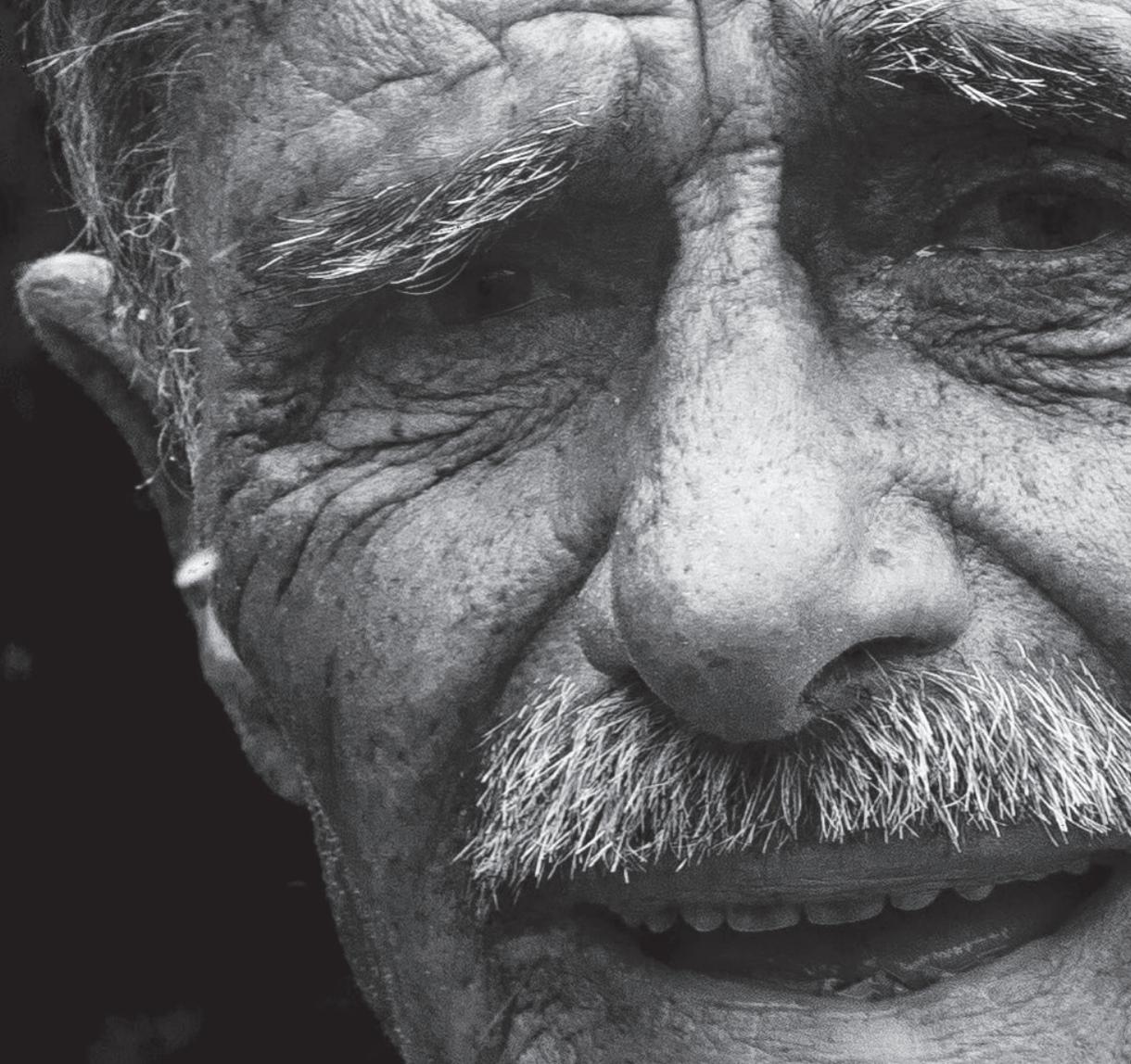
**You will be creating
a *Homefull* Toronto.**

THANK YOU!

A *Homefull* city is a place where our city's homeless feel cared for and accepted: a place filled with housing options, that are measured and defined not by a roof over a head but by what they give to the person living under it. Safety. Security. Support. Community. Choice. A *Homefull* place acknowledges the different needs and challenges of its residents and looks to create homes that serve all populations equally.

A *Homefull* city removes all existing notions of what a home is or should be. It recognizes that one size does not fit all and is deliberately creative and relentless in its delivery. A *Homefull* place does not leave anyone behind and it loves and uplifts its most vulnerable.

Thank you for helping us build a *Homefull* Toronto.



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