

# Roehampton Residence News

Newsletter #3 – January 2021



The Roehampton Residence (808 Mount Pleasant Ave.) is a temporary shelter which was activated by the City of Toronto, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration to support physical distancing within shelters in response to COVID-19.

The Roehampton Residence News will be issued regularly in order to provide information and updates to the mid-town community regarding the shelter. The Newsletter is developed by City staff.

## The Newsletter will provide the following:

- New Year's Message from Roehampton Residence
- Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) Update
- Roehampton Residence Update
- Shelter Resident Success Story...together we make a difference

- If you'd like to sign up to receive the Roehampton Residence Newsletters and/or share your questions, comments, and/or feedback with us, send an email to: [roehampton@toronto.ca](mailto:roehampton@toronto.ca);
- Fill out online feedback form; and
- Read past newsletters, bulletins and other project-related information at: [Toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters](https://toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters)

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## 1. Message from Roehampton Residence

2020 has concluded and we embark on a new year. We hope that 2021 brings happiness, health and prosperity to the community and that we all stay safe, healthy, and positive. With these hopes we still face some challenges. The rollout of the vaccine and adherence to new public health measures we see some hope and light at the end of the tunnel. We are not quite there yet, but we have faith we will get to the 'other side' soon, and we are looking forward to it!

There have been challenges and heartwarming successes at Roehampton, the community and the City as a whole. We thank all of you that show support during the good times and hard times, and we continue to be committed to doing what we can to ensure we contribute to the success of the community and the people we serve.

2020 was one of the hardest years on record for the shelter system; in terms of a large scale Covid response; as well as corresponding impacts of the opioid crisis, economic impacts on more people, and feelings of isolation. Roehampton shares the challenges of the broader system.

Holidays can be a tough time for anyone staying in a shelter and the community helped us do what we could to make it special for those staying in our program. Sadly, we saw two of our residents pass away over the holidays.

The loss of a shelter resident impacts all of us. Staff work tirelessly to support our residents to move forward with their goals and keep them safe. When we lose someone, it impacts us and takes time to heal; while continuing to support everyone else who needs us to continue the work for them, and to provide them the support they need as well, as they heal from their loss.

We have developed a robust and invested Community Liaison Committee; this is the vehicle in which community issues, and initiatives have an opportunity to be brought forward and heard and to implement new initiatives. The time, effort and commitment is recognized and appreciated. We thank the diverse group that sits on this committee; that represents various groups and individuals in mid-town. We look forward to more meetings that have proved to be productive and engaging.

In September, we implemented, in partnership with the area Schools, Superintendents, Trustees, and Police, an effective School Safety Plan. The plan cannot illuminate or eliminate all possible situations, but the feedback from school staff and parents has been that the presence and visibility of the Community Safety Teams (CST) has been reassuring. We continue to support schools, even while closed; and will continue to monitor and develop the plan throughout the year.

Although the work can be difficult, we are honoured to do the work we do for some of the most vulnerable in our society and to support the extensive efforts of the City of Toronto; not just by serving those who are experiencing homelessness; but being part of, and enhancing, vibrant, safe and healthy communities. As we all remain physically distanced, we are not disconnected.

We were deeply touched by the amount of caring that has come from this community from masks being sewn for our residents, welcome home baskets for housing by faith based organizations, as well as individuals and organizations making gift boxes for the residents, to furniture, art supplies, electronics and gift cards to help our residents move forward and so much more; we thank you! We often get asked what we need, this does not have to be financial; often the biggest gift we can give is just being welcoming and caring; which we have seen blossom from this community regularly.

Please stay safe, healthy, and full of joy; even in trying times...take care everyone.

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## 2. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) Updates

The Shelter Design & Technical Guidelines is a living document that provides best practices in the design of any new permanent shelters in Toronto. It is intended to enhance positive outcomes and experiences for the shelter users, staff and the community in new and renovated shelters through designs that promote dignity, comfort and choice for the clients.

The development of these guidelines was in collaboration with several City of Toronto Divisions, Community Partners who work in this sector, and/or those who have technical expertise.

Although the Roehampton has not been subject to these guidelines as we were opened as an emergency response we will make every effort to pick up some of these practices where possible.

Learn more:

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/community-partners/emergency-shelter-operators/shelter-design-technical-guidelines/>



The work of shelter frontline Staff and our partners is often similar to settings such as long term care and other supportive communal settings. The prioritization by the Province of Ontario for early vaccination is recognized due to the daily work and the types of services provided by frontline staff in protecting our most vulnerable.

Staff working in settings such as ours where medical emergency response occurs, and where our residents may be at more risk for severe Covid outcomes, will be eligible to begin receiving the vaccination this week! All Staff that work in a frontline position at Roehampton have received an invitation to book a vaccination with the City of Toronto's vaccination clinic that opens on Monday January 18, 2021.

More information about COVID-19 vaccines is available on the City's web page at [toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/](https://toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-vaccines/).



On December 15<sup>th</sup> the City of Toronto issued a press release to announce an Integrated Prevention and Harm Reduction Initiative (iPHARE), a multi-pronged strategy to address opioid-related deaths in local shelters.

This initiative comes in response to the escalating opioid poisoning crisis in Toronto. It helps to advance the Toronto Overdose Action Plan, and recent recommendations approved by the Board of Health at its November 16, 2020 meeting (HL23.2), and recommendations to SSHA General Manager, Mary-Anne Bedard.

Information for the public about iPHARE can be found in the press release or at [www.toronto.ca/overdose-prevention-and-response/](http://www.toronto.ca/overdose-prevention-and-response/)

There are no changes at this time to harm reduction supports at Roehampton; but we continue to look for ways to enhance services to those that need it. Some of the existing harm reduction supports are:

- Toronto Public Health – The Works Bus and Peer Support
- Harm Reduction Kits and Supplies
- Safe use resources such as buddy systems and hotlines
- Medical intervention for those wishing to manage addictions with prescription substitutes
- Staff trained in harm reduction and first aid and CPR
- Overdose response policies, procedures and resources such as naloxone administration

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### 3. Roehampton Residence Update

As in the broader community, Roehampton saw an increase of sporadic cases in staff starting in late November. Roehampton saw its first case of covid in a resident in mid-December. In an effort to be proactive and curb the spread of Covid on January 5<sup>th</sup> COVID Surveillance Testing (also known as mass swabbing) was conducted at Roehampton by our wonderful medical partners from Sunnybrook.

This surveillance testing provided an opportunity for all clients and staff to be tested onsite. Positive results did come back in some of our residents.

At the time of testing, all residents who tested positive were asymptomatic; however, all residents and close contacts were immediately transferred to our isolation and recovery site. There were no staff cases identified in the surveillance testing.

We continue to screen all residents twice per day and staff must follow public health protocols that include not coming in to work if sick or isolate and go for testing as directed by Toronto Public Health.

We continue with enhanced cleaning of all common areas and a special operations team was onsite to do deep cleaning of the resident rooms.

During an outbreak status we are unable to take new admissions. Many residents who were in isolation have returned and/or are expected to return over the next few days, as they are medically cleared and recovered.

For more information on Covid in our City, including outbreaks, please see:

<https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-latest-city-of-toronto-news/covid-19-status-of-cases-in-toronto/>

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#### 4. Shelter Residents Success Stories



David is of Scottish heritage and accredits this upbringing to him having 'dab hands', which means skilled with your hands in fixing and making things. He has always enjoyed fixing model air planes, fixing bikes and cars, and drawing. This ability to have 'dab hands' he feels led him to eventually work for the Canadian Air Force fixing planes, but unfortunately did get injured on the job.

There are many reasons why someone may eventually become homeless and for David he feels the start came when there was a family breakdown and as result depression, anxiety, and health issues developed and impacted his stability.

David started using shelter services over 2 years ago, but TODAY we are excited to share he has been accepted to the Woodgreen Community Services, Transitional Housing Program. He is very excited to start this new chapter in his life, and to have the opportunity with Woodgreen to participate in the variety of program initiatives available to him.

David's life has had its ups and downs for sure, but through it all he has shown strength of character and resilience in the face of these life changing circumstances and challenges.

Dave has expressed gratitude to the staff working within the Homeless Sector and Shelters....his favorite thing to say is, "I'm not as good as I once was, but I'm as good as I'll ever be, and that is OK."

#### *Quotes by Clients....*

*"With the help of staff I finally have my ID again and can access income and housing"*

*"It is great not being in a shelter downtown..less triggers and temptations"*

*"I now have a clean, safe place to sleep...I am thankful for this, and to have staff here who try to get to know me, and work with me to get housed"*