



Annual Review

2010

Message from Housing Connections

In the city of Toronto, the demand for affordable housing continues to grow to unprecedented levels, while the supply of new rent-geared-to-income housing remains limited. Over the last five years, Housing Connections has experienced a 14 per cent increase in the number of households on the centralized waiting list, while the number of households placed annually has declined by 28 per cent. Today, it is more important than ever for Housing Connections to be steadfast in our commitment to improve access to affordable housing in the city of Toronto. It was this resolve that in 2010 Housing Connections actively sought opportunities to strengthen our ties with our partners, while seeking new ways to better service our clients and connect people to affordable and social housing.

Last year, Housing Connections housed 3,733 households with providers through the centralized waiting list. This represents less than five per cent of the total 76,549 households on the waiting list for rent-geared-to-income housing. However, the emergence of non-rent-geared-to-income programs has created opportunities to improve access to affordable housing options for households in need.

Housing Connections is working with the City of Toronto, community partners and landlords to connect applicants to programs and improve the affordability of their housing. Through the Mental Health Commission of Canada's 'At Home'/'Chez Soi' project, the new Short Term Rent Support Program, and the City of Toronto's affordable housing programs, we have identified housing opportunities for over 3,000 households to improve affordability of their current housing. While there is still much work to be done, this represents a positive step and highlights how working together can bring innovative solutions.

Moving forward in 2011, the focus will be on identifying the opportunities that exist in the system to improve access. With the new *Housing Services Act*, comes an opportunity to improve service and ensure the access system in Toronto is responsive to the needs in Toronto.

The Board of Directors and Housing Connections are thankful for the many contributions of the Board Advisory Council, our Community Partners, volunteers and all the staff at Housing Connections, and remain confident that through our collective commitment, we move closer to our vision of ensuring decent and affordable housing for all Torontonians.

Housing Connections Board and Staff

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Housing Connections provides the pathway to connect people to affordable housing and social housing in Toronto.

Vision

Decent affordable housing for all Torontonians.

Values

Inclusion

We respect people as individuals and provide customer-focused services that foster dignity and compassion

Collaboration

We recognize that everyone's contribution has value and that our best work is delivered when we work with others

Integrity

We are fair, just and transparent, and our behaviour is consistent with our values

Innovation

We promote service through innovation and change



About Us

Working through our network of community partners, applicant self-service tools and our resource centre, Housing Connections provides a decentralized housing access system in Toronto.

Housing Connections' core services include assessing initial and ongoing eligibility for applicants for rent-geared-to-income housing and housing programs to improve access to housing in the city of Toronto.

Housing Connections:

- supports people applying to the centralized waiting list for rent-geared-to-income housing in Toronto;
- assesses special priority applications for rent-geared-to-income;
- administers a Rent Supplement Program (a rent-geared-to-income housing program), with private market landlords for the City of Toronto;
- manages the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Housing Allowance Program, providing an allowance for rent based on unit size for applicants on the waiting list for subsidized housing;
- administers the '*At Home*'/'*Chez Soi*' Supportive Housing Project with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, for people who are homeless and experience mental health issues; and
- administers the Short Term Rent Support Program.

Objectives

Service

Organization

Leadership

Financial Sustainability

Service

Housing Connections continues to improve customer service by making information more accessible to clients, researching and testing opportunities to improve service delivery, and establishing customer services practices for the organization.

Our Plan

We will enhance customer service to increase accessibility.

Strategies

Remove Barriers

Innovation

Excellence in Public Service

2010 Results

- helped 265 applicants gain access to the waiting list through monthly workshops, which provided step-by-step guidance of the application process
- led 32 workshops for clients and staff of community agencies across the city to share information and build relationships with agency staff
- assisted over 22,000 applicants looking for affordable housing, an average of 85 people every day, in the resource centre
- 8,400 new web users registered to update their application info online

- 176,687 callers contacted our call centre which provides applicants with self-service options and the option to speak to an agent. Of the total callers, 47,790 applicants, an average of 163 callers per day, chose to speak to an agent for more information or to update their application.
- 10,060 applicants were supported through our network of 39 Community Partners that offer community-based access
- held a focus group for applicants to share their experiences with Housing Connections' services
- evolved our customer service approach in the resource centre through the implementation of new staff tools that improved our ability to answer applicant questions directly, and enhanced the way we serve applicants



Organization

As Housing Connections continues to strive for improved efficiencies and public service, the expertise, skills and knowledge of our workforce plays a vital role in supporting the organization through change and growth.

Our Plan

Maintain a workforce that is adaptable to changes and enhancements to service, and is also engaged in Housing Connections' business development.

Strategies

Building Employee Capacity
Building Corporate Capacity

2010 Results

- led two training workshops for housing workers through the RENT Training Essential Skills Housing Work program to share information and provide housing workers with tools to assist applicants looking for affordable housing options
- organized fundraising initiatives, and contributed to the Housing Connections United Way campaign, raising \$11,300
- organized and participated in cultural and heritage celebrations such as African Heritage and Asian and South East Asian Heritage months to celebrate the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve
- held a customer service workshop for staff that included feedback from applicants and housing workers, and used this feedback to develop ideas for new ways to enhance our customers' service experience
- continued to develop partnerships with community-based agencies and landlords to share skills and knowledge, as we reinforce Housing Connections' identity
- met bi-monthly with community partners to provide a forum to discuss issues and share solutions

Leadership

Housing Connections has gained significant experience and knowledge in housing program administration. Paired with shared learnings and community agency partnerships, Housing Connections can contribute its expertise to influence social policy and regulations, as well as contribute to the development of future housing programs.

Our Plan

Sustain Housing Connections' position of maintaining and administering the social housing waiting list and housing programs, and use expertise to influence the development of social housing policy.

Strategies

Administration of Housing Programs
Advocating for Social Housing

2010 Results

- housed 488 families and households in the Rent Supplement Program
- added 120 rent supplement units to the portfolio
- helped 2,800 households in the Rent Supplement Program and 920 households in the Housing Allowance Program maintain their eligibility for housing programs and keep their homes
- developed a sustainability plan for the Housing Allowance Program Pilot to extend housing allowance for two additional years
- connected 216 families and households to market-rent homes
- developed an implementation plan for the new Short Term Rent Support Program
- continued the partnership with Habitat for Humanity to host monthly workshops for applicants interested in affordable ownership options
- held landlord info sessions and worked with landlords to house 'At Home'/'Chez Soi' Project participants within an average of 37 days of the participant's referral to the project

Waiting List Statistics

Waiting List Totals	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of Households	67,083	66,186	66,600	71,498	76,549
Number of Individuals	N/A	128,666	127,009	134,176	142,555
Active households	48,601	49,478	52,257	60,197	66,460
Inactive households	18,759	16,708	14,343	11,301	10,089
New applications	22,230	22,767	24,871	28,174	25,816
Cancelled applications	7,407	8,009	9,146	10,523	10,261

Housed Totals	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
All households	5,160	4,336	4,872	4,256	3,733
Special priority households	1,167	1,190	1,433	1,371	1,295
Disadvantaged households	942	1,087	980	741	693
Chronological waiting list households	3,051	1,621	1,990	1,748	1,430

Waiting list Trends

- The demand for subsidized housing continues to increase. In 2010, 25,816 new applications, or 70 applications every day of the year, were received.
- The number of priority applications is rising. There was a 50 per cent increase in priority applications between 2008 (1,416 priority applications) and 2010 (2,082 applications).
- The number of chronological households being housed is decreasing. In 2010, 1,430 chronological households were housed, 28 per cent less than the 1,990 chronological households housed in 2008.
- The increased number of seniors on the waiting list is resulting in an increased demand for 1-bedroom units. The number of seniors on the waiting list increased by 29 per cent from 2008 to 2010. The number of households waiting for 1-bedroom units also increased by 27 per cent from 2008 to 2010.



Financial Sustainability

Investment in progressive IT systems has put Housing Connections in the forefront of social service delivery. Because these systems need to be enhanced regularly to keep up to date and meet demand, Housing Connections continues to explore new funding models that would allow for financial planning to support improvements.

Our Plan

Continue to review systems for efficiency and cost savings, while making innovative improvements to business.

Strategies

Financial Stability

Innovation in Systems Integration

Revenue and Expenses

Revenues	2010	2009
Operating Subsidies (City of Toronto)	5,278,000	5,149,032
Housing Allowance Administration	360,301	281,547
Rental services	437,938	274,993
Interest and sundry	5,422	17,569
	6,081,661	5,723,141
Program Grants		
Commercial rent supplement	12,030,669	11,442,995
Strong Communities rent supplement	11,831,140	11,726,542
Housing Allowance Pilot	446,839	410,068
Housing Allowance Roll out	4,239,163	4,733,671
Mental Health Commission	800,239	41,341
Short Term Rent Support Program	9,699	-
	29,357,749	28,354,617
Total Revenues	35,439,410	34,077,758

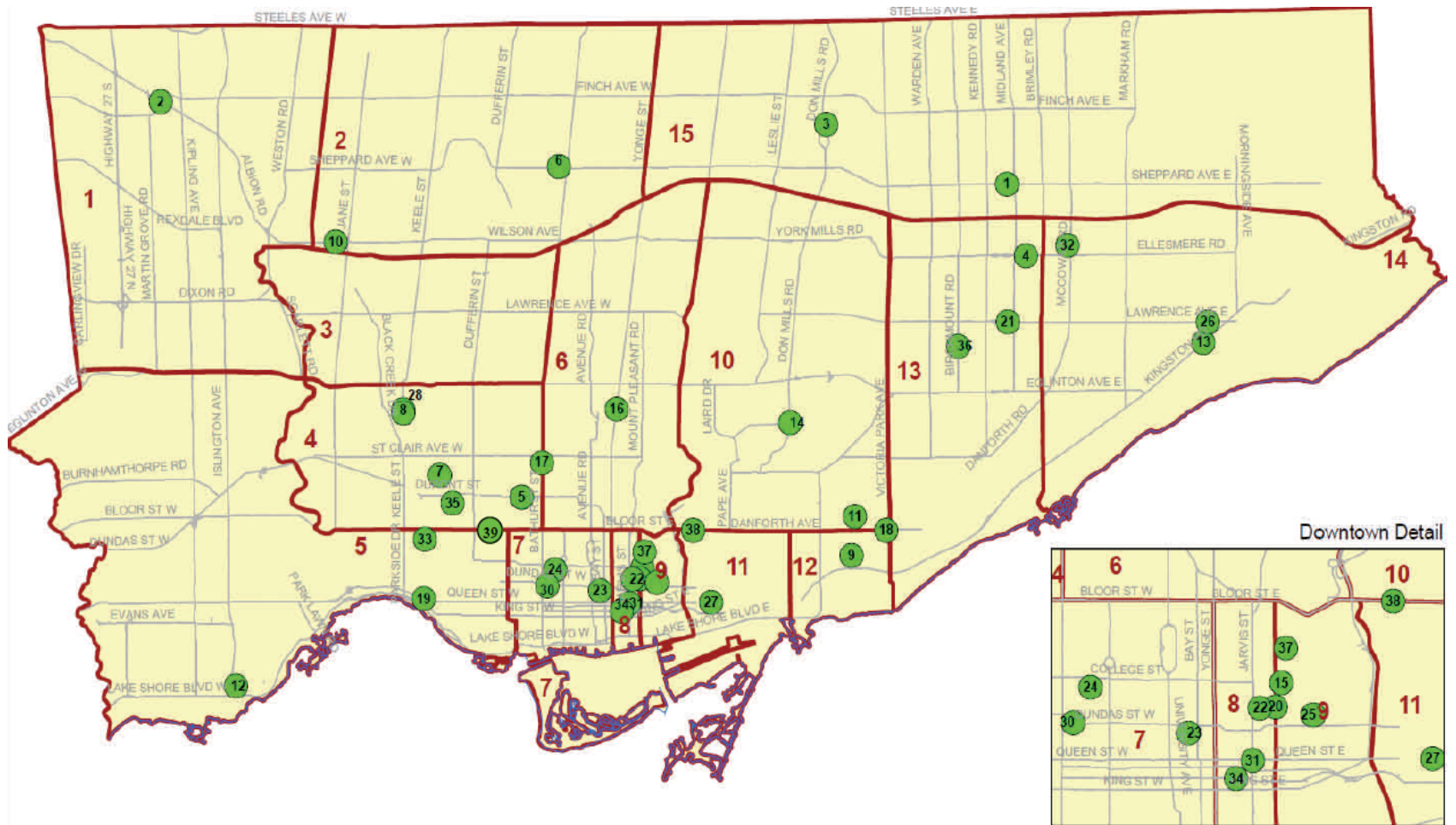
Expenses	2010	2009
Salaries & benefits	4,498,737	4,225,155
Landlord payments	29,357,748	28,354,617
Recoverable expense Mental Health Commission	244,672	17,651
Staff expense	21,837	18,583
Office	607,586	647,785
Systems	294,380	265,072
Professional services	300,839	365,063
Administrative and other	14,710	36,179
Interest	75,450	-
Depreciation	130,251	278,697
Total Expenditures	35,546,210	34,208,722
Excess/(Deficiency) of revenues over expenses	(106,800)	(130,964)

Community Partners

1. Agincourt Community Services Association
2. Albion Neighbourhood Services – North
3. AWIC Community and Social Services
4. Birkdale Residence
5. Bloor Info and Life Skills Centre
6. B’Nai Brith Canada
7. Community Action Resource Centre
8. Community Action Resource Centre
9. Community Centre 55
10. COSTI
11. East York Housing Help
12. Etobicoke Housing Help Centre South
13. Family Residence
14. Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services
15. Mid-Toronto Community Services
16. Midaynta Community Services
17. Native Men’s Residence
18. Neighbourhood Link Support Services
19. Polycultural Immigrant & Community Services
20. Robertson House
21. Scarborough Housing Help Centre
22. Seaton House
23. Streets to Homes
24. St. Stephen’s Community House
25. Toronto Christian Resource Centre
26. Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities
27. Woodgreen Community Centre
28. Unison Health
29. West Toronto Housing Help Service
30. Women’s Residence
31. Fred Victor Centre
32. Catholic Crosscultural Services
33. The Redwood
34. The Assessment and Referral Centre
35. South Asian Women’s Centre
36. The Tamil Eelam Society of Canada
37. Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto
38. Homeward
39. Sistering



Housing Connections Community Partners



Board of Directors (2010)

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Afshan Bye, Director
Dena Forbes, Director
Ruby Lam, Director
Filsun Mahamed, Director
Keiko Nakamura, Director
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Angela Reyes
Aleya Parveen Sheak
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Evadne Shirley
Kevin Speicher
Nicole Stewart
Douglas Stuart
Jean Teoh
Ronny Yaron
Cecilia Yuan

How to get in touch with Housing Connections

Housing Connections' website

Visit www.housingconnections.ca to download an application, find more information or to access to your Housing Connections application with the *Application Update* self-serve tool.



Automated telephone service

Call our automated line at 416-981-6111 to request an application or use your personal identification number (PIN) to access your application anytime.



Visit Housing Connections' Resource Centre

176 Elm Street, Toronto ON M5T 3M4

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Speak to a representative

Call 416-981-6111

Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1-4:30 p.m.

Visit a Housing Connections Community Partner

Visit one of our community partners located throughout the city for help with Housing Connections' application. For a list of our community go to: www.housingconnections.ca

Send us an email

ask@housingconnections.ca

Send us a fax

416-981-6112

Send us info or documents by mail

176 Elm Street

Toronto, ON M5T 3M4