



More than a **roof** over one's head

ANNUAL
**09
10**
REPORT

mainstay
HOUSING

Building Futures.
Creating Communities.

Our Mission

For over 25 years Mainstay Housing has been providing safe, permanent affordable housing and support for those living with serious mental illness and affected by homelessness, poverty, social isolation and harmful substance use.



Back row:

David Haigh, Gord Singer,
Brian Pollard (*Treasurer*),
Richard Lundeen

Front row:

Brigitte Witkowski (*Executive Director*), Rhoda Beecher
(*President*), Virginia Doolittle,
Georgiana Beal

“If you have a roof over your head, the sky’s the limit.”

A message from the President and Executive Director

Study after study shows that “housing is a key determinant of health.” At Mainstay, we see the evidence every day.

It’s not just the obvious things that matter: shelter from the elements; a safe place to sleep; the opportunity to cook and care for oneself; the stability that comes from a fixed address. It’s the chance to belong, to contribute, and to become one’s best self.

Our homes provide the secure foundation that allows our members to claim their place as householders, neighbours, citizens and leaders. We see it in the 4 members who volunteered to become certified Wellness Recovery Action Plan trainers and are now preparing to train another 60 members to do the same.

Board of Directors

Georgiana Beal

Rhoda Beecher,
President

Shabbir Causer

Virginia Doolittle

Tracy Ewing

David Haigh

Thomas Lam

Richard Lundeen

Stuart MacFarlane

Gord Muschett

Brian Pollard,
Treasurer

Paul Reid,
Vice-President

Gord Singer



We see it in the 77 members who are telling their own stories through the Writer's Group. And we see it in the McCormack members who decided to make their building not just clean, but beautiful. Their gardening club won them Toronto's Green Thumb Award, and led the way for twenty other Mainstay gardening groups, each with its own charter.

In fact, 401 members – almost half Mainstay's membership – seized the opportunity to learn and lead through community-building initiatives last year.

These opportunities do not come by chance. They are made possible through the collective efforts of our 15 board members, 45 professional staff, and 22 partner organizations, informed by our 25+ years' experience as a leading supportive housing provider.

Mainstay is serious about using this experience to benefit our members and their peers across Ontario. For example,

we know the types of support that foster successful tenancies – supports that have helped 31% of our members keep their homes for ten years or more. We've embedded this knowledge in the agreements between Mainstay and our support partners, and are working with them to measure success.

We drew on our experience to forge the Tech Accord, a collaboration with Houselink Community Homes and St. Jude Community Homes to create back office efficiencies and yield valuable knowledge about integration in the community.

We're also sharing our experience with policy-makers, here and elsewhere.

Secure homes. A chance to belong. Opportunities to lead. This is what being "a mainstay" is all about.

Rhoda Beecher
President

Brigitte Witkowski
Executive Director

Special Achievements

Membership Committee

The Member Advisory Committee was formed in 2009. Six members immediately stepped forward and volunteered to draft the first terms of reference. They have been working together to provide advice on membership engagement strategies, and community development strategies consistent with Mainstay's mission, vision and values.

The mandate of the committee is to provide:

- Input and advice to staff on communication and outreach strategies about member participation and involvement opportunities;
- Advice on key issues that impact on member development and participation;
- Input and advice on evaluating community development activities.

Streets to Homes

Mainstay's notable outcomes in the first year of the program resulted in the City of Toronto increasing our funding for this year. We immediately agreed to double the number of people coming directly from the street into our housing so they could benefit from **integrated, individualized support** offered by our staff team which includes a Peer Support Worker.



34% of tenants have lived at Mainstay for 1-3 years (on-going)

12% of tenants have lived at Mainstay for 3-5 years (on-going)

23% of tenants have lived at Mainstay for 5-10 years (on-going)

31% of tenants have lived at Mainstay for more than 10 years (on-going)



Shared Service Pilot

Mainstay launched a pilot with our partner agencies to provide **enhanced and co-ordinated support to members** who are affected by many complex issues including substance use, trauma, hunger, chronic health conditions. The goal is efficient allocation of staff from all partner agencies who deliver support to tenants. To date we have predictable on-site harm reduction services, a shared office space for support workers to meet their clients on site, a Good Food Box program and a community kitchen project.

Scorecard of

Performance Indicators

Mainstay convened a multi-year process involving our 22 current community and hospital based agencies to revise and update our memorandum of understanding. The outcome will be a refreshed agreement defining roles and responsibilities for support and create a scorecard of performance indicators to drive quality of life outcomes for the joint client.

Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program

Mainstay, relying on our professional building services team, secured \$1,243,611 through the federal government's economic stimulus package, to immediately invest in capital upgrades to our buildings, both to extend their life and increase energy efficiencies. As of fiscal year end we spent \$852,000 under the program. This opportunity was over and above our annual capital plan investment into our buildings of \$173,300.



Supporting Creativity

Over the last year 77 members were involved in the LARC Writers' Group. Some explored life stories through the art of essays and memoirs. Others wrote poems and fiction. Each class had 3 parts. It began with creative writing exercises. One exercise was:

"You are walking along a beach and you see an angel with broken wings. What feelings or emotions does this image evoke in you?

What actions would you take?"

The second part gave the class "recovery-based prompts" to further provoke the writing process. A prompt can be one's experience or impression from looking at a photograph, thinking about the shape of an object, choosing a word from the dictionary or a line from a song. Prompts are jumping off points leading to deeper meaning in one's life story.

Participants were asked to identify the turning point in their recovery or the significant people that helped them in their recovery process. They were encouraged to read their "works in progress" and receive non-judgmental feedback from fellow writers.

□ **FACT:**

137 members engaged in LARC initiatives such as Community Kitchen; Movie Day; Pancake brunches and clothing room.



“We rejoice (and do not need to put others down)... The brain itself can be healed. We have the power to change, from the inside. It is the feelings not expressed where hurting begins. It’s in the sharing where healing begins”.

Donna.



“My wellness journey is a process; I do not expect an arrival time...I set my target...plan my route...and hope for my desired destination. Writing takes me to a location where I can see myself and look at others with the respect of an artist.”

Robert.



Encouraging Community and Leadership

Mainstay's Supportive Housing Workers recognize and encourage the ambition and ideas of our members that lead to collective action and acts of citizenship. Here is one example of an idea that became reality in one building and spread to other buildings.

It started with our members living at McCormack who wished there were more flowers at their property. It continued when they learned the limits of Mainstay's funding for landscaping. As they

said, "Clean and tidy but not beautiful". Our SHWs, building on their motivation and self-interest, guided our members to research and organize Gardening Clubs. Members discovered their power to achieve, problem-solve and persist. As a result, they won the City of Toronto's "Green Thumb Award," lead the start-up of Gardening Clubs in other Mainstay buildings and laid the foundation for organizing the first Gardening Club excursion to Niagara Falls this year.



Staff and members worked together to plan a trip to Niagara Falls and the Botanical Gardens. For some of the twenty-five members it was their first look at “awesome Niagara Falls.” “It was great to get ideas” others said, “as we walked the Niagara Falls Garden Trail, the 100 acre site, with greenhouses, aviary, ornamental grass garden and herb garden.”

There are now 20 gardening clubs, each has its own charter; some grow flowers or vegetables only, others flowers and vegetables.



□ FACT:

401 members are involved in and learning to lead community building initiatives such as gardening clubs; coffee groups; community kitchen; food security groups, arts and crafts, yoga, movie nights and walking group.



Investing in Member Potential

□ **FACT:**

40% more members received grants in 2010 to pursue their goals over the previous year. Thank you to our donors for making this possible.

There are many ways Mainstay invests in the hopes and dreams of our members. One is the **Opportunity Fund**, an initiative of Mainstay's Board of Directors. It takes advantage of the fact that permanent housing, critical as it is to health and well-being, is the first step in creating a meaningful life. Its goal is simple: invest directly in members so they can take a course to expand horizons for work, volunteering and self-improvement.

Our SHWs are on the look out for what motivates our members and encourage them to apply to the **Opportunity Fund**. Doing the research, and completing an application takes **courage**. Members took courses such as Small Engine Mechanics; American Sign Language; French; High School Equivalency Test; Art program; driving lessons; a House-keeping course at George Brown College.



2009 Opportunity Fund Recipients and Board member, Tracy Ewing, (top right)



"It meant I finally had the chance to upgrade my skills for work as well as for use on my home computer. Being on a low budget it is often hard to get training that is affordable."

*Christine
Computer Basics and Microsoft
Office at George Brown College*



"It was amazing. I wouldn't have had that opportunity any other way. I learned so much. It made me want to teach even more."

*Stayce
Teacher's Additional qualification
to teach Special Education
through York University.*



FACT:

Training on Harm Reduction; Wellness Recovery Action Plan are other ways we invest in learning, growth and work.

Improving Value and Affordability Through Collaboration

In driving to fulfill our strategic imperative for sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness, Mainstay sought out other leaders ready to move forward on an integration strategy.

United under the banner of **Tech Accord**, St. Jude Community Homes, Houselink Community Homes and Mainstay (as lead agency) created an **Information Technology integration**. We relied on the ample and compelling evidence that community-based agencies have insufficient information technology infrastructure to support on-going innovation and demands for reporting and accountability.

Taking advantage of the Toronto Central LHIN's "Partnership for Service Improvement," **Tech Accord** demonstrated how its integration plan met criteria and standards for value, affordability and importantly, expandability to future partners.

Tech Accord demonstrated how, across the size continuum from small (98 units) to large (867 units), the community is able to succeed in a back office integration that supports each agency's autonomy and mission.

This coming year **Tech Accord** will plan for expandability based on outcomes and service user experience.

□ **FACT:**

Tech Accord serves about 130 users across 3 agencies. Sharing of common help desk and IT support service and sharing of physical resources to control or reduce costs.



“From the perspective of St. Jude Community Homes, alone, our organization would not have had the funding, knowledge or expertise to obtain the system and services now in place. It was a privilege to join my colleagues Brigitte and Peggy in leading this Performance System Improvement Project funded by the Toronto Central LHIN.”

*Angela Shaw, Executive Director
St. Jude Community Homes*



Advancing Knowledge and Learning – for us and others

As a **community based agency** Mainstay knows the importance of education, training and sharing best practices with its members, staff team and other stakeholders.

Relying on **evidence and research**, Mainstay developed “*Beyond the Key to the Front Door: a guide to helping tenants keep their homes.*” This workshop equips mental health and supportive housing staff with tools and knowledge to help their clients break out of the pit of homelessness and succeed as tenants.

As a **support service** Mainstay invested in *Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)* training for its members and staff. WRAP provided trainers with tools and resources to support wellness and recovery. In the next phase, the trainers will mentor 60 members.

As an **innovative provider** of housing and supports, Mainstay shared best practices about eviction prevention, harm reduction, recovery in housing, access strategies and NIMBY with visitors from Saskatoon and Fredericton. Mainstay presented at the *Winnipeg Homelessness Summit* and the *North American Housing and HIV/AIDS Research Summit*

in Toronto and at the *Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association Conference*.

This year, Mainstay:

- **Trained** 100 professionals in Ottawa and Fredericton through the “*Beyond the Key to the Front Door*” workshops.
- Continued to **support staff learning and development** on themes such as health and safety; cultural competency and diversity, anti-racism/anti-oppression in mental health/addiction; conflict resolution; deaf awareness; counseling skills; suicide; dual diagnosis; elder abuse; fundraising; construction site safety.



“Thank you for such invaluable information and sharing of amazing and successful experience; broadened my knowledge of housing issues and challenges.”

*Ottawa participant.
“Beyond the Key to the Front Door”*



“This presentation is needed for most front line workers.”

*Ottawa participant.
“Beyond the Key to the Front Door”*



As an **employer**, Mainstay opened a “Building Services Learning Centre” for Caretakers and Maintenance Workers. The goal is to improve skills and knowledge through monthly hands-on expert lead workshops covering topics including Locksmithing; Plumbing; Drywall Repair; Small Appliance Repair; Cleaning and Floor Stripping; Electrical Trouble-shooting; WHMIS and Health and Safety review.



Our Dedicated Staff

Mainstay is dedicated to creative and sound alternatives to improve services to our members. Our workplace is devoted to **customer service standards** and to putting **outcome measures** in place to ensure we meet them.

In an effort to foster the professional development of our staff we have instituted a Lunch & Learn training program, by staff, for staff, in which we integrate learning in a casual setting. We utilize this time to discuss topics that directly affect our work and services, such as Rent-Geared-to-Income, the *Residential Tenancies Act* and Cultural Competency and Diversity.

Cultivating an effective team is essential at Mainstay. Toward that end, our managers recently underwent a 360° review by their peers and direct reports, as a method to help them expand their proficiencies and aptitudes. We strive to continuously work with employees as individuals and in teams to define challenging, yet realistic goals.

We are proud to state that this year we have nineteen employees who have been working at Mainstay for five years or more. This year, ten of those celebrate an anniversary at 5 years, 10 years and 20 years.



“It is a source of pride for me to be able to work at a socially responsible workplace like Mainstay, where concern for the service of tenants is a key priority.”

Uma Sivasuntharam.

“Working for Mainstay has provided me with a positive working environment that has allowed me to further develop my skills and achieve a high standard of service for our tenants.”

Katherine Salinas.



Desmond Marrett (10 years)
Katherine Salinas (5 years)
Teresa Rivas (5 years)
Mel Logan (5 years)
Jimmy Eshesh (10 years)
Sharon Williams (10 years)
Nancy Sugar (20 years)
absent: Stephen Gray (5 years)



Ray Fortune (10 years)
Uma Sivasuntharam (10 years)



Staff

□ **FACT:**

The Dream Team was inspired by a Mainstay member to establish the **Eliana Roman Memorial Award**, to be granted annually to someone who has contributed to the advancement of consumer survivor rights. Two members of The Dream Team are also Mainstay members.

Building Services:

Mario Araya
Teresita Bagorio
Randy Baldwin
Agustin Barahona
Garfield Barrett
John Battye
Wayne Bisnath
Arun Bryson
Medardo Cabebe
Beth Elenzano
Jimmy Eshesh
Ray Fortune
Olimpia Lauriston
George Luzio
Desmond Marrett
Teresa Rivas

Tenant and Member Services:

Marian Adan
Ferreshteh Bahmani
Melissa Consunji
Wayne Cruise
Kimberley Ellsworth
Monica Forrester
Paula Giles
Gomo George
Stephen Gray
Andrea Gutowski
Duke Joseph

Mel Logan
Sandra Mageau
Gilda Martens
Parvin Merchant
Nelly Melo
Alireza Mikanik
Randolph Ouimet
Volletta Peters
Math Radfar
Marta Roller
Katherine Salinas
Charmaine Walker
Sharon Williams

Finance and Administration:

Claudia Alvarado
Michael Deans
Jane Edwards
Tony Le-Catequista
Uma Sivasuntharam
Tony Yu

Executive Director:

Brigitte Witkowski

Executive Assistant:

Nancy Sugar

Student Placements:

Amy Beckwith
(Ryerson University)
Chantal Stepa
(Centennial College)
Anna Krasilshchik
(Seneca College)
Melissa Renaud
(George Brown College).

Summer Students:

Alanna Fletcher
(Ryerson University)
Sandy Lam
(University of Toronto)
Stewart Jackson
(McGill University)

Donors:

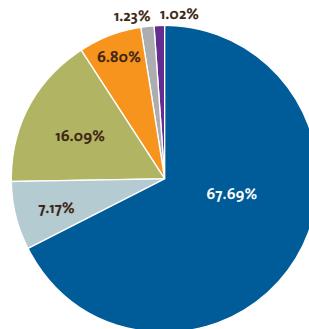
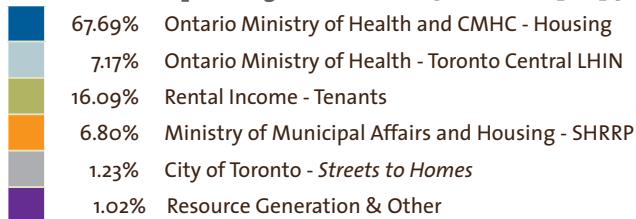
Thank you to our generous corporate and individual donors.

In Memoriam for members who passed away in 2009-10

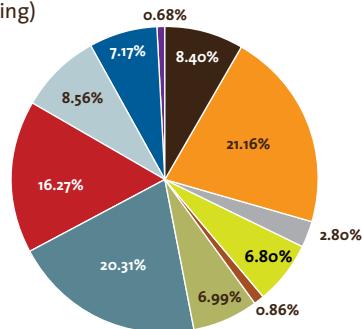
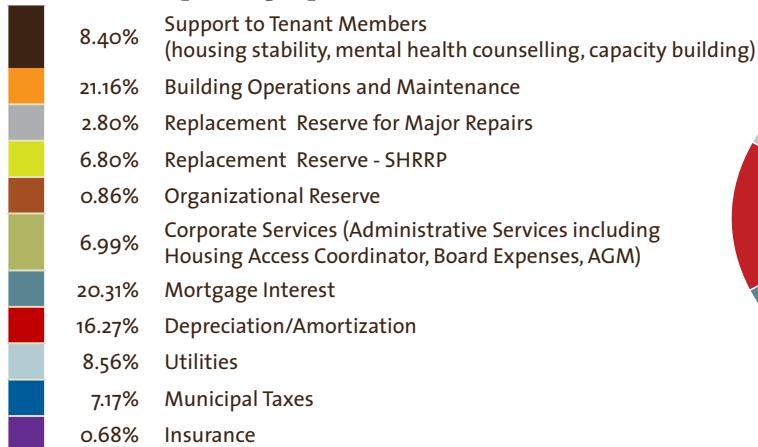
Dan Bucur
Alex Dutton
William Howey
Brian Maitland
Rose Quesnelle
Eliana Roman

2009-2010 Financials

Operating Revenues 2009-2010 \$14,184,969



Operating Expenses 2009-2010 \$14,184,969



Funders: Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care - Housing; Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network; Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; City of Toronto Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative; City of Toronto Homelessness Partnership Initiative (Streets to Homes). SHRRP = Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program

Audited Financial Statements available upon request.



mainstay

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Creating Communities.

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