

**Chairperson’s Report**

**September 23, 2020**

As the Interim Board Chairperson I would like to make a few remarks:

The Bridges opened 15 years ago, and we are recognized by Imagine Canada as a community that uses every donation we receive, to maximize the supports the homeless need. The pandemic has been both an opportunity and a challenge, as we are able to serve less individuals, but have actively rehoused many more than in past years. The bold and innovative leadership provided by the senior staff has been exemplary and created a very dedicated team. They are all to be commended for their support of the homeless.

Individually and collectively we can also change the conversation- we realize that individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty are constantly being stigmatized. The pandemic and the increase of evictions and the visibility of the unsheltered, has increased the negativity within every community.

Their needs are no different than yours or mine, their histories may not be too different either-they have had successes, challenges, and setbacks just like you and I-they want to live their best life as they determine it.

We know that stigmatization is both unfair and untrue- so when I think about the next year for the Bridges and the people we serve, I challenge you to listen actively and improve your equity and empathy. Increasingly, we are serving the mentally ill, older adults, and individuals with disability, as well as those who have employment but can’t find housing they can afford.

The Bridges provides an opportunity for our residents to reconnect to the services and housing they need.

We as a Board, and staff and volunteers are gathering to make people pay attention to the increasingly strategic needs of those individuals who are homeless.

**Sharon R. Livingstone**

**Interim Board Chairperson**