

### *Tales of despair among people needing accessible housing*

The Accessible Housing Network (AHN) hears from people who desperately need accessible (universal design) housing. “Seniors and others of all ages with disabilities make up at least 25% of the Canadian population, yet there is no law requiring that housing be accessible,” says co-chair Sal Amenta. Co-founder Kate Chung clarifies: “AHN is an advocacy network calling for all building codes to be changed to mandate that all new housing be accessible for any age or ability. AHN, itself, does not have accessible housing.” She shares excerpts from some of the e-mails the group has received from people desperate for help:

- After 33 years of living with polio I developed post polio syndrome. Now I need a wheelchair. I have looked into accessible apartments but they only accept people with low income. My husband has always supported me so the only handicapped allowance I ever received was the disability tax credit. Now he is retired and our joint income is just a bit more than the limit for the subsidy. There is almost no accessible rental housing on the market.
- I’m trying to help a woman, an Indigenous land defender, who is being evicted. She needs a one-bedroom private apartment that is accessible — no stairs; short- or long-term rent; max. budget: \$1,500/month; in Toronto.
- I’m a person with disability on ODSP. Can you help me please to find a home? I have 4 little kids. I’m flexible to move.
- My mom is 67 and is in need of housing support. She has been on the TCH list for 5 years now.
- My son is 14 and disabled. We are in a condo and finding it just as inaccessible as our previous home. We are looking for a new house, knowing renovations will be required to accommodate his access needs. As a single mother, it’s a nightmare to navigate this purchase.
- How can we obtain safe housing for our family of 4? We have a 6-year-old who uses a wheelchair. We always have to stay close to a children’s hospital. We are having a heck of a time securing a safe rental home. The home we live in right now is not at all suitable. We can’t get her wheelchair into the house. Our washroom is not accessible. We have stairs. We can’t even access PSWs because they won’t lift her. I have hurt my back now too. We are feeling hopeless. In our current housing, we have been waiting over a year to hear if we can have an accessible washroom. They don’t want to make permanent changes to the unit, because “there isn’t a need” — that’s what they actually said to us. Couldn’t believe it!
- One of the individuals we support at our centre is currently looking for wheelchair-accessible housing, as the apartment they live in currently does not accommodate their wheelchair, so they are forced to move through the apartment by crawling on the floor.
- I have ALS and have two autistic daughters, five and three. My family is being evicted for the second time in 2 years. It is extremely stressful, costly, and exhausting. We are great tenants; we are very clean and we always pay our rent on time. But I’m sure they want to make more money. It’s very difficult to find accessible housing. We have been looking for months but it’s really hard to find something accessible and affordable.

- I am being forced out of my current place as it's being sold and am having a lot of trouble finding something I can afford that is also accessible for my powerchair. I'm very afraid of ending up homeless. I've been in touch with a lawyer and know my rights, but as I'm paying far below market rent, it's inevitable I will have to leave at some point in the near future. As I am mostly housebound and a lot of that is bedbound, I do not have the energy for anything beyond trying to survive. I'm very close to giving up because I do not have the energy to fight much longer.

- I'm an occupational therapist in a hospital, and I'm working with a resident who will now likely be using a wheelchair at all times. Eventually this resident will be returning to live in the community but does not have a permanent residence yet. I'm looking for information related to accessible housing in Toronto, and I was wondering if you have contact information for a real estate agent and/or other people that we can connect with that have experience with seeking out accessible housing.

- I'm seeking advice for a client who requires accessible housing in the Waterloo Region. We are looking for local resources to reach out to and inquire about eligibility and availability.