



Accessible Housing Network

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For Immediate Release

Rally calls for action on accessible housing crisis

People of all ages and abilities gathered at Queen's Park on Monday morning in support of the urgent need for accessible housing. The event was organized by the Accessible Housing Network and the Toronto Raging Grannies. Speakers included NDP MPPs Joel Harden, Critic for Accessibility, and Suze Morrison, Critic for Housing, as well as Green Party leader Mike Schreiner.

Accessible Housing Network co-chair Kate Chung explained that the network had recently learned of a 2002 report by the Ontario Human Rights Commission: **Submission of the Ontario Human Rights Commission Concerning barrier-free access requirements in the Ontario Building Code.**

<http://www3.ohrc.on.ca/en/submission-ontario-human-rights-commission-concerning-barrier-free-access-requirements-ontario>

The Human Rights Commission's report states:

"... it is much easier and less expensive to design a facility to be accessible in the first place, than it is to retrofit an inaccessible facility later on."

"A revised Building Code is perhaps the most direct way to ensure that no new barriers to persons with disabilities are created."

For 18 years, the Government of Ontario has failed to act on the report's recommendations.

The Human Rights Code is a quasi-constitutional law which binds the Crown and prevails over any other Act or regulation, including the Building Code.

The Accessible Housing Network is urging the Ontario government to:

- 1) amend the Ontario Building Code to mandate that all units in all new multi-unit residential buildings be built to universal design standards (fully accessible), and**
- 2) amend the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act to include housing.**

The Network has requested a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark.

“There is currently no Ontario law requiring that any housing be accessible”, states AHN co-chair, Kate Chung. “The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) does not mention housing. The Ontario Building Code only requires that 15% of new apartments be “visitable”, not accessible enough to live there.”

Minette Samaroo, president of the Toronto chapter of Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) notes that “Both the AODA and the OBC are in contravention of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”.

Universal design will accommodate anyone of any age or ability, going beyond mere accessibility. It demonstrates an underlying commitment to including as wide a range of users as possible.

The Accessible Housing Network (AHN) is a joint project of organizations working to support the human rights of persons with disabilities, particularly with regard to the crisis caused by the extreme lack of accessible housing.

For more information:

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