

Imminent eviction spurs search

Ann Cognito's Story

I am an older woman with disabilities and serious longterm health issues including severe chronic pain (multiple causes) and severe environmental/chemical intolerances (probably MCS [multiple chemical sensitivities]; I'm on a very long list waiting for assessment at the Women's College Hospital Environmental Health Clinic). I am also agoraphobic, autistic, and have CPTSD [complex post-traumatic stress disorder].

Before my health deteriorated so much, I used to have a career, and owned my home. I am very well educated, and an environmental activist. While I was still able to function more, I walked from Calgary to Ottawa with my support/service dog to raise awareness about the climate crisis.

I am now looking for safe housing, again.

The place I've been renting is going to be torn down soon and replaced with parking for the adjacent hospital. I don't know when yet, and will be given notice, but it will be soon; I need to act preemptively and find a place. It's been in the works for a while already – it's not a 'maybe later eventually' thing... it's happening.

I'm reapplying to all the subsidized housing lists I'm allowed to, but those lists can take years and I only have months. Also, the vast majority cannot accommodate MCS/ES [environmental sensitivities]–related medical needs, which means a wait would be so much longer. I am looking at listings, rejoining rental groups on fb, and yes, praying.

Finding an accessible, safe home will be challenging due to my disabilities and health issues, as well as my very limited income. I'd like to hear about an available or potentially available apartment, trailer, bunkie, or something. I'm currently near Kingston, but it does NOT have to be in this area or even near... I'll go wherever I can – it just has to be safe, and relatively affordable (I know that's asking for a miracle). Even a very rural place would be good if there's a way to get monthly groceries (I don't drive, except for a mobility scooter).

What follows is a list of my housing needs, in light of my disabilities and health issues. These are not preferences – they are all considerations/accommodations in relation to my health and disability related issues.

- * Must allow me to keep my dog – keeping Mr. Myrtle is NOT negotiable
- * No stairs
- * No forced air heating
- * No shared accommodations
- * Private entrance... no common area to access my unit
- * Not recently renovated or painted
- * No laminate or carpet
- * No adjacent gas stations
- * Not on a high-traffic road

* Not in a city unless it's on the outskirts

* My budget is approximately \$1000/month (which leaves half that much more for all other needs and expenses, but I will continue to manage that, because I have to).

I have mobility needs, hence the need for no stairs, though I have an elevator-type lift which I can move and reinstall to accommodate no more than three or four steps.

I cannot share space and indoor air, as this causes very bad physical and neurological reactions. Other people's personal care and cleaning products, etc., will affect me badly. So will recent renovation products, laminate flooring, adjacent fumes from gas stations, etc.

Preferences went out the window a long time ago, although a quiet area really would be preferred, if at all possible.

I'm already scared. MMS and I can't be homeless – I am not physically able to manage that. I am not even physically able to camp any more.

*Ann Cognito (a pseudonym) can be reached via Facebook
(<https://www.facebook.com/ann.cognito.1>) or Messenger (Ann Cognito), or by e-mail at
swan1@ualberta.ca*