

Shady builder clueless about accessibility

Marion Croft's Story

The decision was made to retire and move to a quieter location. This started an extreme search to find a house that was going to be accessible for me.

I began to visit real estate agencies' websites and the more I searched, the worse it became. There was **NOTHING** that I saw going from eastern Canada, all the way to western Canada that I could afford to buy and tear up to re-build. I was living in a bungalow in Scarborough. Believe it or not, I was willing to move anywhere just to be able to live comfortably without barriers in my way. From east to west, I found nothing. Then I realized that I would have to purchase an empty lot and build a house that was accessible. This would be cheaper.

My real estate agent found me a builder that had a lot for sale on which to build. It was outside of the city and a beautiful place to live. I met with 2 real estate people, the builder, and the builder's real estate person. We explained that I needed an accessible house for my power wheelchair. The builder told us that he had never done anything like this before, but he would do his best (big mistake). The builder had a lot for sale and showed it to me during a second meeting. I felt like he was the right person for this job and began to get very excited. This was a beautiful place to make my forever home.

The building of my house started and things went well until the builder started phoning me at work saying that (for instance) the hallways needed to be widened and it would cost an extra \$12,000. Then, he suggested that the roof needed to be lifted higher... another \$12,000. He did this for **each and every improvement** until I couldn't afford any more of his suggestions.

I was able to acquire a decent price for the house in Scarborough. I left Toronto and headed east where the prices were lower and material was available. But now, the builder of my new house was seeping money away until I had very little left.

I moved in because I had to, on June 30, 2019, and have been fixing or repairing ever since.

After I moved into my new home (which does look extremely impressive from the street), I had to make changes to my washroom and spent \$30,000 to make it accessible enough. The builder had gone ahead and put a "soaker" tub in, without asking, along with other inaccessible things like the toilet and a roll-in shower that didn't accommodate my shower chair. I could barely use the toilet because it was too low. After sitting on it, I could not get up. There were no grab bars put in, and the tub was completely unusable for me. At least I had a shower chair that I could use in a shower. I spent \$30,000 to renovate the washroom.

There is an elevator shaft in my house but no elevator! If I had more money, I could use it to install an elevator so that I could go out to the backyard or best of all to see the lower level of my house. I have lived here for 5 years and never been on the lower level.

Now, I don't have the same money I had going into this new venture of mine so I "put up" with stuff.

I have to close by saying that able-bodied people have no idea what it is like to live life in a wheelchair. Everyone has their problems, but being disabled makes life difficult because of inaccessibility everywhere. My proof that building accessible housing is more affordable than renovating older homes is realized when a renovation like my new bathroom was so expensive. Why not cater to the masses and make houses that everyone can use and afford?