

*Chemical sensitivity nearly led to homelessness*

### **Shelley Petit's story**

Trying to find housing when you have chemical sensitivity is impossible.

In 2019, my toxic tilt occurred. In April I walked into school (I was a teacher) for the very last time. I collapsed almost immediately from a chemical smell and that day everything changed. I went from making \$85K a year to just under \$9K a year.

I also had to locate a new home that was not full of toxins. This means no one in the area who smokes or had bonfires in the summer nor who used wood stoves in the winter; a place where neighbors did not use smelly laundry products, dryer sheets, plug-ins, etc., anything with fragrance as that dissipates through windows and walls. I couldn't even find a landlord or property management team member to show me a place not coated in perfume or cologne, let alone find a place.

I was about to be homeless. I didn't know what to do. Fortunately the man I had been dating for about 9 months at the time had his own house that was fragrance/chemical free and offered for me to move in. When we had first started getting serious we had discussed that we would never move in together — that we would keep separate places. We both worried that cohabitation could ruin our relationship, but fortunately it did not.

I was very fortunate, because I had a great man who respected my accessibility needs (even his own children are not allowed in our house as they use smelly laundry, cosmetic, and hair products) and who was ready to sacrifice whatever was needed to keep me safe and alive. At the same time that all this occurred, there were multiple stories that made the national news featuring people with multiple chemical sensitivity, also known as toxic-induced loss of tolerance (MCS/TILT), who chose MAID because they couldn't find a chemical-free place to live. That could have been me. I had the paperwork ready.

No one should have to live this way in Canada.

