

Submission re Ontario Budget 2024 -

Pre-budget Hearing

From:

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page 2

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A budget is not merely a listing of planned expenditures. It is also a means of assessing ways to save money, while meeting responsibilities.

1. For-profit services always cost more because a profit must be skimmed off the allotted funds. For this reason, **healthcare** must remain **non-profit**. Likewise, **long-term care** must remain non-profit.

To do otherwise is to waste taxpayers funds.

2. Large institutions are more costly than **homecare**. Thus, it is urgent to prioritize homecare and related services. It is also what more than 90% of elders demand.

3. Home care can be more efficiently provided if homes are **fully accessible**.

4. **Accessible (universal design) housing** has many benefits:

- Reduced costs for long-term care facilities. Many people will be able to remain in their accessible homes, freeing up spaces in nursing homes.
- Protection of seniors and persons with disabilities from catastrophes like those in long-term care during the pandemic.
- Reduced burn-out of staff and family caregivers.
- Reduced need for PSW help;
- Reduced need for in-home support help;
- Improved mental and physical health;
- Fewer falls;
- Fewer ambulance calls;
- Fewer hospitalizations;
- Increased employment of people with disabilities.

5. For the above reasons, all of which save the government millions of dollars, it is **cost-effective to mandate that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible to all)**. Universal design will accommodate almost anyone of any age or ability and demonstrates an underlying commitment to including everyone with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

27% of Ontarians have a disability, thousands of them children. Many more seniors also have disabilities, which they tend to not report on the census.

Currently, the **Ontario Building Code** only requires that 15% of new apartments be “visitable”, but not accessible enough for a person with a disability to live there.

Page 5

Thousands are forced out of their dwellings at the most vulnerable time in their lives, simply because their homes are not built to accommodate their emergent needs. This results in “hallway medicine” in hospitals, and long waiting lists for nursing homes.

Millions of healthcare dollars could be saved by enabling people to remain in their own accessible homes.

I urge that you amend the **Ontario Building Code** to make universal design the mandatory standard for 100% of units in all multi-unit housing developments, both rental and ownership, as has now been done in Australia.

6. Cost is not an issue. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has reported that **to build a new apartment costs the same whether the apartment is accessible or not.** To build a house costs only marginally more if accessibility is included from the design stage.

page 6

7. In addition to the above, the Government of Ontario is obliged to meet the requirements of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, the **Ontario Human Rights Code**, and the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, all of which **prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability or age**.

Thus, I urge you to **do the right thing** - which is required by the laws of Canada and Ontario. **Honour the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, the **Ontario Human Rights Code**, and the **Canadian Human Rights Act**. **Mandate that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible)**.

This will save Ontario millions of tax dollars.