



City can save money, end discrimination against people with disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attn: Assignment Editor

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Accessible Housing Network tells City Budget Committee accessible housing will keep people out of long term care

Toronto - In a submission to the City of Toronto's Budget Committee, the Accessible Housing Network has called for an end to discrimination against seniors and people with disabilities. By requiring that all new housing be accessible, the City can save money, for accessible housing keeps people out of long term care.

Although 22% of the population has a disability (Statistics Canada 2017), there is no law requiring that housing be accessible.

The Ontario Building Code only requires that 15% of new apartments be "visitable", not accessible enough to live there.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) does not even mention housing.

Both the AODA and the Building Code 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.

While the AODA and the Ontario Building Code are provincial laws, the City does not need to wait for the Province to change the Building Code. The City can lead the move to accessibility in housing by mandating that all new multi-unit housing incorporate universal design (full accessibility) - especially in any housing built with tax dollars or on land made available by the City.

Universal design will accommodate anyone of any age or ability.

The City can require universal design in all new multi-unit housing which has any City input, whether that be provision of land, concessions in taxes or development fees, changes in bylaws, zoning changes, or other enticements to developers.

As renovations are made to Toronto Community Housing units, they can be made accessible, thus enabling people to remain in their current unit if they need accessibility.

There is no extra cost. According to a report by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), new accessible and non-accessible apartments cost exactly the same to build.

The Accessible Housing Network (AHN) is a joint project of organizations working to support the human rights of persons with disabilities, and to end the extreme lack of accessible housing. AHN reminded City Councillors that people with disabilities are taxpayers too, yet they cannot live in the housing their taxes subsidize.

In 2016, Toronto City Council endorsed the call to change the Ontario Building Code to make universal design mandatory in all new multi-unit residential buildings. Mayor John Tory told an AHN representative at that time, "It's a no-brainer".

AHN co-chair Kate Chung agrees, "We need ACCESSIBLE affordable housing now."

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