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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**People with disabilities demand accessible housing.
Feds must act on this housing crisis.**

**22% of Canadians have disabilities,
suffer discrimination in housing.
Accessible Housing Network calls for action**

Toronto - The Accessible Housing Network calls on all election candidates to listen and to act to end the accessible housing crisis.

Although the government of Canada has declared that housing is a human right, Canadian legislation continues to contravene the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, which all prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and which take precedence over all other laws.

22% of Canadians have a disability (Stats Can 2017), and millions of seniors also have one or more disabilities. The Network points out to election candidates that we are all voters.

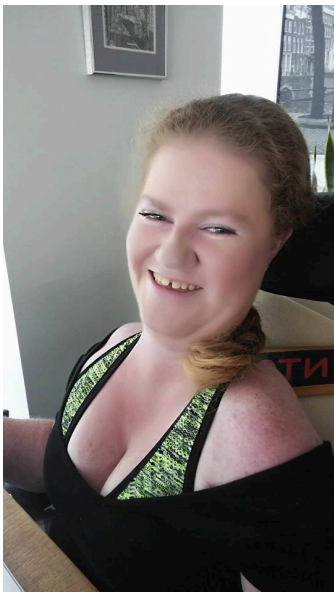
Anyone can have been born with a disability, and anyone of any age can be struck by illness or accident which creates a temporary or lasting injury.

Maddy Dever, who lives in a small Ontario town, says of their precarious housing situation: “We have found a way of making things accessible for me, but I don't have access to the rest of the house. Even if there was anything more accessible, there is nothing even remotely affordable. I'm on ODSP, and there is nothing I can rent in our community or our county. There are others who have ended up homeless or staying with family. We are the forgotten.”

Maddy is only one example of why government must require all new and refurbished housing to be 100% accessible.

“The need for **accessible** housing is a crisis. The simple solution is for the National and provincial Building Codes to require that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible to all ages and abilities),” states Accessible Housing Network co-chair Kate Chung. “There will be **huge healthcare savings** if people are not needlessly stuck in acute care hospitals or forced into long-term care.”

"The cost of building a new apartment is the same whether accessible or not - if it is planned from the design stage. It is renovations to conventional housing which are expensive. This is why making 100% of new housing accessible is practical and affordable”, says Minnette Samaroo, President of the Toronto chapter of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC).



Accessible housing enables people to increase their work hours, reducing need for financial support. Lack of accessible housing results in unemployment.

Judy Kerr could not find an accessible apartment in Toronto, so was forced to move to a small town where she knew nobody, simply to get an available accessible apartment. As a result she had to give up her job. This is why making 100% of new housing accessible is essential.

Accessible housing prevents burn-out among care-givers, reduces the need for personal care attendants, and reduces the need for household help. Brenda-Lee Morin, in North Bay, struggles to provide complete care for her 19-year-old daughter who has severe cerebral palsy, is vision and hearing impaired, is non verbal, and requires a feeding tube. Her house is not accessible, so her daughter is confined to the living room. She cannot get services from providers for baths because her weight is now over the limit. If they had an accessible bathroom, it would include provision for installation of a lift. Brenda-Lee is one more example of why government must require all new and refurbished housing to be 100% accessible.

Accessible housing enhances dignity, freedom, social inclusion, health and well-being. Ottawa accessibility activist, Roger Gervais comments, “Universal Design of new housing is the right thing to do for human rights, for sustainability, for health and safety, for aging in place. The status quo in the building code (barriers in housing) is no longer acceptable. Our next prime minister and MPs need to clearly understand this and act promptly.”

The Accessible Housing Network calls on all federal government candidates to take action to make housing 100% accessible:

- “1. The **National Building Code** must be amended to make universal design mandatory in every unit in all new multi-unit residential buildings.
2. Provinces follow the lead of the National Building Code. To harmonize all provincial Building Codes, the National Building Code must be updated so that all Canadians have access to the housing they need. There is currently no provincial law requiring that housing be accessible.
3. The promised **Federal Housing Advocate** must be appointed promptly. The **Accessible Canada Act** requires this, and the **Accessibility Commissioner** must enforce it. The appointment of the **Accessibility Commissioner** must be no longer delayed.
4. **The National Housing Strategy (2017)** should guide the leveraging of federal spending on housing to promote accessibility across Canada **by**

requiring recipients of federal public money to not perpetuate existing barriers or create new ones.

No tax dollars should ever create accessibility barriers!”

accessiblehousingnetwork.org

The **Accessible Housing Network (AHN)** is a non-partisan network working to support the human rights of persons with disabilities to end the extreme lack of accessible housing.

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