

Executive Summary

This brief documents the systemic employment and housing barriers I have experienced as a person with a disability living in Mississauga, Ontario. Despite holding a university degree, a college certificate, over fifteen years of professional experience in content and communications, and forty years of lived experience with cerebral palsy, I have faced chronic underemployment, repeated dismissals, inaccessible hiring systems, and exclusion from employment opportunities in both the private and public sectors. At the same time, I have encountered significant failures in public housing processes that required me to formally withdraw my accessibility needs in order to secure shelter, placing my physical safety at risk.

In Peel Region, I was advised that accessible housing wait times could extend ten to fifteen years. I ultimately secured housing mostly through personal initiative and community connections. The standard system is ripe with challenges and inefficiencies. To accept a non-accessible unit, I was required to withdraw my accessibility needs in writing. Within two weeks of moving in, I was injured due to the lack of basic safety features. Requests for simple accessibility modifications were denied, and I was directed back to the centralized waiting list, despite the immediate risk to my health. Only after the injury and after concerns about liability were raised was I offered the opportunity to view an accessible unit.

Across employment systems, similar patterns emerge. “Equal opportunity” hiring practices frequently track race and gender but exclude disability entirely, making discrimination against disabled candidates invisible and unmeasurable. I have applied repeatedly to government roles without ever receiving an interview, while at the same time being required to submit extensive medical and financial documentation to access supports. Employment agencies serving people with disabilities often restrict access to ODSP recipients, excluding qualified disabled professionals who are actively seeking work rather than income subsidies.

Together, these experiences reveal interconnected systemic failures: forced trade-offs between safety and housing, reactive rather than preventative support, exclusion of disability from meaningful DEI enforcement, lack of internal public housing transfer mechanisms, and the absence of dignified public-sector employment pathways for people with disabilities. These failures have resulted in preventable injury, long-term instability, and unnecessary reliance on fragmented support systems.

This brief calls for concrete reforms, including the prohibition of forced accessibility withdrawals in public housing, the creation of mandatory internal transfer mechanisms for accessible units, immediate safety-based accommodations, inclusion of compulsory disability in DEI hiring data, removal of ODSP as a gatekeeping requirement for employment supports, and the creation of paid disability-lived-experience roles within government. These changes would reduce harm, improve system efficiency, and restore dignity and opportunity for disabled residents across Peel Region and Ontario.

I am submitting this brief to document the discrimination, employment barriers, and systemic failures I experienced as a person with a disability in Mississauga, Ontario. The purpose is to demonstrate how my experience reflects broader provincial issues in employment and housing, and to request action to address these systemic barriers. This document is intended for public servants, policymakers, and human rights officials who have the mandate to improve accessibility, oversight, and equity.

Background and Context

I am an individual with cerebral palsy living in Mississauga, and I have spent my adult life navigating Ontario's employment and housing systems as a person with a mobility disability. My condition requires accessible living arrangements and flexible or remote work options, and I have consistently contributed professionally when appropriate accommodations are provided. Despite my experience and strong performance in multiple roles, I have repeatedly encountered systemic barriers in the workplace, including failures to accommodate, inequitable treatment, unclear or absent policies, and situations that resulted in emotional, financial, and professional harm. I have also consistently faced difficulties finding new employment and being treated properly throughout the recruiting process.

Alongside these employment barriers, I have also faced significant challenges securing stable and suitable housing as a person with a disability. Issues related to accessibility, discriminatory practices, affordability, and complex bureaucratic requirements have placed me in precarious and unsafe living situations. These housing barriers have directly affected my health, independence, and overall stability, compounding the impacts of the systemic failures I experienced in the workplace.

Long-Term Employment Barriers and Systemic Underemployment

Throughout my career, I have experienced chronic underemployment and repeated dismissals that stem from systemic failures to accommodate disability rather than any lack of ability, qualifications, or work ethic. These patterns have been significant enough that I have filed human-rights-related complaints in the past, demonstrating that the barriers I face are not isolated incidents but long-standing structural issues within Ontario's employment landscape.

Despite the language of "equal opportunity employment," there appear to be no meaningful standards or enforcement mechanisms to ensure that disabled applicants are actually treated equitably. Many employers use equity surveys that measure representation by race, gender,

and ethnicity, but exclude disability entirely. If disability is not asked about, tracked, or monitored, there is no way to evaluate whether disabled applicants are being screened out, denied interviews, or excluded from the hiring process. This gap renders current DEI frameworks incomplete and ineffective for people with disabilities.

I have applied to positions at multiple levels of government over many years and have never been granted an interview, despite holding a university degree, a college certificate, and more than fifteen years of experience as a content and communications professional. I also bring 40 years of lived experience with cerebral palsy and extensive personal advocacy—qualifications that are uniquely relevant to roles focused on accessibility, equity, and public service. I am at a point in my career where I want to contribute meaningfully to the disability community through a role in the public sector. Yet, the hiring barriers I encounter make this pathway disproportionately difficult for me compared to my nondisabled peers.

Employment agencies intended to support disabled job seekers often have eligibility restrictions that exclude individuals who are not receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), even if they have a recognized disability and clear accommodation needs. As a result, I am left without access to employment supports that could help bridge the gap between my abilities and the opportunities available. Rather than relying on social assistance or subsidies, I am seeking dignified employment with an employer capable of honouring my physical and mental health requirements and allowing me to use my lived experience, skills, and professional background to serve the disability community.

These systemic gaps—across hiring practices, DEI implementation, accommodation processes, and employment supports—have created long-term instability and prevented me from securing meaningful, equitable work despite consistent qualifications, experience, and readiness to contribute.

Long-Term Housing Barriers and Systemic Failures

Securing safe and accessible housing in Peel Region has been an ongoing challenge that has required an extraordinary level of personal initiative due to systemic gaps in the public housing system. Although I applied for housing nearly two years ago, I was repeatedly told by multiple constituents that the wait time for accessible or subsidized units could be ten to fifteen years. I ultimately obtained housing not through the formal system, but through my own proactive efforts—building community connections, advocating for myself, and physically visiting the building where I now live. Had I not taken this initiative, it is unlikely that I would have been housed at all.

During this process, I was shown three available units at 200 Missinnihe Way in Port Credit. Despite having clear accessibility needs, I was told that no accessible one-bedroom units were

available and was instead offered either a two-bedroom accessible unit (which required a second applicant) or a non-accessible studio apartment. To accept the studio, I was required to submit a written statement formally withdrawing my accessibility needs. I agreed only because delaying my move for years was not a viable option, but the requirement itself placed me in a position where I had to choose between housing and accessibility—an impossible decision that no person with a disability should be forced to make.

From the outset, interactions with Peel Region, Peel Housing, and Peel Living felt distant and procedural, with little clarity on whether an accessible unit would ever become available. I was repeatedly told there was no internal transfer mechanism that would allow me to move into an accessible unit later, despite my disability being a permanent, well-documented and ongoing need. As a result, I moved into a non-accessible studio on November 1, 2025.

Within two weeks of moving in, I fell in the bathtub, hit my head, and suffered whiplash—an injury directly tied to the lack of accessibility in my unit. When I submitted work orders requesting grab bars and an accessible front door, both were denied. A TSA worker advised me to return to the centralized waiting list, effectively asking me to start the entire multi-year process over again. I declined to do so, as this would have placed me back into prolonged housing insecurity.

Shortly after raising concerns about my injury and the physical risks associated with my unit, I was suddenly offered an accessible apartment at 1022 Greaves Avenue. While I am grateful for the opportunity to view it, the timing raises serious concerns: accessibility options only became available after my physical safety was compromised and after housing staff recognized the potential liability associated with my injury. This pattern suggests that the system's responsiveness is driven not by proactive support or human rights obligations, but by risk management.

In the meantime, I installed my own grab bar—at my own expense—to protect myself from further injury. The broader issue, however, is that public housing policies and procedures unintentionally force disabled individuals to compromise their safety, health, and dignity. I was required to give up my documented accessibility needs just to secure a roof over my head. When I sought accommodations afterward, I encountered barriers, delays, and denials. This contradicts the purpose of public housing, which should prioritize safety and accessibility for its most vulnerable residents.

These experiences reveal a system that treats residents as numbers within a rigid structure rather than as individuals with legitimate needs. They also demonstrate that current policies do not adequately account for the real-world consequences of inaccessible housing—or include mechanisms for timely, responsive adjustments when a resident's health or safety is at risk. The burden of navigating this system has been physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing, consuming significant time and energy that could otherwise be spent seeking employment or contributing to my community.

My housing experience also highlights a deeper contradiction: while government agencies require extensive documentation to determine my eligibility for programs, subsidies, or supports—scrutinizing my medical history, financial status, and personal circumstances—not a single government employer has granted me an interview for a role that would allow me to use my skills, education, and lived experience to serve the disability community. This fragmentation across government systems results in disabled individuals being pushed through a maze of services and assessments while simultaneously being denied meaningful employment opportunities that would reduce dependence on those very systems.

Despite these challenges, my goal is not simply to describe these systemic failures, but to help improve them. I want to apply my lived experience, professional background, and personal advocacy to support reforms in housing, accessibility, employment, and disability rights within Peel Region and across Ontario. This is why I am seeking meetings with key stakeholders who share responsibility for these interconnected systems and who have the authority to make meaningful change.

Systemic Themes Across Employment and Housing

The barriers I have faced in both employment and housing show clear, recurring systemic patterns that extend beyond any individual workplace or single housing provider. These experiences demonstrate that people with disabilities in Peel Region and across Ontario must navigate systems that are fragmented, inconsistent, and frequently unable to meet even basic accessibility or human rights obligations. In both domains, the responsibility for identifying problems, proposing solutions, advocating for accommodations, and managing risks falls almost entirely on the disabled individual rather than on the systems designed to support them.

A central theme across my experiences is **the absence of proactive accommodation and accountability**. In employment, accommodation needs are often ignored or treated as burdensome, and hiring systems—including government hiring practices—do not meaningfully track disability or evaluate whether disabled applicants are being excluded. In housing, accessibility is treated as optional, unavailable, or conditional on compromising basic needs. Even after suffering an injury, the default response was to deny accommodations and direct me back into a years-long waitlist, highlighting significant gaps in responsibility and oversight.

Another systemic theme is **rigid policy structures that prioritize procedure over safety, dignity, or human rights**. Employment systems rely on incomplete DEI frameworks that exclude disability from monitoring entirely, leaving disabled applicants invisible in hiring processes. Housing systems rely on long waitlists, restrictive eligibility requirements, and policies that prevent internal transfers—even when a resident's health and safety are at risk. These inflexible structures create environments where disabled individuals must choose

between accepting inadequate conditions or returning to the back of complex bureaucratic processes.

A further theme is **the reactive nature of support systems**, which only respond when problems escalate into health risks, injuries, or potential liability. In housing, meaningful action occurred only after I reported falling and injuring myself, despite months of proactive inquiries and clear communication about my accessibility needs. This mirrors employment experiences in which systems respond to crises, complaints, or legal action rather than preventing harm in the first place. The predictable result is that disabled individuals face preventable harm, instability, and prolonged uncertainty.

These patterns are intensified by **a lack of coordinated support across government systems**, which simultaneously direct disabled individuals through extensive assessments, documentation, and eligibility checks for various programs while offering no clear pathways to stable employment or accessible housing. The same systems that scrutinize disability for program access do not meaningfully consider disability when hiring, accommodating employees, or ensuring that housing meets basic safety standards.

Together, these systemic themes illustrate a broader structural problem: disabled residents are expected to navigate complex, disconnected systems that do not communicate, do not adequately monitor accessibility outcomes, and do not provide timely or responsive support. The result is long-term instability, preventable harm, and lost opportunities for individuals who are fully capable of contributing to their communities when given equitable access to employment and housing.

Impact on Health, Safety, and Quality of Life

The combined failures across employment and housing have had a direct and harmful impact on my physical safety, mental health, financial stability, and overall quality of life. As a person with cerebral palsy, stability is not simply a preference—it is a matter of basic health and safety. Yet the systems I have relied on for housing and employment have repeatedly placed me in situations where my well-being was compromised, despite my consistent efforts to advocate for myself and access appropriate support.

Moving into a non-accessible studio unit after being required to withdraw my accessibility formally created immediate and predictable risks. Within two weeks, I fell in the bathtub, struck my head, and suffered whiplash—an injury that arose directly because the space did not meet my disability-related requirements. The denial of simple accommodations such as grab bars and an accessible door further amplified these risks. Instead of receiving timely support, I was directed back to a multi-year waiting list, even though my safety had already been jeopardized.

This response illustrates a system that reacts only when liability becomes apparent rather than when a resident's health and dignity are at stake.

These experiences parallel the instability created by long-term employment barriers. Chronic underemployment, repeated dismissals, and inaccessible hiring processes have left me without a reliable income or the opportunity to grow in a role that aligns with my skills and lived experience. The ongoing effort required to self-advocate—filing human rights complaints, navigating inaccessible housing processes, and managing injuries and denials—takes considerable time, energy, and emotional bandwidth. This diverts attention from finding meaningful employment and contributes to an entirely preventable cycle of instability.

There is also a deeper contradiction at play. Government agencies rigorously scrutinize my medical history, financial records, and personal circumstances when determining eligibility for programs or supports. Yet no government body has given me the opportunity to interview for a job where I can use my education, professional background, and lived experience to serve the disability community. This mismatch undermines both my well-being and the broader goal of reducing reliance on social supports. Dignified, stable employment would strengthen my independence and reduce the likelihood that I would ever need subsidized housing or assistance in the first place.

The cumulative impact of these experiences has been profound. My physical safety has been compromised, my mental and emotional health strained, and my economic stability undermined—not because of my disability, but because the systems meant to support disabled residents are fragmented, reactive, and inconsistently applied. These harms are avoidable, and addressing them is essential not only for my well-being but for strengthening the fairness and effectiveness of services across Peel Region and Ontario.

Barriers in Accessing Support Systems and Services

Attempts to access support systems intended to assist people with disabilities—whether in employment, housing, or general social services—have repeatedly revealed significant structural gaps. These systems are often fragmented, difficult to navigate, and inconsistent in their mandates or capacity. As a result, individuals who require coordinated and timely assistance are instead met with delays, conflicting information, and limited follow-through. This has prevented me from securing stable housing, maintaining employment, and addressing urgent needs in a reasonable timeframe.

Employment support programs frequently lack meaningful employer engagement or mechanisms to ensure that accommodations are understood and implemented. Many services

focus on resume preparation or general job search assistance, but do not address the systemic barriers that prevent disabled candidates from being hired or retained. These gaps leave disabled job seekers without the tools or advocacy required to secure sustainable employment.

Housing-related supports present similar challenges. Accessible units remain scarce, waitlists are years long, and frontline staff often lack the resources or authority to intervene when discrimination or unsafe conditions occur. Support programs tend to operate in isolation from one another, making it difficult to navigate eligibility requirements or obtain timely assistance. In urgent situations, the lack of coordination places disabled individuals at serious risk of homelessness, unsafe placements, or prolonged instability.

The cumulative effect of these barriers is a system that places the greatest burden on the people it is meant to support. Rather than functioning as a safety net, current services often require disabled individuals to independently advocate through complex, disconnected processes that were not designed with their needs in mind.

Summary of Key Systemic Issues

The experiences outlined in this brief reveal entrenched systemic failures that operate across employment, housing, and disability support systems in Peel Region and Ontario. These are not isolated breakdowns but recurring structural patterns that consistently undermine the safety, dignity, and economic stability of people with disabilities:

- **Disabled individuals are forced to choose between basic survival and accessibility.** Public housing policies required me to withdraw my accessibility needs in order to secure housing, effectively causing a choice between having a roof over my head and maintaining physical safety. This reflects a system that treats accessibility as optional rather than essential.
- **Support systems are reactive, not preventative.** Meaningful action on accessibility only occurred after I was physically injured in my unit. Proactive efforts to secure safe housing and accommodations were met with waiting lists, denials, and procedural barriers.
- **Internal transfer and accommodation mechanisms in public housing are effectively nonexistent.** Once housed, I was told there were no viable pathways to move into an accessible unit despite permanent documented disability and demonstrated risk to physical safety. Now I'm being told I can move somewhere else.
- **Employment systems fail to enforce “equal opportunity” in any meaningful way for disability.** Hiring processes widely track race and gender but exclude disability from monitoring entirely, making it impossible to assess discrimination against disabled

applicants or to ensure fair treatment.

- **Government hiring systems mirror the same exclusionary patterns.** Despite extensive education, professional experience, and lived expertise in disability advocacy, I have never received an interview for a government role—highlighting a serious disconnect between public-sector equity commitments and real hiring outcomes.
- **Employment support services exclude many disabled professionals by design.** Many programs serving people with disabilities restrict access to ODSP recipients, leaving qualified disabled workers without employment assistance, advocacy, or placement support.
- **There is extreme scrutiny without opportunity.** Government systems rigorously examine disabled individuals' medical history, finances, and personal circumstances for eligibility, yet provide no corresponding access to dignified employment that would reduce reliance on those same systems.
- **The burden of navigating the system is placed entirely on the disabled individual.** Across housing, employment, and supports, the responsibility to identify barriers, document harm, escalate issues, and protect personal safety rests almost exclusively on the person experiencing disability.
- **These failures directly contribute to preventable injury, financial instability, and prolonged dependence.** Unsafe housing, chronic underemployment, and lack of coordinated support create a cycle of harm that is not caused by disability itself, but by the systems meant to accommodate it.

Together, these systemic issues demonstrate that current structures prioritize procedural compliance over human rights, risk management over prevention, and fragmented administration over coordinated solutions. Without structural reform, these systems will continue to place disabled residents at disproportionate risk of harm, poverty, and exclusion.

Policy Recommendations and Required Actions

To prevent the types of harm described in this brief and to uphold the rights of people with disabilities, coordinated reforms are required across housing, employment, and support systems in Peel Region and Ontario. The following actions are practical, measurable, and within the scope of existing government authority:

1. Prohibit Forced Withdrawal of Accessibility Needs in Public Housing

- Public housing applicants must never be required to withdraw documented accessibility needs to secure housing.
 - Accessibility must be treated as a **non-negotiable human right**, not a variable determined by supply constraints.
 - Policies that force disabled applicants to choose between immediate shelter and safety must be formally reviewed and eliminated.
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2. Create Mandatory Internal Transfer Mechanisms for Accessibility

- All public housing providers must establish **formal internal transfer pathways** for tenants who require accessible units due to permanent disability or health risk.
 - Transfers must be prioritized based on **safety, medical risk, and functional need**, not solely on waitlist position.
 - Emergency transfers must be available where injury or imminent risk is documented.
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3. Require Immediate, Low-Cost Accessibility Modifications as a Safety Standard

- Basic accessibility measures (grab bars, door automation, ramps, bathroom safety features) must be treated as **essential safety infrastructure**, not discretionary upgrades.
- Denials of simple modifications must require written justification and supervisory review.
- Tenants must not be directed back to multi-year waiting lists for immediate, low-cost safety accommodations.

4. Mandate Disability Inclusion in All DEI Hiring Data and Reporting

- Disability must be a required category in all private and public-sector and publicly funded employer DEI data collection.
- Employers must be required to track:
 - applications from disabled candidates
 - interview rates
 - hiring outcomes
 - accommodation implementation
- Without this data, “equal opportunity” claims cannot be substantiated, and discrimination remains invisible.

5. Establish Accountability in Government Hiring for Disabled Candidates

- Both private and public employers must be required to demonstrate:
 - How disability is being actively included in recruitment
 - How accommodation is provided during hiring
 - How disabled candidates are progressing through selection processes
 - External audits of accessibility in private and public-sector hiring should be conducted and published.
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6. Remove ODSP as a Gatekeeping Requirement for Employment Supports

- Employment agencies serving people with disabilities must not be restricted solely to ODSP recipients.
 - Eligibility must be based on documented disability and accommodation need—not income support status.
 - This change would immediately expand access to employment assistance for disabled professionals seeking work rather than subsidies.
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7. Fund Disability-Lived-Experience Roles Within Government

- Municipal and provincial governments should create **paid advisory, policy, and program-design roles** for people with lived disability experience.
 - These roles should focus on:
 - accessibility policy
 - housing safety
 - disability employment systems
 - community accountability
 - This would allow disabled residents to contribute directly to structural reform while maintaining dignified employment.
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8. Integrate Housing, Employment, and Disability Systems

- Peel Region and the Province must implement cross-ministry coordination between:
 - housing services
 - employment services
 - disability policy offices
 - Disabled residents should not be pushed between disconnected systems that do not share information, urgency, or responsibility.
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9. Shift from Risk-Management Responses to Preventive Duty of Care

- Government agencies must act on **documented risk before injury occurs**, not only after exposure to liability.
 - Preventative intervention must be treated as a core duty—not a discretionary response.
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These actions would drastically reduce preventable injury, economic instability, and prolonged reliance on social systems. More importantly, they would restore dignity, safety, and real opportunity for people with disabilities who are currently being forced to survive inside fragmented and reactive bureaucratic structures.

Professional Pathways and Public-Sector Engagement

Beyond documenting systemic failures, I am also seeking meaningful pathways into public-sector or non-profit work where I can apply my professional background and lived experience to support disability-related policy, accessibility, housing, and employment reform. I hold a university degree and a college certificate, and I have over 15 years of experience in content, communications, and advocacy. I also bring forty years of lived experience navigating systems as a person with cerebral palsy.

My goal is not to rely on long-term social assistance or fragmented subsidy programs, but to secure **dignified employment within a system that can honour my physical and mental health requirements while enabling me to serve the disability community directly**. Stable, accessible employment would strengthen my independence, reduce reliance on housing and income supports, and allow me to contribute meaningfully to improving the very systems that have failed so many disabled residents.

I raise this not as a personal request for exception, but as a broader policy question:

Why are disabled individuals scrutinized extensively for support eligibility, yet not meaningfully included in the public-sector workforce that designs and administers those same systems?

Conclusion

The experiences detailed in this brief demonstrate that the barriers faced by people with disabilities in Peel Region and across Ontario are not the result of isolated failures, misunderstandings, or individual shortcomings. They are the outcome of systemic design flaws in housing, employment, and support services that prioritize procedures over people, risk management over prevention, and fragmentation over coordination. These systems repeatedly place disabled individuals in positions where they must choose between safety and shelter, dignity and income, or stability and prolonged dependency.

My employment and housing experiences reveal a deeper contradiction within current government approaches: disabled individuals are subject to extensive scrutiny when accessing programs and services, yet are excluded from equitable access to the very employment opportunities that would reduce reliance on those same systems. Despite education, professional experience, and decades of lived disability expertise, meaningful pathways into public-sector employment and decision-making remain largely inaccessible. This undermines both individual independence and the effectiveness of public policy.

The harm described in this brief—including physical injury, economic instability, and prolonged insecurity—was not inevitable. It was preventable. These outcomes occurred not because accommodations are impossible, but because systems lack the accountability, coordination, and urgency required to implement them when they are needed most. The recommendations outlined in this document offer achievable reforms that would significantly reduce future harm while strengthening accessibility, public trust, and long-term cost efficiency across housing and employment systems.

My goal in submitting this brief is not only to seek accountability for systemic failures, but to contribute constructively to their correction. I am requesting meaningful engagement with decision-makers across housing, employment, accessibility, and disability policy to examine these issues in depth and to work toward solutions that honour both human rights and human dignity. With coordinated action and genuine commitment, Peel Region and Ontario have the

opportunity to move beyond procedural compliance and toward systems that truly serve the people who depend on them.

-- *Jack Choros*
Mississauga, Ontario