



Accessible Housing Network



Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice

UNITARIANS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE SAY ACCESSIBLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice *urge government to comply with UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

Members of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ) voted at their 2021 annual meeting to *urge* the governments of Canada and all provinces to ensure that all new housing be accessible using universal design standards, and to immediately amend all laws and regulations to make universal design mandatory for all multi-unit housing units funded directly or indirectly by the Government of Canada and/or a province. They also are calling for any public funds or concessions conferred on municipalities, provinces, developers, or any other organization for housing to be exclusively for universally designed housing units.

CUSJ president Lynn Armstrong said, "People living with disabilities are one of the vulnerable groups that often face discrimination, their needs ignored. In 2021 there is no excuse for having building codes that fail to incorporate the principles of universal design. It is so much easier to design homes right from the beginning than it is to retrofit them

later. We are asking the government to take action now and make new homes accessible."

Although 22% of Canadians have a disability (StatsCan 2017), and millions of seniors want to age at home, there is no law requiring that housing be accessible.

"It is urgent that the **National Building Code** be changed to require that all new housing be universal design. *Universal design* will accommodate anyone of any age or ability, going beyond mere accessibility," said Accessible Housing Network co-chair, Kate Chung. "Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) wields broad influence on housing across the country. The National Housing Strategy guides federal spending on housing. The federal government has responsibility for military housing and Indigenous housing, and participates in funding for housing in all provinces and territories."

In Ontario, the Building Code requires that only 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 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.

For more information contact:

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The Accessible Housing Network is a collaboration of organizations, advocating in support of people of all ages to live as they wish, in housing which is fully accessible. AccessibleHousingNetwork.org

Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice, established in 1996, is a national, liberal religious organization founded to promote Unitarian values through social action. <https://cusj.org>