

June 15, 2020

Accessible Housing Network

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, Toronto Chapter

Letter of Support for 100% Accessible Housing to the City of Toronto's Planning and Housing Committee

Who We Are:

Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) Toronto Chapter

<http://www.blindcanadians.ca> is a national grassroots, peer support organization that is comprised of Canadians who are blind, deafblind or partially sighted and our supporters from the public at large. We work to ensure we have a voice on all matters affecting our participation in Canada's mainstream society. AEBC's mission is to increase awareness of rights and responsibilities, so blind, deafblind and partially sighted individuals can have equal access to the benefits and opportunities of society.

Overview:

AEBC is a member of The Accessible Housing Network (AHN). AHN is seeking support from city and provincial officials to change the "Building Code" to include 100 % accessible housing. According to 2017 Stats Canada, **22%** of Canadians have a disability – and this include 2.6 million Ontarians living with a disability. Housing is a "Human Right," and the need for accessible housing is a crisis. **It is urgent that we change the Ontario Building Code to make universal design mandatory in all new multi-unit residential buildings.** Universal design will accommodate anyone of any age or ability. In fact, **the cost is only about 1% more when planned from the design stage. Accessible housing keeps people out of long term care, and this could save millions of healthcare dollars. Currently, there is no Ontario law requiring that housing be accessible -** The AODA does not mention housing – and The Ontario Building Code only requires that 15% of new apartments be "visitabile", not accessible enough to live there. We believe that **no tax dollars should ever be used to create accessibility barriers.**

We were very disappointed that after partnering with members of The GTA Disability Coalition on a large consultation meeting of cross-disability groups for input into the 2020-2030 housing strategy last year, no mention of accessibility was in the initial housing strategy. This document must be amended to include accessibility – as the most prevalent barrier identified from the consultation is inaccessible housing. There are almost 40% people age 65 living with a disability according to City’s own stats, and this is evident in long term care homes where many seniors and younger people live, and it is all because of inaccessible housing.

The City should apply City’s own Accessible policy and guidelines for all City new and major renovation for residential buildings. Less than 100% housing would mean people with disabilities would not have the same choice of housing units as able-bodied people, or that people with disabilities cannot visit or use common areas and facilities in these buildings.

accessibility Retrofits and renovations would cost much higher than the 1% additional cost at the design and building stages. The City must be planning for the future, not for the past, which is what it would be if we continue to just allot 20% accessible units for new housing units. Universal Design means that everyone will have equal opportunity to choose where they want to live. It means that no one has to be forced into a long-term care home because they have a disability, and their home is inaccessible.

P.S. please send us a copy of the revised 2020-2030 Housing Strategy showing the inclusion of accessibility requirements recommended by the disability community.

Sincerely,

Minette Samaroo

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<http://www.blindcanadians.ca/inclusiveemployment>

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