



100% Accessibility

Presentation to the City of Toronto's
Planning and Housing Committee

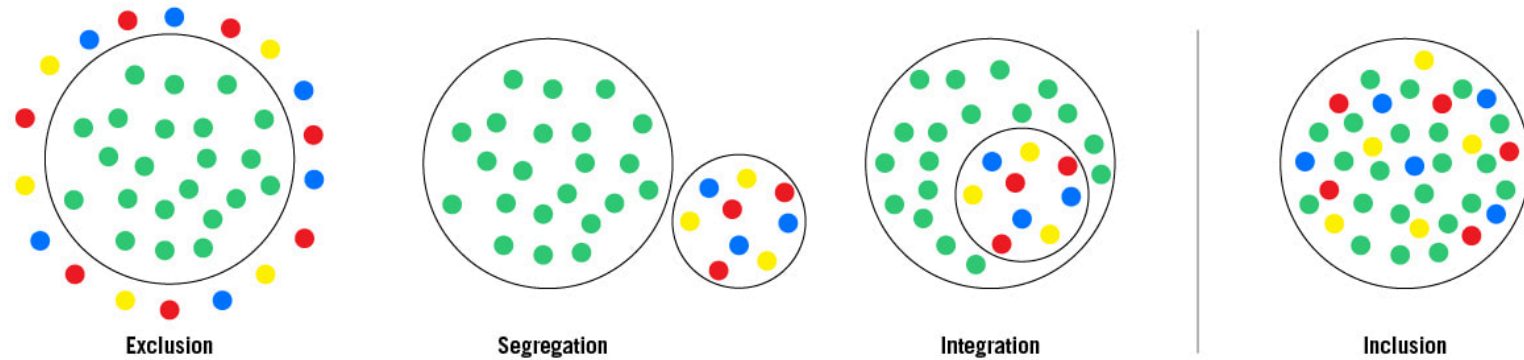
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Introduction



- **Citizens With Disabilities – Ontario (CWDO)** was incorporated as a provincial not-for-profit organization on May 10, 2005.
- **CWDO is non-partisan**, with a **cross-disability focus**.
- **CWDO is the Ontario representative for the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD)**. We participate in many CCD initiatives and support CCD's pan-Canadian efforts.

Vision Statement



Citizens With Disabilities - Ontario (CWDO) is committed to the rights of all persons to participate fully in the civil, cultural, economic, political and social life of their communities.

Image Credit: <https://www.inclusionontario.ca/what-is-inclusion.html>

Mission Statement

CWDO actively promotes the rights, freedoms and responsibilities of persons with disabilities through community development, social action, and member support and referral.

Our primary activity is public education and awareness about the social and physical barriers that prevent the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ontario.

Photo credit: www.coe.int



The Issue

Housing is not Readily and Equitably Available to People With Disabilities

- People with disabilities are denied equal access to housing opportunities because of systemic, discriminatory practices which over time have become institutionalized and bureaucratically embedded into policies and procedures.
- The best way to remedy this history of discrimination is to require that 100% of all new housing be accessible.

Yet:

- All Canadian jurisdictions are obligated to ensure the right to accessible housing under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and
- The Ontario Human Rights Code protects persons with disabilities from discrimination in housing, among other things.
- Public funds should NEVER be used to create or perpetuate barriers.

Concerns

Access Denied is Right and Fairness Denied

- In Ontario, 1.85 million people live with a disability, including 40% of people over 65.
- People with mobility and sensory disabilities require accessible housing.
- As people age, they lose mobility, hearing and sight and therefore benefit from accessibility features that can be provided through housing design.
- The few housing projects that assign accessible units only relegate 10% -15% of the total for accessibility.
- This might be fine if every source of housing had this proportion of accessible units, but since very few buildings have any accessible units, people with disabilities are, in effect, denied housing.

Disability Discrimination

Cost/Space Are Not Acceptable Reasons to Deny Housing to People with Disabilities

- When it comes to people with disabilities, cost is often the number one factor for denying equal right of access. Lack of space is the other one.
- Arguments citing costs serve to entrench, perpetuate and operationalize disability discrimination.
 - [I]t implies that disabled persons' lives are of lesser value ... it conflicts with equality of opportunity; it conflicts with fairness, which requires ignoring (some/most) differential impacts of treatment; it wrongly gives lower priority to disabled persons for equally effective treatment; it conflicts with giving all persons an equal chance to reach their full potential; and, it is in conflict with giving priority to the worse off.
 - <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/economics-and-philosophy/article/costeffectiveness-and-disability-discrimination/96EA141C396CE5665ED0160A729E66F7>
- No other designated group has limits prescribed for their participation.
- People with disabilities have very few housing options available , so limits to accessible units in any building imposes an excess burden on people with disabilities as a group.

About Undue Hardship...

Put People Before Profit

- Undue hardship should be thrown out as a reason to discriminate against 100% accessibility because:
 - Housing developers have been gradually reducing the size of units over the past 50 years ; and
 - Bedroom sizes were typically 50% larger than today
 - Condos have shrunk from an average of 1000 to 755 square feet.
- Similar size reductions can be documented for other living in-unit and amenity spaces.
- Over-crowding contributes to health and social problems.
 - United Nations (1976) Indicators of Social Development: Framework and Methodologies. Sales No E.96.II
- Building developers are long overdue to recalibrate unit sizes, and use this “found” space to create 100% accessible units.

Considerations

Why 100% Accessibility?

- Anyone can acquire a disability.
- Disability increases with age, and it is a recognized social value for people to be able to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. **We deserve nothing less!**
- Staying in one's own home requires that the home be accessible from the outset or readily convertible (at the landlord or builders' expense) as the need arises.
- While limits might exist in setting aside units for other purposes (like family units), it must be noted that people with disabilities also require family units. Even in a 100% scenario, they already have limited access to the types of units needed.
- The fact that family units might be available as a given proportion of the building does not serve as a reasonable rationale to limit the number of units that are available to a person with disability.

Remedy

The Way Forward for Toronto

- Commit to ensuring no public funds will be used to create or perpetuate accessibility barriers.
- Build on criteria and specification clarifying parameters for accessible housing developed in partnership with an advocacy group (R-PATH) to achieve 100% accessibility through universal design.
- Include criteria for 100% accessibility when calling for builders' proposals for new housing or retrofits to existing housing
 - Builders want and need your business, so they will comply.
- Confirm buildings are delivered as planned, including plans for 100% accessibility.
- Leverage building permits
 - Require new housing plans include 100% of units and amenity spaces will be accessible;
 - Require accessibility retrofits in plans for renovations; and
 - Refuse permits whenever the plans do not include 100% accessibility.
- Inspect completed work was completed as planned, including plans for 100% accessibility.

Adaptable Design

Why Adaptable Design is a Poor Compromise

- Using an “adaptable design” approach requires that the home, apartment or condo will be readily converted as the need arises.
- To ensure equity, conversions would have to be done
 1. without delay and
 2. at the landlord’s or builders’ expense.
- Likely landlords and builders would balk at the requirement to convert units, citing time, different building code requirements coming into play, etc.
- In reality, there will be delays potentially leaving a person homeless in the interim or remaining in unsuitable living quarters and at risk for being moved to a nursing home.
- We don’t believe that adaptable design will address a person’s human rights to access housing on par with their nondisabled peers.

Visitability

Why Visitability Doesn't Solve the Problem

- Visitable design is meant to benefit as many people as possible, including friends and family members, parents pushing strollers, individuals using mobility devices and individuals moving furniture or other large items into a home.

- <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/cmhc/pubsandreports/pdf/68661.pdf>

- It focuses on visiting, not **living** in the unit full-time.

Definitions

Definitions (arranged by increasing accessibility)

- **Visitable:** A visitable home includes basic accessibility features that allow most people to visit, even if they use a wheelchair. Basic features include a level entry, wider doors, and an accessible washroom on the main floor.
- **Adaptable:** An adaptable home is designed to be adapted economically at a later date to accommodate someone with a disability. Features include removable cupboards in a kitchen or bathroom to create knee space for a wheelchair user.
- **Accessible:** An accessible house includes features that meet the needs of a person with a disability - open turning spaces within rooms, wheel-in shower stalls, and kitchen work surfaces with knee space below.
- **Universal design:** Universal design aims to create housing which could be used by anyone regardless of ability or disability. It goes beyond mere accessibility and demonstrates an underlying commitment to including as wide a range of users as possible, including those with vision, hearing or other disabilities.

For more information: http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/acho/acho_001.cfm and <http://unitariancommons.ca/>

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Social Media

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