

September 25, 2024

Planning and Housing Committee
City of Toronto
Committee Room 1, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto ON, M5H 2N2

ATTN: The Planning and Housing Committee: Re: Support for Item 2024.PH15.6 – Increasing the City's Supply of Accessible Affordable Housing –

Spinal Cord Injury Ontario is a Provincial organization that serves people with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities. Our work involves helping people and their families reintegrate into their communities by providing a variety of services and resources that aim to help them adjust to living with a disability. These services include Peer Support, Employment Services, and help accessing appropriate medical supplies and assistive devices.

SCIO is becoming increasingly aware of the major gaps in accessible housing within the City of Toronto. The lack of accessible homes is forcing many of our clients to remain in long term care at young ages or in unsuitable situations, where they face physical risks on a daily basis as a result of not having an accessible home. In more extreme scenarios, we are seeing an increase in clients who are opting for MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying) because they do not have a place to call home. Simply stated, this needs to change.

We are a founding member of the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition, a first of its kind community, built collectively with developers, accessibility leaders and people with lived experience with the goal of creating more accessible housing across Canada. Moreover, SCIO has turned its focus toward accessible housing as one of its strategic priorities over the next three years. We regularly collaborate with researchers, people from our community, health care professionals and the development industry to inform government and the public about the benefits of more accessible homes.

With a growing senior and disability population, building more accessible homes is to everyone's benefit. A person's sense of dignity and the opportunities available to them drastically improve when they have an appropriate home that meets their needs. From better mental health to a stronger ability to participate in the work force and community at large, people with disabilities deserve the same opportunities as their fellow citizens.

We highly encourage the City of Toronto to consider the needs of its residents with disabilities by ensuring new homes are built with accessibility in mind, and to regularly consult with the community, so that people with lived experience can participate and voice their needs.

We have a unique opportunity in our city to set a gold standard of a barrier-free Canada and to set an example to other cities across the globe on accessibility.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our insights. We look forward to seeing your committee move forward with recommendations that will contribute to building homes that meet the needs of everyone, regardless of disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stuart Howe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stuart" and last name "Howe" clearly distinguishable.

Stuart Howe
CEO