

Submission re Federal Budget 2025 -

From:

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The **Accessible Housing Network (AHN)** is a non-partisan network of more than 70 Canadian non-profit organizations working to support the human rights of persons with disabilities to end the **extreme lack of accessible housing**.

Our **Human Rights Act** prevails over the building codes. People often mistakenly only design "up to building code" because they don't know the Human Rights Act requires design to not discriminate.

Honouring the Human Right to accessible housing is **mandatory** under the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, Provincial Human Rights Codes, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and the **Optional Protocol**, which Canada has signed.

A **budget** is not merely a listing of planned expenditures. It is also a means of assessing ways to save money, while **meeting responsibilities, including Human Rights**.

For-profit services always cost more because a profit must be skimmed off the allotted funds. For this reason, **healthcare, long-term care** and **housing** must remain **non-profit**. To do otherwise is to waste taxpayers funds.

Large institutions are more costly than homecare. Thus, it is urgent to prioritize **homecare, accessible housing**, and related services. **This is also what more than 90% of elders demand.**

Home care can be more efficiently provided if homes are **fully accessible**.

Accessible (Universal Design) housing has many benefits:

Fewer falls;

Fewer ambulance calls;

Fewer emergency department visits;

Fewer hospitalizations;

Reduced costs for long-term care facilities. (Many people will be able to remain in their accessible homes)

Protection of seniors and persons with disabilities from catastrophes like those in long-term care during the pandemic.

Reduced burn-out of staff and family caregivers.

Reduced need for PSW help;

Reduced need for other in-home support help;

Improved mental and physical health;

Increased employment of people with disabilities.

For the above reasons, all of which save the government billions of dollars, it is **cost-effective to mandate that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible to all)**. Universal design will accommodate almost anyone of any age or ability and demonstrates an underlying commitment to including everyone with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

Canada must follow the example of Australia. The Australian building code mandates that **all** new housing, of **every** type, must be Universal (“Livable”) Design

27% of Canadians have a disability, thousands of them children.

Seniors make up 20% of the Canadian population. Most seniors also have disabilities, which they tend to not report on the census.

Currently, the **National Building Code** does not require that housing be accessible (Universal Design), and the **Ontario Building Code** only requires that 15% of new apartments be “visitable”, but not accessible enough for a person with a disability to live there. **Other provinces** similarly ignore the housing rights of seniors and people with disabilities.

Thousands of Canadians are forced out of their dwellings at the most vulnerable time in their lives, simply because their homes are not built to accommodate their needs. This results in “hallway medicine” in hospitals, and long waiting lists for nursing homes.

Billions of healthcare dollars could be saved by enabling people to remain in their own accessible homes.

Cost is not an issue. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has reported that **to build a new apartment costs the same whether the apartment is accessible or not.** To build an individual house costs only marginally more if accessibility is included from the design stage.

In addition to the above, the Government of Canada is obliged to meet the requirements of the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, and the **Canadian Human Rights Act**, all of which **prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability or age**.

Thus, we urge you to **do the right thing** - which is required by the laws of Canada. **Honour the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, and the **Canadian Human Rights Act**. **Mandate that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible)**.

Amend the **National Building Code** to make universal design the mandatory standard for 100% of units in all new housing, both rental and ownership, as has now been done in Australia.

This will save Canada billions of tax dollars.