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Timothy Bryan, Clerk
Room 1405, Whitney Block
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E-mail: comm-financeaffairs@ola.org

To: The Standing Committee of the Ontario Legislature on Finance &
Economic Affairs

RE: Pre-budget hearings

There is a simple and cost-free way to **save millions of dollars in the healthcare budget**:
change the Ontario Building Code to **make it mandatory that all new housing be universal design (fully accessible)** so anyone of any age or ability can live there.

Vast numbers of people who are in long-term care, on the waiting lists, or in hallways of hospitals could go home if their home were fully accessible.

Accessible housing leads to less care-giver burn-out, saving even more dollars in homecare and long-term care.

In a health system with 30,000 residential care beds and an average length of stay of 20 months, by reducing each new client's length of stay by just 1 month, the system could serve nearly 1,000 more people within existing capacity. (Canadian Institute for Health Information)

There is a misperception that universal design costs a great deal more than conventional design. However, in fact, **the cost is less than 1% more** when planned from the design stage. The Ontario government's own

research has found that the cost is only 0.88% more than conventional housing. Builders will recoup this small added cost when they sell or rent the housing.

There is no law in Ontario which requires that any housing be accessible. The AODA does not even mention housing. The Building Code only requires that 15% of new apartments be “visitable” - but not accessible enough to live there.

Disabilities play no favourites. Anyone can have been born with a disability, and anyone of any age can be struck by illness or accident which creates a temporary or lasting injury. One out of every five Ontarians lives with some form of disability.

I will never forget the little girl, about 8 years old, who lived in my co-op 30 years ago. She used an electric wheelchair, and she couldn't play with any of the other children in the co-op because, while her own unit was accessible, the others weren't.

Just this year, my friend had to move out of Toronto to find an accessible apartment. This meant giving up her job and having to go onto ODSP. If she had been able to find an accessible apartment in Toronto, she would still be here working and supporting herself.

We need innovative housing which is affordable, universal design, multi-generational and promotes the building of community.

You have the power to bring this about. For the sake of the all who need accessible housing, please change the Building Code.

Sincerely,
Kate Chung