

**The Older Women's Network's "Living in Place" campaign** is calling for the **Ontario Building Code** to be changed to require that ALL new multi-unit residential buildings be 100% universal design or easily adaptable, so that anyone of any age or ability can live there. Toronto City Council has endorsed this campaign.

We are asking everyone to write to their MPP (all parties), as well as the Premier and the Ministers of Health, Finance, and Housing.

Our sample letter (below) can be used as is or can be adapted. It is more effective if people write about their personal circumstances and concerns, but the important thing is to contact the politicians, even with one or two sentences.

We'd be grateful if you could pass this request along to anyone who might be willing to write or speak to their politicians.

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### **SAMPLE LETTER TO SEND TO MPP**

Dear

**Re: Urgent need for universal design apartments and condominiums**

Whatever their age or ability, everyone needs a home, and preferably a home they will not have to leave due to accident or illness.

At present, thousands are forced out of their homes, at the most vulnerable time in their lives, simply because the home is not built to be barrier-free or easily adaptable when needed to become barrier-free.

The result is overflowing beds at hospitals and long term care facilities, and long waiting lists.

Just imagine the difference if the Ontario Building Code required all units in new multi-unit residential buildings to be 100% accessible, instead of the current 15% "visitable", and if all used universal design principles.

Universal design allows spaces to accommodate anyone of any age or ability, going beyond mere accessibility. It demonstrates an underlying commitment to including as wide a range of users as possible for a "lifetime of changing needs and abilities".

Over 4.4 million Canadians (one out of every seven) currently live with some form of disability. And the numbers are growing as you and I age, with estimates that this will change to one out of every five within the next 15 years.

Many people, including many builders, believe that universal design costs a great deal more than conventional design. However, evidence from places where universal design is more commonly used, such as Australia, shows that the cost of universal design in housing is less than 1% more when planned from the initial design stage. It is renovation to conventional housing, changing it when accessible accommodation is needed, that is prohibitively costly.

I urge you to ensure the Ontario Building Code Section 3.8.1.1 is revised immediately in keeping with the legal requirements under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code to recognize all persons with disabilities as people first, by making universal design **mandatory** in all rental and ownership apartments.

Thank-you for your support of this urgently needed change.

Sincerely,