

From: Dispossessed Disabled Artists Demanding Housing (DDADH)

<http://claudewittmann.ca/DDADH/ddadh.html>

To:

Doug Rollins, Director
Housing Stability Services
Doug.Rollins@toronto.ca

Copies to:

Abigail Bond, Executive Director
Toronto's Housing Secretariat
Abigail.Bond@toronto.ca

City Councilor and Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão
Chair of the Toronto Planning and Housing Committee
Ana.Bailao@toronto.ca

Arshnoor Khoja, Senior Strategic Policy Consultant
Accessible Housing Working Group
arshnoor.khoja@toronto.ca

Scott Miller Berry, Interim Executive Artistic Director
Workman Arts
scott_millerberry@workmanarts.com

Re: your September 12, 2022 letter in reply to our request for
Priority Access to Housing for People with Disabilities

Dear Mr Rollins,

DDADH thanks you for your reply to our letter and for opening a door of collaboration with the Accessible Housing Working Group.

We anticipate that the Accessible Housing Working Group will be interested in our input about the type of housing accessibility that is needed in the long-term by Toronto invisibly disabled individuals which, in very very brief terms: financial accessibility + case-specific unit modifications. We are in the process of writing a message to Arshnoor Khoja, Senior Strategic Policy Consultant of the Accessible Housing Working Group. You will receive a copy.

Our original letter to Director of Housing Secretariat Abigail Bond addressed two other pressing issues which you did not address in your reply.

We asked

- **that people with disabilities be added to the list of individuals falling under the “Local Priority Rules”, which define urgent access to rent-geared-to-income, COHB, and affordable housing in Toronto;**
- **that individuals with invisible disabilities who would benefit from unit modifications qualify for COHB under the call for applications currently on the City’s website, even if the case-specific modifications they would benefit from are not the ones familiarly accepted as such by the City.**

We are humbly asking that you take time to consider these urgent issues and get back to us.

Then, since our original letter, another person has joined DDADH. This person is Trevor Manson, long-time active member in the executive committee of the ODSP Action Coalition as well as of other disability justice seeking groups, himself an artist on ODSP.

He is currently called to apply for a rent-geared-to-income unit and, despite the relief of finally being at the door of a life where rent will not eat most of his income, he is experiencing the choice-based system as a rigid frame that is not providing him with the information he would need to choose an appropriate unit. Not being allowed to see your future apartment before applying and possibly moving in is untenable, especially for somebody disabled.

As well and according to what he sees through his Access To Housing account, there appears to be no way he could access a unit with the modifications he needs. Modified units are only offered to persons who need wheelchair accessibility, which is not his case.

In this situation, he would prefer to receive a COHB.

There are a few more reasons for which Trevor should be offered a COHB.

COHB has been offered to individuals and families near or at the top of the Centralized Waiting List. Trevor is now one of them.

Trevor is a disabled artist who benefits from unit modifications for which he has already paid. He suffers from a neuromuscular condition which causes widespread nerve pain, ataxia, and loss of balance/spatial recognition, among other symptoms, requiring him to install safety grab bars around the shower area of his East end apartment where he has lived for more than 11 years.

If/when Trevor moves from the unit, he is obliged to return it to its original state, which will cost hundreds of dollars he doesn't have. He will also lose access to the crucial support network he has built up over 30 years of living in the same area, including proximity to his best friend who lives five minutes away and often stops by with fresh produce and other groceries that Trevor cannot afford on an ODSP budget.

Because the modifications to Trevor's unit are not for a wheelchair, they are not the typical modifications considered in order to qualify for the COHB. This is where we come back to the question of giving access to the current call for COHB applications to disabled individuals who require unit modifications *specific to their conditions*.

In summary we are asking

- **That Trevor Manson be offered a COHB.**

Our lives and art practices are damagingly tied to housing insecurity.

We urge you to consider our suggestions for improvements of Toronto's housing for persons with disabilities. We look forward to your reply.

For DDADH,
Leon McCurdy, Serena McCarroll, Trevor Manson and Claude Wittmann