June 22, 2026

National Housing Council – Review Panel
1100 - 180 Kent Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 0B6

Dear Review Panel Members,

Autism Ontario is pleased to provide the attached submissions to the National Housing Council review panel for its written hearing on the lack of accessible housing in Canada.

As an organization with a history of over 50 years supporting autistic children and adults and their families across Ontario and as a member of the Intentional Community Consortium (ICC), we strongly support advancing accessible, inclusive housing across Canada for autistic adults and individuals with developmental disabilities. A meaningful vision for housing must be rooted in flexibility, deep affordability, safety, and integration within communities, ensuring individuals can live with dignity, autonomy, and access to the supports they need.

The recommendations that follow urge the prioritization of accessible housing within national strategies, ensure new housing meets safety and care standards, and partner with sector organizations to deliver scalable, community-based solutions. With coordinated action and sustained investment, Canada can uphold the right to housing and create inclusive communities where autistic people can thrive.

Sincerely,

Marg Spoelstra
Chief Executive Officer
Autism Ontario

1. **What is your vision for accessible housing in Canada and why?**

Autism Ontario supports housing solutions that are flexible, deeply affordable, safe, supported, and integrated into communities. Housing opportunities must consider the individual's existing community and offer access to necessary intersectional supports which encourage autonomy, dignity, inclusion, and integration and participation in the broader community.

2. **How does the lack of accessible housing affect people living in Canada?**

Caregivers of autistic adults tell Autism Ontario that one of their greatest fears is what will happen to their adult child when they are no longer able to care for them, or when they pass away. Most autistic adults in Ontario live at home well into adulthood, often until middle age, with their family functioning as their fundamental source of support. They are much more likely to be accessing social assistance and have the poorest employment outcomes of people with disabilities.

Much of the housing available for autistic adults and people with developmental disabilities continues to be segregated and expensive. Most autistic adults and their caregivers struggle to find a quality home, contributing to inadequate support and unsuitable living conditions that lead to more intensive—and more unaffordable—downstream support. Many autistic adults live in shelters which are neither environmentally nor socially equipped to house autistic people.

Appropriate, deeply affordable, flexible housing solutions for people with developmental disabilities including autism in Ontario are often only accessible to the very wealthy or well-resourced. The supported housing waitlist in Ontario for adults with developmental disabilities alone is 40 years long, and this is unacceptable. Caregivers and people waiting for housing die while sitting on a crisis-based waitlist. Once a person waiting in crisis for housing reaches the point where systems must intervene, increasingly Long Term Care institutions are made part of the solution to the housing crisis for people with developmental disabilities. Long Term Care institutions are neither appropriate nor acceptable housing and care solutions for autistic adults aged 18+ in Ontario.

3. **What system-wide gaps, and what government actions and inactions, are getting in the way of Canada's progress on the right to housing and the rights of persons with disabilities?**

In its report Lost in Transition (November 2025), the Ontario Ombudsman found that system-wide gaps in coordination between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, coupled with government inaction, are leaving adults with complex developmental disabilities, including autism, stuck in hospitals for months to years (and even decades). There aren't enough appropriate community supports and safe, affordable housing near to their families. Many of these individuals end up losing important life skills and experience a decline in their well-being. They experience harm and loss of dignity.

Hospitals are not homes. The Ombudsman recommends better coordination between the ministries, more proactive planning, improved data sharing, and increased investment in community housing and staffing. The province has agreed to all 24 recommendations and will be monitored on its progress moving forward. However, this crisis has been on-going for many decades, even though real solutions are well-documented and demonstrated, and known by the government. We are concerned that unaddressed systemic ableism is limiting attention and preventing progress.

4. **What actions and solutions should governments and communities lead to make better progress on the right to accessible housing for people with disabilities in Canada?**

Autism Ontario calls on the government to:

1. Reaffirm its commitment to build 2400 units of housing for people with autism and developmental disabilities per the 2017 national housing strategy.

2. Explicitly include people with developmental disabilities, including autism, as a priority in Build Canada Homes.

3. Require all housing funded through Build Canada Homes to meet Care Occupancy and Fire Code requirements so that housing is safe, accessible, and appropriate for people who require support.

4. Work with organizations focused on supporting and creating housing opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities to deliver housing at scale. This includes enabling national or regional portfolios of projects and providing resources to help smaller agencies get to a point where they can successfully apply.

5. **Please share any research, reports or links that support your submission.**

**Research:**

Berrigan, P., Scott, C.W.M. & Zwicker, J.D. “Employment, Education, and Income for Canadians with Developmental Disability: Analysis from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability.” J Autism Dev Disord 53, 580–592 (2023). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04603-3

Mackenzie Salt, Marina Schor, Simone Daniels, Jonathan Lai, Stelios Georgiades, Deepa Singal. “Fostering Inclusion: Exploring the Needs of Autistic Adults in Canada. An Autistic-led Survey.” Autism Alliance of Canada. April 2024. https://autismalliance.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FINAL-AAC-Adult-Needs-Assessment-Survey.pdf

Parisa Ghanouni, Stephanie Quirke, Jennifer Blok, Amanda Casey. “Independent living in adults with autism spectrum disorder: Stakeholders’ perspectives and experiences.” Research in Developmental Disabilities, Volume 119, 2021, 104085, ISSN 0891-4222 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2021.104085

**Reports:**

Ontario Ombudsman: “Lost in Transition: Investigation into whether the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health are taking adequate steps to address the inappropriate hospitalization of adults with developmental disabilities” (November 2025) https://www.ombudsman.on.ca/en/our-work/investigations/lost-transition

**Resources:**

AIDE Canada: “Enjoying My Home: Supported Housing Options for Autism and Intellectual Disability in Canada” https://aidecanada.ca/resources/learn/housing/enjoying-my-home-supported-housing-considerations-and-options-in-autism-and-intellectual-disability

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: “Housing solutions for autistic adults” https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/observer/stories/081-autistic-adults-help-develop-pathway-to-independent-living

End the Wait Ontario: “Housing Options for Autistic Adults in Ontario” https://www.endthewaitontario.com/adults/housing

Government of Canada: “Framework for Autism in Canada” (see “Priority area 2: Economic inclusion”) https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/framework-autism-canada.html

Lansdowne Consulting/CT Labs: “Housing Through an Autism Lens.” October 1st, 2021. https://www.autismontario.com/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/housing_through_an_autism_lens.pdf

Social Care Institute for Excellence: “Toolkit for place-based strategies for housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability” https://www.scie.org.uk/housing/toolkit-for-place-based-strategies-for-housing-for-autistic-adults-and-adults-with-a-learning-disability/

Autism Ontario: “Housing is Complicated” video series [while these videos are from 2016, the stories illustrate that housing gaps remain static, and that options are available only to well-resourced families]
https://youtu.be/ruZYSU9NZ3I?si=xbk6M8iA7TSL27li
https://youtu.be/nCgv4mlzQ3s?si=iti3tQmDGE8STCgL
https://youtu.be/1Ynp3YiL5Ws?si=IKXgYEh_Z_6BQyUh