

HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT LIVING
FOR ADULTS WITH SEVERE PHYSICAL DISABILITIES
IN EDMONTON

By
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Until 1975 most young and middle-aged adults with severe disabilities lived at home with their aging parents, (LIKE I DID) or in auxiliary hospitals or nursing home with older seniors. This is still the case today for many persons who are either physically or mentally disabled.

In June of 1975 I was lucky enough to be selected to live in the first group home for the physically disabled adults to be opened in Alberta here in Edmonton. The McQueen group home (which is still open today) has been run by Alberta Rehabilitation Council for the Disabled (Eater Seals) since it opened. It has 9 spacious private bedrooms for the residents, a common living room, kitchen, laundry room and a huge back yard.

A support services staff is on sight 24hrs./7 days a week to assist the residents with personal activities of daily living were and still are involved in the running of the home by sitting on different committees like, maintenance, staffing (scheduling, interviewing new staff etc), grocery shopping and menu planning. A great amount of independent living knowledge was gained by living in this group home and it was a fun place to live, at least for the fifteen years I lived there.

In the early 1980's some of the residents who lived in McQueen and other persons in the community and in nursing homes were wanting to live in their own apartments but needed a support services program to help them with their personal needs. They came together and obtained funding to build Sir Douglas Bader Towers. It was the first apartment high-rise to have a portion of its units wheelchair accessible and include an in house support services program.

Some of the residents living in Bader for a number of years and some others still living in institutions etc. wanted a bigger living space and more control of the building they lived. So they again approached the federal/provincial governments for funding to build the first Cooperative with a portion of its apartments wheelchair accessible and an in-house support services program. The Abbey Road Cooperative was opened in 1986.

In 1990 another Cooperative to be called Artspace opened with 66 apartments and 22 town houses, 29 of which were wheelchair accessible and included 24hrs./7 days a week support services. I have lived in Artspace now for 24 years, ever since I left McQueen group home in 1990. I love living independently in my own apartment with the assistance we receive from our in-house Supports for Artspace Independent Living (S.A.I.L.) Staff. I love being involved in the committees and the decision making work we have to do as Members of the Cooperative. Also I like the friendly community atmosphere of Artspace.

In the mid 1990's Creekside Condominium opened that had several accessible apartments and an in-house support services program like at Artspace and Abbey Road Cooperatives.

Since the mid 1990's there has been a number of group homes built for the mentally and physically challenged, but very few housing complexes have been built for those who are physically challenged only.

A lot more mobility aid accessible housing complexes are still needed to be built here in Edmonton. But there is no use building like Abby Road Cooperative, Creekside Condominiums and Artspace Housing Cooperative, if the Alberta provincial government takes away, or change the funding model of the support programs for independent living so drastically that most of the residents who need assistance with their personal care and other activities of everyday life find it almost impossible to continue living in their own residents and are force to move into an institutional setting.