

Court File No.

**ONTARIO
SUPERIOR COURT OF JUSTICE**

B E T W E E N:

**CENTRE FOR EQUALITY RIGHTS IN ACCOMMODATION,
JANICE ARSENAULT, ANSAR MAHMOOD, BRIAN DUBOURDIEU
and JENNIFER TANUDJAJA**

Applicants

- and -

**ATTORNEYGENERAL OF CANADA and
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF ONTARIO**

Respondents

APPLICATION UNDER Rule 14.05(3)(g.1) of the *Rules
of Civil Procedure*, R.R.O. 1990, O. Reg. 194 and under
the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

**AFFIDAVIT OF PHILLIP DUFRESNE
(Sworn May 13, 2010)**

I, **PHILLIP DUFRESNE**, of the City of Toronto, in the Province of Ontario,
MAKE OATH AND SAY:

1. I used to live on the street. Once I became homeless, I thought I would always live on the street. Now I live in supportive housing at Houselink Community Homes. I've lived there for 18 years. Housing saved my life. Having secure, stable housing has allowed me to grow both as a human being and as a citizen. It has allowed me to become a healthy, productive, engaged member of society.

Background

2. When I was 10 years old, I moved from a small town in Alberta to Montreal. I was in a new city and going to a new school and didn't know anybody. The other kids at

school ignored me because I didn't have the same interests as they did. I began to notice that I was different from everyone else.

3. As time went on, I lost all confidence in myself and became very withdrawn. I avoided people whenever I could because I didn't feel comfortable. I managed to get through high school and university but it was a struggle.

4. After graduating with a B.A. in Anthropology from Concordia University in Montreal, I moved to Toronto to look for work. I saw everyone around me getting jobs, getting married, having children, buying a house and buying a car. I wasn't doing any of these things. My life seemed to be at a standstill.

5. The only jobs I could get were minimum wage, unskilled labour jobs that kept me living in poverty. This made me very frustrated.

6. My frustration turned to anger. I got into many fights with my family and they had me committed to Sunnybrook Psychiatric Ward for three days against my will. They thought I was having a nervous breakdown.

Becoming Homeless

7. Unable to find work after my release from the hospital, I was evicted from my apartment and ended up on the street. I wondered what I had done that was so terrible that I deserved to be homeless.

8. Nobody ever thinks they will end up on the street, but it can happen to anyone because there are many things in life you have no control over, like illness. Without a place to live, you can't do anything with your life. You can't get a job, go to school or take proper care of your health. You aren't able to develop any skills and begin to lose the ones you have. You become very isolated. It's like being locked up in a closet, totally alone.

9. I went from shelter to shelter. Most of them cost money. I had some savings from my former work that I was living on but I didn't know how long they would last so I was

trying to be careful. I was afraid that once I ran out of money I wouldn't even be able to sleep in a shelter and would truly be on the street. I didn't know about social assistance.

10. In the shelters we slept in large dormitories. I didn't have any belongings; they were in the apartment when I was evicted. Every other day I washed my clothes because I had only what was on my back. I was very angry and found it hard to talk to anyone without getting into an argument so I just kept to myself. I felt hopeless. I thought I would have to live this way for the rest of my life. I was afraid. I thought I was going to die.

11. I stayed at a Salvation Army shelter for seven or eight months. At 7:30 a.m., after breakfast we were forced to leave. There aren't many places open at 7:30 a.m. so often I would go to Union Station. But the security guards harassed me and gave me tickets for loitering. If the weather was inclement, I would end up on a street corner in the rain or snow or cold. Sometimes I would go to the library or the Eaton's Centre to warm up. But you couldn't hang around for too long or you would get hassled. We could return to the shelter at noon for lunch and then had to leave again until 4:30.

12. Eventually I got a private room at the Salvation Army for five dollars per day. I lived there for another seven to eight months until a social worker helped me get a room in a rooming house. I was still living on my savings and this is how I paid my rent. But I lived in fear of running out of money and not being able to pay my rent and ending up on in a shelter again.

What Safe Affordable Housing Has Meant for Me

13. A few years later, a hostel outreach worker helped me get into supportive subsidized housing at Houselink Community Homes. Houselink helped me apply for Ontario Disability Support benefits. Once I had an income and a home my life began to turn around.

14. Houselink is a non-profit, charitable agency based in Toronto that provides supportive housing to people living with mental illness. Residents and consumers are members of Houselink and participate in the decisions of the organization. Houselink

makes it possible for people living with mental illness to build meaningful lives on their own terms.

15. Not only has Houselink provided affordable housing and support services, it has given me an opportunity to develop skills I didn't know I had. This has led to my work on the Dream Team, HomeComing Community Choice Coalition and the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association Board. I am also the former President of the Houselink Board and former Chairperson of the Toronto East Counselling and Support Service (TECSS) Board.

16. I am on the Steering Committee of the Homecoming Community Choice Coalition which is made up of supportive housing providers, mental health consumers and survivors, human rights lawyers, mental health agencies and other citizens. The Coalition promotes the rights of people with mental illness to live where they choose. While the focus is on people with mental illness where the discrimination is most acute, the Coalition's goal is to ensure that no one is stopped from living where they choose because of "not-in-my-back-yard" discrimination.

17. I am also an active member of the Dream Team, a group of psychiatric consumer/survivors who advocate for more supportive housing in Ontario for people with mental health issues. By telling our personal stories, conducting and presenting research, and standing up for human rights, we demonstrate and promote the life-altering benefits of supportive housing. Safe affordable housing saves lives. We want everyone in need to have access to it.

18. Supportive housing is critical for people with mental illness. Mental illness is very isolating and often people don't know where to turn. Support workers offer assistance with daily life skills such as grocery shopping and cleaning. They assist people in getting to medical appointments. Sometimes they are simply someone to talk to when there is no one else. Without these supports, and as a result of discrimination, people with mental illness often have a hard time finding and maintaining housing.

19. After living on the street, anything positive that happens to me seems like a miracle because I could just have easily ended up dead. Without supportive housing I would not be alive today.

20. Houselink provides supportive housing for 400 people. That makes 400 miracles. We need many more of these miracles to solve the problems of precarious housing and homelessness for persons with mental health issues.

21. I've made this affidavit to the best of my ability and in support of the right to housing case, and for no other or improper purpose.

SWORN BEFORE ME at)
)
the City of Toronto, this 13th day)
)
of May, 2010)
)

PHILLIP DUFRESNE

A Commissioner, etc.

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Proceeding commenced at Toronto

AFFIDAVIT OF PHILLIP DUFRESNE
(Sworn May 13th, 2010)

Solicitors for the Applicants