

Fighting Discriminatory Zoning Laws

The Dream Team is an incredible group of individuals with a strong passion for human rights and supportive housing that shines through every facet of their work. Their members have been at the forefront of consumer-led advocacy for affordable housing across Ontario. They have carried out invaluable work in educating community members and decision-makers about mental health and addictions, and the role that supportive housing plays in ending homelessness and extreme poverty. ACTO has been proud to work with them since 2006 on joint initiatives that support human rights in housing.

We worked together on the 'Road Show' project, which highlighted the impact of discriminatory municipal planning practices on mental health consumers. This involved public meetings with ACTO staff and Dream Team members in Waterloo, Smith's Falls, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and Sarnia. These meetings presented to people in those communities a perspective on supportive housing that they had never heard before – the perspective of people with lived experience of how decent, affordable housing can improve lives.

In another part of this project we worked with a team of professional planners to analyze the legal tools that cities and towns across Ontario use to block development of supportive housing. We have shared this report widely – with planners, politicians and human rights advocates - to begin to tear down the barriers that keep people with disabilities from full participation in community life.

The Dream Team has now gone on to fight this issue in a ground-breaking case at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario. They are asked the Tribunal to strike down long-standing bylaws that limit the location of housing for people with disabilities in Toronto, Smith's Falls, Kitchener and Sarnia. The City of Sarnia has responded by removing the offensive parts of their by-law. The other cities have decided to fight the Dream Team at the Tribunal. ACTO continues to support the Dream Team in their organizing and education work.