

Charlotte-Anne Malischewski, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, delivers a powerful message: Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) is not merely a medical concern but a cornerstone of modern human rights. She formally clarifies that under the Canadian Human Rights Act, MCS is recognized as a disability, making it a legal requirement for employers and service providers to prevent discrimination. This legislation grants those affected the right to seek justice and reparations through provincial and federal commissions. Ms. Malischewski underscores that the "human rights-based approach" is essential for ensuring that people with MCS have the same rights as any other citizen: the right to participate fully in society, to access safe healthcare and housing, and to work in environments that do not jeopardize their physical well-being.

She highlights a disturbing intersection between the current economic climate and disability rights, describing Canada's cost-of-living crisis as a modern "human rights crisis." For the MCS community, this crisis is particularly burdensome. Rising costs make it nearly impossible to secure the specific, non-toxic housing required for their health. This often leads to forced homelessness or isolation in inadequate, inaccessible environments. Ms. Malischewski points to active efforts to combat this, such as a national review panel currently investigating the lack of accessible housing. She explicitly invites the MCS community to use their voices to influence lawmakers, ensuring that the need for chemically safe, "breathable" housing is included in future recommendations to the government.

Furthermore, Malischewski advocates for proactive systemic change. She introduces the Commission's updated "Environmental Sensitivities and Scent-Free Policies Guide," a resource designed to help federal organizations eliminate barriers before they cause harm. This aligns with the Accessible Canada Act's objective to reach a totally barrier-free nation by 2040. While specific regulations for the "built environment" such as air filtration and chemical standards in architecture will take more time, she stresses that now is the critical window for lobbying and scientific collaboration. By integrating MCS requirements into these upcoming federal regulations, Canada can lead a global, harmonized movement to ensure that inclusion is no longer a bonus, but the basic guaranteed standard for all public and private spaces.