

Voices of ABLE2

Episode 2 – Navigating the Wait: A Mother and Daughter’s Journey Through Ottawa’s Housing Crisis

EMELOU

[00:00:00] Welcome to Voices of ABLE2, where we share real conversations about disability inclusion and community. I'm Emelou Porquez, and today's episode is called “Navigating the Wait: A Mother and Daughter's Journey through Ottawa's Housing Crisis.”

For many of us, finding a place to call home is simply a part of life. But for people with disabilities and their families, it can feel like chasing an impossible dream. Safe, accessible. Affordable housing isn't just about having a roof overhead. It's about security, independence, and the chance to build a life. Yet for countless of families across Ottawa, the dream remains out of reach, buried under years-long wait lists and the constant weight of uncertainty.

We're speaking today with Joelle and her mom Patti, [00:01:00] who have been waiting on Ottawa's social housing registry for over a decade. That's 10 years of hoping, planning, and wondering what comes next. But this isn't a story without light. With a support of ABLE2’s housing support program and their adult protective services worker, Patricia, Joelle, and Patti are actively building toward a future of independence, security and true belonging even as they continue to wait for a place to call home.

Joelle and Patti, thank you so much for being here today on our podcast.

PATTI

Thank you for the opportunity.

EMELOU

Uh, so let's start with your whole experience being on a wait list. Uh, can you share what your journey has been like trying to find accessible and affordable housing in the city? And what does it feel like waiting for something [00:02:00] like this?

PATTI

We've been on a list since 2010.

JOELLE

We, we've been on the waitlist since 2010.

PATTI

That's right. And in,

JOELLE

I think we got every list in 2014, it's been 10 years. To me, for ten years nothing has happened.

PATTI

They, they did actually say that she needed a, a one bedroom apartment, but in a group of six where five would be inhabited by special needs clients and one would be a social worker. Apparently such a thing doesn't exist. No, I have, I have asked about it. The, the D-S-O-E-R, the developmental services of Eastern Ontario actually has no accommodation, so there are no special places into which we can go, which leaves us with the market value apartments [00:03:00] and being on minimum wage. She can't afford market value rent, right Joelle?

JOELLE

Yes

PATTI

I, I have to say with Patricia, she did find an apartment combined with a grant from the government, which would have made it possible for her to have a one bedroom apartment. Then the government, despite saying they were renewing the program, did not fund it. She had found a one bedroom apartment that was perfect.

JOELLE

I found my bedroom apartment and I could, I could afford it. I, I thought it was my hope. And, but then we found out, there was no funding. After that

PATTI

And we're back on a list, uh, quite close to us. There was a studio apartment. Mm-hmm. That was for rent for [00:04:00] \$2,000 a month. Yeah, it's just not in, in her area of, of, of money.

EMELOU

Yeah. And it's, it's really ridiculous how, you know, it's, it's difficult for , the people who actually need housing to find housing in the city.

PATTI & JOELLE

Yeah. Yeah.

EMELOU

And so for you, Patti, as you think about the future, what worries you most about Joelle's housing situation and what would it mean for her to have a place of her own?

PATTI

Well, I am going to die one of these days and I am getting older and as I get older I seem to accrue different conditions so that now I have a heart condition and I'm diabetic and you know, I'm not going to last forever. And part of my job as Joelle's parent, as the parent of my other girls, is to make sure they are able to live their [00:05:00] lives on their own. That I have set them up successfully to learn how to live on their own. And at the moment, I can't do tha. Because she has no place to live on her own.

Now, my other three girls are all living successfully on their own. They've got a lot of children which show up, but they are successfully living on their own and Joelle is not. And I think at 38 years old. She should be given a chance also to practice those skills. The D-S-O-E-R said that they would come and scoop her up when I died, but I don't feel that's good enough. It gives her, it means she's dealing with the loss of a parent, 'cause there's only one here now. So the loss of a parent in addition to losing her home.

So she needs to [00:06:00] have that experience of having her own home and running her own home, managing her finances, which I believe she is capable of doing, and certainly Patricia from ABLE2 has helped her with that.

But how do I get a chance for her to practice living on her own?

EMELOU

Yes. And that's something that many parents, you know, just want for their children, to have that peace of mind and make sure that their children are well supported and are able to thrive even after, you know, they're long gone.

And, yeah, it's, it's certainly, helpful to be on this service with ABLE2, but at the same time. You also kind of want that peace of mind for yourself, for Joelle. Right.

PATTI

But it seems that ABLE2 is not able to actually produce an apartment like they're not magicians. They have to go with what's [00:07:00] available in the market, but at least she knows where to look. Patricia knows where to look, whereas Joelle does not necessarily look. Patricia's been helping you look right?

JOELLE

Yes. I I Sometimes she giving me first, right? She's taking me to look for too...

PATTI

Yes. So you looked at a lot of co-ops with Patricia? Yes, because first we thought maybe a co-op wouldn't be ideal for Joelle. Then we thought, well, you know what, it's only a couple of hours a month, so she should be able to handle it.

JOELLE

Also, uh, I also want to say I almost watching by my own, independently. And I've been looking for co-op homes for, [00:08:00] for over, for a couple years.

PATTI

Yeah. Yeah. Like she, she holds down a full-time job. She gets herself to work, she gets herself home. She budgets, she does all those things that I believe are necessary for her to do. But again, she's always got me as a safety net. She's always got me. But when children live at home, they kind of stay in the role of daughter of the house instead of independent person. Anyway, that, that's kind of what I feel. I feel it's very frustrating because they're talking about things that apparently are not available.

JOELLE

I, I've been feeling, been feeling frustrated too. 'Cause I be, 'cause my friends and my family my relatives keep asking me if I find one yet, I have to say not yet. It's been very frustrating for a long time.

EMELOU

Yeah. [00:09:00] And it must be taking a toll on your day-to-day living. Because right now Joelle could have had an apartment and living and you know, practicing her skills for independence and living on her own.

PATTI

With with me around to help her if she needed it. Mm-hmm. That, that to me is an important thing, a part of my role as a parent. I feel is to guide her and help her. I mean, Patricia does a wonderful job of that also. But you know that I, I don't want to die before I've done that for her.

EMELOU

Yeah.

PATTI

Looks like I'm gonna have to hang around for a long time.

EMELOU

So what is the impact of being on a wait list, on your day-to-day life? Like, can you share about what it looks like every day?

JOELLE

Um, every day it's been, it's just been frustrating, but I try to keep myself [00:10:00] busy

PATTI

And positive

JOELLE

Ang positive and just go out, go to work every day, meet new people, um, especially with my own family. And I try, try not think about too much.

PATTI

I think that's the thing. You just try not to think about it.

She's not exactly in limbo. No. She does have a place to lay her head at night. Is it the place she wants? Mm, no.

JOELLE

No. I also, um, so I, I just keep my little stick for, for my own.

EMELOU

Yeah.

PATTI

She says she has two rooms in our house so that she can have one as a living room and one as a bedroom. To give her that kind of, you know, feeling.

EMELOU

Yeah.

PATTI

But [00:11:00] I am always the one that's there with the last word, whereas if she were on her own, she would be making more of the decisions herself.

EMELOU

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.

JOELLE

I can cook on my own. To have my room, to have my own, but just, I just want my own place.

EMELOU

Yeah. And, and it's such, it's really such frustrating, uh, place to be in waiting for something as, essential as housing.

If you both could share one thing to make people understand about what it's like to wait this long for housing, what would you want them to know about it?

PATTI

I think Joelle would want to know how she finds it so frustrating, right Joelle?

JOELLE

So I want them know that it's been frustrating for a long time. [00:12:00] I just hope, just hold my hope to find a place sooner, and be independent.

PATTI

Yeah. She'd like to be able to start her new life as an independent person living on her own, with her mom in the background. But I'm worried that it's gonna get to the stage where I won't be in the background anymore.

EMELOU

Yeah.

PATTI

So I will leave a job, half finished.

EMELOU

Oh well, certainly, you know, I am crossing fingers for you and really hoping that housing becomes a reality soon.

Um, so despite all this, what's giving you hope right now, Joelle and Patti?

PATTI

Well, I think Patricia, 'cause Patricia works very hard with Joelle, and Joelle gets on well with her. She will actually take advice from her, which she doesn't always from me, [00:13:00] but, I think the fact that somebody is working on her behalf.

JOELLE

I'm very happy, Patricia helps me, um, to find a place, and she help me with budgeting, um, she's trying to...

PATTI

Well yeah she's working very hard on your behalf.

JOELLE

She works very hard to get me independence. And she helps me to find a bus stop too close by for my work.

EMELOU

Yeah.

JOELLE

Because she doesn't want me going so far from home, work, so it's super, my job. To put closer to the bus job.

PATTI

Well, you had that job for over 10 years, so that's a good thing.

JOELLE

Yes.

PATTI

You've got a good work ethic, so nobody wants to mess with that.

JOELLE

No.

EMELOU

That's really great that you have, Patricia, [00:14:00] APSW staff to support you and kind of help you prepare for that future towards independence.

How do you feel about the program in its entirety? Like, what has your experience been like? Being supported by ABLE2?

PATTI

Um, from my point of view, it took the onus off me.

As I say, when, when. children live at home, even adult children, they do tend to adopt the attitude of the child at the home, and mothers aren't always considered to be very wise.

Whereas Patricia can come in and say a very similar thing and Joelle will accept it from Patricia. Because Patricia has much more experience according to Joelle, well, certainly in the housing market she has, and in working with handicapped children, I just have the one.

So it has been really good for me to get that bit of a break. Because [00:15:00] otherwise I don't get it. And I'm responsible for everything. Which can be tough.

EMELOU

Yes.

PATTI

Can be tough.

EMELOU

How about you, Joelle? How has the whole experience been like for you being supported by ABLE2?

JOELLE

Pretty good. Um, pretty good. I mean, very positive about the program, helps more, big difference from ten years ago.

PATTI

But we had nobody 10 years ago did we.

JOELLE

No, but no more, no more from ten years ago. It makes a difference.

PATTI

Then they, they got us to fill out this evaluation form and then dropped us like hot potatoes. We didn't hear from them again.

Every couple of years I would phone to make sure she was still on a list.

EMELOU

Yeah

PATTI

We had no help or support whatsoever until Patricia came.

JOELLE

So I'm very happy to me, she stayed with me for [00:16:00] the two years now.

EMELOU

That's great. That's, that's really great to hear and I'm, I'm really, truly hoping that, you know, the wait comes to an end. And Joelle, you finally find an affordable and safe housing for yourself and some peace of mind for you too, Patti.

PATTI

Yes. Sit back in the chair and relax. Right.

EMELOU

No, but yeah, I truly, truly understand, you know, the, the feelings of wanting that fulfilling life for Joelle and just wanting her to thrive...

PATTI

And she does when she's put in a new situation. She will always grow. Into that situation, guided and you know, supported and everything,

EMELOU

Yeah. And I do believe that when people are given opportunities to thrive, they really do. And so the missing piece in your story, in particular, Joelle, is this opportunity to become more [00:17:00] independent.

So, before we end today, is there anything else that you would like to share about your whole experience being on the housing waitlist? Like, what would you like people to understand about it?

PATTI

We were very disappointed in that COBH program. Remember the COBH, whatever, that, that didn't kind of come up, come about. It was supposed to, uh, provide some kind of, um, allowance that bridged the gap between what she could afford on her minimum wage and market value rent of an apartment. Yeah. Not sure what happened to it.

EMELOU

That's really unfortunate that it didn't pull through. It would've been very helpful to bridge that gap between affordability and what's available in the market. But then again, certainly the housing situation in the city could be better.

PATTI & JOELLE

Yeah. Yeah.

EMELOU

Well, It, it has been [00:18:00] great talking to both of you. Thank you again so much Joelle and Patti for being on our podcast today and sharing your experience. Truly, you know, shines the light on the experiences of many people who are also on the wait list and for helping us understand, you know, the emotions and the feelings behind being on the wait list. Thank you.

PATTI

Thank you for the opportunity.

JOELLE

Yes. Thank you.

EMELOU

For families like Joelle and Patti's, independence isn't just about having a place to live. It's about peace of mind, dignity, and knowing there's a future where their loved one can thrive, even when they can no longer be there to help.

At ABLE2 we believe no one should have to wait for the chance to live safely and independently. Through programs like ABLE2's Housing Support Adult Protective Services Worker Program, we're helping [00:19:00] people with disabilities find stability and belonging.

Your support for ABLE2 turns hope into realities for families like Joelle and Patti's. One family, one story at a time.

We would like to thank our presenting sponsor, Sequence Marketing. As one of ABLE2's most trusted partners, Sequence Marketing has played a vital role in amplifying ABLE2's mission, connecting with communities, and sharing stories that matter.

Known for their creative and people-focused approach. They bring a commitment to storytelling and brand excellence that makes a real impact. Their generous support has made this podcast possible.

Thank you Sequence Marketing for helping us make inclusion heard.

If you'd like to learn more about what we do or how you can get more involved with ABLE2, visit able2.org.

Thank you for listening to Voices of ABLE2. If this [00:20:00] episode moved you, please share it with someone who needs to hear it.

Join us next time for another story that deserves to be heard.