

**My Parking Spot Was Far Away** by Gail McIndoe published in Quest 109, Winter 2017

Last spring I moved to a large apartment building in Brampton. A few months before I moved in, I met with the leasing agent and told her that I needed a handicapped parking spot close to the door of the underground garage because I have mobility and chronic pain issues and usually use a walker. She assured me that she tried to keep a few spots “open” for tenants like me. I was thankful that I would have parking close by.

But it didn’t happen when I moved into the building on June 1st.

The office manager stated that she had no spots close to the door and I was given a spot 147 paces away. Back and forth I went each day with my walker. The extensive walking made me extremely tired for a lot of the day and evening. I also sprained my left ankle. My right knee became extremely swollen and painful. The increased pain kept me up at night despite taking my regular pain medications.

I kept going back to the office politely requesting a closer parking spot to the door in the underground. Repeatedly I was told by the office manager that “I have nothing”. I was asked to wait until the next month to see if a closer spot would come up with “someone moving out”.

Luckily, I found out about the Centre for Equality Rights.

I was eventually told by the head office of this landlord that I needed to contact the Property Manager of this building. I then emailed the Property Manager and stated that my health had suffered quite a bit with all of the walking each day to the parking spot that I had been assigned.

A few days later, I received an email from the office manager stating that she had a tandem spot here for me much closer to the door. A tandem spot is a long spot where two cars from one apartment in the building can park one behind the other. She emphatically stated that “It was \$120” because it was a tandem spot for two cars. The charge for single spots was \$75 per month. I told her that I was not paying \$120.

I again contacted Madison at CERA and she stated that the parking spot should still be \$75 as this was an accommodation by the landlord for my disability. Madison also mentioned that it is up to the landlord to pay for the accommodation of my disability (in this situation), not the tenant’s responsibility to pay the extra cost of the tandem spot. I emailed the Property Manager once again and she agreed to honour the \$75 parking charge.

All of the help that I received from the excellent staff at CERA was absolutely free.

If you or anyone else you know in Ontario that has trouble with their landlord accommodating their disabilities, please consider contacting CERA for help. I called and emailed the staff at CERA countless times and each time I was treated in a courteous manner. My many questions were answered politely and accurately by all of the staff there.

I highly recommend this organization and feel extremely fortunate and thankful that they helped me out getting a parking spot here closer to the door in the underground garage.

CERA can be reached at 416 944-0087 or toll free outside of Toronto at 1 800 263-1139.