

Statement on the Passing of Ellen Cohen – Disability Community Mourns Her Loss

Issued by the Canadian Civil Society UN CRPD Delegation

It is with profound sadness that we share the news of the sudden passing of Ellen Cohen, a lifelong advocate for the rights and dignity of people with disabilities. Ellen passed away in Geneva, Switzerland, where she was part of the Canadian delegation of disability rights and civil society organizations participating in the United Nations review of Canada's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Her passing is a deep loss to the disability community in Canada and beyond.

For decades, Ellen worked tirelessly to advance the rights of people with disabilities, particularly those at the intersection of mental health and disability. With her personal lived experience of mental illness and a deep commitment to family members, she always believed she was destined to help others. Her career spanned over thirty years, marked by her roles as an advocate, educator, and organizer in mental health and social work. Her leadership, advocacy, and commitment to social justice shaped countless initiatives and strengthened the voices of individuals who have long been marginalized. Through her leadership and work with the National Network for Mental Health (NNMH), the Canadian Alliance for Mental Illness and Mental Health (CAMIMH), ARCH Disability Law Centre, and many other organizations, Ellen played a pivotal role in bridging the mental health and disability movements.

As a result of her leadership, Ellen was appointed to the Federal Minister's Disability Advisory Group (MDAG). This group provides advice to the federal Minister responsible for Disability Inclusion by targeting barriers to the full participation of Canadians with disabilities in specific areas of Government of Canada priorities and mandates.

Ellen was a fierce champion for inclusion, a trusted leader, and a compassionate ally. She dedicated her life to ensuring that all people, regardless of ability or circumstance, were recognized, respected, and supported. Ellen's passion, wisdom, and unwavering commitment to justice touched the lives of so many. She fought for a Canada where all people, regardless of disability, could live with dignity and full participation. Her legacy will continue to inspire advocates, policymakers, and communities working to create a more just and inclusive Canada.

The disability community mourns this immeasurable loss and extends our heartfelt and deepest condolences to Ellen's family, friends, and colleagues. We stand together in remembering her extraordinary contributions and honouring the impact she had on so many lives.



May her memory be a blessing, and may we continue the work she so passionately dedicated her life to.

Zichrona livracha.