

Take the Cringe Test

How can you tell the difference between discrimination and a legitimate objection to supportive housing? Take the “Cringe Test.”

If it sounds wrong when you say the same thing about a racial, ethnic or religious minority, then you know you’ve heard a discriminatory statement. For example:

Would you say. . . ?*	. . .if it makes you cringe to say. . .?
This neighbourhood already has its fair share of people on welfare.	This neighbourhood already has its fair share of Italians.
The homeless should be placed only on arterial roads.	Jews should be placed only on arterial roads.
This neighbourhood is just not suitable for vulnerable mentally ill people.	This neighbourhood is just not suitable for vulnerable Asian people.
Welfare recipients lower property values and drain public services.	Senior citizens lower property values and drain public services.
Houses for people with disabilities must be separated by 245 meters.	Houses for Catholics must be separated by 245 meters.
We are placing a moratorium on housing for low-income people while we study the impact on the area.	We are placing a moratorium on housing for Greeks while we study the impact on the area.
We deserve to be warned before people with mental illness move onto our street.	We deserve be warned before gays and lesbians move onto our street.
We are a tolerant people. We have been happy to welcome people with mental illness into our neighbourhood. But enough is enough.	We are a tolerant people. We have been happy to welcome the Chinese into our neighbourhood. But enough is enough.
We don’t want mentally ill people, but we’re willing to accept seniors.	We don’t want Muslims, but we’re willing to accept Protestants.
If mentally ill people are going to live there, then I want the building to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 12-foot high wall around it • bars on the windows • frosted windows so they can’t look out • windows that can’t open • a curfew. 	If black people are going to live there, then I want the building to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a 12-foot high wall around it • bars on the windows • frosted windows so they can’t look out • windows that can’t open • a curfew.

*Note: Every one of the statements in this column have been made **publicly** in Ontario within the past five years.