

Ramping Up!

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NATIONAL HOUSING SYMPOSIUM A SUCCESS

Happy New Year! We hope all of you had a safe and happy Festive Season, and are looking forward to a terrific 2005!

In follow-up to the National Housing Symposium – Designing for Mobility, held November 24, 2004, we want to thank all involved in making this day a resounding success!

Keynote speakers, Gloria Gutman, of Simon Fraser University, Brian Sinclair, of the Department of Environmental Design at the University of Calgary, and Bob Barraclough, Director of the Provincial Office for Disability Issues, gave all attendees much to think about, as did many excellent speakers addressing mobility and accessibility through the areas of design, development, real estate, finance, funding and renovation. The feedback was wonderful, and there is already anticipation for another symposium next year.

With the combined disabled and senior populations comprising

approximately 17% of Alberta's population, this Symposium was very timely and relevant, as was indicated by the number of registrants. In the future, we will increase the size of the venue, in order to accommodate all interested in participating!

We are thankful for the excellent contributions of conference coordinator, Ralph Hubele, and conference co-host, Canadian Paraplegic Association. We also extend sincere gratitude to our event sponsors:

- Alberta Real Estate Foundation
- Calgary Health Region
- Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)
- The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

This conference would also not have been possible without our conference planning team, which included representatives from a wide variety of departments and organizations such as CMHC, the Faculty of Environmental Design at University of Calgary, Alberta Seniors

from Shelters and Special Needs Housing, Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society, Calgary Health Region, the City of Calgary, and the Kerby Centre.

We were very encouraged to see such a varied audience at this event ranging from developers, realtors and renovators, to architects and designers. Also in attendance were health care professionals, consumers, and representatives from government programs and departments. What a fantastic day of education and information!

We will distribute available conference materials to those who attended the conference, as well as those who were unable to participate that day. If you are interested in receiving conference materials, please email Deanna at deanna@ahscalgary.ca with your contact information.

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4-D WALL-NUTS !

Volunteers from Spartan Controls were recently at the Fourth Dimension group home to wash walls. This much appreciated effort was a United Way "Days of Caring" project.

AHS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH CALGARY CO-OP



Larry Arnsinson, Store Manager, Brentwood Co-op, presents a cheque for \$15,000 to Robyn Jackson, AHS.

Medic Moose program, and Bowl for Kids, as well as AHS.

Calgary Co-op's contribution is designated for **AHS' Residential Assessment and Design (RAD) Program**, which assists people with mobility problems in adapting and/or renovating their homes to accommodate accessibility needs. This program currently serves over 560 annually and is growing daily.

Based in Calgary, Calgary Co-op is one of the largest employers in the Calgary area, with more than 3,600 employees. In addition to its head office in Calgary, Alberta,

Calgary Co-op operates 20 retail shopping centres, 22 gas bars, 13 liquor stores and 12 travel agencies in Calgary, Airdrie and Strathmore, Alberta.

According to its website, www.calgarycoop.com, Calgary Co-op "owes its success to the members of our community who purchase our products and services. Because our continued success depends on the strength of our community, we are committed to being a meaningful contributor to bettering the lives of our employees, members and our community."

AHS greatly appreciates Calgary Co-op's willingness to invest in the RAD Program and help people achieve greater independence in their own homes and in the community.

Thanks Calgary Co-op!



This past October, the Accessible Housing Society was thrilled to be a recipient of a **\$15,000** donation from **Calgary Co-op's 2004 Charity Golf Classic**. At this event, Calgary Co-op raised over \$285,000 for local organizations including: Alberta Children's Hospital, Boys and Girls Clubs, Meals on Wheels, Calgary Public Library, Missing Children Society, EMS

RESIDENTS' FOCUS: GREG MCMEEKIN

Greg McMeekin is a resident of the Fourth Dimension group home and a most disenfranchised Flames fan. He'd like to tell NHL commissioner Gary Bettman that dialogue and compromise would help resolve the current hockey dispute.

Greg knows a lot about both. For 31 years he's lived with cerebral palsy and has had to compromise and communicate on issues constantly. Greg says attitudes toward the disabled need to change.

"I see attitudes as an even bigger barrier than physical barriers like transportation, housing and access to buildings," he says.

Changing attitudes of people is very difficult, he says, because some people just don't want to change.

Greg would like attitudes to be more positive in areas like education,



Greg McMeekin is a resident of the Fourth Dimension group home and a most disenfranchised Flames fan.

AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped), and employment of the disabled. He believes educating the public about people with disabilities and their ability to contribute to society will help but right now, as in the Flames lock-out, there needs to be more dialogue.

Greg is a strong advocate for the disabled, currently servicing on boards for Accessible Housing Society and Resicare, and on the Handi-bus Advisory Committee.

Greg moved into 4D after completing an honours degree in Mass Communications at Carlton University. He finds that the group home provides the 24 hour a day care he needs while giving him optimal independence to pursue employment or education. Greg is currently completing a certificate in Desktop publishing through U of C Continuing Education.

WINTERIZING & PHYSICAL SAFETY

Winter has arrived once again – time to endure the snow, ice, and cold temperatures. Not only can the season be unpleasant, it can be hazardous to go from one place to another especially if you have a mobility problem. There are some simple points to keep in mind and modifications you can do outside your home to make it not only safer in the winter but safer throughout the year.

1. Ensure the lighting is adequate from your vehicle to the entrance door. Consider lights that border the sidewalk or a motion light that will come on automatically.
2. Ensure there are handrails on the stairs or ramp. Handrails should be round, 1-1/4" to 1-1/2" in diameter, for easier grip. Continuing the handrails along the sidewalk from the entrance to your vehicle will give you additional support.
3. If you have a ramp, ensure it has been built to proper specifications and has a maximum 1:12 slope. Any type of slope can be dangerous in the winter so it is particularly important to keep it clear of snow and ice.

4. Also ensure your sidewalks and stairs are clear of snow and ice. This is especially important if you have a sidewalk that is uneven (i.e. made of patio blocks) – it is difficult or impossible to see the irregularities when covered in snow, posing a tripping hazard.
5. Ensure the down spouts drain away from the sidewalk to avoid ice build-up.
6. Replace the door knob on your entrance door with a lever handle. This is much easier to operate when wearing gloves or if you are carrying packages.

If you need assistance with snow shoveling, there are several programs available throughout the city. For more information about the programs in your area, persons with disabilities under the age of 65 can call 211 or 268-CITY (2489). For persons over the age of 65, call 974-3112.

If you're looking for funding sources that will consider these and other home modifications, please call Accessible Housing Society at 282-1872 for information on the government programs that are available.



THE FACES OF RAD



Alanna Thiessen



Alan Nakatsui



Sue Pearson

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING SOCIETY SERVICES

Housing Registry - To help you find wheelchair accessible rental housing in the city, please call Larry at 282-3373.

Residential Assessment and Design Program - To have your new or current housing situation evaluated for plans or renovations to achieve greater mobility, please call Alanna, Alan or Sue at 282-1872.

Personal Care Services - To access the personal care provided at three locations in Calgary, please call 282-1872.

Library Services - To research a mobility solution, please feel free to browse our resource library.

Barrier-Free Design Workshops - Call AHS at 282-1872 to arrange a workshop for your group.

FUNDING

Did you know that there are programs out there that may assist you financially if you need to renovate your home to improve accessibility? Each of the following programs has specific eligibility requirements. To determine your eligibility, call the individual program or call AHS at 282-1872.

- ◆ Home Adaptation Program (HAP): through Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, 310-0000, then enter (780) 427-5760
- ◆ Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP): through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ Home Adaptations for Senior's Independence (HASI): through CMHC, (403) 515-3000
- ◆ Easter Seal Ability Council: equipment only, (403) 235-5662

BECOMING UPWARDLY MOBILE

by Alan Nakatsui, MAAA, PEng.
(Excerpt from Fall 2003, HomeBase
Media's "Renovations Magazine")

This is the second in a series of articles on making a home more accessible for those who have some mobility difficulties, which can mean anything from use of a cane to walk, to use of a wheelchair. The first article explained why you should consider accessibility in your home even if you currently have no such need. It just makes sense: you want to stay in your own home well after your retirement.

This, and subsequent articles will deal with specific equipment and areas in the home. This article describes the various devices available to get to the main floor from the ground and between floors in the home.

If you are lucky or have planned ahead, your current house is a bungalow with the main level very near ground level. This makes it easy to provide access to the home with a short ramp. And simple access to the basement could be possible with an inclined platform lift.

But this is Calgary, and this house does not exist here. At least, you won't find many. Most housing in Calgary has the main floor raised above ground and many are two storey homes. In these cases, creating better access to the home and to the different levels is more difficult.

What are the elevating devices that are available? Below is a list of the types that are sold by a number of vendors in the city:

- ◆ **Porch Lifts:** This device has a platform that will accommodate a scooter, a wheelchair plus a standing person, or someone using a walker. They are normally used to access the main floor from the ground, and can be located outdoors, in a garage, or in an enclosure. Cost is \$4000.00 and up depending on the required

height, plus site work, which usually includes a concrete base pad, a sidewalk, an electrical outlet, and a new landing at floor level.



- ◆ **Chair Lifts:** These are chairs that run on rails which are attached to the stair. They are for indoor locations only. Cost is around \$3500.00 and up. Stairs that are not straight runs can be accommodated, but the cost is much greater for curved tracks. This device requires the ability to transfer to the chair and sufficient stability in the seated position to ride up independently. If a mobility device such as a walker is being used, the device must be available on both floor levels, or someone must transport the device.

- ◆ **Inclined Platform Lifts:** Similar to chair lifts, these lifts share stair wells with the stairs. Costs range widely due to the different features available, from \$8500.00 to \$15,000.00 for a straight run of stairs. Some site work could be needed to provide adequate support in the stairwell walls. Width of the stairwell and headroom are critical factors in whether this type of lift can be installed. Also, curved tracks are possible at much greater costs.

- ◆ **Vertical Platform Lifts:** These are similar to elevators but do not have cabs. They are used to travel between floors or from ground to floor level. Cost is \$12,000.00 and up plus site work for a lift serving two floors. They require about 5' x 5' of floor area on each of the levels being served, stacked directly above one

another, and other services such as plumbing, ducting and electrical wiring may need to be relocated. The floors surrounding the opening must also be structurally supported. These considerations make it difficult to locate the lift within an existing home. An addition to the exterior of the home to house the lift is an alternative. Shafts for these devices are created with studs and gypsum board. Standard residential doors can be used for access, with interlocks to prevent the doors from opening if the platform is not at that level.

- ◆ **Shaft-less Elevators:** These elevators have cabs but do not require a shaft in which to run. They serve two floors only. Cost is approximately \$13,000.00 plus site work. Considerations similar to the above lift installation apply. They must be located against a suitable structural wall which can support the lifting mechanism. The opening through the floor is automatically closed in when the cab is parked at the lower floor. The advantage with this type of elevator is that the floor area occupied the cab is open when the cab is parked at the other floor level.

Elevating devices can be an expensive addition to the home and selection of the right one is a difficult decision. So it pays to plan ahead. If you are planning a renovation to your home, even if you don't currently need a lift, designing for its future installation is a valuable exercise.

Accessible Housing Society can assess your home to help decide which devices are needed, which are feasible, and where they can be located. Call 282-1872 or visit our web site www.ahscalgary.ca to find out more about our organization and what we can do to help you.

EARLY CHRISTMAS PRESENT FOR ACCESSIBLE HOUSING SOCIETY FROM HILLHURST MASSAGE (HTSMC)

On Wednesday December 8, 2004, Janet Reimer and Ellen Wolfe, owners of Hillhurst Therapeutic & Sport Massage Clinic presented Robyn Jackson of Accessible Housing Society of Calgary with \$580.00 in donations collected by Hillhurst Therapeutic & Sport Massage Clinic this past fall.

“We had the opportunity to help Accessible Housing once again while two of our therapists were completing their practicum hours for their reflexology certification.” explains Janet Reimer. “AHS were fantastic

supporters last time we did this so we were pleased to be able to partner up with them again!”

Hillhurst Massage (short for HTSMC) has three Certified Reflexologists and ten Registered Massage Therapists. We would ask that you please continue your support of HTSMC by attendance or referrals. With your assistance, they can maintain a position for future donations to many of Calgary’s non-profit organizations that help so many Calgarians like AHS.



Janet Reimer and Ellen Wolfe presenting cheque to Robyn Jackson

AN “OPTIMUM” WAY TO HELP AHS

For years Shopper Drug Mart has enabled its customers to get the most out of their drug store dollars through the Optimum Points program. At each purchase, the Optimum Card bearer can earn points which can be accumulated and used for discounts on future purchases.

Now the program’s benefits are even greater – you can use your points to support the Accessible Housing Society!

The process is simple:

- ⇒ Log on to the Internet and go to www.shoppersdrugmart.ca
- ⇒ Look on the menu bar near the top of the page and click “Shoppers Optimum”
- ⇒ Click on “Donate Your Points For Charity Today”
- ⇒ Click the “Donate Now” button

- ⇒ Fill out the form and click “Submit”
- ⇒ Scroll through the list of charities and click on “Accessible Housing Society
- ⇒ Type in how many points you wish to donate and click “Submit”

You also have the option to be notified by email that your donation has been confirmed.

AHS will use Optimum Program Points to purchase equipment and supplies for our residences and office, as well as things like prizes and food and beverage for special events.

Thanks for your support of this!

OKTOBERFEST IS THE BEST!



The 2nd annual AHS/United Way fund-raiser was a complete success with nearly \$600.00 raised. Over 50 people came to the Fourth Dimension group home to enjoy beer, sausages and entertainment by Gabriela. Thanks to contributors: Safeway NorthHill, Big Rock, Spolumbo’s, Calgary Italian Bakery, Calaway Park, and Yummy & Co. and contributors to the bake sale.



To our generous supporters:

- E. Aboussafy
- Alberta Lottery Fund - Community Initiatives Program
- Calgary Co-op 2004 Charity Golf Classic
- Catholic Charities
- dmg world media
- Harry & Martha Cohen Foundation
- D. Kirk
- La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries
- A. Markin
- Medivet Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
- Nickle Family Foundation
- Progress Club of Calgary - North
- Rotary Club of Calgary Centennial
- Shell Busey’s HouseSmart Centre
- United Way of Calgary & Area
- United Way Donor Choice Program

