

To: Mayor Gregor Robertson;
Members of Vancouver City Council;
Chris Robertson, Assistant Director,
City-Wide and Regional Planning

From: Leonor Vlug, Deaf community advocate
By email: s.22(1) Personal and
Confidential

Date: July 17, 2018

Subject: Accessible Path of Travel Policy Review (RTS #10317)

Disclaimer: While I am a member of the City of Vancouver's Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, I am primarily a Deaf woman, a senior citizen, a retired educator, and an advocate with over 30 years of experience and I am commenting from these latter perspectives.

I have read the comments made by representatives of the two advisory committees, organization representatives and individuals who are seniors or who have disabilities themselves. My comments will not address the specifics of design, percentages of housing required to have or be exempted for creating the accessible paths – but the principles connected to the overall decision-making.

It is simple – I see a great contradiction in the consultation focus of the accessible path of travel – a process where parties are discussing numbers and percentages of different types of housing and building developments and so forth. I question the **reluctance** of guaranteeing options for **complete**, rather than 'minimal' accessible path of travel for housing. This appears to be a travesty of the City's recent and unanimously approved commitment to create an Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy for the City of Vancouver.

I would think that this City Council would be proactive in establishing a definitive effort to begin the long-term goal to make bylaws, building codes, policies, and procedures as close to providing full accessibility as possible - not wait to have it imposed upon the City by provincial legislation and subsequent regulations or by litigation.

My practical attitude comes from over thousands of years' oppression where Deaf people have had to fight for their preferred communication access and to be accepted as they want to be accepted - and this spills over to my frustration when I see how my colleagues with disabilities are constantly fighting for access in similar ways - for basic things like shelter, food, medical care, and transportation. Commonsense says you make the housing accessible - not only inside, but in the entryways and exit areas - simply safeguarding all - not only for PWD, but elderly persons, families with children, and their visitors.

Does it matter if it costs the developers or builders more to make homes and buildings easier to get into - that cost is a one-time thing for the most part...unlike providing sign language interpreters for deaf persons like myself or for personal care attendants - an ongoing cost - for many areas of our lives – just so we can participate as citizens in ways most people take for granted.

I encourage all involved in the decision-making process to consider how the community will view the end results, and how true to the commitment of an Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy such decisions will be seen.

Thank you.

Dragnea, Irina

From: Laura Mackenrot s.22(1) Personal and Confidential
Sent: Wednesday, July 18, 2018 1:00 AM
To: Public Hearing
Cc: Laura Mackenrot
Subject: Submission for Accessible Path Hearing July 18
Attachments: 2018.07.18 Laura Mackenrot - Access Path Submission to CoV.docx

Dear Mayour and Council

Please find attached my letter which also includes a poem with two parts that I have written with regards to the Accessible Path issue today, July 18.

Please note that this is a personal submission. I will also be speaking today.

Our PDAC Co-Chair Jacques Courteau will be presenting on behalf of PdAC.

Respectfully Submitted

Laura Mackenrot, B.Com.
National Teleconference Speaker, Registered Disability Savings Plan
Vice-Chair, Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, CoV

Laura Mackenrot

July 18, 2018

Dear Mayor and Councillors

My name is Laura Mackenrot and I am the Vice Chair of the Person's with Disabilities Advisory Committee. I want to give a voice to those we rarely hear from and yet represent a sizable and vulnerable portion of our population: children with disabilities.

I am 36 years old and when I was 1 year old, I developed severe symptoms of arthritis. After the age of 4, I helped raise donations for the Arthritis Society to enlarge the building and to facilitate more treatments. I did this for about 10 years – in that time I met hundreds of children and seniors with disabilities. In fact, I attended an arthritis camp for children since the age of eight and into my teen years and we would share our stories. More often than not, the stories were about loneliness, not being able to go play outside, feeling trapped, being isolated, and having to stay inside our own homes. Back in the 80's there were not a lot of houses that I would classify as accessible or what we now use the term, "visitable" and because some of the arthritics had to use electric scooters or wheelchairs, it was difficult to visit friends and relatives.

I have usually been able to walk, although for long distances I often needed a wheel chair. It was also incredibly difficult for me to use the stairs as a child. People used to lift me up the stairs because when I climbed stairs, my arthritis would hurt more. In my 20's I was unable to even step up a curb and my hips and right knee had to be replaced. I lost my vision at age 26.

I know what children, adults, and seniors with disabilities have to endure. And for those who are able-bodied, even though they see people using wheelchairs, what they don't see are the many more people who like myself, appear to be able to walk on level ground but struggle with curbs and stairs and in many cases, are unable to walk further than a few hundred meters. That is why visitability and having an accessible path is very important to me.

We have an aging baby boomer population. Right now, approximately 1/3 of the population living in the City of Vancouver is 65 and over. These seniors also have arthritis and other kinds of mobility impairments which make it very difficult and painful for them to climb up stairs. By not having more housing units and more new builds that have an accessible path, it means this population becomes more isolated and at risk for injury. The longer a person can stay in their own home, they will remain healthier longer. Accessibility and visitability is paramount for this to occur. Therefore, this also reduces the financial burden to cope with the health care demands of an aging and disabled population.

So I ask – why we are still making so much of our new builds inaccessible? Why are we still making them not visitable? And when I say “we” what I really mean is “you” – the law makers, because you too will eventually become elderly and could become disabled.

In the last 30 years, it doesn't seem like much has changed. Why is this? I would like to see our children of today as well as parents and grandparents, be able to attend functions in people's homes where they don't encounter barriers to access. It is really disappointing and dismaying to see that in 2018 we continue to be reactive and not proactive in developing a better standard of living for everyone.

Let's not wait another 30 years before regretting making our housing stock both visitable and accessible. Let's ensure to change the laws today. Please make an accessible path mandatory with exceptions when new developments are being built. It should not be voluntary. We know that voluntary compliance does not work. It only results in a miniscule percentage of developers who will elect to build an accessible path. Let's provide visitability and accessibility to all our residents, not just those who are presently able-bodied.

No path to party – Part 1

The little girl cries
She's at home
On a couch
Watching TV
With tears
Streaming down her face

She doesn't want to be here
What she wants is to be at her friend's birthday party
She knows it's going on
It's only 2 blocks away
In her mind she can see the other little girls all arriving
Walking up those tall stairs
Presents in their hands
Walking through the balloon-ridged entrance door
She knows they'll have a lot of fun
Cake, presents, laughter, and smiles

But she's not smiling
She's crying
She wants so very bad to be a part of this
To join in the activities
The laughter and the fun

But she can't
She can't move
Because she's a child with a disability
The wheels of her wheelchair are her legs

But at this party
There is no accessibility
Those tall stairs
Are the barriers to her fun
To her happiness
To seeing her friends and participating in the birthday party

She knows this is why she did not receive an invitation
When all the other little girls in her class got them
But she didn't
This must be it
It's not her personality
She knows that
She's perky and sweet
Full of smiles
All sugar

Somehow she had hoped that an invitation would come
That people could get it together
Figure out a way to get her through the door
To be a part of the party
To participate

But they didn't
They didn't put a second thought to it
It was just easier for them to not invite her
Perhaps they didn't know what to do
Perhaps they just didn't want to ask
Perhaps they didn't have enough strength to be able to lift her up and down those tall stairs
Perhaps they did not want to get their carpet dirty
From the wheels of her wheelchair
This is her life

Yet this is so life-shattering
So she is home now
She's not playing party games
While the other little girls at the party down the street
Enjoy their balloons and cake
And cry out in wonder
As they watch the presents being opened

She's alone
At home
Sitting on the couch
Crying

When will this ever change?
When will it get better?
When will she be able to join the party?

No Path to party – Part 2

A quarter century has passed
Since the little girl has cried
From not being able to go to the birthday party
She's a woman now
But not much has changed
Over two and a half decades
The number of parties
has barely changed
She can almost count them on 2 hands
Somehow she thought
That as the years passed
This would have changed

But it did not
No dinner invitations come
No birthday parties
Almost no celebrations of any kind
No invitations ever come in the mail
No phone call is ever received

She is used to it now
Attending only one party in the year
By a gentleman in a wheelchair
And she goes every year like clockwork
Because this is the only party
She ever gets invited to
This is the only home
That has a path to the party

Even though a quarter century has passed
She still has the hope
That this will change

But will it?
Or the question is
Will it change in her life time?
She's not getting any younger
She knows this
What she once thought would be a lifetime filled with birthday parties,
Weddings, dinners and celebrations
Has become a lifetime of loneliness,
Solitude, and social isolation
With invitations never received

And so the little girl may be gone
But in her place is a woman
A woman who still cries

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Mackenrot, B.Com.

Dragnea, Irina

From: Michael Huggins s.22(1) Personal and Confidential
Sent: Wednesday, July 18, 2018 12:34 PM
To: Public Hearing
Subject: New Adaptability Requirements

Hello

If I am reading correctly, a 1 and 2 family dwelling now requires a level grade entry with an accessible path of travel nitwit standing all the challenges outlined in the policy report. While the intent is understandable, does this not drastically change the typical typology of form from **a house with a basement 4' below grade and a main floor 5-6' above grade**. The entire FSR calculation in RS districts is based on this typology if the FSR is to be maximized. If the FSR calculation remains status quo, then the design options for houses in Vancouver will be unnecessarily constrained by virtue of requiring a visitable and adaptable ground floor which usually implies a fully below grade basement which is not considered livable area. I am not convinced this has been thought through unless I am missing something or that all houses built with livable basements (no more than 4' above ground) will need a split level entry and elevator??? Of course, I am assuming that ramping is totally impractical, unwieldy and unsightly. A ramp to get up 6' would need to be 60' long with landings every 15'. Am I missing something?

Sincerely,

—
Michael C. Huggins • Architect AIBC
Burrowes Huggins Architects

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