

Prince George Declaration on Visitable Homes

Developed out of the
“Creating Universally Designed Healthy Sustainable Communities Conference”
Prince George, British Columbia
April 6-8 2009

hosted by the Measuring Up The North Initiative:

a partnership between
the North Central Local Government Association and the BC Paraplegic Association with
supporting partners:
2010 Legacies Now, the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport (including the Age-Friendly
Initiative),
BC Healthy Communities and Northern Health.

One hundred and seventy-five (175) delegates attended this conference where various researchers, consultants, builders, designers, building officials, planners, realtors, elected officials, policy makers, government officials, local and provincial government personnel, seniors’ and disability advocates, universal design practitioners, non-profit organizations, health professionals, students and others gathered from across British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and the USA. After three days of deliberations the delegates recommended a declaration come out of the conference in an attempt to move the state of visitable home forward at this critical time. The following declaration is based on the presentations and discussions held.

Whereas there is a growing population of older adults in British Columbia, Canada and the USA and;

Whereas there is a growing number of persons with disabilities in British Columbia, Canada and the USA and;

Whereas nearly 90% of single family homes in North America lack basic access and;

Whereas persons with disabilities and older adults experience unnecessary falls, are forced to live in institutions, are unable to enter or leave their homes safely, are unable to enter their own bathrooms, are unable to visit friends and relatives, are “forced to migrate” and are unable to fully participate in society due to this housing stock that lacks even a basic level of accessibility and;

Whereas the vast majority of persons with disabilities and older adults wish to live in their own homes and communities and fully participate and contribute to society and;

Whereas any member of society can become disabled either permanently or temporarily and experience mobility, visual or cognitive issues that make navigating stairs difficult and;

Whereas single and multi-family homes for older adults and persons with disabilities should not be addressed by specialized housing alone and;

Whereas a home with basic access or visitable is defined as one that has at least one zero-step entrance on an accessible route; doorways throughout the main floor with no less than 32 inch (810mm) clear width; and at least a half bathroom on the main floor with the wider doorway and;

Whereas a visitable home is a more functional and convenient home for all persons including residents moving equipment or furniture, movers, persons caring for young children and their equipment, ambulance attendants, maintenance and repair personnel, caregivers and;

Whereas a visitable home, with a no-step entry is also significantly safer for all users and especially for older users who have great difficulty negotiating a step while opening or closing an entry door (plus often a screen door) and;

Whereas visitability is an established norm in several jurisdictions in North America, the United Kingdom, and Australia where much progress has already been achieved regarding visitable housing policy, thousands of new homes have been built and several jurisdictions have declared that all new homes must be visitable;

Whereas the number of new homes built in British Columbia, Canada and the USA will barely keep up with the demand that is needed;

Let it be resolved that

- All new single family homes be built to have a basic level of access (visitable) and
- All new multi-family homes and apartments be built to have a basic level of access (visitable) throughout and that a percentage of all suites be fully universally designed or accessible and;

Let it be resolved that

- the local, provincial and federal levels of government work toward establishing laws, by-laws, codes and incentive programs to ensure visitability at all levels of jurisdiction.

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