

## Letter to City of Vancouver: Thank you for making housing more accessible!

Posted by [Chris McBride](#) on Sep 27, 2013



On September 25, 2013, Vancouver City Council unanimously passed bylaw changes that will enhance the accessibility and adaptability of new homes in Vancouver. Their decision also contained a commitment to look at an accessible path to all new houses, townhouses. The new bylaws will take effect in early 2014. [Click here to review the report](#) (the relevant info is found on pages 9-11, 15, 17, & 23-25).

What does this mean? Once the bylaw changes take effect, all new housing (including single family dwellings, new apartments/condos, and multiple unit buildings) will have a barrier-free shower or an adaptable shower, wider doors/stairs/halls, lower light switches, higher outlets, 3 piece bathroom on the main floor with room for a person in a wheelchair to get in/close the door/use the toilet & sink/& get out, lower drainpipes under sinks so counters can easily be lowered, reinforcement in the bathroom walls, outlets for future stair glides. Multiple unit buildings will also be required to have better signage for persons who are blind or have partial sight, power door openers and other accessibility-related considerations.

During the decision making process, Council also asked questions that made it clear they will seriously consider additional accessibility improvements in the future.

On behalf of SCI BC, I expressed our thanks to Vancouver's Mayor and Council, and to Jill Weiss and the City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, who worked so hard help ensure the development and adoption of the historic bylaw changes.

Here is my thank you letter to Vancouver's Mayor and Council.

### **Dear Mayor and Council:**

It was with great pride and delight that Spinal Cord Injury BC (SCI BC) learned of Vancouver Council's decision to adopt the bylaw changes that will enhance the accessibility and adaptability of new homes constructed in Vancouver.

As stated in my email sent in support of the proposed bylaw changes, challenges related to accessing accessible and adaptable housing are the most common reasons our membership contacts our organization for help. The adoption of the new bylaw is an important step in addressing this fundamental need for people with disabilities and seniors.

We are proud to live in such a progressive city that clearly understands the importance and value of enhancing the participation and inclusion of all of its citizens. Once again, Vancouver is a leader in fostering greater accessibility for all. We are also encouraged by Council's apparent willingness to consider additional accessibility improvements.

I would like to recognize the tremendous work done by Jill Weiss and the City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee in working with the disability community in support of these historic bylaw changes. It has been a great pleasure working with Jill on this and other priority issues faced by Vancouver's disability community.

On behalf of SCI BC, I extend my most sincere thank you and congratulations on adopting the accessible and adaptable housing bylaw changes. Their impact will both positive and significant.

*Chris McBride, PhD Executive Director*    **Spinal Cord Injury BC**

Note from Eleanor Smith: Vancouver advocate Jill Weiss was a prime mover for this bylaw.