

RE: WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY IN THE JUSTICE BUILDING

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendation of the Acting Director Engineering be adopted.

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TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1989 MAY 16

FROM: ACTING DIRECTOR ENGINEERING

SUBJECT: Wheelchair accessibility in the Justice Building.

PURPOSE: To respond to a Council enquiry regarding the provision of wheelchair access between floors in the Justice Building.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT sufficient funds be appropriated from the 1989 Capital Contingency to install stairwell platform lifts (estimated at \$60,000) in the Justice Building subject to commitment from B.C. Building Corporation to cost share in this project.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

Council at its meeting of 1989 April 10 were made aware of the difficulty of persons confined to wheelchairs accessing the basement of the Justice Building from inside the building. Arising from the discussion, Council adopted the following motion:

"THAT staff prepare a report on the feasibility of providing wheelchair accessibility to the basement of the Justice Building from inside the building."

Operational functions within the Justice Building could give rise for the need to travel between the Court level (top floor) and the cells (basement). Currently, there is no wheelchair access between floors within the interior of the building. Access between floors is possible outside the building at present, however only via a very circuitous route with sections of steep gradient.

The item of wheelchair access is only one issue affecting the disabled and before describing the access options we would provide Council with the background on the more comprehensive topic.

As part of the Municipality's recognition of the National Access Awareness Week during 1988 May 29 - June 4, Council received a Planning Department report on the topic of issues for the disabled.

1.0 BACKGROUND (Cont'd.)

The purpose of the report was two-fold. The first was to raise the general awareness of accessibility issues facing the disabled. The second was to identify a number of initiatives which could be pursued by the Municipality, the private sector and other levels of government to improve accessibility for the disabled.

The report addressed the status of accessible facilities and services in Burnaby for the disabled as related to the subjects of housing, restaurant and motel/hotel accommodations, employment, transportation and pedestrian movement, recreation and public facilities and education.

The report identified that some initiatives could be initiated in the short term, and represent minimal expense to the Municipality; however, longer term objectives may take several years to achieve. Under the section for Recreation & Public Facilities the report determined

"A long term objective that should be pursued by staff is to assess the accessibility of all Municipal facilities and buildings. The outcome of such an assessment would be a phased plan to upgrade all Municipal buildings to meet standards for the disabled. Priority should be given to the Municipal Hall."

Council will receive a further report to coincide with the 1989 National Access Awareness Week scheduled for June 04 - 10. Included in the forthcoming report will be an approach to achieve accessibility for the disabled within Municipal facilities.

2.0 JUSTICE BUILDING OPTIONS

Unlike the Municipal Hall and West Building, the Justice Building has no elevator. Its architectural configuration precludes the installation of an exterior elevator because there is no outside wall common to all floors. An interior elevator could be constructed however it would be very costly (approximately \$400,000) and would result in the loss of considerable office space which is already at a premium.

One option which is technically viable for the Justice Building is the installation of either stair chairs or wheelchair stair platform lifts within the stairwells. Platform lifts would be preferable because the counter-balanced platform folds neatly out of the way when not in use.

The stairwells within the Justice Building are located in areas of restricted public access therefore any unauthorized personnel wishing to use the devices, if installed, would require to be escorted. It should be noted that although the various floors within the Justice Building house functions which are complementary in nature, they have very distinct identities. The Court function is a Provincial responsibility and the courts occupy space leased from the Municipality whereas the Municipal policing function occupies the lower floors. There is little interaction between floors and in many jurisdictions the Courts and

2.0 JUSTICE BUILDING OPTIONS (Cont'd.)

Police are housed in separate buildings. Therefore it is felt that the frequency of use would be light and consequently the need for escorts would not be an onerous demand placed upon the R.C.M.P.'s resources. The R.C.M.P. have indicated that they would not object to the installation of the devices.

3.0 FINANCING

It would be necessary to install the devices in two stairwells in order to achieve wheelchair access from the Court level to the basement. Preliminary estimates indicate that the cost of platform lifts would be in the range of \$25,000 - \$30,000/stairwell for a total of \$50,000 - \$60,000. Staff have been unable to locate any grants either Provincial or Federal which would be applicable to this project.

Staff have approached B.C. Building Corporation (B.C.B.C.), who lease space in the Justice Building, to inquire whether B.C.B.C. would be willing to cost share in providing wheelchair access. B.C.B.C. have the matter under consideration however no decision has been made. If B.C.B.C. commits to cost sharing in the project it is recommended that the Corporation proceed with the installation of stairwell platform lifts.

Although no provision for wheelchair access in the Justice Building has been included in the 1989 Capital Budget, funds could come from the capital contingency provision.

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ACTING DIRECTOR ENGINEERING

cc: Director Planning & Building Inspection
Director Finance
Director Administrative & Community Services
Officer-In-Charge, R.C.M.P.
Superintendent, Building Maintenance
Medical Health Officer

