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# Universal Design Network of Canada

Promoting Best Practice in Universal Design

[www.UniversalDesign.ca](http://www.UniversalDesign.ca)

[www.ConceptionUniverselle.ca](http://www.ConceptionUniverselle.ca)

October 25, 2018

The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)

Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street

House of Commons

K1A OA6

Canada

Dear Committee Members,

I am an occupational therapist and founding member representing the *Universal Design Network of Canada* which is a non partisan, non profit organization. Our mission is simple: to promote Universal Design in Canada using research, education, and displays of best practice and policies. The United Nations defines Universal Design as “the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.”

As you are most keenly aware, Bill C-81, otherwise known as *Accessible Canada Act*, is now being reviewed by your committee. Throughout the public HUMA committee meetings this month, common issues within the bill continue to be identified such as absence of time frames, the systemic and complex issue of accessibility, and lack of "meter stick” to measure change. While the *Universal Design Network of Canada* recognizes these concerns, we strongly believe a bill which commits to Universal Design principles would not only address many of these issues, but would also compliment the overall intention which is the progressive realization of a barrier-free Canada using a disability lens.

We are recommending Bill C-81 include a commitment to support research, education, and displays of best practice and policies in the knowledge area of Universal Design. This commitment will also support the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (ratified by Canada in 2010) which specifies State Parties to “undertake or promote research and development of universally designed goods, services, equipment and facilities, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, which should require the minimum possible adaptation and the least cost to meet the specific needs of a person with disabilities, to promote their availability and use, and to promote universal design in the development of standards and guidelines”.

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Universal Design is a powerful tool to achieve a barrier free society. We believe Canada can transcend beyond the minimum standard of codes and regulations to a fully inclusive society where Universal Design is considered at the beginning of any design, whether it be in the built environment, products, services, information technology, or programs. Using the 1939 Wizard of Oz movie as an example, a universally designed Canada would be like watching the characters transition from black and white to vibrant and engaging technicolor. Committing to the principles of Universal Design will benefit all Canadians regardless of age, ability, or disability. I’d like to end this submission with a quote from Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus School, “If it is true that the mind can transform the body, it is equally true that structure can transform the mind”.

Sincerely,

Jason Dalton

Occupational Therapist/Founding Member

*Universal Design Network of Canada*

St John’s, NL

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## Appendix

The Principles of Universal Design (Center for Universal Design, 1997)

1. Equitable use

2. Flexibility in use

3. Simple and intuitive use

4. Perceptible information

5. Tolerance for error

6. Low physical effort

7. Size and space for approach and use

The Goals of Universal Design (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012)

1. Body fit: Accommodating a wide range of body sizes and abilities.

2. Comfort: Keeping demands within desirable limits of body function.

3. Awareness: Ensuring that critical information for use is easily perceived.

4. Understanding: Making methods of operation and use intuitive, clear, and unambiguous.

5. Wellness: Contributing to health promotion, avoidance of disease, and prevention of injury.

6. Social integration: Treating all groups with dignity and respect.

7. Personalization: Incorporating opportunities for choice and the expression of individual preferences.

8. Cultural Appropriateness. Respecting and reinforcing cultural values and the social environment context of any design

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