



## Just Ask Bob!

– By Expert Contractor,  
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A home that fits everyone...

# Built right, the first time!

**Dear Bob:**

*My wife and I are looking for a builder to construct us our retirement dream home. Beside the pool table and 54 inch screen television that I have always wanted (and worked so hard for!) we really wish to have the home constructed so that it is barrier-free. We don't want it looking like a nursing home, just easier on our aging bodies while still having a good resale value. "Something that would appeal to everyone, not just us old people!" Can you offer us some design ideas?*

**The Gaspars – Ancaster**

The Ontario Building Code is designed to construct safe, affordable homes built to a minimum standard, hence the "Ontario Minimum Building Code". Nowhere in the code book does it say to build them "smart" and make sure that the home will fit everyone!

It cost much less money to incorporate these smart building practices in the beginning while the home is being built, rather than after the fact, otherwise known as "renovations" which can cost up to ten times more than having it built right from the beginning.

Young families moving into new homes today do not yet realize that the home is not well designed, nor consider accessibility.

Today they are young and can move around easily, however as they age, and especially if they develop a disability, they will quickly realize that it takes a great deal of effort to maneuver themselves comfortably through the home.

The home can easily be designed to accommodate EVERYONE: both young and aging, healthy or ill, without any mobility issues down the road!

**Simple Smart ideas; Built right from the start;**

- All doors should have lever style door handles instead of round knobs. These lever handles can easily be operated by anyone.



- Falls account for more than half of all injuries among Canadians 65 years and older. All shower and bathtubs should have solid wood blocking installed during the framing stage, and be prepared for grab bars before the tiles are installed. (I have personally slipped in the bathtub a few times and I am still young and healthy!)
- Some new homes have ridiculously small doors, usually installed on two-piece powder rooms. All new homes should come with doors that are at least a minimum of thirty two inches wide, to easily accommodate a wheel chair. (Try getting through a small doorway with a walker!) Pocket doors offer ease of use and are a space-saving alternative to regular swing in doors.



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- Hallways should have a new standard width of at least 48 inches – once again to easily accommodate one wheel chair plus one ambulatory person
- Door thresholds should be limited to a maximum of half an inch in height.



- New homes should be built with better lighting. All entrances should have an outdoor light (preferably motion-activated).

All exterior sides of the home should come standard with motion-activated lighting (walk a couple of steps, lights come on for enhanced safety and security. It's not enough to just have a light switch at the top and bottom of the staircase – these light switches should be motion-activated, making them essentially automatic.

Age shouldn't matter: how many times have we all just walked down the stairs in the dark because we could not see the light switch (or were too sleepy) to hit the switch on the wall?

Incorporating these items during new construction cost pennies, as opposed to after the fact during the dreaded renovation.

**Dear Bob:**

*Where can I go to see what products are available for making my existing home more accessible and are there any organizations that provide financial assistance for home modifications?*

**Elaine – Stoney Creek**

A wide variety of products for accessible renovations are available for you to see and try out before you make decisions. You may visit the Ontario March of Dimes Accessibility House, (Thorold), Shopper's Home Healthcare stores, even some big box renovation stores carry these products in-stock.

**For further information:**

The Accessibility Directorate of Ontario:  
[www.accessibilitydirectory.ca](http://www.accessibilitydirectory.ca)  
 or phone 416-325-4957.

CMHC (Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation)

- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)
- Home Adaptation for Seniors (HASI)  
[www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca)

**Have more questions for Just-Ask-Bob?**

Wondering what the easiest and longest-lasting kitchen or bathroom faucet is to install?

Should your roof have tar paper installed throughout? Is your new home builder giving you the cold shoulder during your warranty period? ■

Please send all your questions to "Just Ask Bob" c/o Silver and Gold Magazine [info@sngpublishing.com](mailto:info@sngpublishing.com) or visit "Just Ask Bob's" website for more information.  
[www.triplerinc.ca](http://www.triplerinc.ca)