

Deputation from: Julie Sawchuk, Resident of Blyth, Teacher at FE Madill, Member of Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Deputation Request: Support for the North Huron StopGap community ramp project (start date March 2017; estimated completion June 2017)

Attachment: Ramp Project Survey Form

I am here to ask for your support for the StopGap Community Ramp Project for the Town of Wingham and the Village of Blyth. StopGap is a not-for-profit organization whose sole objective is to increase accessibility - so everyone can have access to every space.

With the help of volunteers and donated materials, StopGap provides portable ramps to eliminate the barrier that one step provides. Businesses with a single step storefront will be invited to participate and ramps will be constructed by students at FE Madill. Materials will be donated by local businesses or purchased with donated funds. Each ramp cost approximately \$40.

Upon completion, the ramps will be delivered free of charge and businesses will have a brightly coloured, custom and fully portable ramp ready to be used as needed. Store fronts will display signs stating that a ramp is available and a number to call in order to access it. Not only do these ramps make a business more accessible for wheelchair users, parents with strollers and carriers with trolleys, they also make the storefront more appealing and attract curiosity.

There are approximately 25 businesses (Blyth and Wingham combined) that would benefit from having a one-step ramp. Businesses will be surveyed to determine interest and each ramp will be measured and made to order.

Business who participate love having the ramp. Here is a quote from a business owner in Toronto:

"The entrance to my shop has a very high front step. This had proved an impediment to many people since we opened in 2011. So when we got a call out of the blue from someone asking if we wanted a ramp, I jumped at the chance. I had not previously heard of StopGap but once someone from the organization came and took measurements and gave us a choice of colours, I started noticing StopGap ramps all across the city.

When the ramp arrived, it made an immediate difference to my business. Within an hour of its being set in place we were complimented on how helpful it was. All of a sudden the shop became accessible not only to customers using wheelchairs, but also to parents with strollers and anyone for whom the front step had been an insurmountable challenge.

It's also been great for me. Every day I wheel a cart loaded with sale books onto the street. Without the ramp, this extension of my business would not be possible.

We couldn't be happier with our StopGap ramp and we commend the StopGap crew on the great service they provide."Peter Sellers, Sellers & Newel Second-Hand Books,
Toronto ON

As a member of the Huron County Accessibility Advisory Committee I will be the liaison between businesses, donors and the builders (Madill's Off-Site construction class). These ramps are not the perfect solution but the project introduces the right to equal access and independence for all. I request that North Huron Council make a motion to endorse the North Huron StopGap project.

If you would like any further information please feel free to contact me directly.

Julie Sawchuk

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