



Finding accessibility solutions

STAFF WRITER – The GTA Construction Report Special Feature



Province of Ontario, Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services presents the Provincial Award of Recognition to Reliable Living for their success in creating barrier free living at home and in the workplace

(left to right: Hon. Minister Harinder Takhar, Shayna Campbell, Ronny Wiskin, Susan Wiskin)



Barrier free washroom including ReliAble's Euromax Shower using Schluter Systems Kerdi shower tray and waterproof membrane.

As the population ages, new buildings need to be designed to accommodate the mobility challenges of seniors and handicapped people and existing buildings must be retrofitted. Reliable Independent Living Services provides comprehensive consulting resources and solutions to building owners, architects and contractors seeking practical and cost-effective answers.

"The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act sets out guidelines for things like how to build entrances, washrooms and public facilities," says Reliable Independent Living Services founder Ronny Wiskin. "Anyone in the business of building new or retrofitting existing buildings is going to have to be

knowledgeable about this Act."

While some of the law's provisions will be effective on relatively short notice, building owners don't need to panic about introducing retrofits as much of the legislation doesn't take effect until 2025. However, Wiskin says it makes good business sense to waste no time in implementing accessibility solutions, especially if your business serves tenants or clients who are aging.

Wiskin has first-hand experience and knows what works, and what doesn't. His five-year-old business has retrofitted many residential and commercial buildings in the Toronto area. With input from Schluter Systems, for example, Reliable Independent Living Services can create



Barrier free residential two storey Telecab elevator installed by ReliAble Living provides complete access for the disabled parents of the home owners.

ReliAble

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accessible showers in spaces which would otherwise be unfeasible to retrofit.

Wiskin says he first became aware of the challenges of accommodating seniors when he saw his grandmother suffering because she could not bathe in her retirement home. "She had osteoporosis and arthritis," he said. "She had a real fear of falling. She was feeling very unsafe about getting in and out of the bathtub."

Tod Valickis, Schluter Systems Ontario Regional Manager, says Wiskin visited one of Schluter's Innovation Workshops and discovered the solution to his grandmother's problem. Schluter provides a waterproof membrane on which tile is directly applied. "You can build any structure you want,

cover it with the membrane, and tile it," Valickis said.

This allowed Wiskin to design a shower for his grandmother within her living space without requiring building structural changes.

Soon, Wiskin had several clients within the building wishing the same solution, and his business grew rapidly. "We've worked in over 300 homes in southwestern Ontario," he said.

Part of his service includes learning about and accessing financial resources for the renovations.

With success in serving individual seniors, Wiskin says he is now receiving calls from designers requesting consultation on accessibility issues for commercial and institutional buildings.

"We can assess the planned or existing building, and make suggestions about how to comply with the provincial legislation at the most economical cost," he said. "This



Wheelchair lift installed by ReliAble Living provides the home owners with wheel chair access into their home.

advice will speed up the design process and save money."

Wiskin says the changes need not be complex. For example, the cost of a 32 or 34-inch door is not much different than a conventional 24-inch opening. "If we are going to renovate a space, we're doing it in a way that is usable long term and doesn't have to be redone."

"The system for showers we've developed with Schluter Systems with a curb and ramp allows the system to be accessible and can be modified for a diversity of environments," he said.

"We should realize that already people over 45 represent about 40 per cent of the population," Wiskin says. "Seniors want to be able to visit the places they've been visiting throughout their life. They want to re-

main part of society."

"We need public space that is accessible to everyone to maintain a healthy economy. People can't just be trapped in their homes."

For more information about Reliable Independent Living Services visit <http://www.reliableliving.com> or phone (416) 502-9200.

Schluter Systems Innovation Workshops

Tod Valickis, Schluter System's Ontario Regional Manager, says the accessibility solution discovered by Ronny Wiskin is just one of many applications for Schluter System for ceramic and stone tile installations.

Renovators, contractors, and designers are invited to upcoming innovation workshops at the offices of the Terrazzo, Tile & Marble Association of Canada in Vaughn.

Upcoming workshops are scheduled for October 29-30, November 26-27, December 17-18 and January 14-15.

For more information, you can call Cathy Marchese at 800-667-6746 or email cmarchese@schluter.com or you can download the registration form here: <http://www.schluter.com/media/education/WORKSHOP-TORONTO-2009.pdf>



ReliAble Living installed a cabinet lift in order to lower the upper cabinets to a height accessible to a wheelchair user.



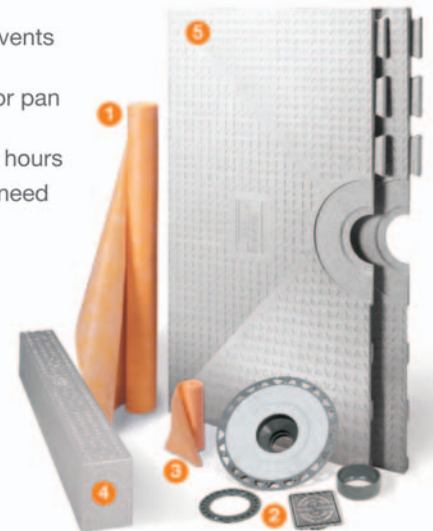
PROFILE OF INNOVATION

Schluter®-Shower System

A complete, integrated assembly for tiled showers

- Waterproof/vaportight assembly that prevents mold growth
- Bonded waterproofing eliminates need for pan liners and cement backerboard
- Simple and easy to install; ready to tile in hours
- Prefabricated sloped tray eliminates the need for a mortar bed

1. KERDI waterproofing membrane and vapor retarder
2. KERDI-DRAIN
3. KERDI-BAND waterproofing strip
4. Prefabricated curb
5. Prefabricated tray (available in different sizes)



For your free copy of the Schluter®-Shower System Installation Handbook, visit:

www.schluter.com or call 1-800-667-8746

