

ACCESSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

2020



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The City is built on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People. The Songhees and Esquimalt Nations are part of the Coast Salish family and are descendants of the Lekwungen family groups. Victoria continues to build and nurture strong relationships with the Lekwungen Peoples.

ACCESSIBILITY WORKING GROUP.

The City gratefully acknowledges the contributions, dedication, and hard work of the Accessibility Working Group (AWG) members who have given selflessly to help achieve a more inclusive Victoria. Early in their mandate, this voluntary group of people identified the need for an Accessibility Framework and made the original recommendation to Council to undertake this work. They have provided valuable feedback, recommendations, and ideas, and contributed their expertise and knowledge to both City staff and Council on accessibility issues.



COMMUNITY MEMBERS & AGENCY PARTNERS.

This framework has also been made possible through the support, insights, and expertise of accessibility experts, service providers, advocates, and residents with lived experience. The City is grateful for their contributions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

The City of Victoria is evolving and our understanding and capacity of accessibility is growing. New policies, strategies, and programs are being developed to create a connected and inclusive community. People with disabilities, among other equity-seeking groups, have not traditionally been included in planning and municipal service delivery processes. In order to achieve the vision identified in our Official Community Plan, the City must take positive steps to remove barriers, involve those with diverse perspectives and abilities, promote inclusion, and foster a positive and respectful community through its actions and services.

THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO ACCESSIBILITY.

The City of Victoria is committed to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers across its services, programs, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The City of Victoria values the contributions from all people and

believes diversity strengthens the community. The City recognizes the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commits to making sure those voices are part of community planning.

The City of Victoria will ensure staff and council are (1) aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and (2) support positive community attitudes.

FOCUS AREAS.

The 2020 Accessibility Framework is categorized into three key focus areas:

- 1. Built Environment:** Promoting accessibility in urban policy, design, planning, operations, and development.
- 2. Governance and Services:** Removing barriers to and increasing participation in local government programs, services, information, bylaws, and public decision making.
- 3. Capacity and Collaboration:** Developing increased corporate capacity to deliver professional services in a

more accessible manner, building partnerships with accessibility service providers, and advocating to other levels of government and stakeholders for change.

“By focusing on accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being, and personal outcomes for the people in our community.”

Almost every Canadian has or will experience a disability, or cares about someone with accessibility challenges. Many of us will require supports at times throughout our lives. By focusing on accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being, and personal outcomes for the people in our community. This framework includes a set of goals, objectives, and directions that provide structure to support City planning to create a high standard of accessibility across municipal services and programs, infrastructure, and projects.



THE CITY OF VICTORIA.

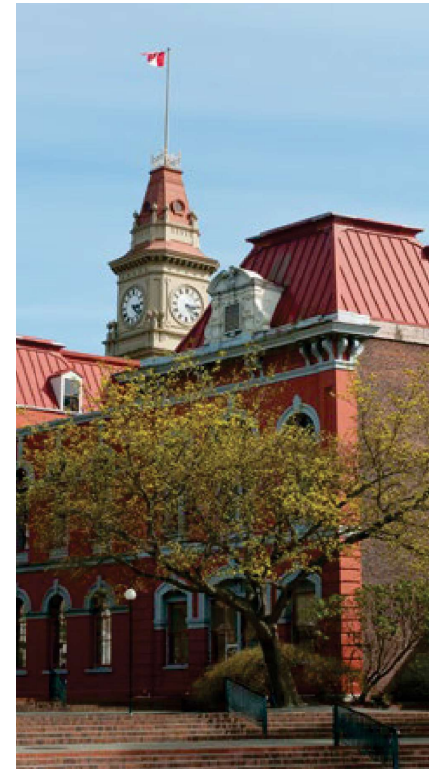
The City is on a path to evolve our understanding and capacity related to accessibility. People with disabilities, among other equity-seeking groups, have not traditionally been included in the planning and municipal service delivery processes. In order to achieve the vision identified in our Official Community Plan, the City must take positive steps to remove barriers, involve those with diverse abilities, promote inclusion, and foster a positive and respectful community through its actions and services.

Many City programs, services, and infrastructure have been introduced over time, without full consideration of how these measures may affect people with different disabilities. This framework has been created to help guide the City in accessibility planning and will be put into action by each department as part of everyday business and service delivery.

A new Accessibility Program will be established as part of the City's work on equity and inclusion and set into motion a series of actions that aim to prevent and remove barriers for people with disabilities. This program can be defined as the combination of resources, policy, guidelines, standards, directions, actions, tools, and information to deliver year-on-year accessibility improvements.

INTRODUCTION.

The City of Victoria is taking deliberate steps to make itself a more inclusive community. As part of these efforts, new policies, strategies, and programs are being developed to help nurture a connected and cohesive community that promotes well-being, belonging, resiliency, and vibrancy.



ACCESSIBILITY AS A PART OF EQUITY.

The 2020 Accessibility Framework applies accessibility to all aspects of City planning and operations, from our capital investments and municipal programs, to front-line services for residents and businesses. The associated City of Victoria Council Accessibility Policy and Short-Term Action Plan reinforces our commitment to accessibility and is part of an emerging, broader set of priorities and programs to support an inclusive, welcoming community.

Accessibility is a part of our broader equity and inclusion efforts that contribute to improved social health and well-being. The City has adopted the definition of equity to mean treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.

An intersectional research and policy lens recognizes that people have multiple and diverse identity factors shaping their perspectives, ideologies, and experiences. This approach addresses inequality and barriers to inclusion without isolating one factor of an individual's identity from another. It also recognizes that inclusion affects people differently, in part, to how their identities intersect and ultimately influence their experience. The City of Victoria is developing a Community Equity Lens that will embed



distributional, procedural, and structural inter-generational equity into the City's corporate policies guiding hiring, staff training and professional development, procurement, and civic engagement.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC Human Rights Code, and the courts recognize that no rights are absolute, and that a balance of competing interests is required. These laws guarantee rights such as freedom of expression and protection from discrimination and harassment based on gender identity or expression, ancestry, sexual orientation, and disability, among others. They require that all rights be given equal consideration. Our laws recognize that rights have limits in some situations, particularly where they substantially interfere with the rights of others. It is important to search for solutions to reconcile competing rights and accommodate individuals and groups. This can be challenging, controversial, and sometimes dissatisfying. However, it is a shared responsibility and will be made easier when we better understand the nature of one another's rights and obligations and show mutual respect for the dignity and worth of everyone involved.¹

Shifting our preconceptions, attitudes, and decision-making regarding disability requires careful self-examination, education, awareness, commitment, and planning. This framework focuses on a systematic and coordinated approach to reduce barriers in our community. We use data, lived experiences, best practices, and provincial legislation and guidance to understand community accessibility challenges and opportunities to support investment decisions that maximize positive outcomes.

“The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.”

Over the next several years, the City will focus on accessibility programming and barrier reduction and prevention. Removing barriers from public places requires a structured approach to improve accessibility across infrastructure, programs, services, and information. The City also has an important role to improve accessibility by helping foster a dialogue that recognizes we are a stronger and healthier community when no one is left out.

ACCESSIBILITY AS A PART OF EQUITY.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ACCESSIBILITY?

“Accessibility” is a general term used to describe the degree of ease that something (e.g. device, service, place) can be used and enjoyed by people with disabilities. Accessibility requires conscious planning, design, and effort to ensure barriers are removed, and the environment is highly useable and practical for the general population.

The United Nations defines accessibility as “a precondition for an inclusive society for all and may be defined as the provision of flexibility to accommodate each user’s needs and preferences.”²

The Accessible Canada Act defines disability as “a physical, mental, intellectual, learning, communication or sensory impairment—or a function limitation— whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person’s full and equal participation in society.”³

The concept of accessible design ensures both “direct access” (i.e. unassisted) and “indirect access” (i.e. compatibility with a person’s assistive technology,

e.g., computer screen readers).

Accessibility can be accomplished by mainstream or Universal Design, which allows a person with a disability to use the same facility or service as everyone else (this is preferred), or with an alternative solution designed for people with disabilities.

“ Accessibility requires conscious planning, design, and effort ”



ACCESSIBILITY VS ACCOMMODATION.

Sometimes people with disabilities require personal accommodations in situations where accessible systems or programs are not yet in place. “Accommodation” refers to the changes or modifications made to a system (e.g. a policy or practice) to meet the needs of a specific individual or group. Accommodations can be options to overcome any type of barriers within an existing system.⁴

Accommodations may be a reasonable approach for important, temporary improvements, and may also be an appropriate response to rare or infrequent accessibility issues. These instances should be carefully monitored and managed to ensure longer-term accessibility solutions are identified and developed wherever possible.⁵

Accommodation is not the same as accessibility, and accessibility is always preferable to accommodation. Accessible systems are designed at the outset to be usable by as many people as possible, regardless of ability. Accommodations may be proactive or

reactive and may not effectively address everyone’s needs. An accessible system would make sure the required functions / treatments were in place before being introduced. Removing barriers can be challenging and more expensive. In removing barriers, care should always be taken to avoid or minimize any unintended negative consequences for others.



UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY.

ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE.

A series of public engagement events were held to pursue a deeper understanding of the issues, challenges, and priorities we face in creating an accessible city. Face-to-face engagements over the last two years have included workshops, meetings, and focus groups to learn, discuss, and explore key issues, ideas, and insights. Community members were invited to provide feedback on accessibility challenges and priorities, both in writing and verbally. Opportunities were promoted within the community via social media, the City's website, through disability advocacy and support agencies, and directly to community members who had corresponded with the City on access and inclusion matters. The engagement sessions involved local organizations, service providers, and people with lived experience including those with caring responsibilities.

“ A series of public engagement events were held to pursue a deeper understanding ”



KEY INSIGHTS & THEMES.

A number of insights and themes emerged from the community that are integrated within this framework.

The first theme is the need for greater awareness, education, sensitivity, and understanding. Participants emphasized that the City, service providers, developers, and businesses need to learn how people with disabilities travel through the community, interact in public and private places, and participate in events and activities. In many cases, the very real barriers people with disabilities face mean they cannot fully participate in our community.

Another theme is the importance of accessibility in the built environment within and beyond the geographic

boundaries of Victoria. There are many people with disabilities who come from other communities to work, visit, or play in the City of Victoria.

Participants identified the importance of retrofitting the built environment and applying new, consistent, and coordinated regional standards to support accessible transportation, parks, plazas, and public buildings.

The final theme from the engagement process identified how Victoria can use its role as a capital city to demonstrate leadership, set the example, and encourage a higher community standard to improve acceptance and the quality of life for people with disabilities.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY.

TYPES OF DISABILITIES.

Different disability groupings are used to help provide a broad understanding of experiences that may be shared or related to a disability, in terms of underlying health conditions, activity limitations, participation restrictions, and environmental factors. Disabilities can be encountered at any age and can be temporary or long term.

While there is no universally adopted set of disability groupings, it is important to recognize several common types and causes of disability. Some disabilities are visible while others are not immediately visible to others, such as asthma, brain injuries or concussions, allergies or environmental sensitivities, extreme fatigue, or chronic pain.

The following definitions are adapted from the World Health Organization (WHO) to help build awareness, but should not be interpreted as a complete list.

Pain: Pain-related disabilities often refer to long term or complex pain that may be caused by injury and may commonly occur with other disabilities.



Flexibility, Mobility, and Dexterity:

Disabilities related to mobility, flexibility, and dexterity include limb disabilities, manual dexterity, coordination, brain injuries and spinal-cord function.

Mental Health: Mental health-related disabilities refer to conditions that affect the mind and brain and the way a person thinks, feels, and acts.

Learning and Memory: Learning and memory disabilities include challenges related to skills such as reading, writing, and problem solving. They can also interfere with more complex and abstract skills related to the ability to organize, to reason, long and short-term memory, and attention span.

Visual Disabilities: Visual disabilities can range from partial sight loss to complete blindness.

Hearing: Hearing disabilities can range from partial hearing loss to complete deafness.

Developmental: Developmental disabilities are a diverse group of conditions resulting from physical or mental challenges that arise before adulthood. These conditions may create difficulties with language, mobility, learning, and independent living.

Other: There are many other types of disabilities that may affect how a person lives their day-to-day life.



UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY.

TYPES OF BARRIERS.

There are five general types of barriers.

1. Attitudinal Barriers: Behaviours, perceptions, and assumptions that discriminate against people with disabilities. These barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or misunderstand those with disabilities.

An example of how an attitude can contribute to discrimination is speaking to a person's assistant, rather than the person with a disability, assuming that a person who cannot communicate in traditional ways cannot understand. Employee sensitivity and inclusivity training such as to improve interpersonal skills for customer service is one way to address this type of barrier.

2. Informational or Communication Barriers: When a person with a disability cannot easily receive and/or understand information that is available to others.

An example of a communication barrier is when information is available only in audio or verbal format and is

inaccessible to people with hearing loss. Ways of addressing this barrier include having sign language interpreters, closed captioning services, or written materials to accompany presentations.

3. Technological Barriers: When technology does not meet the needs of people with disabilities.

An example of this could be service computers at City Hall that are not accessible to people with sight loss. Ways of addressing this include providing computers with screen reader software and large print key labels.

4. Physical or Architectural Barriers: Elements of buildings or outdoor spaces that create barriers.

An example of this is utility poles placed in the sidewalk without adequate clearance for people using mobility scooters or wheelchairs to navigate. Ways of addressing this include retrofitting the built environment to create additional space and planning new sidewalks without obstructions.

5. Organizational or Systemic Barriers: Policies, procedures, or practices that may result in people with disabilities being mistreated or excluded from participating.

An example of this is when people with disabilities are not included at public consultation events because of the location or format of the event. Ways of addressing this is updating communication guidelines and visual standards to increase accessibility of public documents through alternate formats.

The City of Victoria is committed to removing existing barriers and preventing the creation of new barriers through the application of this framework and its actions.

“Barriers often emerge from a lack of understanding, which can lead people to ignore, judge, or misunderstand those with disabilities.”



OUR COMMUNITY PROFILE.

The City of Victoria is the capital of British Columbia, located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. The City is an attractive residence and destination for families, newcomers, workers, retirees, and visitors. It is home to 92,000 residents and supports an additional 300,000 people from across the region as the main business, tourism, and economic hub. The City's population is growing at a rate above the national average, with projections to reach 109,000 residents by 2038. It is estimated that currently 19,000 individuals in the City of Victoria live with one or more disabilities.

PREVALENCE OF DISABILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY.

The data on disability in Victoria relies on Statistics Canada's census data for the Province and the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD). The data in this section is taken from the CSD, which provides an important overall snapshot but is limited in its local details. The survey was completed by individuals aged 15 and over who in the 2016 Census "reported having a long-term condition or difficulty." This is the most recent official statistical information on disability in Canada and is available on a provincial and national basis.

The CSD is based on a "social model of disabilities," which in screening for disabilities requires a "limitation in daily activities." The CSD included questions on disability type and severity. There were 10 types of disabilities covered: seeing, hearing, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, pain-related, learning, developmental, mental health-related, and memory. The severity of the disabilities was based on the degree of difficulty (ranging from "no difficulty" to "cannot do at all") and frequency of daily activity limitation (from "rarely" to "always").

The CSD is currently available only at the provincial and national level. However, by using rates from the CSD (on presence of disabilities, types, and severity), we can develop an estimate of the number of individuals with disabilities in Victoria based on our census data. These estimates provide a general understanding regarding the number of people with a disability in our community and the existing spectrum of disabilities.

Disability, of course, is contextual and related to multiple barriers. Therefore, it is important to avoid preconceptions about what a disability is. The data does not provide a detailed analysis of Victoria, but provides the first insights on the accessibility needs within our City, how prevalent they are, and what the City can do to progressively remove barriers. There are more than 926,000 British Columbians over the age of 15 with some form of disability. This represents 25% of the population. As the population ages, the number of people with disabilities (and their severity) is likely to increase.

DISABILITIES IN VICTORIA.

In Victoria, it is estimated that approximately 21% of the population (about 19,000 people) have one or more disabilities. This means approximately 1 in 5 Victorians experience at least one disability. An estimated 1 in 10 Victorians over the age of 15 have severe or very severe disabilities.

Severe disabilities are conditions that profoundly affect a person's ability to access basic community spaces, services, and programs, and require a higher level of support for essential, everyday needs.

As part of the research and data collection on disability in Canada, there are a number of important findings related to employment, poverty, and opportunities for people with disabilities.

The rate of people with a disability living in poverty is consistently higher in every age category compared to Canadians with no disabilities.

645,000 Canadians with disabilities had potential for paid employment in an inclusive labour market but were not employed.

Over 83,000 youth with disabilities were neither in school nor employed but were considered to have potential to work.

The 2019 Rick Hansen Foundation / Angus Reid Institute public opinion

survey on disabilities found more than two-thirds of Canadians expressed the concern that someone they know will face a disability over the next decade. Three in ten Canadians say accessibility is a consideration for them when they think about the places they will go and which they will avoid in their community.

"...approximately 1 in 5 Victorians experience at least one disability."

FIGURE 1. (opposite page, 23)
Estimated Disability Types in Victoria. Numbers estimated using Statistics Canada Survey on Disability (2017) and profile of persons with disabilities for British Columbia information, applied to the population numbers for Victoria. "Total" disability rates include estimated population experiencing one or more of the included types. This survey was completed for persons 15 years or older.

In addition to the above points, the 2017 Statistics Canada Survey on Disability also found that:

1 in 5 Canadians (22%) of the Canadian population aged 15 years and over had one or more disabilities.

Pain, flexibility, and mobility-related disabilities along with mental health were the most commonly reported disabilities.

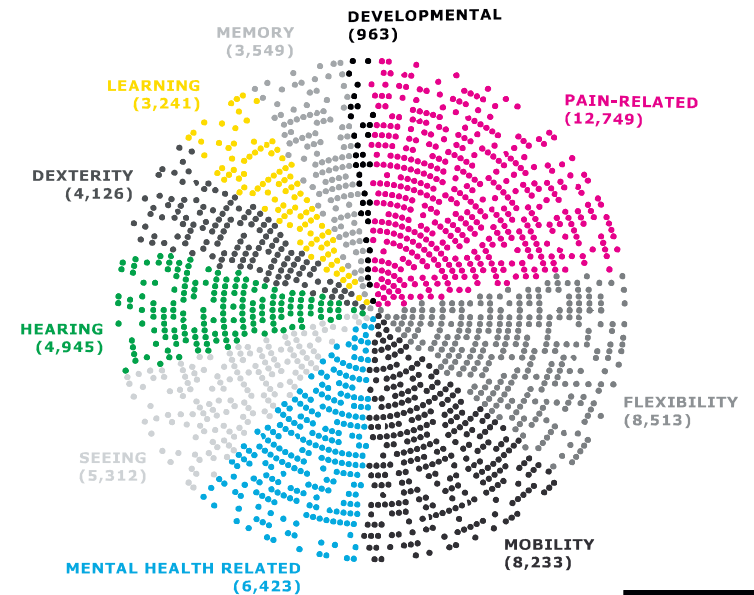
The prevalence of disability increases with age, affecting:

- 13% of those 15 to 24
- 47% of those 75 and older

Many Canadians who reported disabilities are part of the work force:

- 76% of those with mild disabilities
- 31% of those with severe disabilities

ESTIMATED DISABILITY TYPES IN VICTORIA.



19,743 people total

AGING AND DISABILITY.

The 2016 Census showed the percentage of seniors in Victoria's population is growing, with more than 18,000 Victorians over the age of 65 years (representing 22% of the population) up from 14,600 in 2006 (18.5% of the population).

Victoria's aging population (65 years and over) is forecasted to grow by 50% over the next 20 years, to 27,000 people. This is significant because the prevalence of disability increases with age and affirms the need to start systematically reducing accessibility barriers now.

With 20% of Canadians (25-64 years) reporting having a disability, compared with 38% of Canadian seniors aged 65 and older, it is clear that older populations will have higher rates of disability. While the overall level of disability increases with age, specific types of disability also become more common. According to the 2017 statistics, the disabilities reported by Canadians varied significantly by age with disabilities such as pain, flexibility, and mobility more than doubling for those 65 years and older.

DEVELOPING INSIGHTS FROM THE DATA.

Understanding the differences and commonality of disability types and groupings is critical when considering how and where the City designs, prioritizes, and funds improvements. Understanding our community profile can help to refine areas of City responsibility, where more attention is needed or where processes need to be in place to accommodate people with disabilities.

In the future, more accurate and detailed local accessibility information will help the City better understand our specific

accessibility challenges, needs, and priorities. This data gap is identified within the City's multi-year action plan.

“ Understanding the differences and commonality of disability types and groupings is critical when considering how and where the City designs, prioritizes, and funds improvements. ”



INVESTING IN ACCESSIBILITY.

This framework aims to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility throughout the City of Victoria. Thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action will help deliver accessibility improvements in our community and across the region for decades to come.

All individuals have an inherent right to participate in a society where everyone is treated with dignity, given opportunity to participate, and provided access to their community so that they can fully contribute to society in their own unique way. Depending on how they are planned and built, urban environments, infrastructure, facilities, and services can impede or enable access, participation, and inclusion for people.

An inclusive society provides opportunities for meaningful participation in society. An inclusive society fosters diversity, reduces social and economic isolation, and promotes mental and physical health and well-being. Without inclusive opportunities, diversity may be scarce, and control over choice can be limited, reducing the ability for people with disabilities to make positive choices to their own lives.

As a community, we are richer with a diverse range of viewpoints and individual

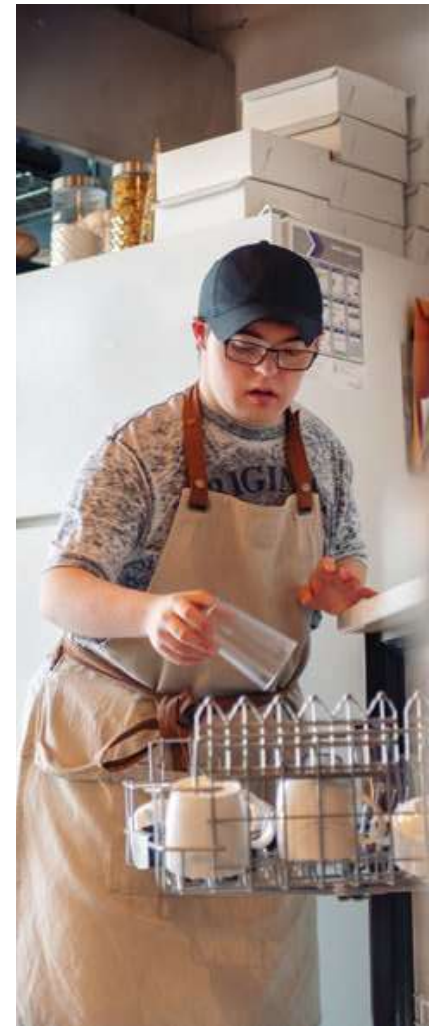
perspectives. Exclusion can lead to disadvantage and discrimination, which have far-reaching negative impacts across all aspects of life, including health, welfare, education, and employment. These impacts are felt beyond the individual, with families and the broader community all being negatively affected by a non-inclusive society. There is a strong economic imperative for increasing the inclusiveness of our society, to foster job opportunities that enhance the ability of people with disabilities to be independent and free from economic struggle.⁶



“ Thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action will help deliver accessibility improvements in our community and across the region for decades to come. ”

Almost every Canadian has or will experience a disability, or cares about someone with accessibility challenges. Many of us will require support at times throughout our lives. By valuing the importance of accessibility, we can directly improve the health, well-being and personal outcomes for the people in our community. As policies of inclusivity and accessibility are implemented thoughtfully and effectively, we can increase employment and education rates, alleviate poverty, and grow a sense of belonging—not just for individuals living with a disability, but for their families and loved ones, too.

People with disabilities deserve the opportunity to be actively involved in local government decision-making processes, especially decisions that affect them directly. Inclusion enables participation by all, ensuring all voices are part of shaping a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant community.





**THE CITY'S
ACCESSIBILITY
COMMITMENT.**

The City's accessibility commitment is a statement that shares our view and promise to the community regarding accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The City of Victoria is committed to identifying, preventing, and removing barriers across its services, programs, and infrastructure, in order to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The City of Victoria values the contributions from all people and believes that diversity strengthens the community. We recognize the essential knowledge and perspectives of people with lived experience of disability and commit to making sure those voices are part of community planning and decisions.

The City of Victoria will ensure that staff and council are aware of their roles in influencing accessibility for people with disabilities and accept their responsibility to support positive community attitudes.

The commitment stated above is reinforced with the council accessibility policy, which is a part of our broader accessibility program.

KEY PRINCIPLES.

The City has adapted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) core principles that underpin the rights of people with disabilities in combination with the emerging provincial principles on accessibility, as follows:

Inclusion: All people should be able to participate fully in our community with dignity and individual autonomy.

Diversity: All people will be respected for their differences and lived experiences, regardless of ability, age, gender identity and expression, race, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, place of origin, and religion. Our framework acknowledges that other aspects of identity interact with ability to determine how individuals experience barriers and inclusion.

Respect: All people should be treated with respect so that they can make their own choices, contribute to civil society, and thrive through independence.

Collaboration: While the City does provide a leadership role, the City cannot address accessibility alone. We must collaborate with other stakeholders, levels of government, agency partners, advocacy organizations, and service providers to eliminate barriers and support innovations

towards an accessible society.

Adaptability: Disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology, and attitudes change.

"A city that is well designed is well designed for all. Accessibility, as a collective good that benefits all, should be considered a central component of good policy to achieve inclusive and sustainable urban development".



THE CITY'S ROLE.

The Community Charter and the Local Government Act are the legislative frameworks under which all British Columbian municipalities operate.⁸ Under this context, Victoria recognizes its local government responsibility to remove barriers across public spaces, programs, and services.

The key areas of responsibility that the City can consider in its goal of identifying, removing, and preventing accessibility barriers include:

- **Public infrastructure**
- **City programs and services**
- **Municipal information, regulations, and policies**

And the City's role, related to:

- **Leadership by example**
- **Advocacy and partnerships**

The City will work within its jurisdictional authority to deliver accessibility improvements in the community, which aim to complement the actions of other regional agencies that play important roles in improving the outcomes for people with disabilities. Health authorities, regional and provincial governments, community associations, commercial and institutional enterprises, and non-profits all have a direct impact on the accessibility of

programs, infrastructure, and supports across our community. The City recognizes that strong leadership, collaboration, and coordination can help address accessibility challenges throughout our community.

The City must increase its awareness and skills so that it can achieve higher standards in accessible design, programs, and service delivery. The following elements represent the nature of accessibility work required from the City:

Capacity-building — Focused education and training: Increasing staff awareness, skills, knowledge, and competencies will help guide accessibility improvements in design and service delivery.

Prevention — Introducing new accessibility design standards: Design policies and standards for facilities, transportation, information, and services will help the City better integrate accessibility requirements into design processes, avoiding the creation of barriers so that accessibility can be optimized alongside other project requirements.

Removal — Retroactive accessibility improvements: Many barriers exist due to infrastructure, program and technology design and installation, implementation, decisions, and trade-offs made in the past.

Insights — Accessibility data and information: Information related to the community profile, types of barriers, their prevalence, impact, and patterns will help the City better manage priorities.

Planning — Prioritization and coordination: Project planning and prioritization should occur in an integrated fashion with annual program budget cycles, and coordinate with other capital and operational investments and programs to take advantage of any and all synergy opportunities to maximize benefits. The City must carefully balance a wide range of community interests, resources, and investments to achieve the required accessibility outcomes.

“ **Victoria recognizes its local government responsibility to remove and prevent barriers across public spaces, programs, and services.** ”



BALANCING NEEDS ACROSS COMMUNITY.

Planning and design of the City infrastructure, programs, and services requires careful balancing of changing and often competing needs. Trade-offs are always part of the design process, and designers, project managers, and service providers must carefully balance safety, equity, security, affordability, sustainability, quality, time, cost, and other important requirements. Evaluation and prioritization of these variables is required to effectively manage risk. Often situations arise where compromises are required for many users to ensure the minimum acceptable needs are met for all. Processes and tools to manage these variables will be developed through an iterative process and will improve over time through the implementation of this Framework and the Corporate Equity Lens.

Education and enforcement of the desired user behaviours are also important factors to ensure that infrastructure and programs function as intended. Having enhanced accessibility information, awareness, and creative approaches will help achieve better outcomes.

With accessibility requirements at the design table, the City will be in a better position to balance community needs, remove systemic barriers, promote inclusion, and create a more positive and respectful community.



FOCUS AREAS.



The framework is broken down into three key Focus Areas, outlined below, which group our actions into core segments of accessibility work that closely align with the business and structure of City work and planning. These Focus Areas embed goals and priorities across departments in the City, and are strengthened by the action plan, contained in the appendix. They are as follows:

Built Environment: Promoting accessibility as a collective good and a key component in urban policy, design, planning, and development. This focus area includes the systematic reduction and prevention of physical barriers across transportation and mobility, public facilities, and public spaces.

Governance and Services: Removing barriers and increasing participation in local government programs, services, information, bylaws, and public decision making.

Capacity and Collaboration: Developing increased corporate capacity to deliver professional services in a more accessible manner. This includes partnerships and advocacy with other levels of government and community stakeholders. Collaborating with community partners can set a strong example for community accessibility attitudes and awareness.

Each of these focus areas is detailed below with goals and key objectives. City services, infrastructure, and program design will rely on new lessons and tools that have been developed.

A key approach for addressing accessibility is "Universal Design". The concept of Universal Design was developed by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers, and environmental design researchers. The purpose is to guide the design of environments, products, and communications. The principles can be used to evaluate existing designs, guide the design process, and educate stakeholders about characteristics of more usable services, products, and environments.

THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN.

FOR INCLUSIVE SERVICES & SPACES.

Universal design principles can be applied to a variety of situations in the municipal context as well—for example, community recreation or arts programs, services at City Hall, public consultation activities, or new infrastructure designs. Consideration of these principles in the development and ongoing management of City services can support increased accessibility across our City.

EQUITABLE USE



The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

1

FLEXIBILITY IN USE



The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

2

SIMPLE & INTUITIVE USE



Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language, skills, or current concentration level.

3

PERCEPTIBLE INFORMATION



The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

4

TOLERANCE FOR ERROR



The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

5

LOW PHYSICAL EFFORT



The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimum fatigue.

6

SIZE & SPACE FOR APPROACH & USE



Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

7

Principle 1: Equitable Use:
The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use:
The design takes into account a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use:
Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

Principle 4: Perceptible Information:
The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error:
The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort:
The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimum fatigue.

Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use: Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.⁹

FOCUS AREA (1)

BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

A liveable community enhances an individual's independence, accommodates their needs, and fosters engagement in civic, economic, and social aspects of the community. People with disabilities can live more freely when the built environment is designed and/or modified to support their needs. Technology can also play a significant role in removing liveability barriers.

Creating liveable communities for people of all abilities is more than modifying the physical environment. It applies to activities, facilities, housing, road design, walkability, transportation, environmental sensitivities and supportive services, and creates opportunities for social connection, engagement, and well-being. Infrastructure investments will need to incorporate universal design principles for public spaces including buildings, open spaces, parks, playgrounds, plazas, and streetscapes. We will also need to continue to develop and apply design standards that align with industry and other municipal best practices.

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY.

Mobility relates to the ease of moving, whereas accessibility may address the ease of reaching desired destinations. Planning for accessibility considers safer public and private transportation systems, and

incorporates decisions related to rights of way, land use, and development that reduce barriers and effort required to access important destinations and services.

BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES.

The City owns more than 100 buildings including recreation centres and major event venues such as the Save-On-Foods Memorial Arena, Royal Athletic Park stadium, and the Victoria Conference Centre.

In addition, the City maintains buildings that support other municipal services such as park operations, public works, fire and rescue, and police operations.



PARKS, OPEN SPACES AND PUBLIC PLAZAS.

The City of Victoria's parks, plazas, and open spaces are a vital piece of the City's character, culture, and vibrancy. Serving residents and visitors alike, they offer important opportunities for socializing, recreation, relaxation, play, and learning as well as providing an opportunity to connect with nature. These spaces (both hardscape and softscape) are intended to contribute to quality of life for people of all ages and abilities.



WHAT WE HEARD.

Public input highlighted the importance of accessible public spaces such as village centres, pedestrian pathways, parks, recreation facilities, and public transit. Stakeholders noted examples of areas in the City with high standards of accessibility and areas where there were significant concerns. Examples of existing barriers included a lack of wheelchair access at intersections, width and conditions of sidewalks, playground equipment diversity,

designated places for mobility aid parking, access to accessible parking, public transit and taxis, and the overall need for improved design standards. Victoria is one of the oldest cities in British Columbia, and as a result, its infrastructure reflects 150 years of varying urban design standards. This provides an opportunity to innovate and rethink urban design standards in order to promote inclusive and accessible design while recognizing our history.



GOAL.



To systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and plazas, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities.

Key Objectives

- To prevent and remove barriers from City infrastructure and places, transportation infrastructure, facilities, parks, and open spaces.
- To evaluate and prioritize retrofits to existing City infrastructure, buildings, and spaces to meet updated accessibility standards.
- To improve the availability and accessibility of transportation services, mobility options and parking infrastructure for people with disabilities.

ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY.

Introduced new accessible features at City intersections, pedestrian signals, and tactile domes, all of which are now becoming standard for new or replacement downtown and village locations.

Completed new sidewalk and pathway upgrades and widening projects to support mobility scooters and aids.

Upgrading transit shelters and dedicated loading zones for accessibility support vehicles such as HandiDART buses.

Modernization of accessible elevators and staircase markings at parkades.

Completed Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ ratings for 22 City-owned buildings.

The Cecelia Ravine Park expansion project included a wheelchair-accessible pathway to the Galloping Goose pathway, delivery of a new accessible public washroom, and included accessible playground surfaces and play equipment.

Upgraded several City-owned facilities with Universal Design features in public washrooms, new access ramps, power-operated doors, a new universal change room at the Crystal Pool, and a wheelchair lift at the Victoria Conference Centre.

Introduced new accessible picnic tables and outdoor furniture as well as accessible outdoor fitness equipment and play features in parks.

Developed a selection list for low-allergen plantings.

Designed wheelchair-accessible planting beds for some community gardens.

Initiated accessibility audits in key parks.



FOCUS AREA (2)

GOVERNANCE AND SERVICES.

People with disabilities face multiple forms of barriers preventing full participation in local government activities, including accessing services, information, events, discussions, and engagements.

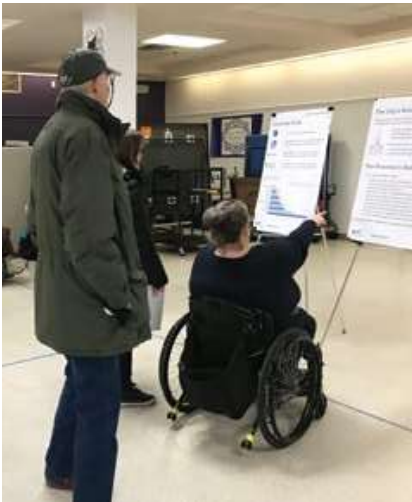
Universal Design principles also translate to the focus area of government programs and services. Accessible government enables increased opportunity for participation in the system of municipal business and public life, so that people with disabilities can engage with matters that affect their own lives and their communities.

These opportunities may include the right to vote, be elected, gain employment, participate in public affairs (including serving on advisory committees), and enjoy full access to City services including the website, City documents, and webcasting of council meetings. Participation is important to the City because it helps the City arrive at better decisions, informed by a diversity of voices within our community.

MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS, SERVICES, POLICIES, INFORMATION AND BYLAWS.

Municipal Planning for accessibility allows people with disabilities to take full advantage of municipal programs, services, and information. Through the review of existing services, bylaws, and information platforms and the consideration of accessibility in new regulations and service planning, the City can ensure that people with disabilities have more opportunities to participate.

MUNICIPAL DECISION MAKING.



Making it possible for people with disabilities to participate in government decision-making processes requires intentional efforts and resources to create a supportive environment for different needs. These efforts will allow all residents to engage more fully on matters that affect their own lives and communities.

WHAT WE HEARD.

Public and stakeholder outreach identified several barriers. The most common were the need for full access to City Council meetings, the need for document formats suitable for those with sight loss, information for people with hearing loss, and making public information easily searchable and navigable via City websites. Making elections fully

accessible for people with disabilities was identified as a critical goal. Improving access to information through technology and reviewing bylaws to reduce barriers were identified as important strategies to support access to municipal programs and services.



GOAL.

To provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, services, information, engagement opportunities, and the ability to exercise their statutory rights.

Key Objectives

- To increase customer service support across all City public service counters to serve people with visible and non-visible disabilities.
- To increase offerings of recreational program opportunities for people with disabilities.
- To increase opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in Council decision-making processes, City engagement activities, City-led special events and/or ceremonies.
- To improve accessibility of municipal election processes.
- To consider accessibility as part of policy development processes.



- To review and develop municipal bylaws considering accessibility needs.
- To increase diverse participation in City advisory committees and boards.
- To increase the accessibility of the City website, closed captioning, and online resources.
- To continue to incorporate support for people with disabilities as part of City-wide emergency preparedness and planning.

ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY.

Partner with Island Health in the Supportive Child Development Program to provide one-on-one assistance for children who require extra support to participate in summer camp programs.

Inclusive swimming lesson programs at Crystal Pool.

Initiated review of the Council Procedures bylaw to find opportunities to increase accessibility in City decision making.

Improvements to the inclusion process for recreation programs regarding managing allergic risks.

Introduced online open data platform and website that is accessible for those using screen readers.

Installation of a hearing loop and braille directional signs at City Hall for Council meetings.

Piloted accessibility improvements in town hall meeting.

Conducted an air quality test in City Hall to test and monitor air quality for allergens.

Installation of Universal Design features to the public washrooms in City Hall and Council Chambers.

Switched to scent-free cleaning products to improve air quality.

Delivery of the “helping hand” program for solid waste management to support people with disabilities.

Initial electronic / remote access capabilities for City meetings.

Introduced mail ballot voting, curbside voting, special voting opportunities at care facilities, and legislated ballot marking assistance.

Approved an accessible voting machine for next voting opportunity.

Introduced accessible Council meeting features (webcast meetings and closed captioning).

Developed additional platforms for participating in City-wide engagement processes.

FOCUS AREA (3)

CAPACITY AND COLLABORATION.

The City must increase its knowledge and develop the skills and standards to identify, remove, and prevent accessibility barriers across programs, services, and projects. The City also has a role to play in helping support a new standard of accessibility across the broader community.

In Victoria there are several organizations focused on improving the lives of people living with disabilities. Collaborating with these stakeholders will help the City to make better-informed decisions that result in positive impacts. These organizations are often a direct and essential support system for people with disabilities and are considered important partners and experts.

WHAT WE HEARD.

The City also has an important responsibility to lead by example to improve community attitudes related to disability. It has been recognized that some “attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities may be considered a significant barrier to their full access and inclusion. International consultation teaches us that the attitudes towards people with disabilities are often determined by ignorance, fear, or the lack of opportunity to interact. Supporting positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions.”¹⁰

The City has a leadership opportunity to integrate accessibility as part of its core business, and demonstrate high standards of inclusion and communication.

Improved awareness, knowledge, understanding, and new capabilities are required to make positive accessibility impacts. Building corporate capacity is done through education, awareness, hiring, and training and can be supported in the community through stakeholder communications engagement. Working closely with community organizations will help give a voice to individuals and groups who need support.

The Accessibility Working Group identified the importance of ensuring the voice of lived experience is always part of accessibility actions in municipal planning. The group also recognized that people with disabilities are experts in their own right. They not only provide expertise in the area of accessibility, but also come with other skills and abilities valuable to the process which need to be recognized and respected. The City subscribes to the principle of inclusion and recognizes that we must partner together to truly understand the perspectives, information, and ideas of persons with lived experience.

Throughout the public engagement process, the City heard about the importance of fostering positive attitudes regarding disabilities. The City’s actions on improving accessibility for the infrastructure, services, programs it controls, and the services



it regulates can set an example for the broader community and people’s ability to recognize barriers that people with disabilities encounter daily. Removing these barriers can create equality, independence, choice, and control to improve overall quality of life.

GOAL.

To lead accessibility change-making within the City mandate and promote collaborative, positive attitudes in our community.

Key Objectives

- To continue offering enhanced training and awareness programs to foster a welcoming corporate environment for people with disabilities.
- To demonstrate inclusivity in City publications and materials.
- To introduce resources and processes to support and coordinate corporate accessibility efforts, projects, and programs.
- To facilitate regular activities to improve the City's knowledge and understanding of lived-experience and accessibility challenges across our community.
- To continue to engage with and collaborate with local disability stakeholder groups to gather insights and lived experiences.

ACTIONS TAKEN OR UNDERWAY.

Creation of the City's Accessibility Working Group to provide input and advice on accessible planning and action.

Introduction of accessibility statement on all employment postings.

Offering a long-standing respectful workplace policy and staff training program.

Accessibility awareness training for senior leaders and key staff members.

Continued departmental liaison with community disability and accessibility resources.

Provision of annual customer service training on accessibility inclusion for staff at Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre.

Introduce assessment of accessibility impacts as part of staff reports to Council.





IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK.

Taking action on accessibility will be guided by the commitments in the framework, and supported by good governance, an action plan, resources, and regular reporting on key measures to ensure we are on a trajectory of success. The City is a dynamic environment, so the program must also respond to changing circumstances and priorities, while making meaningful progress to accessibility. The following outlines how the City will manage these challenges to purposefully advance the vision of a more inclusive, barrier-free society.

ACCESSIBILITY AS A PART OF BROADER INCLUSION EFFORTS.

The Accessibility Framework addresses a single element of community equity and inclusion and is part of an important set of emerging actions and priorities that aim to improve overall social health and well-being across the City. As planning and programs develop, the City will continually assess how to best integrate these disparate but

related initiatives, to maximize impact and resource efficiency. The City's work on equity will plan and determine the most appropriate role of an advisory body, made up of persons with lived experience, to help guide the City and its programs related to issues of accessibility and inclusion.

TAKING ACTION.



A series of short-term actions have been identified to commence implementation of the Accessibility Framework and to support the objectives laid out in this document. Actions will form a part of the City's overall Accessibility Program. Each year the City will identify, implement, and integrate accessibility through its annual service planning, capital planning, and project management processes. Implementation of this Framework and reporting on accessibility accomplishments will be included in annual City reporting cycles.



PROVINCE OF BC.

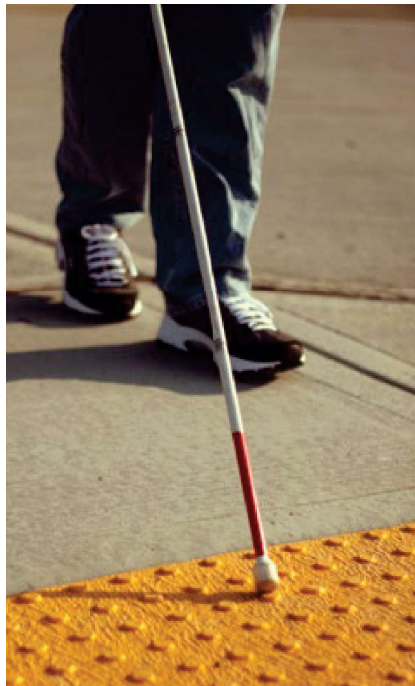
Creating a more accessible City of Victoria requires an understanding of the policy and legislative context. In the absence of an accessibility-specific legislation in British Columbia, such as a general Disability or Accessibility statute, the province relies on the BC Human Rights Code. The BC Human Rights Code (the Code) is a law enacted by the BC legislature in 1973.¹¹

The purposes of the Code are to:

- Foster a society in BC where there are no impediments to full and free participation in the economic, social, political, and cultural life of BC.
- Promote a climate of understanding and mutual respect where all are equal in dignity and rights.
- Prevent discrimination prohibited by the Code.
- Identify and eliminate persistent patterns of inequality associated with discrimination prohibited by the Code.
- Provide a means of redress for those persons who are discriminated against contrary to the Code.

The Code prohibits discrimination in certain areas of activity (for example, employment). The Code also creates the

tribunal and sets up a process for making and resolving complaints of the types of discrimination it covers.¹² The City of Victoria's Accessibility Framework seeks to ensure that the listed purposes of the Human Rights Code above can be taken in stride for people with disabilities who live in or visit our community.



The Province's jurisdiction includes areas of responsibility, such as building code, education, health care, and income assistance. In 2019 the Province re-established the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner. The role is intended for the promotion and protection of human rights through education, research policy development, and public investigation into issues of systemic discrimination. Further, in September 2019 the Province announced consultation on new Accessibility Legislation.

The provincial government also has a plan titled "Building a Better BC for People with Disabilities." The plan views an inclusive society as one that provides opportunity for persons of all abilities to fully participate in society, which requires challenging our attitudes and beliefs about disabilities. The motivation comes from recognizing the value and contributions that people with disabilities make to our workplaces, communities, and economy.¹³



CANADA.

The Canadian Disability Rights movement began in the late 20th century and advocates for Canadians with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. On December 9th, 1975, the United Nations (UN) issued the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons outlining key rights and encouraging countries to protect people with disabilities' rights and opportunities.

In 1981, the UN promoted the International Year of Disabled Persons, which catalyzed Canadian public and political interest to secure the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities in the final draft of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom and the Employment Equity Act, 1986.¹⁴ During the 1980s and early 1990s, a global recession deeply affected the disability community. Escalating public debt and deficits in Canada produced an era of fiscal restraint and austerity. During this time social assistance was slashed, subsidies to disability organizations were removed, and official political liaisons were reorganized or removed.¹⁵

In response, the Canadian Disability Rights Movement increased its efforts and by the 2000s, saw significant revival in public interest and political commitment. On March 11th, 2010 Canada ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), alongside other countries. The ratification committed Canada to a series of principles and measures to improve the socio-economic well-being of the disability community while improving their legal and political rights. In June 2019, Canada legislated the Accessible Canada Act (Bill 81).

The international, federal, and provincial policy and legislative context is rooted in the Disability Rights Movement. It is important to understand how the City of Victoria aligns and contributes to broader accessibility efforts.

“...encouraging countries to protect people with disabilities' rights and opportunities.”

Following the decision to sign the UNCRPD, the Accessible Canada Act (Bill C-81) received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. Its goal is to create a barrier-free Canada through proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to accessibility. Furthermore, Canada has a strong framework for protecting the human rights of Canadians. The Canadian Human Rights Act promotes equality of opportunity

and protects people from discrimination. Bill C-81 supports the objectives of the Canadian Human Rights Act and does not diminish any obligations under that Act.

The pivotal direction of the Accessible Canada Act is to enhance the full and equal participation of all persons, especially people with disabilities, in society. This is achieved through the realization of a Canada without barriers.¹⁶ The Accessible Canada Act creates new standards and regulations for sectors with federal jurisdiction, which includes banking,

telecommunications, transportation, and the Government of Canada.

“Creating a barrier-free Canada through proactive identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to accessibility.”





INTERNATIONAL.

In 2006, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was released with a purpose to “promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.” The UNCRPD is a blueprint to ensure people with disabilities have access to the same rights and opportunities as everybody else—it re-affirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must be able to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It stipulates that signatory countries adopt the following key commitments:

Adopt appropriate legislative and administrative measures to abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against people with disabilities.

Promote and develop universally designed goods, services, equipment, and facilities and embrace principles of Universal Design in the development of standards and guidelines.

Provide accessibility training for professionals to provide effective and non-discriminatory assistance and services to people with disabilities.

The commitments within the UN Declaration reinforce the responsibility of the City to eliminate obstacles in society, such as physical access to buildings, roads, and transportation, and access to information through written and electronic communications. Equally as important, the Convention identifies the City’s responsibility to reduce stigma and discrimination and to embrace respect for differences as part of our collective human diversity, which are often reasons why people with disabilities are excluded from education, employment, and health and other services.

“ Promote, protect, and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”

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