

**SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: RICK HANSEN FOUNDATION ACCESSIBILITY AND CERTIFICATION  
TRAINING PROGRAM**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. THAT Council approve the approach to ensuring accessibility in new civic structures, as outlined in Section 5.0.

**REPORT**

The Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on 2022 January 19, received and adopted the attached report providing information and a suggested approach for civic interaction with the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility and Certification Training Program.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan  
Chair

Councillor J. Keithley  
Vice Chair

Copied to: Chief Administrative Officer Deputy CAO/CFO GM Community Safety GM Corporate Services GM Engineering GM Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services GM Planning and Development
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Chief Human Resources Officer Chief Information Officer Chief Librarian City Solicitor Fire Chief OIC-RCMP
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**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2022 January 12

**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

**FILE:** 14500 00

**SUBJECT: RICK HANSEN FOUNDATION ACCESSIBILITY AND  
CERTIFICATION TRAINING PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE:** To provide information and a suggested approach for civic interaction with the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility and Certification Training Program.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the Committee recommend that Council approve the approach to ensuring accessibility in new civic structures, as outlined in *Section 5.0*.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Burnaby City Council, at its meeting of 2021 August 30, received a delegation from the Rick Hansen Foundation, presenting information about the Foundation's Accessibility Certification and Training program for Municipalities and Educational Institutions.

The delegation invited Burnaby to participate in the program by having civic buildings and structures rated, and for key City staff to participate in the training program. The matter was subsequently referred to staff for more information and review. This report responds to this request.

**2.0 POLICY CONTEXT**

Civic commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities is reflected in the following Council-adopted policies and plans/strategies: *Corporate Strategic Plan* adopted 2017, *Social Sustainability Strategy* adopted 2011, *Equity Policy* originally adopted 1994, updated policy adopted in 2020, and *Healthy Community Policy*, adopted 1991.

### **3.0 OVERVIEW OF RICK HANSEN FOUNDATION'S ACCESSIBILITY AND CERTIFICATION TRAINING PROGRAM**

The Rick Hansen Foundation's (RHF) Accessibility and Certification Training Program is a trademarked program, which consist of two main components:

#### Rating and Certification

- RHF has developed a proprietary physical accessibility ratings system which extends beyond the BC Building Code (and other Provincial codes), as based upon a number of sources, including Universal Design principles and Canadian Standards Association (CSA) recommendations for the 'accessible built environment'. A rating between 60-80% results in the facility being 'certified', and a rating of 80% and higher results in facility being 'gold certified'.
- Trained auditors use the tool referenced above to complete an audit of identified facilities, in order to 'rate' the building in terms of its accessibility. Architectural drawings can also be reviewed.
- Facilities then receive a final report which outlines positive features and areas for improvement – with specific suggestions outlined.
- Facilities are also given the choice to have their ratings available online in the RHF maintained registry, or by purchasing a label or plaque for the location.
- In order to receive a rating two fees are involved – firstly a fee of \$2,340 payable to the CSA via the RHF registry noted above, and the fee for the trained professional completing the audit. This latter fee varies based on the size and complexity of the site.

#### Training for Related Professionals

- The RHF accessibility certification training program teaches participants how to use/understand the ratings system referenced above. Upon completion of the course, participants will be considered qualified by RHF to conduct audits of existing buildings and pre-construction drawings.
- The course is marketed by RHF as being for architects, general contractors, urban planners, engineers and others involved in the design and construction of buildings.
- The course is available locally via Vancouver Community College at a tuition of approximately \$1,600.

In addition to a range of private businesses, participating public entities and governments include the Province of Nova Scotia, the Province of Ontario, the City of Vaughan, the City of Richmond, Vancouver International Airport, and Victoria International Airport. Additionally, the City of Surrey announced in 2021 May that it was committing to building all future civic facilities to a 'gold certification' standard, making it the first local government in Canada to do so.

### **3.1 Assessment of Program**

The RHF Accessibility and Certification Training Program provides a clearly articulated and consistently applied metric for assessing physical accessibility of the built environment, based

upon well-regarded core CSA standards. The prominence of the RHF has also promoted wider society awareness of accessible design and the societal benefits of it.

However, disability advocates both locally and nationally have identified concerns regarding that the ratings system and training certification, as follows:

- The system prioritizes the experiences of physical disabilities versus other disabilities, for example cognitive or sensory. This a key concern given the emerging nature of accessible design – in some circumstances design conflicts can arise as differing groups/individuals have differing needs, and that RHF ratings tool has not made publically available how or in what way these conflicts can be addressed;
- It is unclear how and when the tool is updated, based upon lived experiences and changing global standards and expectations;
- It is contended that receiving ‘certification’ in the area of accessibility may dissuade non-disabled participants from hiring and/or consulting directly with persons with disabilities on projects in order to gather lived experience expertise; and
- The training for certification in question is relatively brief (approximately 48 hours).

Staff note that they are limited in being able to independently assess these identified concerns due to the proprietary nature of the tool and program content.

Concerns have also been raised in the national disability community regarding the potential reliance of various levels of government on third-parties, such as RHF, to define and gate-keep accessibility from an incentive-based perspective, rather than through legislation. The Province of British Columbia has recently implemented accessibility related legislation, which is discussed below in *Section 4.0*.

#### **4.0 ACCESSIBLE BC LEGISLATION**

In 2021 June, the *Accessible B.C. Act* received Royal Assent. The Act is a provincial law, which enables the Provincial government to establish accessibility standards in a range of sectors (e.g. employment, delivery of services, the built environment, information and communications including digital, transportation, health, education, and procurement etc.) aimed at identifying, removing and preventing barriers to accessibility and inclusion. A ‘barrier’ is defined as anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with disabilities.

In order to develop these standards, the Province is establishing an Accessibility Committee to assist with developing accessibility standards. The Committee will consist of up to 11 members appointed by the responsible Minister, the Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. At least half of the members must be persons with disabilities or disability advocates. The Provincial Accessibility Committee may also receive assistance from a “technical committee” composed of experts in a particular sector. For example, a technical committee analyzing accessibility standards for buildings may be composed of builders, architects and engineers.

In developing an accessibility standard, the Committee is required to consult persons with disabilities, individuals and organizations that support persons with disabilities, Indigenous

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peoples, and any organizations and government ministries that might be affected by the standard. The Committee is also required to consider relevant laws and standards and the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, has released preliminary guidance for public sector organizations and local governments stating that they will be required to establish an accessibility committee (if one does not already exist), which will provide input and direction towards development of an organizational accessibility plan and creating a mechanism for public feedback on accessibility. The Ministry anticipates having the first regulation in place in 2022. Further details have not yet been released.

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS OF CIVIC FACILITIES**

Staff anticipate that the City, as well as other local governments in the Province, will be required in the coming years to come into compliance with variously provincially mandated accessibility standards, as enabled through the *Accessible B.C. Act*. It is currently unknown how, or to what extent, that these guidelines will overlap with the content of the RHF ratings tool, as well as the curriculum of the training program.

As such, it is the opinion of staff that it would be precipitous for the City to adopt the RHF ratings as a de facto standard for civic buildings. Instead staff recommend that all future civic structures, and all major renovations of existing civic structures, incorporate the latest available standards from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) for the Accessible Built Environment, in all instances where a greater level of accessibility is referenced in the CSA Standards than in the BC Building Code. Staff note that this is notwithstanding further direction provided by pending Provincial accessibility standards.

It is also recommended that demonstrated experience in, and attention to, accessible and inclusive design be incorporated into 'Request for Proposals' and all other similar purchasing processes, for the design, construction, and major renovation of civic structures. As well, it is strongly recommended that the City continue with its existing practice of reviewing all major new civic structures with the community-member based Access Advisory Committee.<sup>1</sup>

In order to support relevant staff to implement the above, as well as to ready the City workforce for the pending Provincial standards, staff also recommend that key individuals in Civic Projects and Facilities Management undertake either the RHF Certification Training Program, or other similar trainings (e.g. Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's 'Successful Accessible Design'), in order to more fully familiarize themselves with the tenets and principles of accessible design.

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<sup>1</sup> The Burnaby Access Advisory Committee (BAAC) was established in 1988 to provide advice and direction to City departments on access and inclusion issues.

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## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Given the pending mandated implementation of various accessibility standards, enabled via the *Accessible B.C. Act*, staff recommend that the City not currently adopt the RHF ratings as a de facto standard for civic buildings. Instead it is recommended that Council approve the approach to ensuring accessibility in new civic structures, as outlined in *Section 5.0*.



E.W. Kozak, General Manager  
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

RM:sa

cc: Chief Administrative Officer  
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer  
General Manager Corporate Services  
General Manager Engineering  
OIC – RCMP  
General Manager Community Safety  
Chief Human Resources Officer  
General Manager Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
Fire Chief  
Chief Librarian  
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City Clerk