

NEWS RELEASE

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New Provincial Legislation reinforces City of Nanaimo is on the accessible track

Summary

The Province of B.C. declared that effective September 1, 2022 public sector organizations, including the City of Nanaimo, will be required to establish an accessibility committee, a plan and the ability to receive feedback. The City of Nanaimo is ahead of the curve with Council's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness meeting regularly since February 2020.

In addition to an established committee, the City is actively working to remove barriers so individuals of all diverse-abilities have equitable access to choose the places they wish to live, work and play. The City of Nanaimo was granted Age Friendly Community status for showing commitment to making the city age friendly, particularly for seniors. The new City Plan - Nanaimo Relmaged being considered by Council for adoption, embraces the creation of an "Empowered Nanaimo", which includes policies that will address the barriers for people of all ages and abilities to move freely throughout the community and have equitable access to services and spaces. The proposed City Plan includes policies that support adaptable and accessible housing, programs, facilities and infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks etc.). City Plan – Nanaimo Relmaged if adopted, is designed to meet Provincial requirements for an Accessibility Plan.

Many ongoing and past projects are helping to improve both mobility and financial access to the City's parks, recreation and cultural facilities and programs. Accessible beach mats are being laid at Departure Bay beach so those in wheelchairs can reach the water more easily. The team from Inclusive by Design and the City have been working at Diver Lake Park to add several accessible amenities. The community can now enjoy an accessible picnic table, pit toilet, bench and fishing pier. Phase II of the Maffeo Sutton Park inclusive playground is about to begin which will include a we-swing allowing someone in a wheelchair to swing with another person. Families and individuals can apply for the City of Nanaimo Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) program, supporting those in financial need to access Parks, Recreation and Culture programs and services.

The City's Complete Street Guidelines are being incorporated into projects such as Metral Drive to ensure comfortable and effective mobility for people of all ages and abilities. So all people can move about the community safely, 10 touch-free sensors at crosswalks have been installed. These Guardian Wave buttons have a constant direction locator tone and programmable voice function. Curb ramps and the bumpy yellow motion detecting pads, called tactile warning surface indicators, have been installed at five crossings so far. Many of the improvements are incorporated from the BC Community Road Safety Toolkit working towards a Vision Zero - zero traffic fatalities and zero serious injuries. The City also supports the use of a range of technologies to facilitate effective community engagement and remove barriers to participation for those with diverse-abilities.

From May 30 - June 4, 2022 Canada will celebrate the sixth annual National AccessAbility Week (NAAW). Over the week on social media the City will highlight some of the contributions helping make Nanaimo inclusive and accessible. Follow @cityofnanaimo on Facebook and Instagram for more information.

Strategic Link: To be a community that is livable, environmentally sustainable and full of opportunity for all generations and walks of life.

Key Points

- City of Nanaimo is already adhering to the new Provincial legislation for public sector organizations to establish an accessibility committee, a plan and the ability to receive feedback well in advance of September 1, 2022.
- The Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness are promoting social and political equity within City plans, policies, bylaws and infrastructure. Their guidance has been incorporated in the City Plan being considered for adoption by Council. They also work with Council to increase public awareness on issues related to accessibility and inclusion.
- City of Nanaimo continues to strive to be an accessible and inclusive community. This includes many current initiatives and policies that support adaptable and accessible housing, programs, facilities and infrastructure. Recent examples are the inclusive playground at Maffeo Sutton Park and the installation of Guardian wave touch-free crosswalk sensors.

Quotes

"Livability is an important strategic theme for this council and we are proud to proactively plan for growth with a focus on community infrastructure that supports an inclusive, healthy, safe and desirable place to live. We appreciate the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness's recommendations and participation."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"Nanaimo is growing at an incredible pace, and we want that growth to be inclusive of anyone that wants to live here at all times of their life and abilities. Building accessible features into our infrastructure, programs and facilities isn't just smart - it's necessary. In an inclusive and accessible community, everyone wins."

Sheryl Armstrong
City Councillor
City of Nanaimo

"We live in a truly great city, and we want everyone to be able to enjoy it to its fullest. That means acknowledging that different people have different needs, and adding accessible features that will increase safety and participation. Nanaimo is on the right track and we'll keep going with these important improvements."

Zeni Maartman
City Councillor
City of Nanaimo

Quick Facts

- The 2022 National AccessAbility Week theme is "Inclusive from the start", imagining a Canada where no one is left out, a Canada for everyone.
- Nanaimo is designated an Age Friendly Community by the British Columbia Ministry of Health. This status is granted to communities that have shown a commitment to making their Cities Age Friendly, particularly for Seniors.
- Recently the Leisure Economic Access Pass (LEAP) was reviewed with the intent of removing additional barriers, making it easier to obtain. The pass can be used for up to 50 free admissions for drop-in swimming, skating, weight room and gym visits per year and %50 registered programs up to four times per year (maximum of \$40).

Continued... New Provincial Legislation reinforces City of Nanaimo is on the accessible track

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