



BARRIER-FREE CITY FORUM RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL

The City of Charlottetown's Civic Board for Persons with Disabilities hosted a Barrier-Free forum and, in reviewing the report, has compiled a list of specific recommendations and action items for Council to consider.

There was a common theme within the report that suggested the City of Charlottetown should integrate a "disability lens" into all aspects of City business (ie: policy, programs, systems, structural reviews, development, etc.).

GENERAL ACTION ITEMS:

The following are general action items based on that overall theme from the Barrier-Free City report. The action items are broken down into short-term and long-term categories, although some of the short-term actions would have long-term requirements or impacts.

Short-term:

- 1) Create a checklist/guideline document for improving the accessibility of events, including City events and those in which the City is a partner.** The checklist/guideline would be shared with all departments and event partners. Its purpose would be to ensure a disability lens is applied to all aspects of the event logistics. Before the document is finalized, end-users should be consulted for their feedback. The document should include the following categories:

- Site/venue accessibility
- Washroom accessibility
- Accessible seating
- Designated parking and recommended ratio
- Accessible transportation
- Communications

2) Share the Barrier-Free City report with stakeholders and other levels of government. Include correspondence with the Province pointing out specific recommendations in the report where municipal and provincial governments may be able to work together on solutions.

a. Develop a strategy for communicating with the private sector about the benefits of improved accessibility. Share any support/resources that might be available. Include a list of things businesses could do to improve accessibility (ie: lower sinks; higher toilets; replacing fluorescent lights with LED; door knobs with latches; integrating technology to assist people with disabilities; designated quiet spaces identified and communicated with frontline staff and/or advertised on doors; and more automated doors and grab bars, ramps, etc.)

3) Keep accessibility at the forefront of discussions with developers (new infrastructure and renovations).

4) Improve signage on City buildings to promote accessibility options (ie: front entrance of City Hall needs signage for ramp, etc.).

5) Train frontline staff to be able to better assist and support people with disabilities.

a. Create alphabet boards and/or plain language guides for use at the reception desk for people with communication disabilities. Examine what could be done at wickets (bill payment centre) to improve privacy and assist those with hearing impairments. Consider adding assistive technology.

6) Use a disability lens when communicating with the public.

a. Create a database of programs, services, resources and links on the City's website that captures disability related information, especially as it applies to City services. This might include: a map of existing benches; a map of designated parking spaces; an outline explaining the accessibility level of the City's facilities; a link to information about the accessibility of other facilities in the city; links to the City's online payment systems; a list of resources and services available in the community, etc.

- b. When sending traffic advisories for roads or construction related advisories, include information from the contractors about whether the sidewalks are affected and if alternate routes are provided.**
 - c. Explore technologies that could assist in communications with the public** (ie: Cost out and install a soundbox in the Council Chambers to improve accessibility for people with hearing impairments during public meetings of Council. Add a tablet with translation app and plain language/picture-based guides for accessing City services at the main reception desk).
- 7) Expand on the Sensitivity training recently completed by some City staff to include all front-line staff.** Update training as needed.
- 8) Recommend that Police Services increase parking fines for people illegally parking in disabled parking spots.**
 - a. Consider using the revenue generated from fines to support accessibility initiatives.**
- 9) Continue to advocate for safe, affordable housing.**

Long-term:

- 10) Create a map of existing benches and determine where the gaps might be in terms of offering rest areas in the city.** Share the map with the public.
- 11) Research standards for accessibility and cost out upgrades needed to improve accessibility in City buildings. Begin making upgrades as funding allows.** (ie: lower sinks, higher toilets, replace fluorescent lights with LED; replace door knobs with latches, create designated quiet spaces, consider more automated doors and add more grab bars).

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following are recommendations and action items specific to City departments that the Civic Board for Persons with Disabilities presented to Council based on the Barrier-Free City Forum and Report. The committee acknowledges some of these recommendations or action items would need to be done over a longer period of time.

Human Resources:

- Continue participating in job placements for people with disabilities.
- Continue to be part of discussion panels with PEI Council of People with Disabilities on the City's recruitment process
- Continue to support employees with the Hearing Health program, as well as other significant health and safety programs (ie: The return to work and accommodation programs, and employee wellness programs). Continually monitor and improve/amend as necessary.
- Utilize the training and tools provided by the Sensitivity Training seminar from Communication Access Now. Expand access to this type of training for all City staff, as well as use the other resources available to improve visibility and communication efforts (signage, etc).
- Improve language used for job postings and the City's website to ensure that the public is aware of the City's intent to be an equal opportunity employer, to promote diversity, and ensure accommodation measures are in place for employment services process (such as online applications, interviews, etc).
- In consultation with front-line departments, be open to and promote opportunities for availability of alternate work arrangements for People with Disabilities
- Work with Council to determine what the City's formal goals are for diversity targets, and plan for and implement those targets.

Public Works:

- Speak with staff about accessibility challenges around snow removal and stress the importance of working together to improve accessibility for all people throughout the winter.

- Continue to monitor snow removal efforts and make improvements where possible, including investments in the fleet, in the snow alert system and in communicating with the public on snow removal efforts.
- Continue to make snow removal at Tremplon a priority.
- Increase efforts on sidewalk snow removal. Cost out and consider adding to fleet.
- Add more (and wider) openings in the snow banks to access the sidewalk from parking spaces or the street.
- Continue to take feedback from the public on areas where salt/sand might be lacking. Prioritize resources based on the feedback.
- Continue ongoing inspections and maintenance to streets, sidewalks and crosswalks
- Hire a consultant to take a look at city sidewalks through a disability lens (ie: inadequate grade, cracks or tripping hazards, etc.).
- Cost out and consider upgrading crosswalk with new technology to improve accessibility (ie: listing and seeing crosswalks with lights/sounds).
- Make disabled parking spaces larger, where space allows.
- Update the database of disabled parking spaces and make it available to the public. Look into the ratio of disabled parking spaces to ensure there more than enough.
- Work with other departments to communicate the accessibility of municipal buildings
- Work on the recommendations/action items listed under “using a disability lens”

Planning and Heritage

- Though the City can only require property owners to meet the minimum requirements for buildings as established in the National Building Code, accessibility needs to be at the forefront of discussions with developers whether it is a new development or a renovation. Advocate for increased accessibility, beyond the minimum.

- Communicate with the public on any enhanced provisions for accessibility once the revised National Building Code is adopted in 2016.
- Continue requiring a ratio of barrier-free spaces in relation to the square footage of buildings in the Zoning and Development Bylaw. Look into increasing the ratio (ie: research best practices in other municipalities)
- Though external signage indicating the accessibility of a privately owned building does not require a sign permit, Planning staff should encourage property owners to post this information.
- Communicate the new regulations to permitting Garden Suites on properties that are one acre lots or more in the city.

Emergency Services (Fire and Police)

- Implement a Mass notification tool that can be used on a wide variety of platforms and improve accessibility in communications, especially through Emergency Measures.
- Consider creating stickers for inside homes that may assist with identifying persons with disabilities to first responders and emergency personnel. Would need to create a partnership with other first responders / Provincial 911. Bring the idea to the next meeting of the Emergency Services Communication Advisory Committee.
- Continue and expand on training with Police Services staff to include disabilities identification and roll that into other training areas such as dealing with Mental Health, Use of Force, etc.
- Continue ongoing fire safety visits and fire safety education of various occupancies with persons of disabilities.
- Continue sharing information with the public relating to fire safety information specific to persons with disabilities concerning smoke alarms, egress windows, exits, etc.
- Continue cooperation and participation with Island EMS in responding to emergency incidents involving persons with disabilities.

- Arrange consultation with the PEI Council for Persons with Disabilities to discuss training opportunities to enhance firefighter knowledge and improve response to incidents involving persons with disabilities.
- Include the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) "Emergency Evacuation Planning Guide for People with Disabilities" on both City of Charlottetown and City of Charlottetown Fire Department web pages and circulate it.
- Purchase additional chair lift and make sure all Fire staff are trained on how to use it and that training is refreshed as necessary.
- Extend current Fire Prevention Bylaw to include automatic sprinkler system installation in all occupancies involving persons with disabilities.

Parks and Recreation

- Promote the new Victoria Park Boardwalk. It is leveler and wider, boards were placed closer together to improve accessibility, and seating areas were improved.
- Continue to regularly identify and address concerns relating to park access as feedback is received from the public.
- Do more promotion around playgrounds with different levels of inclusion.
- Compile and promote information on the Parks and Recreation facilities and their accessibility, outlining information such as the availability of accessible washrooms, ramps, and elevator, etc.
- Do more promotion of the direct delivery programs that are inclusive.
- Continue to support groups that work with people with disabilities in the field (ie: Special Olympics, Parasport, Recreation PEI, etc.).
- Identify accessibility concerns at the parks that can be easily addressed.
- Continue the Confederation Trail Lighting project in 2016 or as funding allows.
- When selecting new playground equipment, continue to focus on play structures with different levels of inclusion.
- Review programs and facilities to identify opportunities to be more inclusive/accessible.

- Continue to remind Special Event organizers of the importance of making their events accessible and advocate for improvements.
- As infrastructure is being upgraded or replaced, continue to consult with user groups to help ensure the facilities are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Water and Sewer Utility

- Promote the option to make online payments and address the accessibility of the bill payment station (wicket).

Transit

- Meet with the Trius Transit operator to review and discuss the recommendations in the Barrier-Free City report and how the recommendations could be put into action and how the City can support improvements.
- Advocate for more accessible taxis. Promote those that are accessible.

Tourism

- Continue to work with other departments on promoting accessible events, businesses, etc.
- Advocate for more accessibility across all sectors to move toward becoming a Barrier-Free City and be able to include that in information provided to tourists as well as locals.
- Work with major event organizers on inclusion and improving accessibility.