City of Cranbrook Accessibiltiy Framework 2023
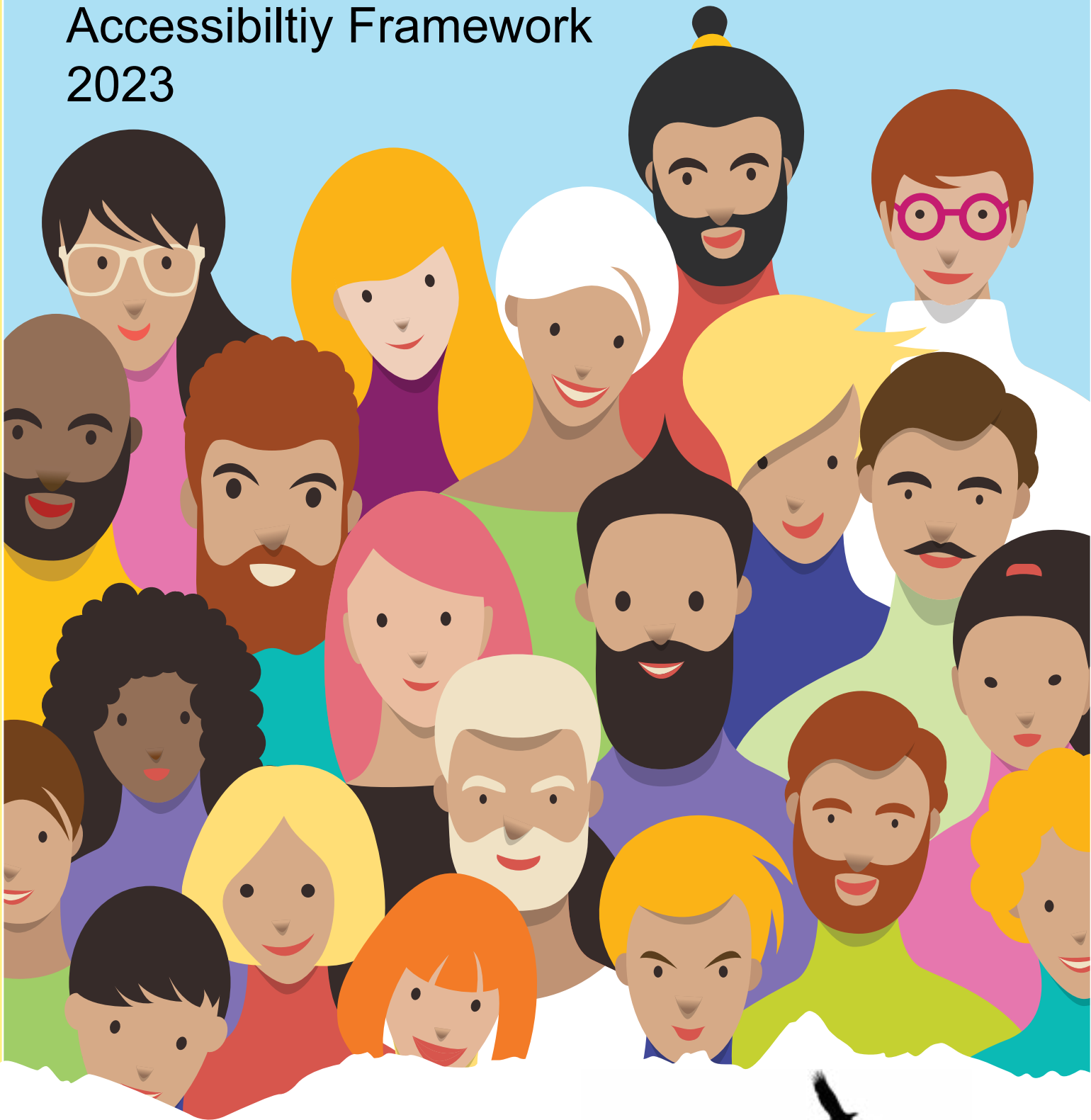
MOUNTAINS OF OPPORTUNITY

CRANBROOK

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Introduction

On June 17, 2021, the Government of British Columbia enacted the Accessible British Columbia Act (the Act), marking a historic milestone as the first provincial accessibility legislation in BC.

The Act establishes a comprehensive legal framework for the formulation, execution, and enforcement of accessibility standards targeted at eliminating barriers in various aspects of the community, including the built environment, program and service delivery, employment, procurement, communications, and technology. As one of the 750+ public-sector organizations bound by the Act, the City of Cranbrook (the City) must create an Accessibility Framework that consists of an Accessibility Committee, a three-year Accessibility Plan (the Plan), and a Feedback Mechanism to gather public input.

The legislation requires that when developing and updating an Accessibility Plan, an organization must follow the principles of:
- Inclusion
- Adaptability
- Diversity
- Collaboration
- Self-determination
- Universal design

To comply with this new legislation, the City has developed an Accessibility Framework, which also describes the phases through which the City will develop a three-year Accessibility Plan to guide the advancement of accessibility in Cranbrook
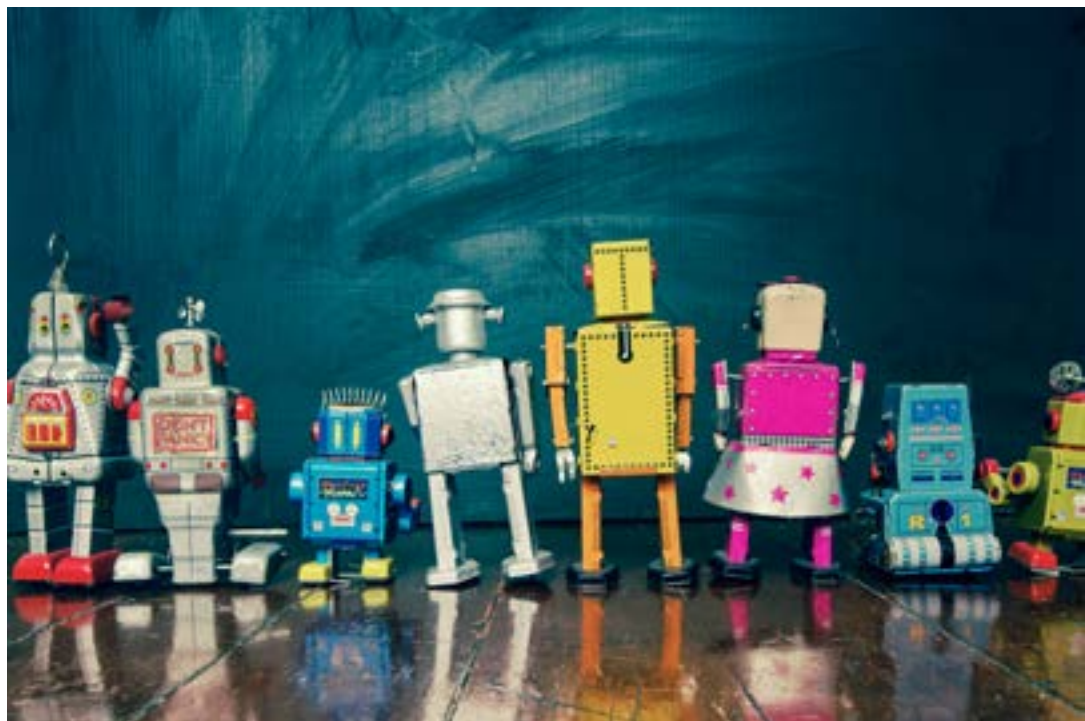
City Message

Additional to the Act passed in June 2021, Council approved a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy that provides the foundation for ensuring a safe, respectful, and inclusive community and workplace. The City is working towards becoming a community that supports accessibility, fosters diversity of perspectives, and provides equal opportunities for all residents. Internally, the City is committed to being an inclusive workplace that welcomes, respects, and values a diverse workforce that reflects the qualities and differences of the broader population it serves.

The City also appreciates the contributions of all individuals and acknowledges that diversity enriches the community. The City acknowledges the invaluable insights and perspectives of individuals with lived experiences of disability, recognizing them as unique individuals with their distinct presentations, skills, knowledge, interests, abilities, goals, and past or present experiences.

By applying an accessibility and cross-disability lens throughout planning and service delivery, the City follows the "Nothing about us without us" principle when engaging with members of the community that have disabilities. The City will work continuously to identify, remove, and prevent barriers experienced by people in Cranbrook.

This Accessibility Framework is among many steps taken toward accessibility and inclusion, supported by the legislative requirements prescribed by the Act. In 2024 and over the next three years, staff will continue to refine the Accessibility Plan and conduct community engagement sessions that will, to the best of our abilities, create barrier-free access to City services and programs. We want to thank the Project team, City staff, community members, and partner organizations for contributing to this important work within our community.

About the City

Cranbrook is a vibrant community surrounded by natural beauty and a place where a sense of belonging, innovation, and diversity meet. We are a community rich in history and values, enriching the quality of life for those who reside in Cranbrook. Our city is the largest urban centre in the Kootenay region and is known as a meeting point of culture, cuisine, stunning scenery, and sports for every season. As the 'Basecamp of the Kootenays,' our city is a transportation hub of the East Kootenay, with the Canadian Rockies International Airport, healthcare, education, the College of the Rockies, and the East Kootenay Regional Hospital. Ensuring our beautiful city meets the diverse needs of our residents and visitors is essential.

The City of Cranbrook is expanding a shared understanding and capacity of accessibility to ensure that everyone finds Cranbrook the best place to call home. We are reviewing and developing policies, strategies, and programs to create a connected and inclusive community. The City believes that accessibility and diversity will enrich the community and anyone wishing to be part of the community of Cranbrook is welcome and accepted.

Our Mission, Values, and Commitment to Accessibility

The City's mission is to be a place where a sense of belonging, innovation, and diversity meet. To be a regional economic, social, and cultural centre and the best place to call home. This Accessibility Framework is designed in alignment with the City's corporate values.

Every day, guided by these values the City aims to provide excellence in programming, services, infrastructure, and amenities to all members of our community to the best of our ability and capacity.

VALUES:
The values expressed below were chosen intentionally by Council and are the guiding principles that determine how the City of Cranbrook operates, both in its public facing and internal functions.

VALUE	WHAT IT MEANS
INCLUSIVITY	All are welcome in Cranbrook. We believe in the value of community and will enhance a sense of belonging as we look toward the future.
PROGRESSIVENESS	We will explore innovation opportunities with local and regional partners that will enhance the quality of life for all in Cranbrook.
RESPONSIVENESS	We will enhance communication with our citizens and provide greater opportunities for input. We will listen and respond to community needs and concerns.
SERVICE EXCELLENCE	We electer to provide the best services, programs, and amenities. We will focus on meeting community needs to the best of our ability and capacity every day.
TRANSPARENCY	We are committed to openness and accountability to our residents. Cranbrook will strive for continuous improvement through the use of best practices.

Our Accessibility Story & Purpose
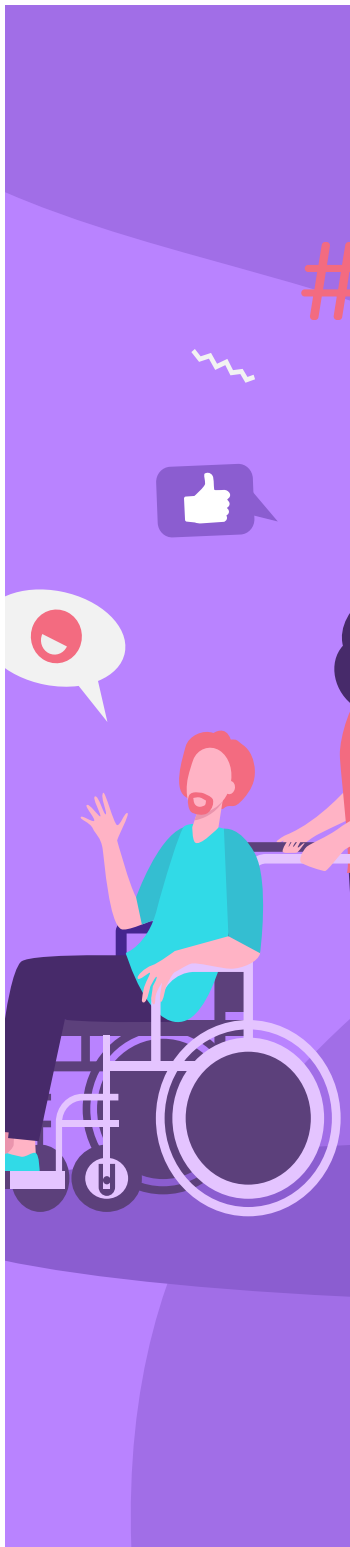
As the largest population centre in southeast British Columbia, Cranbrook is the principal hub for commerce, industry, government, education, health care, air transportation, goods, and services within the region. The city is also noted for its flourishing community of arts and athletic interest groups, organizations, and events.

We recognize the importance of all our citizens participating in all aspects of community life. As a City that has committed to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, we look forward to building on the work we have already done and working collaboratively to continue making Cranbrook a welcoming community to people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities.

Regional Partnerships & Commitment to Accessibility

Over and above setting a Cranbrook specific framework, the City has partnered with the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and other local organizations to form a Regional Accessibility Advisory Committee. The purpose of this regional committee is to collaboratively align goals, share resources, and support the overall objective of accessibility in our region.

Action Plan

Our Approach: Accessibility Framework

This Accessibility Framework outlines how the City meets the requirements of the Act on September 1, 2023 during Phase 1 of the work and will continue to build on the meaningful foundation of accessibility and inclusion during Phase 2.

Phase 1
- Established an Interim Accessibility Committee
- Developed an Accessibility Framework
- Gathered community feedback through inclusive public engagement
- Identified Priorities and steps required to create a comprehensive three-year Accessibility Plan
- Established a preliminary feedback mechanism for the public to provide experiences related to accessibility

Phase 2
- Complete public engagement
- Complete an internal audit of policies, procedures, bylaws, and processes
- Finalize Cranbrook's three-year Accessibility Plan
- Establish an Accessibility Advisory Committee

This framework aligns with the regional goals set by the Regional Advisory Accessibility Committee. We believe that collaboration within the East Kootenays will create progressive collaboration towards achieving transparent accessibility goals and objectives for all residents of the communities in our region.

The finalized Accessibility Plan will highlight priorities and provide direction to ensure that the City continues to improve access to services for people of all ages and abilities.

The Consultation Process

Consultations have begun with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility questionnaire launched over Summer 2023. Beginning in late Summer and into early Fall 2023, our consultants and the internal project team received over 100 responses sharing insights on the accessibility barriers or successes they experience in Cranbrook. Throughout the fall and into early 2024, the City will continue to conduct a series of engagements with focus groups, pop-up events, and collaborating with representatives from organizations within the community. The people we serve will be heard to inform the direction of the City's Accessibility Plan. Our aim is to gather feedback from various voices, particularly those directly impacted by the outcomes of the Accessibility Plan.

The City will work with our committees to develop an actionable three-year plan that will define our priorities to increase accessibility and inclusion for City services and programs and positively impact our community and region.

Interviews with individuals with disabilities and organizations that support them, will be conducted to ensure the Accessibility Plan is informed by the lived experience of those directly impacted by barriers to accessibility. The public are invited to attend the planned engagement sessions to collaborate with the City in our shared journey. Engagements are also being conducted with internal staff to understand accessibility within the City's workplace.

The Interim Accessibility Committee will participate in strategic planning sessions and co-create the priorities, goals, and objectives for the Accessibility Plan. The Accessibility Framework, three-year Accessibility Plan, and Feedback Mechanisms will be available to all in the Fall of 2023 and the Winter of 2024.

Focus Areas: The Accessibility Standards

In alignment with the focus areas identified by the B.C. Government, the key themes of Cranbrook's Accessibility Plan are crucial to ensure all community members can participate fully and actively, enjoy equal opportunities, and access the City provided resources they need. The focus areas include the Built Environment, Employment, Information Technology and Communications, City Programs and Services, Transportation, and Procurement and Financial Services. Each focus area is unique and presents different opportunities to ensure accessibility within the community.

Built Environment

Physical access in the Built Environment is important for everyone to create thriving, inclusive cities as it directly impacts the places where people live, work, and play. The Built Environment includes City-operated parks and green spaces, sidewalks and roads, and civic facilities, including libraries, arenas, recreation centers, trails, and dog parks.

Physical access looks at how people can walk or wheel through the community and interact with City facilities independently and safely. Striving to ensure people can effectively navigate the environment to participate in the spaces and places the City offers for residents and visitors alike.

Employment

As a significant employer in the region, we feel that providing inclusive employment opportunities creates diverse perspectives and an opportunity to have community members see themselves reflected in the workforce. Accessibility in employment includes ease of access to the City's hiring processes, procedures for providing accommodations, and the types of accommodations provided throughout the hiring process and the overall employment cycle. Understanding these elements is crucial in supporting the overall success of a potential candidate or employee.

Information, Technology, & Communication

As technology advances, there are more opportunities and ways for individuals with disabilities to obtain information and participate in community discussions. Ensuring accessible information formats and diverse communication methods is crucial in improving the access to information for everyone. When people with disabilities have this access, they can more effectively assess available opportunities, programs, and services that align with their needs and interests.

When looking at access to Information, Technology and Community printed, digital, and in-person communications, closed captioning, interpreters, alternative methods of communication, accessible websites, and PDFs should be considered.

Programs & Services

Through an ongoing effort to identify, eliminate, and prevent obstacles. The City's extensive array of programs and services, ranging from tax payments to recycling services, community facility programs, festivals, and community events, will progressively become more inclusive. By providing accessible programs and services, individuals with disabilities and those facing barriers to access can fully participate in community life. This reduces the need for last-minute solutions and adaptations while preventing the feeling of exclusion from City events, programs, or services due to lack of accessibility.

The City of Cranbrook's programs and services includes those offered in the City's parks, recreation, and cultural facilities. Accessibility includes the ability to easily access payment options for City provided programs and services.

Transportation

Transportation around Cranbrook is an integral part of community life. It is important that the City looks to meet the diverse needs of Cranbrook residents. Whether people are utilizing active transportation such as walking or wheeling, taking a bus, driving their own vehicle, taking a taxi, or using a ride-hail vehicle accessibility is key.

Transportation areas pertaining to the City encompass City sidewalks, street parking and City-owned parking lots, snow removal at these locations and civic facilities, taxicab and ride-hail licensing, and partnership with BC Transit for public transportation.

Procurement & Financial Services

Procurement is the activity of finding and acquiring goods and services. The aim of accessible procurement is to not only ensure the City engages with contractors that deliver products or services at the right time, right price, and best cost, but also includes accessibility and universal design in the bidding and proposal process. Taking an accessibility-oriented approach to the policies, practices, and decision-making processes of an organization is essential to advancing accessibility in the City. Incorporating accessibility into the organizational structure, promotes an inclusive, diverse, and fair workplace with a healthy corporate culture. This section includes how the City purchases goods and services, financial procedures, payment processing systems and financial reporting. It also details how addressing accessibility in these areas will support the residents of Cranbrook.

Community Feedback Mechanism

Feedback from the community is important for the success of our Accessibility Plan. We will be developing several ways for residents to share feedback on the Accessibility Plan. In the interim, anyone with feedback about current phases of the Accessibility Framework and about accessibility in the City of Cranbook, can share their thoughts by contacting info@cranbrook.ca

Implementation & Monitoring

Once finalized, the Accessibility Plan will be shared with the community. Actions and community feedback will be evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis. Progress on any identified action points will be tracked and reported to Council and updates in the Plan. The Accessibility Plan will be updated every three (3) years to reflect successes, growth, areas of opportunity, and the advancement of priorities within the community.

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Appendix A: Glossary

"Accessibility means that all people can take part in their communities through work, play and other daily activities."

Accessibility: A barrier-free experience that offers the same opportunity for everyone to participate in their community

Accommodations: "An alteration of environment, program format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access" or participate in a space, place, event, or program in a way that meets their needs.

Active Transportation: Active Transportation is human-powered transportation that connects your destinations. It includes traveling with the help of a device including mobility devices, electric bikes, and anything that uses your own power.

Attitudinal Barriers: "When people think and act based upon [assumptions and misconceptions that limit how a person with a disability can participate], such as making decisions about people with disabilities without including them or not believing that a person with a disability can contribute to the workforce."

Barrier: "Anything that hinders the full and equal participation in society of a person with [a disability]. Barriers can be caused by environments, attitudes, practices, policies, information, communications, or technologies, and affected by intersecting forms of discrimination."

Built Environment: The constructed aspects of physical surroundings, "including homes, communities, schools, workplaces, parks/recreation areas, business areas, roads and green spaces, [that vary] in size from large-scale urban areas to smaller rural developments."   For the purposes of the Plan, the built environment applies to all public spaces. This includes buildings, sidewalks, road systems, parks, playgrounds, and other public infrastructure encountered by people in their everyday life.

Deaf: We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture.

Disability: A complex term that is based on a person's physical body experiencing barriers created by the environment that prevent a person from fully participating in the community to the greatest extend possible. Many members of the disability community prefer the term disability, but this is not necessarily the case, and other terms may be preferable for some members of the community.

Diverse Abilities: Diverse Abilities is a term frequently used by community service organizations to refer to individuals with disabilities and self-advocates as a means of positively focusing on the varied abilities of a person.

Equity: "Equity is the fair treatment and access to equal opportunity (justice) that allows the unlocking of one's potential, leading to the further advancement of all peoples. The equity pursuit is about the identification and removal of barriers to ensure the full participation of all people and groups. "

Hard of Hearing: "Refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. People who are hard of hearing usually communicate through spoken language and can benefit from hearing aids, cochlear implants, and other assistive devices as well as captioning."

Inclusion: "Inclusion is a universal human right and its objective is to accept, welcome and embrace all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or other need. Inclusion consists of the efforts and practices to ensure groups or individuals with different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and treated equally."

Information and Communication Barriers: When communication methods are not accessible by people with disabilities, such as information that is communicated using complex language or jargon or when materials are only available in small print without large print options.

Medical Model of Disability: A historical, deficit-based approach to understanding disability that views disability as "a medical problem that needs to be cured [and] focuses on labelling and treating people's symptoms."

Physical Barriers: "When obstacles in an environment make access difficult, such as a washroom with an accessible stall but no automatic door opener" or a meeting that is hosted in a space with no wheelchair access.

Sensory Barriers: "When sensory information such as lights, sounds, smells, etc. prevent participation in the environment, such as co-workers wearing perfume in the workplace or use of fluorescent lighting in the workplace."

Social Exclusion: When a person or members of a group or social category is/are unable to participate in their community and experience feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a lack of belonging. People with disabilities are at increased risk of experiencing exclusion.

Social Model of Disability: A contemporary approach to understanding disability that views disability as "a consequence of environmental, social, and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with [a disability] from a maximum participation in society. This model centers on social barriers that keep persons with a disability from participating actively in all political and social institutions. This model places the source of the problem on society. Solutions must focus on social change and not solely on the individual with the disability. This model focuses not only on physical or environmental but also other barriers of a social nature such as prejudice, stereotyping."

Systemic Barriers: When policies or procedures are not inclusive, such as a process that only permits individuals to submit or access information through an online system without alternatives being provided or a driver's licence being required for a job when another form of transportation could be used.

Tactile: Tactile information, signals and wayfinding provide the means for individuals to access information through touch, either by input through their hands (e.g., raised print) or information received by tapping a white cane.

Technological Barriers: "When technology can't be accessed by people with disabilities," such as self-service kiosks without accessibility features or touch screens without screen reader software or tactile keyboards.

Appendix A: Glossary

Universal Design: "The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability."

Wayfinding: "Wayfinding has the function to inform people of the surroundings in the (unfamiliar) built environment, it is important to show information at strategic points to guide people into the right directions." This includes elements like signage, acoustics, illumination, and surface finishes.

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