



## “What People Said...”

# Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee Community Engagement Report

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Developed by [ChangingPaces.com](https://ChangingPaces.com)

Delivered on August 27, 2024

## Introduction

In July 2024, the Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee (CWAAC) hired Changing Paces, an accessibility consulting firm, to conduct a survey they had developed. The intention was to have facilitated sessions to more fully consider the questions sent out to the community in the spring of 2024. They ran four two-hour virtual workshops, and three in-person workshops titled “Gauging Accessibility in Capital West AAC Communities.” The workshops were facilitated by Trish Robichaud, the founder and CEO of Changing Paces, and Marie Marchildon, a Subject Matter Expert on disability, both having lived experience with disability.

The CWAAC is comprised of the Corporate Officers representing seven municipalities: The City of Colwood, the Township of Esquimalt, the District of Highlands, the City of Langford, the District of Metchosin, the District of Sooke, and the Town of View Royal. From March 1, 2024, to April 7, 2024, the committee undertook a survey to determine what barriers people with disabilities encounter within their municipalities.

Hiring Changing Paces to facilitate a more in-depth exploration of the needs of people with disabilities around municipal facilities, goods, and services in the seven municipalities, was the next step in compiling information to use in creating the communities’ accessibility plan. By engaging people face-

to-face, even if over Zoom, the level of authenticity and vulnerability of the participants grew exponentially. This allowed the feedback to directly reflect actual municipal barriers experienced by citizens with disabilities in these seven communities. The focus of the initial accessibility plan is Service Delivery and Employment.

Along with a more in-depth look at the survey, the presentation included sharing their personal experience with disability. Discussion included topics such as stigma, barriers, the pros and cons of labels, and ideas for improving working relationships between people with disabilities and municipal staff. Also discussed was “what it would be like to have ultimate accommodations on the job.” These discussions proved to be hearty and insightful, providing rich qualitative data.

The quality of the data collected is substantial. Changing Paces participated in the effort to promote the engagement events along with the partner municipalities. Changing Paces used social media channels, emailed disability organizations and various stakeholders, and placed ads in the local paper. In total, thirty surveys were gathered. The following is the collected data, together with target areas to address, and our recommendations for CWAAC’s inaugural accessibility plan.

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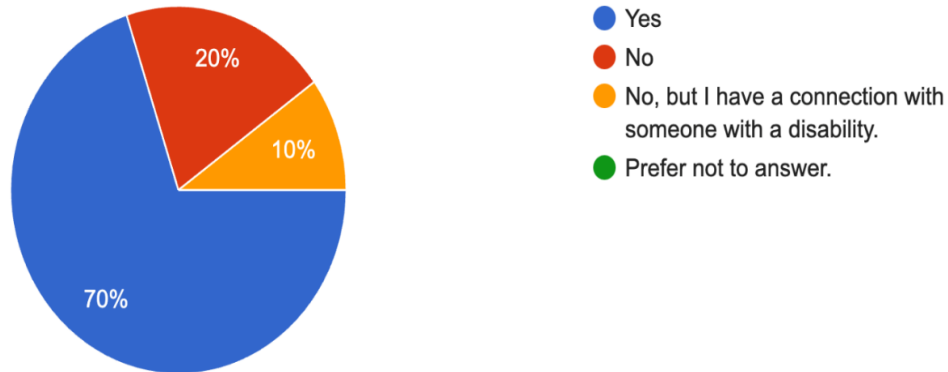
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# Question 1.

1. Do you (or the person you are assisting) identify as having a disability or disabilities, or have you or they experienced an accessibility challenge at any time ?

30 responses



70% - Yes

20% - No

10% - No, but I have a connection with someone with a disability.

0% - Prefer not to answer.

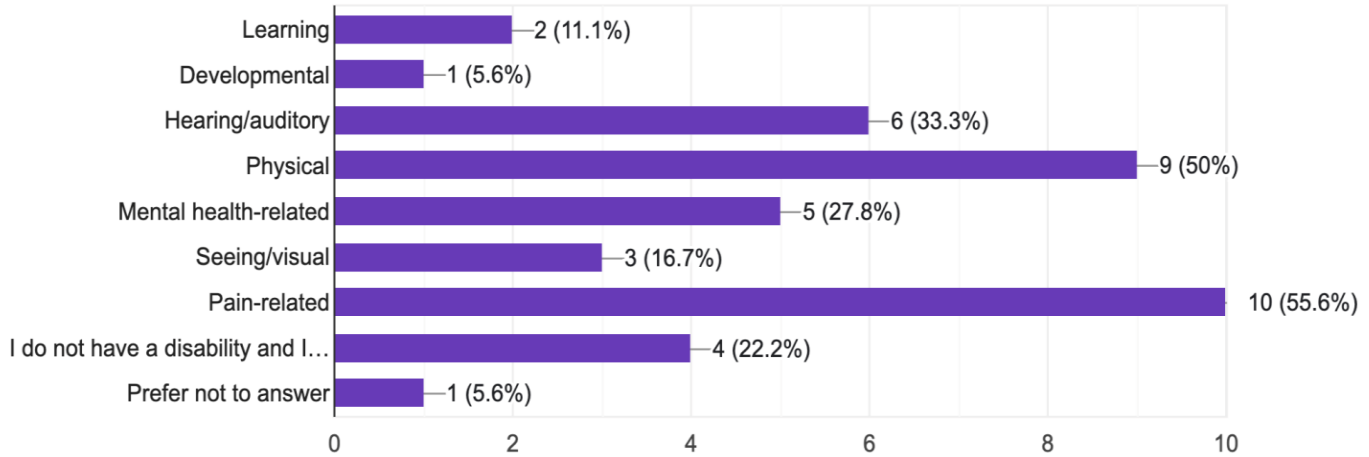
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This pie chart shows the percentage of individuals who have or know anyone with a disability or have experienced an accessibility challenge. [The data indicates that the “Yes” was the most answered, noting the importance of addressing accessibility challenges and issues.] While the survey represents a small sample size relative to the overall population, the quality of the discussions makes it clear that there is a need to address accessibility challenges and issues across all seven municipalities.

# Question 2.

2. Which type or types of disabilities impact you (or the person you are assisting) ? (Select all that apply)

18 responses



11.1% - Learning

5.6% - Developmental

33.3% - Hearing/auditory

50% - Physical

27.8% - Mental health-related

16.7% - Seeing/visual

55.6% - Pain-related

22.2% - I do not have a disability and I am not assisting someone with a disability.

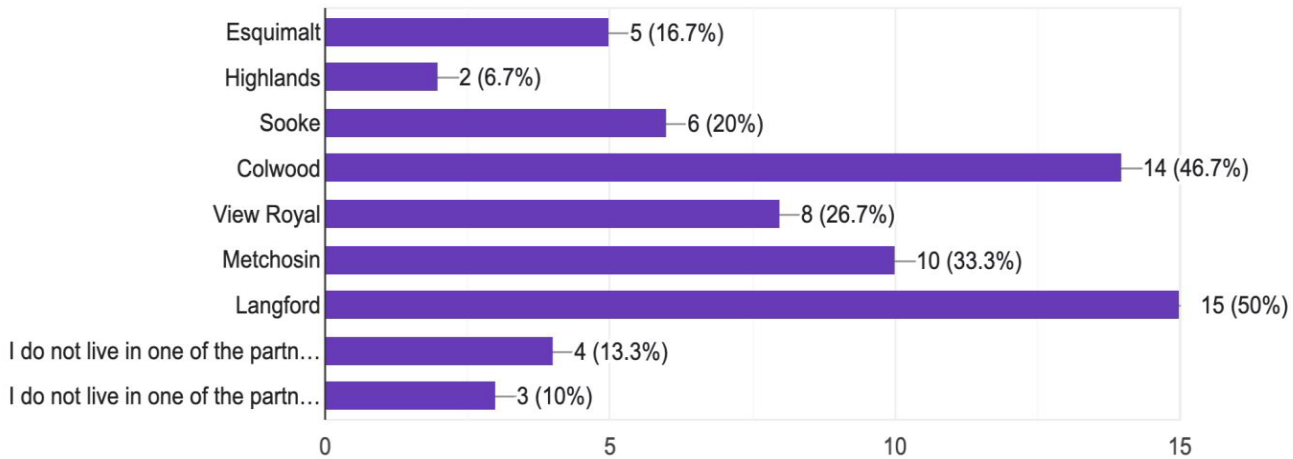
5.6% - Prefer not to answer

The bar graph above shows the type/s of disabilities that the respondents may have encountered or are currently experiencing. Physical and pain-related disabilities ranked the highest out of the choices.

### Question 3.

3. In which of the partner municipalities do you (or the person you are assisting) live or regularly access municipal services? Check all that apply.

30 responses



16.7% - Esquimalt

6.77% - Highlands

20% - Sooke

46.7% - Colwood

26.7% - View Royal

33.3% - Metchosin

50% - Langford

13.3% - I do not live in one of the partner municipalities, but I often visit these areas.

10% - I do not live in one of the partner municipalities and I am rarely in these areas.

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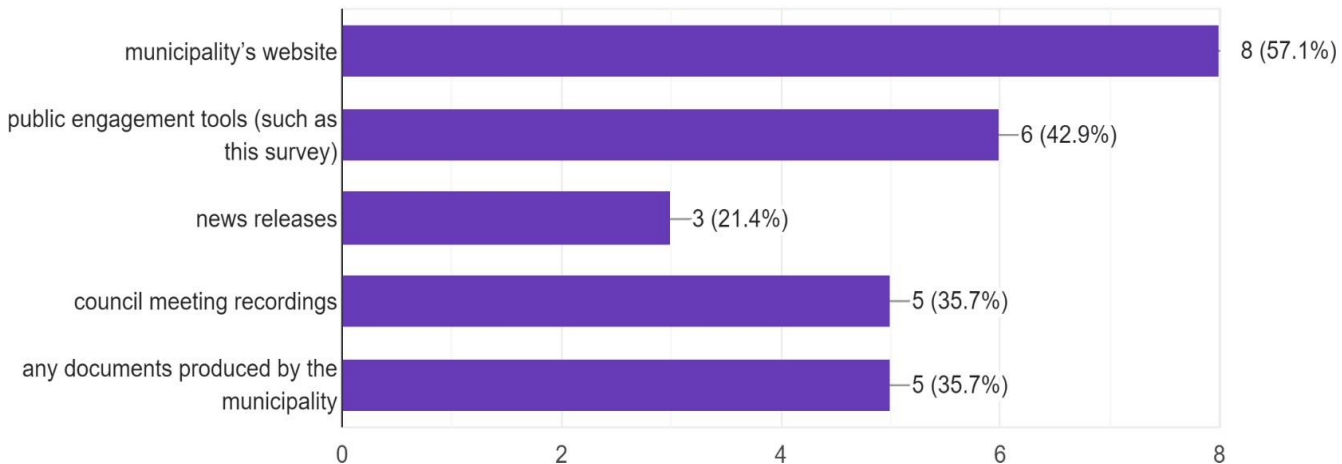
The bar graph indicates that most of the respondents came from the municipalities of Langford (50%) and Colwood (46.7%). Regardless of the municipality, some answers to our surveys had similarity in terms of addressing accessibility issues, which will be explored more below.



## Question 4A.

4A. Where, if at all, have you (or the person you are assisting) encountered a barrier to accessing municipal information?

14 responses



The bar graph shows areas that the respondents encountered the following barriers to accessing municipal information. The “municipality's website” and “public engagement tools” ranked as the two highest.

42.9% - municipality's website

33.3% - public engagement tools (such as this survey)

19% - news releases

28.6% - Council meeting recordings

28.6% - any documents produced by the municipality

4.8% - I have not encountered this, but we have heard many times where persons have had trouble with website, news releases, Council meetings

4.8% - Any documents produced, personal interaction, people are uncomfortable do not know what to say, maximize font size on signage, presentations

.....

The following questions below and their responses exhibit the accessibility concerns that need the municipalities' attention.

## Question 4B.

**4.B. If you (or the person you are assisting) indicated experience with a barrier when accessing municipal information, on part one of this question, please provide details below.**

### What People Said:

In terms of accessing municipal information, the issues most often raised were website accessibility, online information, and ease of access. Specifically, they said the following:

- Municipal websites not user friendly to diverse needs of people with disabilities, very limited/no engagement opportunities for PwD [persons with disabilities], no notice/accommodation to reduce/eliminate barriers for them, news releases not in alternate formats/sufficient notice for booking transportation, not enough accessible parking, no universally accessible bathrooms on site, automatic doors not working or don't exist, recordings difficult to impossible for those visually/hearing impaired, documents not in alternate format and documents not readily available.
- Sometimes it is difficult to find documents on websites, especially if visually challenged. Alternative formats would be useful.
- Too many levels you need to navigate to get to the correct department.
- The search function on websites is very difficult.
- An event was held that didn't offer suitable parking (required walking a long distance)
- Website a hunt and search exercise.
- Trying to access documents can be difficult.
- Not in plain language and in symbols colors or red.
- Council meetings are long and exhaust me. I can watch the live meeting on Zoom, and watch recordings, but it's hard to participate with the public comment process.
- Websites are difficult to navigate, information is in more than one place, difficult to assess what is the most recent information.
- Some surveys don't work with just the use of a keyboard and screen-reader. Glad this this one does.
- The person I am assisting wants more info or is looking to be involved, but often feels information is lacking.
- Easier access to resources.
- Knowing the engagement opportunity might only see or recognize if it was on Colwood's Instagram.

- Finding forms and you have to go to many different spots to find what you need.
- People using microphones do not speak loud enough and I can't hear questions or comments.
- Langford website is not user friendly, can't do simple searches, and not-community focused.

## Identified Barriers

### a. Physical Barriers

- Inadequate accessible parking and long walking distances at events.
- Lack of universally accessible bathrooms and functional automatic doors
- Poor audio quality during meetings, making it hard to hear speakers.

### b. Communication Barriers

- News releases and documents not available in accessible formats.
- Delays in accessing front counter staff.
- Lengthy Council meetings that may hinder participation.

### c. Digital Barriers

- Websites are not user-friendly or accessible for people with disabilities.
- Difficulty navigating websites and using search functions.
- Information is scattered, outdated, and hard to find.
- Lack of alternative formats for documents and forms.
- Surveys and digital resources are often not compatible with assistive technology.
- Difficulties accessing recordings and participating in public participation opportunities.

### d. Customer Service Barriers

- Lack of clear and accessible information about resources and opportunities.

## Changing Paces' Recommendations:

### 4B 1. Physical Solutions

**4B-1i** – Strive to exceed the minimum number of accessible parking spaces required by the Province of BC.

**4B-1ii** - An accessible front entrance with a power door should be provided to ensure ease of access for all individuals.

**4B-1iii** - Accessible washrooms should also include power doors to ensure ease of access for all individuals.

**4B-1iv** - In large or elongated spaces, consider adding seating or resting spots throughout to provide comfort and accessibility for everyone.

## **4B 2. Communication Solutions**

**4B-2i** - Accessible document training is essential to ensure staff can create alternate formats, such as Microsoft Word, PDF, PowerPoint, and social media content.

**4B-2ii** - Providing timely notices of community events and meetings allows individuals to book transportation as needed.

**4B-2iii** - Municipalities may consider increasing front counter staff coverage. This is an opportunity to hire diverse people, including those with disabilities.

**4B-2iv** - Council meeting locations should include hearing loops to accommodate those who have trouble hearing.

## **4B 3. Digital Solutions**

**4B-3i** - The partner municipalities may wish to consider conducting an accessibility audit on each site where budgetary considerations are allowed, if they have not already done so.

**4B-3ii** - When creating forms for internal or external use, consider using electronic forms to enhance accessibility.

**4B-3iii** - Remind staff to allow their devices to update automatically to ensure accessibility features are up to date.

**4B-3iv** - On pages with downloadable files, videos, or documents, municipalities should provide an email address for those needing help accessing these resources.

## **4B 4. Customer Service Solutions**

**4B-4i** - Wherever a service counter is provided, it is recommended to include a space with lowered counter height to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities.

**4B-4ii** - Customer service training should be conducted for all staff including accessibility. This training is most effective when all organization members participate, as this can foster

a more inclusive company culture.

## Question 4C.

**4 C. If you (or the person you are assisting) indicated experience with a barrier when accessing municipal information in part one of this question, please share any ideas you might have on how to reduce or eliminate that barrier.**

### What People Said:

To address accessibility issues when accessing municipal information, the respondents shared the following suggestions:

- Provide 'plain language' documents.
- Provide a front counter customer service agent.
- Pay attention to meeting times – Council meeting times are hard.
- Access needs to be thought of right at the beginning and not just as an afterthought.
- Phone information may assist people with visual impairments. In-person services may be more helpful than on-line materials.
- Drop down windows showing all departments.
- I understand there is work updating the website. I trust this will make a big difference.
- Always have Accessibility parking options.
- Provide alternate text in plain language.
- Website not user-friendly.
- Better ways to search.
- Support artificial intelligence (AI) use for accessibility.
- I'd like to feel more confident that writing a letter to the Council & the District of Sooke was really going to take action. I feel people who also present in person get more attention to the issue they're writing about. I can't even sit on the wobbly folding chairs long enough to wait for a turn to speak at Council.
- More streamlined website. Perhaps a 'Where do you want to go' prompt on the opening page would help? Searching documents is especially cumbersome, perhaps more selection prompts like a selection prompt to search by year and type of document one wants.
- More info municipalities could share.
- I would make it, so it picks out many words when related to the search item.
- Use door to door mail or flyers for information.
- Remind speakers to speak clearly and loudly. Consider closed captioning for recorded meetings.
- Larger font on communications, signs, alternative formats e.g.: audio, PDFs, screen

readers.

- Improve search features and design of websites to help people easily find whatever they are looking for.

## **Identified Barriers**

### **a. Communication Barriers**

- Lack of plain language documents and alternate text.
- Inadequate phone and in-person services for people with visual impairments.
- Font sizes on communications and signs is too small, lack of alternative formats like audio or screen readers.
- Ineffective methods for disseminating information, such as limited use of door-to-door mail or flyers.
- Need for municipalities to share more information and improve public engagement.
- Accessibility needs not being considered early enough in planning processes.

### **b. Customer Service Barriers**

- Limited front counter customer service for direct assistance.
- Perception that in-person presentations to the Council are more effective than written communication.
- Speakers at meetings need to speak more clearly and loudly, consideration of closed captioning for recordings.

### **c. Physical Barriers**

- Minimal accessible parking options at municipal sites.
- Lack of accessible seating during Council meetings (e.g., wobbly chairs, chairs with no arms, chairs with arms).

### **d. Digital Barriers**

- Website not user-friendly, with poor search functionality and cumbersome navigation.
- Need for a more streamlined website with prompts for easier document searching.
- Larger role for alternative formats in communications, such as PDFs, audio versions, and screen reader compatibility.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **4C 1. Communication Solutions**

As in recommendations for Question 4B under communication barriers, and consider training on accessible documents,

## **4C 2. Customer Service Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service Solutions:]

**4C-2i** - If someone has indicated that they cannot attend a Council meeting in person, they could be offered the option of participating virtually through electronic means.

**4C-2ii** - Municipalities may wish to partner with organizations that support people with disabilities who are looking for work. Staff training may help establish a company culture that encourages and supports people's self-disclosure of their disabilities.

**4C-2iii** - Speakers at meetings should have microphones. If microphones are unavailable, speakers can be asked to stand up when contributing to help carry their voice. Municipalities may consider closed captioning options.

## **4C 3. Physical Solutions**

**4C-3i** - Municipalities should ensure there is a sufficient number of accessible parking spaces based on how many parking spots there are in total.

**4C-3ii** - Seating at Council meetings include space for mobility devices. Chairs must be stable and include both those with arms and those without.

## **4C 4. Digital Solutions**

[Refer to 4B 3i, RE: Digital Solutions for recommendations on websites]

[Refer to 4B 3 RE: Digital Solutions for accessible document training it would be best to include making audios and videos accessible as well.]

# **Question 5.**

**5 A-J. Please indicate if you (or the person you are assisting) experience any barriers:**

- A. Accessing municipal parks, trails, playgrounds?
- B. Accessing municipal programs or services?

- C. Engaging with Council?
- D. Accessing municipal buildings and grounds?
- E. Interacting with bylaws or policies?
- F. Interacting with municipal staff?
- G. Participating in municipal events?
- H. Interacting with signage/wayfinding around the municipality?
- I. Accessing municipal sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes?
- J. Other (if you wish, please provide additional information about these experiences)

What do you recommend as possible solutions to eliminate these barriers?

## Question 5A.

### 5 A. Parks, Trails, and Playgrounds

#### What People Said:

When it comes to accessibility barriers in terms of parks, trails, and playgrounds, the respondents said the following:

- Universally accessible parks, trails and playgrounds where everyone is included.
- More accessible swimming and sports activities in nature/outside.
- Paved well even walkways, sitting areas.
- Build Ramps, not stairs. Everyone can use a ramp.
- Accessible benches/picnic tables (for rest) and participation.
- Accessing Esquimalt lagoon beach. I access near garbage cans 32 & 33 area - take risks with crutches to get through gravel dumped on narrow pathways (32).
- Better surfacing of the ramp at Ed McGreggor Park - very slippery when wet. Surfacing on park trails to be wheelchair navigable.
- Using symbols, colours, braille.
- Flashing light for crosswalk at the corner Veterans Memorial Park and Veterans Memorial Highway, 1 more accessible parking spot. Ramp access to gazebo.
- Conduct accessibility assessments of all public trails and fund implementation of improvements such as signage to provide trail difficulty rating.
- Wood chips instead of rubberized surfaces. My wife has noted to the City of Colwood that not all parks are inclusive (for wheelchairs or motorized scooters).



- Could not get my mom's wheelchair through the gate easily at one of the parks in Langford. She was visiting from another municipality, and we went elsewhere to let my child to play.
- Creating a municipal accessibility plan for parks & playgrounds. Add more playground equipment that are accessible, education for municipal staff.
- Use fine-grained material on trails instead of coarse gravel.
- [Use coloured garbage cans as they are easier to locate] More options; clearly sharing information on accessibility for parks, trails & playgrounds.
- Recognition that trails are now regional roads so they can be treated as such.
- Pay attention to include people with disabilities given that there are more and more people walking over time so space will become limited.
- Ensure good communication between all trail users (including cyclists and those not on cycles).
- Bicycle lanes should be wide.
- Thank you for providing the bicycle rack.
- Gravel is not an accessible surface.
- Gravel is also unstable and can have people lose their footing (this point was trying to demonstrate that there is no good use for gravel when it comes to the public).
- Ramps that are wood are not accessible (slip hazard).
- Need more accessible playgrounds.
- Access to parks and trails from parking lot can be hard.
- Elevator is not reliable.
- Events by the [Sooke] river are not accessible.
- MacGregor Park has challenging parts in it where events are sometimes hosted

## Identified Barriers

### a. Physical Barriers

- Low number of universally accessible parks, trails, and playgrounds.
- Walkways, ramps, and sitting areas are not always paved, reliance on stairs limits access.
- Surfaces like gravel and wood can create mobility challenges and safety hazards.
- Inaccessible park gates, playground equipment, and resting spots like benches and picnic tables.
- Limited accessible parking spots near key facilities and events.
- Unreliable and inaccessible elevator services at public locations.

### b. Communication Barriers

- Lack of plain language documents and alternate formats such as braille, symbols, and larger fonts.

- Poor communication regarding accessibility features in parks, trails, and public spaces.
- Limited use of clear signage and accessible information indicators (e.g., color-coded garbage cans).

### **c. Policy-Related Barriers**

- Municipal initiatives may overlook accessibility considerations.
- Need for comprehensive policies for creating and maintaining accessible public spaces and services.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **5A 1. Physical Solutions**

**5A-1i** - Strive towards providing accessible playgrounds, adequate bench or rest stops, and smooth surfaces in common go-to areas.

**5A-1ii** - Surfaces such as gravel and wood chips are difficult to navigate. For better accessibility use asphalt or rubberized surfaces instead.

**5A-1iii** - Seating and rest stops, such as benches and picnic tables, make trails or grounds accessible for individuals who tire easily or have mobility issues.

**5A-1iv** - Consult with playground experts to ensure that playground equipment is designed to be accessible.

**5A-1v** - Washroom facilities should be designed to be fully accessible or at the very least, include an accessible stall as a minimum standard with a goal of being fully accessible.

**5A-1vi** - Where possible, include additional temporary accessible parking spaces near the entrance of any event.

### **5A 2. Communication Solutions**

[See 4B Digital Solutions RE: accessible document support]

**5A-2i** - Create an inventory online of the accessibility features at parks, trails, and public spaces by each respective municipality would be a major asset to the public.

**5A-2ii** - Signage should include oversized text with significant contrast between the background and the text for better readability.

**5A-2iii** - Provide signage indicating trail difficulty or challenges to help users navigate effectively.

### **5A 3. Policy-Related Solutions**

**5A-3i** - Integrate accessibility at the core or onset of your planning and processes rather than addressing it afterward.

**5A-3ii** - Develop accessibility policies for maintaining accessible public spaces and services, including an accessible customer service policy.

## **Question 5B.**

### **5 B. Programs or Services**

#### **What People Said:**

When assessing programs or services of municipalities, the respondents said:

- Listen to people with lived experience and value their input and put these ideas into action. Lip service happens far too often. Accessibility to community spaces remains a barrier to participation. Well-defined easy access to programs [including those that have] time sensitive [registration]. We have an annual service review where levels of service are discussed, leading to budget decisions.
- Limited accessible options for neurodiverse & physical disabilities.
- Swim programs needed evenings or weekends, or you could have partners to connect with to do workouts or swimming buddies.
- At reception the only thing I would add would be space for a mobility scooter/wheelchair to wait safely and at least 2 chairs one with arms. Sofa and sofa type chairs are difficult sit and get up from.
- Create and expand public service/ program models and introduce democratic participatory planning and administration.
- Make station avenue accessible with ramps.
- Education and training for all, but for public-facing and front-counter staff.
- Teach people to recognize differences in others and react appropriately and accordingly.
- Present all options for people (paper, QR code, online, over the phone, in person, etc.).
- Have an “accessibility concierge” type of person to help out with all things accessibility.
- Networking [knowing what resources are available in the community and nearby].

#### **Identified Barriers**

### **a. Physical Barriers**

- Accessibility to community spaces.
- Limited accessible options for neurodiverse and physically disabled individuals in municipal programs.
- Need for more space at reception areas for mobility scooters/wheelchairs and seating with proper support.
- Need for ramps and better surfacing in public spaces.

### **b. Communication Barriers**

- Perceived lack of meaningful engagement with people with lived experience.
- The need for well-defined and easy access to time-sensitive programs.
- Inadequate presentation of service options (e.g., paper, QR code, online, phone, in-person).
- Absence of an “accessibility concierge” to assist with accessibility-related needs.

### **c. Systemic Barriers:**

- Need to create and expand public service/program models.
- Need for accessibility considerations to be addressed during annual service reviews and budget decisions when considering new initiatives.

### **d. Customer Service Barriers**

- Insufficient education and training for public-facing staff to recognize and appropriately respond to differences in others.

### **e. Digital Barriers**

- Potential issues with integrating various communication tools and platforms to ensure accessibility.

## **Changing Paces’ Recommendations:**

### **5B 1. Physical Solutions**

**5B-1i** – Contact neurodiverse and physically disabled populations for input on the types of programs they’d be interested in and their needs for participation.

**5B-1ii** - Work towards providing sufficient space in reception areas for mobility scooters and wheelchairs and plan for strong, supportive seating.

## **5B 2. Communication Solutions**

**5B-2i** - Value and leverage the lived experience of people with disabilities in the community.

**5B-2ii** - Once contact is made with disability organizations, develop relationships with people in communications to share information about accessible municipal programs.

**5B-2iii** - Include multiple avenues for people to communicate with you when sending any communication, such as phone, email, QR code, online, and in-person options.

**5B-2iv** - Consider appointing an “accessibility concierge” to assist the public or staff with accessibility-related needs. This person could work closely department/person responsible for Human Resources to facilitate necessary accommodations.

## **5B 3. Systemic Solutions**

**5B-3i** - The involvement of people with disabilities in the community is central to the idea of “Nothing about us, without us.” Remember that “Disability inclusion is an opportunity, not an obstacle.

**5B-3ii** - Suggest to the department/person responsible for Human Resources that they implement a policy ensuring accessibility concerns are addressed at the start of every service review.

## **5B 4. Customer Service Solutions**

[See 4B 4. RE: Customer Service Training]

## **5B 5. Digital Solutions**

**5B-5i** – Integrate and manage various communication tools and platforms can be integrated to ensure accessibility, provided a person highly competent in digital accessibility manages them.

# **Question 5C.**

## **5 C. Engaging Council**

## What People Said:

When it comes to the Council and accessibility measures, the following were mentioned:

- It is important that Council hear people with disabilities, respond to their issues that they raise and do something about it. 'Actions speak louder than words.' Collaborating with partners such as community groups and accessibility committees is also important as they are already doing the work and have expertise that should be valued and appreciated.
- In-person opportunities to meet staff and Council are very helpful.
- Easier access to their contact info is needed.
- Sooke's Council meetings scheduled times align with work hours of residents, or when residents are stuck in the atrocious traffic back up.
- Have way if needed, for someone to sign (ASL) having a video or shows the words.
- When the receptionist is not available, the message is too long. Prefer human contact and the receptionist you have is excellent!!!! Perhaps a confirmation that the message was received or if the message has been rerouted to another department that can better answer a question or concern.
- Remove arbitrary rules that limit public input which have an especially detrimental impact on those with accessibility issues - on matters of city governance and expand opportunities for said public input.
- Teach council members to speak clearly and loudly because being deaf is an invisible disability.
- Some people, not Council, have difficulty engaging because they don't want to say wrong thing or offend (so they avoid).

## Identified Barriers

### a. Communication Barriers

- Need easier access to contact information for Council members and staff.
- Need for tools or support for those requiring sign language interpretation or other communication aids.
- Long or unclear automated messages when reception is unavailable, preference for human contact and confirmation messages.
- Need for Council members to speak clearly and loudly to accommodate those with hearing impairments.
- Challenges in engagement due to fear of saying the wrong thing or offending.

### b. Attitudinal Barriers

- Lack of action and response from Council to issues raised by people with disabilities; need for genuine collaboration with community groups and accessibility committees.
- Rules that limit public input may disproportionately impact those with accessibility issues.
- Inadequate acknowledgment of invisible disabilities and corresponding communication needs.

### **c. Systemic Barriers**

- Need to expand opportunities for public input and remove barriers that prevent effective participation in municipal governance.
- Limited engagement opportunities with Council and staff due to scheduling and access issues.

### **d. Physical Barriers**

- In-person opportunities to meet staff and Council are helpful, but there may be physical barriers to accessing these opportunities if not well accommodated.
- Elevator is a challenge at Sooke Council Chambers.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **5C 1. Communication Solutions**

**5C-1i** - Consider ensuring contact information for Council members and staff is available on the website and at the municipal office at reception, with a Braille version available upon request.

**5C-1ii** - If someone wants to attend and has a hearing disability, strive to offer several options. These may include investing in hearing loops, using PowerPoint to transcribe amplified audio on a screen, or booking an ASL interpreter.

**5C-1iii** - If possible, consider implementing an automated option that allows callers to speak directly to a person when contacting the municipality.

**5C-1iv** - It is suggested that at the start of every Council meeting, the person opening the meeting may ask speakers to talk clearly and articulately for the sake of those with hearing loss or those who speak English as a second language.

### **5C 2. Attitudinal Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service Solutions, response from Council, inadequate

acknowledgment of invisible disabilities]

### **5C 3. Systemic Solutions**

**5C-3i** - Consider making Council members available to engage with the public outside of business hours once a month, ensuring that this schedule is widely known.

**5C-3ii** - Strive to allow people to give input in multiple formats, such as written, verbal, American Sign Language, Augmentative or Alternative Communication, or by proxy, to encourage greater inclusion and a variety of perspectives.

### **5C 4. Physical Solutions**

**5C-4i** - If a person with a disability cannot visit the municipality, consider having a Council member arrange to meet them in person, on the phone, or electronically.

**5C-4ii** - Strive to ensure that all elevators in municipal buildings are maintained and functioning.

## **Question 5D.**

### **5 D. Municipal Buildings and Grounds**

#### **What People Said:**

For accessibility within municipal buildings and grounds, the respondents mentioned the following:

- All municipal buildings and grounds need to be universally accessible. There is a lot of work to do in this area.
- Well defined depts [departments], larger signs, well managed walkways, and easy accessing entrances.
- New Arts and Culture Gallery has a gravel parking lot.
- Make sure toilets are high enough to get off.
- Reliable Elevator.
- Colours symbols, and braille.
- Asked for a bike rack at town hall and they installed one! It works well to lock up my large adult tricycle.
- One more accessible parking space would be nice, signage to make sure parked trucks don't block the sidewalk by backing into space and taking up space on the sidewalk.
- Ensuring walk paths are in good condition and ramps and parking spots are accessible Higher



toilets.

- Terrible bathroom in Langford city hall because need for key and limited keys.
- Also, can't access building except for the short time when door unlocked.
- Accessibility features aren't included.
- Accessible parking isn't sufficient (not enough or poorly designed spots).
- Proximity of accessible parking should be considered.
- Accesses and pathways are too narrow for mobility assistive devices.
- "I feel I am taking risks to access areas I want to go".
- Should have signage that tells users how hard the trail is or what to expect in terms of challenges.
- Need more accessible playground equipment that prioritizes all children playing together, not just "disabled" kids in one area and "everyone else" somewhere else.
- Municipal buildings parking is not sufficient nor accessible.
- Staff need training to assist those with disabilities and different needs.
- Accessibility is often an afterthought for municipal events.

## Identified Barriers

### a. Physical Barriers

- All municipal buildings and grounds need to be universally accessible.
- Insufficient or poorly designed accessible parking spots; need for more spaces and better signage to prevent obstruction.
- Pathways and entrances are too narrow for mobility assistive devices.
- Gravel parking lots and walkways create accessibility challenges.
- Toilets not fully accessible
- Challenges with elevators and poorly maintained access points.
- Inadequate or inaccessible bathroom facilities with limited access.

### b. Communication Barriers

- Need for clear signage, including larger signs, colors, symbols, and braille to aid navigation and understanding.
- Lack of signage indicating trail difficulty or challenges.

### c. Systemic Barriers

- Accessibility features are often included as an afterthought rather than integrated into planning from the start.
- Limited training for staff to assist those with disabilities effectively.

## Changing Paces' Recommendations:

### 5D 1. Physical Solutions

[See 4C 3. RE: for details on Physical Solutions and Parking.]

[See 5A 1. RE: for information on Physical Solutions related to surfaces and other aspects.]

**5D-1i** - All municipal facilities would benefit from implementation of universal design principles.

### 5D 2. Communication Solutions

[See 5H RE: for details on Signage.]

**5D-2i** - Ensure clear signage, including larger signs, colors, symbols, and braille, to aid navigation and understanding.

### 5D 3. Systemic Solutions

[See section 4B 4. RE: for details on Customer Service solutions and training.]

**5D-3i** - When planning new development or major renovations, consider accessibility from the beginning. Retrofitting after the fact will be far more costly than incorporating accessibility features from the start.

## Question 5E.

### 5 E. Bylaws or Policies

#### What People Said:

As for accessibility in the municipalities' bylaws or policies, the respondents noted these:

- Accessible parking violators need to be fined and this needs to be enforced. Not happening currently and limited to no parking for accessible vans/Handy Dart/ facility day program vans/buses. Limited to no policy info ever seen re: accommodations/inclusiveness.
- Plain language materials are important.
- Old bylaws and policies and not regularly enforced.
- One size does not fit all & there should be opportunities to apply alternative.

- Late entrance of [residents with] lived experience to the committee process.
- I would like to see bylaws implemented for accessibility and safety for all new commercial buildings/including restaurants, cafes. Would like to see Traffic Impact Assessments address accessibility and safety measures as population increases and that they become part of the development permit process and transparent to the public.
- On leash / Off leash bylaws. Have safe areas where dogs must be on leash.
- Other people's lack of awareness means challenges for people with vision issues or mobility, tree branches or car mirrors if sidewalk blocked for example.
- Encourage diversity

## Identified Barriers

### a. Policy-Related Barriers

- Old bylaws and policies are not regularly enforced; need for updated policies on accommodations and inclusiveness.
- Lack of policy information on accommodations and inclusiveness.

### b. Communication Barriers

- Plain language materials are important but not consistently provided.
- Late inclusion of lived experience in the committee process.
- Lack of awareness among the public about accessibility needs and inclusive practices.

## Changing Paces' Recommendations:

### 5E 1. Policy-Related Solutions

**5E-1i** - Whenever possible, strive to exceed minimum standards for the number of accessible parking spaces.

**5E-1ii** - Municipalities are encouraged to review and update all organizational policies to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness are integrated throughout. HR policies should include a variety of accommodation opportunities for employees with disabilities.

### 5E 2. Communication Solutions

**5E-2i** - Bylaws and policies should be written in plain language as much as possible.

**5E-2ii** - Build public awareness of accessibility needs and inclusive practices by incorporating accessibility into all public gatherings and events.

# Question 5F.

## 5 F. Municipal Staff

### What People Said:

For municipal staff, the respondents said:

- Some municipal staff are fantastic and some rude and disrespectful. More awareness training and 'hands on' learning experiences need to happen regularly not just once and 'tick the box.'
- Education programs and walk through sessions pointing out the barriers.
- Provide communication training for staff when engaging with neuro diverse populations.
- Shorter message when receptionist is not available to ensure that those with disabilities such as auditory, memory loss do not have to hang up and repeat the call. Human contact is preferred.
- Respectful workplace culture is needed.
- Provide a front counter customer service agent.
- Pay attention to meeting times – Council meeting times are hard.
- Education and training for all, but for public facing and front counter staff.
- Teach people to recognize differences in others and react appropriately and accordingly.
- Say your name to people with a vision issue.
- People skills training, disability awareness and accessibility and inclusion training
- Training for inclusivity, patience, respect.
- Provide tools to help; many are not costly (for example, a signature guide by the cash register, fold where you need the person to sign a document).
- Share information.
- Ask the person if they need assistance (do not just “take over” and help).
- Ask the person if they need assistance each time they come in as the situation could vary from day to day.
- Ensure the conversation is with the customer and not the person that may be assisting them.
- People with disabilities often feel like an afterthought when municipal staff create events or processes.
- When past experiences are negative, people find it hard to keep trying and showing up again and again to be disappointed or treated poorly.
- Staff need to show that people with disabilities are welcomed and embraced.
- People need explanation when told no by staff regarding proposed accessibility improvements.
- Mail in voting is an accessible option.
- Be kind.

- Organization wide, people need more training.
- Ask people every time they come in if they need assistance. Just because they say yes or no one time, they may not the next time.
- Speak directly to the person and not their assistance person.
- Purchase a signing guide for people to use.
- Look for inexpensive additions and retrofits that can be available at the counter for people to use (magnifying glasses, screens).
- Customer service should be seen as public service.
- Service delivery should be broadened.
- Organization wide training.
- Go out to the people, don't make them come to you.
- Lack of resources.
- Broad staff training is needed to assess the needs of the people you serve.
- Improve recreational facilities so people using it can be independent.
- Train staff to be calm, use plain language, give space and time for those to come up with answers.
- Be mindful of attitudinal barriers and facial expressions.
- Don't speak for those with disabilities.

## **Identified Barriers**

### **a. Communication Barriers**

- Lack of proper communication between staff and customers, such as not speaking directly to the customer.
- Automated messages or answering services used when front counter staff are unavailable are too lengthy, creating difficulties for those with auditory or memory issues.
- Staff would benefit from more training in communication with neurodiverse populations.

### **b. Customer Service Barriers**

- Inconsistent treatment and inclusivity from some municipal staff, including instances of intolerance and disrespect.
- Perceived lack of a respectful workplace culture and failure to recognize and address the needs of people with disabilities.
- Negative past experiences lead to reluctance to engage with municipal services.
- Insufficient training for staff on disability awareness and accessibility, with a lack of practical, real-life scenario-based education.

### **c. Systemic Barriers**

- Inadequate organization-wide training on disability awareness and inclusivity.
- Lack of regular, hands-on education programs for staff to address accessibility barriers.
- Service delivery needs to be consistently aligned with the following principles of public service:
  - Dignity;
  - Independence;
  - Inclusion;
  - Equal Opportunity.

#### **d. Policy-Related Barriers**

- Insufficient policies and practices to address the needs of people with disabilities, including the absence of front-counter customer service agents.

### **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

#### **5F 1. Communication Solution**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service Solutions and training]

[See 5B RE: Physical Solutions and Neurodiversity]

**5F-1i** - Municipalities are encouraged to ensure their phone systems include an option for callers to speak to someone live. This does not require a full-time receptionist but rather a system that allows calls to be directed to an available staff member already at their desk.

#### **5F 2. Customer Service Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service Solutions and customer service training]

#### **5F 3. Systemic Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service Solutions and customer service training]

#### **5F 4. Policy-Related Barriers**

[See 5F RE: Municipal Staff and Communication Solution]

## **Question 5G.**

## 5 G. Municipal Events

### What People Said:

For municipal events, the respondents said:

- Welcoming, universally accessible location with at least 2 weeks' notice so that persons with disabilities can book transportation and arrange caregivers with lots of promotion where people feel valued will result in more attendance and participation.
- Many events not fully accessible and usually the committee members putting on the events there is no one with a disability pointing out the possible barriers.
- 'Quiet spaces,' 'sensory safe spaces', accessible parking and election advance poll.
- Sometimes transportation to get to the event or feeling lonely at the event.
- Increase Accessible Parking/Identify if Event is Accessibility Friendly on Posters and Website/Wheelchair or Mobility Scooter able to navigate site ground.
- Beach access can be difficult because of the terrain.
- Accessibility parking.
- Make everyone feel welcome at the start, not an afterthought, priority parking for people with needs.
- Encourage developers and stakeholders to consider accessibility in all municipal projects.
- Include accessibility requirements in project guidelines and review processes and consult with accessibility experts during planning stages.
- Consider disabilities in community planning to create an inclusive environment.
- Engage with disability advocacy groups during the planning process and conduct accessibility audits of public spaces.
- Ensure all engagement events are accessible to everyone.
- Adjust the height of boards, provide alternative ways to participate (e.g., digital sticky notes), and ensure venues are physically accessible.
- Improve access to meetings for those who cannot attend physically or lack remote technology.
- Offer hybrid meeting options, provide necessary technology, or support, and ensure meeting materials are accessible in various formats.

### Identified Barriers

#### a. Communication Barriers

- Event information and promotional materials lack clear indicators of accessibility features, making it difficult for people to know if an event is accessible.
- Event details are not always communicated far enough in advance, hindering planning for transportation and caregiver arrangements.

## **b. Physical Barriers**

- Many events are not fully accessible, with inadequate provisions for people with disabilities.
- Lack of "quiet spaces" or "sensory safe spaces" at events.
- Inadequate accessible parking and difficulty navigating event grounds with wheelchairs or mobility scooters.
- Beach access and other event locations are challenging due to terrain issues.

## **c. Systemic Barriers**

- Lack of consistency in applying accessibility requirements across all city projects and events.
- Perceived insufficient engagement with disability advocacy groups during the municipal event planning process.

## **d. Policy-Related Barriers**

- Perceived lack of accessibility considerations in project guidelines or review processes.
- No clear policies or practices to ensure all engagement events are accessible to everyone.

## **e. Customer Service Barriers**

- Perceived lack of training or awareness on accessibility needs and inclusive planning.
- Need for improved education on creating universally accessible and welcoming environments for all attendees.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **5G 1. Communication Solutions**

**5G-1i** - Event promotion would be more effective for people with disabilities if promotional materials included accessibility information.

**5G-1ii – Where possible**, event promotion should begin three to four weeks before to allow time for arranging transportation and caregivers.

### **5G 2. Physical Solutions**

**5G-2i** - Engage with disability advocacy groups during new municipal initiative planning processes and conduct accessibility audits of public spaces.



**5G-2ii** - Empower the disability community to help plan and volunteer to support attendees with disabilities.

**5G-2iii** - Offering a “quiet tent” is an option for individuals needing a safe decompression space. It should be in a low-noise area with minimal stimuli.

**5G-2iv** - Plan for more accessible spaces than anticipated. Post signage indicating accessible parking from the road to the parking spaces.

**5G-2v** - If an event is held where the terrain changes, plan a path on an easy-to-navigate surface for people using mobility devices.

### **5G 3. Systemic Solutions**

**5G-3i** - Recommend that the CWAAC develop a checklist of accessibility requirements and considerations for municipal events or projects and a policy for its use. When planning accommodations, including a committee member with lived experience is best.

### **5G 4. Policy-Related Solutions**

[See above RE: checklist]

[See above RE: policy]

### **5G 5. Customer Service Solutions**

**5G-5i** - Event organizers would benefit from having refresher training on disability awareness. Volunteers should also receive training on accommodating people with disabilities prior to the event.

## **Question 5H.**

### **5 H. Signage/Wayfinding**

#### **What People Said:**

For accessibility issues with signage/wayfinding, these were mentioned:

- More attention to what barriers for persons with disabilities is and fixing these in the budget.
- Braille and large print options are useful.
- Confusing signage, small print unrecognizable symbols.
- Have recorded options that people can play aloud. Braille signage.

- Contrast large print.
- It's nice to see First Nations names and words on signage.
- Would like to see a signage/wayfinding map on website that specifically lists/shows accessible information such as parking (number of spots), accessible public bathrooms, accessible outdoor seating or quiet spots that would help someone plan their way around.
- Signage for trails on ability level.
- Color contrast is helpful; larger font - maximize the space on a sign, or on online seminar slides/presentations, use simple fonts.
- Easier to read, sometimes too much information.
- Ensure entrance welcoming, bright, well-signed, good power door openers.
- Take a different approach if first approach isn't working.
- Offer text, email, interpreter services, and staff trained in sign language and other languages.
- More signage is needed.
- Galloping Goose Trail: Improve signage and reduce speeds of bikes and scooters on the trail. Work with the CRD to install clear signage and enforce speed limits.

## Identified Barriers

### a. Communication Barriers

- Signage options do not include recorded options and Braille.
- Website signage/wayfinding maps should include accessible information such as parking spots, public bathrooms, and outdoor seating.

### b. Physical Barriers

- Confusing signage with small print and unrecognizable symbols makes navigation difficult.
- Lack of color contrast and large print on signs affects readability.
- Signs and entrances need to be welcoming, well-signed, and equipped with power door openers.

### c. Systemic Barriers

- Signage needs to be considered for accessibility features.
- Improvement and maintenance of signage, including trail signs.

### d. Policy-Related Barriers

- Need for policies ensuring signage includes accessible formats and adequate wayfinding information.
- Inconsistent application of accessibility standards in signage and wayfinding systems.

## **e. Customer Service Barriers**

- Need for effective signage practices and accessible wayfinding solutions.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **5H 1. Communication Solutions**

**5H-1i** - Signage options should include recorded formats and Braille to ensure information is accessible to everyone.

**5H-1ii** - Website signage and wayfinding maps could include accessible information such as parking spots, public bathrooms, and outdoor seating.

### **5H 2. Physical Solutions**

**5H-2i** - All signage should use large print, high-contrast colors between text and background, and Braille wherever possible.

### **5H 3. Systemic Solutions**

**5H-3i** - Consider the accessibility of municipal signage during the onset of budgeting to save significantly in the long run.

### **5H 4. Policy-Related Solutions**

**5H-4i** - All municipalities should consider policies regarding signage based on the information above.

**5H-4ii** - Aim to consistently apply the established accessible policies and standards in all signage and wayfinding systems.

### **5H 5. Customer Service Solutions**

**5H-5i** - Staff may consult with external organizations that specialize in disability solutions such as the Rick Hansen Foundation, to learn effective signage practices and accessible wayfinding solutions.

## **Question 5I.**

### **5 I. Sidewalks, Crosswalks, Bike lanes**

## What People Said:

For Sidewalks, Crosswalks, Bike lanes accessibility issues, here are some of the respondents' concerns:

- Bus stop.
- Cross walks with signal lights though I realize that several of the busy roads in the area are under Provincial, not local, jurisdiction.
- Maybe provide crossing guards at intersections.
- Cars are the largest danger to me.
- Speed limits should be reduced to 30 km/hour.
- Crosswalks with signal lights.
- Advocacy with the province to improve pedestrian safety on HWY 14.
- Otter point road crossing near the legion is unsafe.
- Crosswalks need to have more time to cross.
- Integrate accessibility into all committees.
- All the focus and budget spent on new and improvements to bike lanes. Not enough attention and budget spent on improving people of all ages and abilities being able to get around their communities and other communities as well.
- Some streets have no sidewalks or have sidewalks that go to gravel, not suitable for wheelchairs (e.g. at Grant and Otter Point Road).
- Evenly paved walkways, wider sidewalks even level walkways without barriers i.e. garbage cans, flowerpots, short light wait times.
- Standard treatment of surfaces, curbs, signs, lighting.
- Speed[ing] is a problem.
- Lack of sidewalks, uncontrolled sidewalks need lights.
- More sidewalks uneven, not maintained powers quick timers on walk signs, maintenance during motor vehicles on sidewalks snow on corners and sidewalks.
- A crosswalk from Pelican Drive in Colwood to Duke Road in Metchosin. This is a municipal boundary, crossing a fast-moving arterial road. Two municipalities would have to join to provide a link between Latoria Creek Park and surrounding neighborhoods to access the waterfront.
- Signal lights at crosswalks on main roads. Perhaps consider crossing guards during busy traffic times.
- Wider sidewalks allow mobility devices and bikes not to crowd people on foot.
- Sidewalks cleared as soon as possible to allow people with disabilities to get to work safely and without having to leave home 15-20 mins later to get to an appointment or bus stop. Fall leaves and spring cherry blossoms need to be cleared along sidewalks as they are easy to slip on.
- Focus on improving intersections on major roads to provide more space for wheelchairs and

mobility devices at crossings and pedestrian safety islands/corner safety islands. Maintain minimum 2m wide sidewalk width standard to help provide accessibility and comfort to those using wheelchairs and mobility devices.

- Not all sidewalks are up to new accessible standards (less than 1.2m wide) Not enough space on the island when waiting to cross or steep drops.
- Galloping Goose speed limit.
- Reduce speed maximums on trails.
- Hearing e-bikes/scooters is an issue. Ideally, they would be more audible.
- Pavers uneven, tripping hazard.
- Make more even transitions to road - not raised.
- Make sure snow removal isn't blocking access.

## **Identified Barriers**

### **a. Physical Barriers**

- Uneven sidewalks, including transitions to gravel, pose accessibility challenges.
- Sidewalks and crosswalks may lack sufficient width, making it difficult for mobility devices to navigate.
- Pavers and surfaces can be uneven, creating tripping hazards.
- Insufficient space on pedestrian safety islands and steep drops at crossings impedes accessibility.

### **b. Communication Barriers**

- Information about accessibility features at crosswalks and sidewalks is often not clearly communicated.

### **c. Policy-Related Barriers**

- Inconsistent attention and budget allocation between bike lanes and pedestrian infrastructure hinder overall accessibility improvements.
- Lack of standardized treatment for sidewalk surfaces, curbs, and lighting affects navigation.
- Speed limits and traffic controls, such as the absence of crossing guards or reduced speed zones, contribute to pedestrian safety issues.

### **d. Systemic Barriers**

- Not all sidewalks meet new accessibility standards.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

## **5I 1. Physical Solutions**

**5I-1i** - Strive to update sidewalks, ensuring they are wide enough for electronic mobility devices and that smooth transitions occur where the sidewalk ends.

## **5I 2. Communication Solutions**

**5I-2i** – Consider allowing longer crossing times at crosswalk signal lights as a simple accommodation that benefits all pedestrians.

**5I-2ii** - Strive to incorporate top-of-the-line crosswalk features, including audio signals and clear signage. Consistency between municipalities could be beneficial.

## **5I 3. Policy-Related Solutions**

**5I-3i** - Incorporating accessibility considerations at the baseline of every budget meeting for infrastructure helps municipalities avoid costly retrofits for bike lanes, sidewalks, curbs, and lighting.

## **5I 4. Systemic Solutions**

**5I-4i.** - Strive to meet accessibility standards for all new sidewalks.

# **5 J. Additional Information Please**

The following were just additional notes:

- Snow clearing and put all the snow in the 2 disability parking spots.
- Mail in ballot.
- Elections need work so voting is easier.
- Advance voting should have accessibility line as in avoid the long wait, identify /make more accessible priority parking.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

**5J-i** - Snow ploughing or placement in accessible parking spaces makes them unusable.

**5J-ii** - Offering alternative voting methods to ensure inclusivity for the public

**5J-iii** - On voting days, consider accessibility needs such as chairs and empty spaces for mobility devices to accommodate all voters effectively.

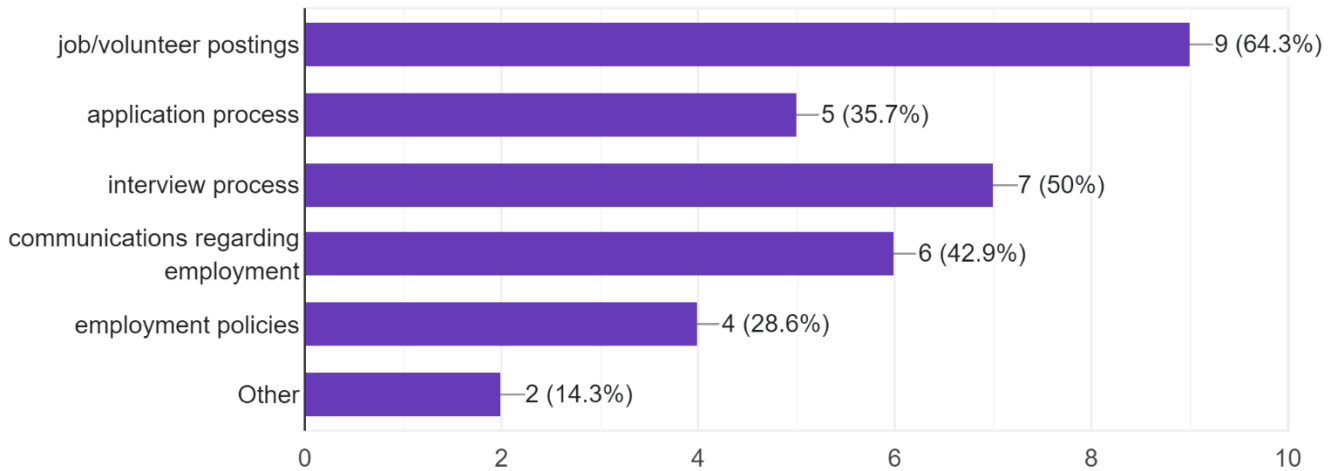
**5J-iv** - On each voting day, aim to provide extra accessible parking to ensure sufficient space for

voters with disabilities.

## Question 6A

6A. Where do you (or the person you are assisting) experience barriers when applying for jobs or volunteer positions with your local government?

14 responses



64.3% - job/volunteer postings

35.7% - application process

50% - interview process

42.9% - communications regarding employment

28.6% - employment policies

14.3% - Other

### What People Said:

When it comes to barriers with job application or volunteer positions, most respondents had difficulty or needed help with job/volunteer postings over the other 5 choices

## Question 6B.

6 B. If you (or the person you are assisting) indicated experience with a barrier when accessing municipal employment and volunteer opportunities in part one of this question, please

provide specific details below.

## What People Said:

When accessing municipal employment and volunteer opportunities, the following were noted:

- A lot of work needs to be done in this area. Not much accommodation/equity and volunteers not always valued.
- Job descriptions are inadequate and often have way too much listed as requirements.
- Interview process focuses too much on talking and discussion. Creativity is needed in this process to allow people to shine in other ways.
- Not clear process on how picked, how hired, time limit for process.
- Maybe work with agencies support people with employment like community living in Victoria, lifetime networks to find ways to support that person or trained staff to be able to work with that person.
- Retired and can only make suggestions that bring attention to the interview process.

## Identified Barriers

- **Systemic Barriers**

- Unclear hiring processes, including ambiguous criteria and timelines.

- **Attitudinal Barriers**

- Negative perceptions about hiring individuals with disabilities, leading to discriminatory practices.
- Volunteers with disabilities are not always valued or recognized appropriately.

- **Communication Barriers**

- Job postings lack inclusivity, such as not providing alt text for photos.\

- **Digital Barriers**

- Poor acoustics in committee or Council rooms create challenges for individuals with hearing impairments.

- **Customer Service Barriers**

- Need for better support tools and training for staff working with individuals with disabilities.



## Changing Paces' Recommendations:

### 6B 1. Systemic Solutions

**6B-1i** - Include contact information in the job postings clearly stating that assistance is available if required to apply for the job.

### 6B 2. Attitudinal Solutions

**6B-2i** - Customer service training helps dispel stereotypes and stigma surrounding hiring individuals with disabilities.

**6B-2ii** – Involving volunteers with disabilities in municipal roles will provide valuable insights and unique perspectives and possibly lead to a reliable source of future employees.

### 6B 3. Communication Solutions

**6B-3i** - Make job postings accessible and be willing to accommodate various needs in the hiring process.

### 6B 4. Digital Solutions

**6B-4i** - Equip Council rooms with microphones and provide speakers amplifying sound to enhance accessibility. Consider playing PowerPoint presentations in the background to ensure that the text on the screen is captured effectively.

### 6B 5. Customer Service Solutions

**6B-5i** - Customer service training is recommended to ensure that staff can effectively support all individuals, including those with disabilities

## Question 6C.

**6 C. If you (or the person you are assisting) indicated experience with a barrier when accessing municipal employment and volunteer opportunities in part one of this question, please share any ideas you might have on how to reduce or eliminate that barrier.**

### What People Said:

For addressing barriers when accessing municipal employment and volunteer opportunities, the respondents suggested the following:

- Where possible, include 'wheelchair' symbols on application forms/job ads to indicate that the

position would be suitable for a person with disabilities.

- Note that 'accommodation available' is near the top of the job ad as opposed to the bottom of the ad.
- Include the level of effort required for the position in the job ad.
- List specifically: 'Available accommodation might include...' in the job ad.
- Interview processes could be made more inclusive and provide a more stress-free process if interview questions were provided in advance allowing people to have time to think about the questions and respond in a meaningful way.
- Make sure that the reception area is clear, the receptionist is at the desk to greet applicants and can help applicants in the waiting area if required. Ensure the path to the interview room and interview room can be navigated easily, chairs w/without arms if needed. Identify washroom area. Make sure to walk back with the applicant to reception.
- Realize that panel interviews can be more stressful than one on one.
- Overcome language barriers at service counters.
- Increase representation of youth and seniors in volunteer and employment opportunities.
- Allow demonstrative interviews (perform a task).
- Education and training for interviewers, panels, recruiters and general employees to assess and remove personal bias in the process (i.e. 'People with disabilities can't do \_\_\_\_\_', 'This person has \_\_\_\_\_. They can't do this job/they won't be an effective team member.'
- Develop working partnerships with organizations that place those looking for work. You can find talent looking for you.

## Identified Barriers

### • **Communication Barriers**

- Language barriers at service counters.
- Not having access to interview questions in advance causes stress and impedes thoughtful responses.
- Perceived lack of awareness about the stress of panel interviews and the importance of accommodating various needs.

### • **Physical Barriers**

- Reception area and interview room are not always accessible or easy to navigate.
- Absence of clear paths, lowered service counters, appropriate chair options, and identified washroom locations.

### • **Customer Service Barriers**

- Lack of staff assistance to applicants in the waiting area and exiting after the interview.

- **Systemic Barriers**

- Perceived lack of diverse representation (youth and seniors) in volunteer and employment opportunities.

## **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

### **6C 1. Communication Solutions**

**6C-1i** - If you know the languages commonly spoken by the public in your municipality, consider using a translation app or tool to assist staff in communications at service counters.

**6C-1ii** - If interviews require multiple participants, try to accommodate requests to break them into one-on-one sessions to facilitate more effective communication.

### **6C 2. Physical Solutions**

**6C-2i** - Ideally, provide an accessible reception area, with a lowered service counter and interview room with clear paths, appropriate chair options, and easily identifiable accessible washroom locations to ensure easy navigation.

### **6C 3. Customer Service Solutions**

**6C-3i** - Have a receptionist or staff person assist applicants in the waiting area and guide them back after the interview.

### **6C 4. Systemic Solutions**

**6C-4i** - Embrace diversity to drive innovation by including youth and seniors with disabilities in volunteer and employment opportunities, helping municipalities stay connected to their communities

## **Question 7A.**

7A. What supports are important to you (or the person you are assisting) when working or looking for a job? (Select all that apply)

17 responses



76.5% - Accessible Parking

76.5% - Any adapted spaces such as restrooms, breakrooms, reception area, meeting areas, or pathways.

76.5% - Any assistive devices such as screen readers, braille displays, text-to-speech software, strobe light/visual smoke alarms, or hearing loops.

### What People Said:

- Provide accessible parking for both staff and the public.
- Designate accessible parking spaces close to entrances and ensure they are well-marked
- Design office layouts to maximize natural light and views of outdoor spaces.
- Reduce noise levels to improve concentration and reduce fatigue.
- Use soundproofing materials and create quiet zones.
- Reduce noise and improve concentration with private workspaces.
- Provide cubicles or closed offices for employees who need them.
- Ensure employees have a consistent and personalized workspace.
- Assign permanent desks and ensure setups remain unchanged.
- Have small tools and devices available for both members of the public and staff to use.

### Changing Paces' Recommendations:

#### 7A 1. Physical Solutions

**7A-1i:** Strive to exceed the provincial minimum requirements for accessible parking spaces in municipal parking lots. If possible, provide signage on a pole as well as on the ground to signify the designation of accessible parking spaces.

**7A-1ii:** Consider allowing employees to personalize their workspace as it may reduce anxiety and provide comfort, leading to higher rates of productivity.

**7A-1iii:** If a private office is not an option, consider providing noise-canceling headphones as an affordable accommodation for employees needing reduced noise.

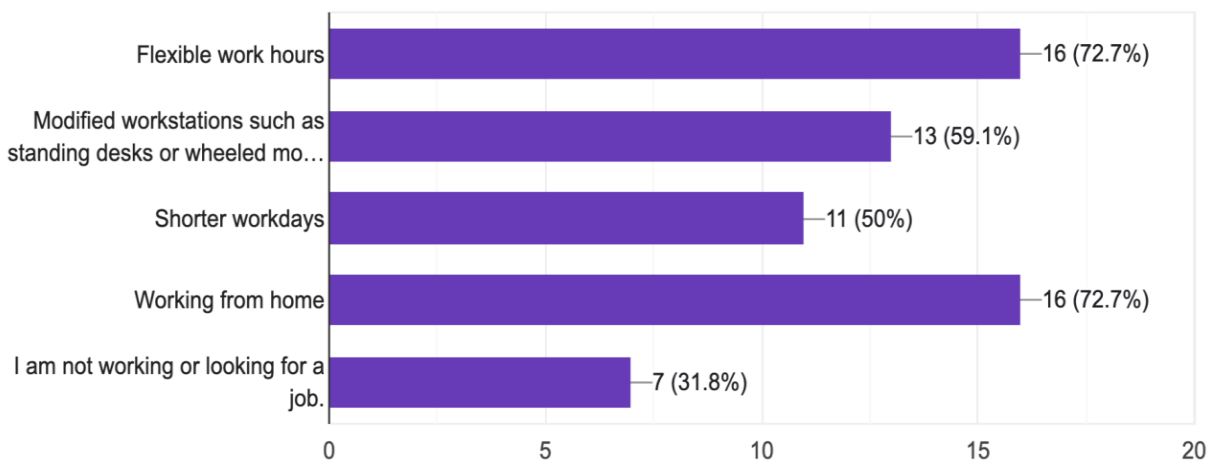
## 7A 2. Environmental Solutions

**7A-2ii:** Noise-canceling headphones could be a cost-effective accommodation for employees who are bothered by high noise levels, as they often help improve concentration and reduce fatigue.

## Question 7B.

7B. What supports are important to you (or the person you are assisting) when working or looking for a job? (Select all that apply)

22 responses



72.7% - Flexible work hours

59.1% - Modified workstations such as standing desks or wheeled mobility device-adaptive desks.

50% - Shorter workdays

72.7% - Working from home

31.8% - I am not working or looking for a job.

## What People Said:

Out of all the choices when it comes to the ideal work environment or when looking for a job, “flexible work hours” and “working from home” were the two most desired.

Moreover, the following are anecdotes that relate to the topic:

- Provide flexible hours or a split shift option.
- Offer extended hours or flexible scheduling for public services.
- Customize workstations to meet individual needs.
- Provide ergonomic assessments and necessary adjustments, such as standing desks or specialized equipment.
- Chair with pullout for legs/adaptable workspace.
- Need training on voice to text.
- Lighting accommodation.
- Customizable desks.
- More space.
- Sound sensitive areas.
- More flexibility in hours.
- Work from home.
- Ideally, a workplace should be compassionate and provide a flexible culture.
- Accommodation should be normalized.

## Changing Paces’ Recommendations:

### 7B 1. Employment Solutions

**7B-1i:** Consider offering flexible scheduling options, such as split shifts, limited extended hours, and work-from-home options, to accommodate the diverse needs of municipal workers, including those with disabilities. This flexibility could greatly benefit both the public and all municipal employees. People with disabilities, like everyone else, have appointments and other responsibilities that could be managed more effectively with flexible scheduling.

### 7B 2. Physical Solutions

**7B-2i:** Strive to invest time and resources in customizing workstations for employees with disabilities. Taking the necessary steps to ensure comfort and accessibility in the workplace can lead to increased productivity. When selecting products like chairs and

desks, please consider brands and items that the individual already knows work well for their body, ensuring that the accommodations are truly effective.

## Question 7C.

**7 C. What supports are important to you (or the person you are assisting) when working or looking for a job?**

### What People Said:

When working or looking for a job, respondents need support with the following:

- All the above and others not mentioned above such as mentoring, job sharing, funding for workplace modifications, ergonomic desks, back supports etc.
- Psychological safety (related to attitudinal barriers), recognition of intersectionality (e.g., having a disability and other identity, such as being an immigrant) and its impact on policies and practices, non-bureaucratic process of securing accommodations.
- The employer should be equal opportunity employer.
- Ready accommodations or openness to.
- Flexible hours, work from home.
- Working interviews- do away with rigid outdated interview processes.
- Partnerships with union representatives to develop job descriptions that reflect more flexibility in hours worked.
- Inclusion and adaptability.
- Opportunity to work from home, accessible parking, if in office own workspace.
- To feel a part of team and making friendships.
- I liked being able to work from home as a writer, with flexible work hours as long as I got the project done.
- Accessible break rooms/kitchens with toasters/coffee makers etc. easy to access, including sink and paper towels. Flexible dress code.

### Changing Paces' Recommendations:

#### 7C 1. Communication Solutions

**7C-1i** - Ensure that accommodations discussed during the hiring process are carried over into the workplace through contracts or written agreements with specifics, where possible.

**7C-1ii** - Strive for a more interviewee-centered approach by being flexible and prepared to move beyond traditional formalities. Focus on questions directly related to the job to assess fit and needs better.

## **7C 2. Physical Solutions**

**7C-2i** - Aim to accommodate individual body types by considering ergonomic workplace modifications such as adjustable desks, back supports, and accessible break rooms. Be open to a variety of solutions, which may be informed by the lived experiences of people with disabilities.

**7C-2ii** - Consider flexible work schedules, such as hybrid home/office arrangements to better accommodate diverse needs.

**7C-2iii** - Incorporate accessibility in to break rooms so that amenities like toasters, coffee makers, and sinks are within reach. Be open to making case-by-case adjustments and discussing needs.

**7C-2iv** - Strive to keep office equipment such as printers in accessible locations and provide both private and collaborative workspaces when possible.

## **7C 3. Customer Service Solutions**

**7C-3i** - Consider implementing a program for individuals with disabilities paired with mentoring or job-sharing opportunities. This may allow individuals to settle in and adjust their accommodations as needed.

**7C-3ii** - Strive to partner with union representatives and be open to developing job descriptions that include an offer of support if help is needed to apply.

**7C-3iii** - Be willing to provide accommodations and explore various solutions, which may foster a more inclusive workplace culture and allow individuals to contribute their own solutions, such as personal computers and adaptive technology.

## **7C 4. Systemic Solutions**

**7C-4i** - Consider including people with disabilities at various organizational levels and giving them influence over developing policies and practices. This approach may more effectively integrate individuals into the municipal work culture.

**7C-4ii** - Strive for simplified or streamlined processes to discuss and secure accommodations promptly.

## **7C 5. Attitudinal Solutions**

**7C-5i** - Strive for comprehensive customer service training.

**7C-5ii** - Be open to multiple ways of achieving solutions and working styles. This flexibility



may accommodate diverse learning and working preferences and enhance overall workplace inclusivity.

## Question 8.

**8. Please list the top 3 accessibility improvements, in ANY area you (or the person you are assisting) want to see your municipality or the municipality you visit make:**

### What People Said:

For the respondents, the top three accessibility improvements that need attention are:

- Universally accessible municipal halls, functional and accessible parking that accommodates not just cars but accessible vans, more hiring of people with lived experience for accessibility work, general access emails need to be replied to, followed up on.
- Accessibility for getting to municipal buildings and events), accessibility to municipal policies and information and accessibility to recreation activities.
- Easy access, many rest spots, accessible facilities within the buildings.
- Sidewalks, continuing consistently.
- Enough accessible parking.
- Inclusive outdoor spaces, including playgrounds, parks, and beaches.
- Ample accessibility parking spots.
  
- Hiring of people with intellectual disabilities, neurodiversity, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders - employment is for all, go door-to-door to engage with residents, increased bus and Handy Dart options.
- Maintenance, universal design, accommodation.
- Higher toilets with grab rail in all bathrooms.
- More toilets in public spaces.
- Education and awareness.
- Bike lanes would encourage faster moving bikes to move from trails onto the roadways, a trail rating system, like ski hills and bike trails.
- Crosswalks, sidewalks and wider parking spaces to ease access in and out of vehicles.
- Work from home is a useful improvement for lots of workers! Flexible work hours at home or at the worksite are also a good improvement. Also, Bus Stops that let buses use their ramps.
- Visual recognition on the City Website that Langford is an inclusive environment. That the wheelchair sign is not a stigma and can be visible on seating and is in fact a relief to some people with disabilities coming to City Hall.
- Improved intersection for pedestrian / mobility devices user safety and comfort.
- Expanded sidewalk network - min 2m width.
- Improved trails with better signage to aid those with disabilities.

- Sick days for mental health.
- Sidewalk improvements.
- Bus stop upgrades.
- Parks/Trails upgrades.
- Parks accessibility, communication tools, better working environments to be more inclusive.
- Trail signage walkways, more accessible play equipment.
- Better on leash bylaw. Beach accessibility.
- Closed office/cubicles to limit office noise.
- Closed captioning (live and recorded).
- Auditory changes to committee / Council rooms.
- More paved trails, better street lighting, more public washrooms.
- Accessibility for wheelchairs/walkers.
- Use fine grained gravels on trails, walkways.
- Flexibility in work hours, schedules.
- Society's awareness as to what diversity is.
- Willingness to act once you know.
- Individualization / customizable spaces.
- Emergency plan that works for all.
- Website optics need to feel inclusive.

## Identified Barriers

### a. Physical Barriers

- Insufficient accessible parking for vans and cars.
- Inconsistent sidewalks; some go to gravel, not suitable for wheelchairs.
- Lack of accessible facilities in municipal buildings (e.g., higher toilets, more public washrooms).
- Sidewalks and crosswalks need improvement for width, maintenance, and accessibility.
- Inadequate or unclear access to municipal buildings and events.
- Infrastructure that does not adequately consider universal accessibility.
- Limited accessibility in recreational areas, including trails and beach access.
- Insufficient improvements in outdoor recreational facilities to support accessibility.

### b. Communication Barriers

- Lack of responsiveness and follow-up on general access emails.

### c. Employment Barriers

- Limited accommodation and flexibility in job descriptions and hiring practices.

- Outdated interview processes and lack of inclusivity in employment practices.
- Perceived inadequate support and accommodations for employees with disabilities (e.g., ergonomic adjustments, flexible work arrangements).
- Lack of ready and effective accommodations or modifications in the workplace.
- Insufficient support for people with intellectual disabilities.

#### **d. Attitudinal Barriers**

- Insufficient efforts to promote an inclusive environment and address societal stigma around disabilities.

### **Changing Paces' Recommendations:**

#### **8 1. Physical Solutions**

**i** - Strive to exceed the provincial minimum requirement for accessible parking spots, ensuring that these spots are on level ground and kept open during special events.

**8-1 ii** - Aim to ensure smooth transition points and adequate width of sidewalks.

**8-2 iii** - Consider providing a raised toilet seat in public washrooms as an inexpensive way to enhance accessibility.

**8-1 iv** - Work towards incorporating accessibility into all future planning, development, and maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks. It could be beneficial to include input from individuals who use mobility devices in the planning process.

**8-1 v** - To improve accessibility, strive for large, clear signage, and consider having a welcoming person guide attendees at municipal events.

**8-1 vi** - To work towards a fully accessible future, consider accessibility from the initial stages of infrastructure planning and include it in every stage of development.

**8-1 vii** - Aim to create more accessible recreational areas, both indoor and outdoor, including trails and beach access.

#### **8 2. Communication Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Digital Solutions websites]

**8-2 i** - Consider improving the follow-up on general access emails to ensure timely responses.

**8-2 ii** - Consider using talk and convert dictionary apps to assist with overcoming language

barriers at service counters.

### **8 3. Employment Solutions**

[See 7C RE: Physical Solutions employment supports]

[See 4B RE: Customer Service training support for people with intellectual disabilities.]

### **8 4. Attitudinal Solutions**

[See 4B RE: Customer Service training, societal stigma, mental health]

## **Conclusion**

While municipalities have clearly made strides in accessibility, there remains an exciting opportunity to further enhance the experiences of people with disabilities and the community as a whole. The challenge of designing user-friendly products, services, vehicles, and environments for people with disabilities is significant. Historically, this has led to accessibility being addressed later in the process. However, with the Accessible British Columbia Act (ABCA) now placing accessibility at the forefront, the Capital West AAC is in a strong position to recommend meaningful action for their respective Council's and municipalities' consideration.

The survey results clearly highlight the immense value that municipalities could gain by embedding an accessible mindset from the earliest stages of planning—whether for projects, policies, or events—and carrying this commitment through to completion. This approach is best realized through collaboration with disability consultants, who bring crucial expertise and insights to ensure that accessibility is thoughtfully integrated into every aspect.

Additionally, the survey underscored a need for regular Customer Service Training, which is typically conducted every two to three years. There are a number of organizations that are well-prepared to deliver this training. By adopting a forward-thinking approach and achieving tangible short-term goals, municipalities can create environments that are not only accessible but also empowering for everyone.

While addressing physical, communication, systemic, or technological barriers can be complex, the power to transform attitudinal barriers lies within each of us. By fostering empathy and embracing kindness, we can create an inclusive culture that extends beyond meeting minimums established through regulations. True accessibility is about building a community where everyone feels valued and supported.

The initial focus of the Accessibility Plans for the Capital West AAC member municipalities is on service delivery and employment, but the committee is laying the groundwork for addressing other accessibility

themes in the future. This demonstrates a commitment to ongoing improvement and expansion of accessibility initiatives.

The Capital West AAC has several opportunities to lead in advancing accessibility:

- Developing comprehensive, multi-municipal accessibility plans.
- Creating standardized accessibility guidelines that can be adopted across jurisdictions.
- Serving as a model for inter-municipal collaboration on accessibility issues.
- Driving innovation in accessible service delivery and employment practices.

By taking a proactive and collaborative approach, the Capital West AAC can help ensure that accessibility becomes a fundamental consideration in all municipal planning, policies, and services across the region.

This report has been submitted by,



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