

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rick Hansen Foundation announces winners of 2017 Accessible Cities Award

Winnipeg, Richmond, Edmonton recognized for being leaders in accessibility and inclusivity

May 31, 2017 (Vancouver, BC) – Today, the Rick Hansen Foundation announced the winners of its Accessible Cities Award with the cities of Winnipeg, Richmond, and Edmonton being honoured for the initiatives they are leading to promote universal access and improve the lives of people with disabilities.

The Rick Hansen Foundation launched the Accessible Cities Award in the fall of 2016 to recognize municipalities for creating and building accessible places and spaces for people with disabilities. When physical barriers within the built environment are removed, and people with disabilities can live, work and play to their full potential, the entire community benefits.

Says Rick Hansen, Founder & CEO of the Rick Hansen Foundation, “It gives me great pleasure to announce the winners of the Accessible Cities Award. These cities are demonstrating leadership and determination in creating greater accessibility in our built environments. Congratulations to Winnipeg, Richmond, and Edmonton for their successes in pursuing best practices by expanding universal access and for inspiring others to do the same.”

All three cities are recognized by the Foundation for their progressive vision and policies, wide variety and scope of accessibility improvements, and work on engaging their communities to be more inclusive. The Award is a symbol of the commitment and progress each of these cities has made to improve the quality of life for all members of their communities.

The City of Winnipeg has been proactively incorporating accessibility into city planning for 20 years and has been a leader in creating a mindset of inclusivity through the implementation of accessibility committees, accessibility policies and standards, and creating exemplary examples of accessible design for others to follow.

“It is an absolute honour to be recognized by the Rick Hansen Foundation as one of the winners of the 2017 Accessible Cities Award,” says Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, “While the work is nowhere near complete, it is encouraging to receive an award like this which reaffirms the great work of Winnipeg’s Access Advisory Committee made up of persons with disabilities, people working in the field of accessibility and elected officials. Their continued advocacy towards issues such as universal design is helping build a more inclusive Winnipeg.”

The City of Richmond has a holistic and dedicated approach to access. Since the 1980s, it has adopted policies to improve accessibility, and today, access and inclusion are themes embedded throughout City planning documents which emphasize the need for accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods to facilitate aging in place, improve access to services and respond to community members of all abilities.

“Richmond has a long commitment to being an accessible city,” said Richmond Mayor Malcolm Brodie, “We work closely with groups like the Richmond Centre for Disability and the Rick Hansen Foundation and strive to be both leaders and champions in incorporating accessibility into urban design across the

community. We're proud to receive this prestigious honour and pledge to continue to work to promote universal access for all and to improve the lives of people with disabilities."

The City of Edmonton has made accessibility a priority in all areas. Three of the City's six 10-year strategic goals specifically address improving accessibility for its citizens and outline ways in which Edmonton is striving to become an inclusive, accessible and affordable community. Edmonton city staff demonstrate collaborative leadership and work to help incentivize private businesses to increase access.

"Edmonton is enriched by the contributions of persons with disabilities. I am proud our city is being recognized for the strides we've made to strengthen our community, as it is only stronger when everyone can be included," said Mayor Don Iveson. "With the help of our Accessible Advisory Committee, our city is creating spaces and places for all."

As part of the Award, five spaces across Canada that exemplify best practices towards universal access were inducted into the Award's Circle of Excellence: the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg; the Richmond Olympic Oval in Richmond; the Walterdale Theatre in Edmonton; Celebration Square in Mississauga; and François Dupuis Recreation Centre in Ottawa.

Visit rickhansen.com to learn more about the cities' strategies and initiatives, and the five Circle of Excellence Inductees.

About the Rick Hansen Foundation

The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) was established in 1988, following the completion of Rick Hansen's Man In Motion World Tour. For nearly 30 years, RHF has worked to raise awareness, change attitudes, and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

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