

For Immediate Release

Eight B.C. Municipalities Awarded with Funding to Advance Accessibility

Rick Hansen Foundation B.C. Grants Program will provide complimentary accessibility ratings, improvements and training

March 9, 2023, Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nation / Richmond, B.C. - The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) is pleased to celebrate eight municipalities across British Columbia who have committed to improving accessibility through their participation in the B.C. Grants Program. Developed to support communities across the province to improve accessibility for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities, the program will provide complimentary RHF Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) ratings, up to \$82,500 in funding for accessibility improvements to existing sites within each municipality, and accessibility training for city staff.

More than 926,000 people in British Columbia have a disability. Thanks to generous funding from the Government of British Columbia, the municipalities of **Coquitlam, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Port Moody, Prince George, Richmond and Whistler** will participate in the program and were selected based on population and geographic representation.

“We are honoured to be able to help improve accessibility in municipalities across British Columbia, thanks to generous support from the province,” said Brad McCannell, VP Access and Inclusion, Rick Hansen Foundation. “Almost 50% of adults in Canada have a permanent or temporary disability or live with someone who does. Many of us struggle every day to access the places where we live, work, learn, and play, facing significant barriers that others take for granted. Accessibility improvements to spaces such as community centres, libraries and arts facilities will benefit everyone across our province – parents, seniors, people with temporary and permanent disabilities, their caregivers and loved ones. Everyone has a right to real, meaningful access.”

RHF Accessibility Certification is a rating and recognition program that consistently measures the meaningful accessibility of a site based on the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision, and hearing. Some of these features include accessible entranceways, vehicle access, emergency systems, accessible washrooms, and wayfinding signage.

These municipalities are following the leadership of both Surrey B.C. and Vancouver B.C. who have committed in their policies to achieving RHFAC Gold for all newly built civic buildings, the highest certification level in the program.

By participating in the B.C. Grants program, the eight selected municipalities will receive:

- An RHFAC rating for three sites to identify key areas of improvements;
- Up to \$82,500 (total) in accessibility improvement funds to be allocated for upgrades to the three rated sites;
- A post-accessibility improvement RHFAC rating to showcase enhanced access;
- RHF Accessibility Certification plaques for each site that achieves certification;
- Accessibility Awareness training for municipal staff to foster a positive culture of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and
- Complimentary [RHFAC Training](#) tuition grants for three eligible staff within each municipality. This training will be offered through [Vancouver Community College](#) and will teach participants how to use RHFAC methodology to rate existing buildings and pre-construction drawings on their level of meaningful access.

“Not only do we recognize that municipalities require access to this program and funding, but we want to ensure that future building upgrades and new structures can be designed with accessibility in mind,” adds McCannell. “Through accessibility training, each municipality will have the opportunity to continue their community’s accessibility journey and foster a positive culture of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.”

In addition to the eight municipal recipients, two B.C. Indigenous communities will also receive funding through the program and will be announced in the coming months.

Learn more about the RHF B.C. Grants Program [here](#).

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. Visit www.rickhansen.com to learn more.

RHF Media Contact:

Cynnamon Schreinert, Hartley PR

Cynnamon@hartleypr.com

604-802-2733