

## For Immediate Release

# **Saanich Council Champions Accessible Design with Resolution to Advance RHFAC Gold in New B.C. Buildings**

## **District of Saanich resolution urges province to prioritize inclusive infrastructure at the outset of development**

**June 4, 2025 , 2024 - Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nation / Richmond, BC** –The Rick Hansen Foundation applauds the District of Saanich for its leadership towards a barrier-free British Columbia. With the June 2nd passage of a resolution recommending that the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) request that the Province of British Columbia incorporate the latest accessibility standards established by the Canadian Standards Association and Accessibility Standards Canada (CSA/ASC B651) into Provincial building code, and that all new public buildings achieve a Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) Gold rating, Saanich Council has positioned itself as a leader in championing meaningful access for all British Columbians.

“Accessibility cannot be an afterthought; it must be built in from the beginning,” said Saanich Councillor Teale Phelps Bondaroff, Chair of the District’s Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee. “We’re asking the Province to design public buildings that reflect dignity, inclusion, and meaningful access—not just for today, but for the next 50 years.”

This call to action comes as British Columbia embarks on over \$24.8 billion in capital infrastructure investments over the next three years. Without deliberate planning, new construction could unintentionally embed barriers that will affect generations to come. The RHFAC program addresses this risk by evaluating meaningful access in spaces where people live, work, learn, and play—accounting for mobility, vision, hearing, and neurodiversity.

“Nearly two-thirds of Canadians have a disability or a family member or someone they take care of with a disability,” said Doramy Ehling, CEO of the Rick Hansen Foundation. “When accessibility is incorporated into our built environment from the ground up, we create welcoming environments that are more inclusive, economically vibrant, and socially connected.”

Arnold Cheng, an RHFAC Professional and the founder of Spectrum Ability, echoed this message, “The best-performing buildings aren’t necessarily the newest or most expensive. They’re the ones that prioritize accessibility from day one. RHFAC Gold certification is not just a benchmark—it’s a blueprint for a future where everyone can participate.”

“Thank you to the Saanich mayor and council for approving the resolution to move forward with the increasing accessibility through the RHFAC program. I look forward to UBCM working with us in making local and provincial new building construction more inclusive to meet the needs of all residents.” said Rish Sharma, Committee Member, Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Committee.

As Canada continues to advance accessibility legislation and local governments adopt meaningful accessibility plans, Saanich’s resolution serves as a pivotal moment in the journey toward a more inclusive built environment. The draft resolution is now heading to UBCM, which meets this fall in Victoria. If adopted there, it will become part of the advocacy work of UBCM.

Access a [full version of the resolution](#) including background.

For more information on the RHFAC program, visit: [www.RickHansen.com/RHFAC](http://www.RickHansen.com/RHFAC)

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### **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 over 35 years, RHF has worked to raise awareness, change attitudes, and remove barriers for people with disabilities. Visit [www.RickHansen.com](http://www.RickHansen.com) to learn more.

To arrange an interview, please email:

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