

For Immediate Release

## **City of Vancouver: The Next Municipality to Commit to Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ Gold**

All new city-owned buildings in Vancouver will be built to the highest level of accessibility in the country

**February 2, 2023, Traditional territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations / Vancouver, B.C.** - The Rick Hansen Foundation applauds the City of Vancouver for mandating that all newly built municipal facilities are required to achieve Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ (RHFAC) Gold. All new city-owned buildings in Vancouver will be welcoming and inclusive for individuals with disabilities.

“With 1 in 5 Canadian adults living with a disability and this number growing as our population ages,<sup>1</sup> Canadians continue to struggle every day because of physical barriers to accessibility. The new city builds in Vancouver achieving RHFAC Gold is exceptional news for people living with disabilities, and we encourage cities across Canada to implement these accessibility goals,” said Doramy Ehling, CEO, Rick Hansen Foundation.

The City worked with design firm **hcma** to conduct many of the RHFAC ratings and accessibility reviews to date. There are mandatory requirements that City of Vancouver builds will have to meet to achieve RHFAC Gold. They go beyond a minimum rating score of 80% which includes a primary entrance that is accessible, accessible washrooms, audio-visual alarms, safety warning features, and assistive listening and communication enhancement technology. City staff from Real Estate and Facilities Management will also take [RHFAC Training](#) to gain knowledge and practical skills to rate their own buildings for meaningful accessibility.

The Training includes learning the impacts of the social and physical environment on people with disabilities, Universal Design principles and standards, how to rate the built environment for its level of meaningful access using the RHFAC methodology, and how to write recommendation reports based on their findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada, November, 28, 2018.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>

“While the City of Vancouver acknowledges that creating an accessible city goes beyond physical infrastructure, working with the Rick Hansen Foundation is imperative for accessibility and inclusion. It is important for the city to continue to advance the work of accessibility from multiple perspectives and identities to ensure that Vancouver is truly a community for all,” said Michelle Schouls, Director, Facilities Planning & Development, City of Vancouver.

“This is one step we are taking to ensure we achieve a high level of accessibility in every new public building so people of all ages and abilities can access the places in our city where we live, work, learn and play.”

For the City of Vancouver, this work is part of their first [Accessibility Strategy](#), which was adopted by Vancouver City Council in July 2022. The strategy is guided by community engagement and members of the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee. “People have many intersecting identities, which creates implications for how individuals will fare in society,” said Laura Mackenrot, former co-chair of the City of Vancouver Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee. “Vancouver strives to be a world-class city, and working with the Rick Hansen Foundation to ensure a high level of accessibility in every new city-owned building is a crucial step towards this and welcoming and including persons with disabilities.”

“Also important for City of Vancouver residents and those of all Canadian cities to know, the cost for new builds to achieve RHF Accessibility Certification is zero dollars when thoughtful planning and design are applied in the design phase,” added Ehling.

These findings are documented in [a feasibility study](#) conducted by design firm **hcma** that evaluates a detailed cost comparison of RHFAC, Canada’s 2015 National Building Code (NBC), and the 2018 Ontario Building Code (OBC).

An accessible built environment benefits everyone - people with temporary and permanent disabilities, older adults, children, and parents with strollers.

In Canada, almost 50% of adults have or have experienced a permanent or temporary physical disability or live with someone who has.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Angus Reid Institute, Accessibility: A source of future anxiety and a significant consideration for Canadian consumers today, January 22, 2019.

[https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/downloads/ari-research-jan-2019eng-final-accessible\\_1.pdf](https://www.rickhansen.com/sites/default/files/downloads/ari-research-jan-2019eng-final-accessible_1.pdf)

Making our public spaces universally accessible unleashes our collective economic and social power creating a country and communities across the nation we can all be proud of.

More than 1,750 sites across Canada have been rated through the RHFAC program, including over 112 achieving RHFAC Gold. To learn more, visit <https://www.rickhansen.com/become-accessible>.

You can learn more about the City of Vancouver Accessibility Strategy [here](#).

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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 nearly 30 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.

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