

Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change

THE CITY OF VANCOUVER'S ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY (Phase 1)



**Council Presentation : Accessibility Strategy Implementation Update
and Council Motion Report Back**

1. Recommendations
2. Provincial Legislation: Accessible BC Act
 - Accessibility Plan
 - Accessibility Committee
 - Public Feedback Mechanism
3. **Council Direction:** Employment Audit and Work Underway
4. **Council Direction:** Procedure By-law Updates – Accessibility of Council Meetings
5. **Direction:** Facilities and Infrastructure Assets Audits City Buildings and Facilities
 - Facilities and Infrastructure Assets Audits of Patios and Public Realm/City Streets

- A. THAT Council approve the Terms of Reference for the Accessibility Committee.

- B. THAT Council direct staff to implement the Accessibility Committee as regulated by the Accessible British Columbia Act.

- 1. Accessibility Plan**
- 2. Accessibility Committee**
- 3. Public Feedback Mechanism**

- The *Transforming Attitudes, Embedding Change: The City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy (Phase 1)* in July 2022
- Many of the actions contemplated in Phase 1 are now underway and detailed at the end of this report.
- Phase 2, which is the final strategy, will be brought to Council in Q1 of 2024.



Purpose

The purpose of the Committee is to support the City of Vancouver in identifying barriers to accessibility and providing the City with advice on how to prevent and remove those barriers.

Mandate

The City of Vancouver's Accessibility Committee ('the Committee') is established pursuant to section 10 of the Accessible British Columbia Act ('the Act'). The Committee must act in accordance with the Act and any applicable Regulations.

It is recommended that the Accessibility Committee have the following responsibilities:

- Provide guidance and advice on the development of the City of Vancouver's Accessibility Strategy and its renewal;
- Help with the development of a public feedback mechanism to identify accessibility barriers, in relation to the Accessibility Strategy, and provide advice to the City on how to remove or prevent barriers;

- Embed an accessibility lens on matters such as policy, by-laws and planning decisions and encourage others to apply this lens;
- Review and provide feedback on 3-year Accessibility Strategy departmental action plans; and
- Review and provide feedback on Accessibility Strategy annual progress reports by departments, including monitoring progress and timelines, and providing recommendations on priorities.

The Act requires that the Accessibility Committee must, to the extent possible, have members selected in accordance with the following goals:

- (a) at least half of the members are
 - (i) persons with disabilities, or
 - (ii) individuals who support, or are from organizations that support, persons with disabilities;
- (b) the members described in paragraph (a) reflect the diversity of persons with disabilities in British Columbia;
- (c) at least one of the members is an Indigenous person;
- (d) the committee reflects the diversity of persons in British Columbia.

We recommend exceeding the requirements in the Act.

Recommendation: City Committee be comprised of 11 community members and 5 non-voting City staff

- 50% of community seats reserved for people with lived experience of disability and other intersecting identities, and a minimum of 2 seats specified for Indigenous people with disabilities;
- Representation of staff and community members to maximize co-learning and collaboration;
- Seats reserved for 1 representative from the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee and the Older Persons and Elders (formerly Seniors') Advisory Committee, respectively; and
- Open, flexible, accessible and low-barrier application process to ensure applicants feel welcomed and supported.

The Act requires that the City establish a public feedback mechanism to receive feedback from community:

12 An organization must establish a process for receiving comments from the public on

- a. the organization's accessibility plan, and
- b. barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization.

- Staff are exploring building a new feedback tool into the City of Vancouver website, inviting residents and visitors to report barriers to accessibility involving City facilities, infrastructure, and services as well as to provide feedback on the Strategy
- This new tool will enable the City to crowdsource an audit of its facilities on an ongoing basis, and to communicate back with individuals reporting.
- This tool will also enable the City to receive feedback on the strategy/plan in order to inform priorities.
- The public feedback mechanism is expected to be completed by Q1, 2024, in collaboration with the Accessibility Committee.
- Until then, public feedback is invited by contacting 311. The Public can also email the City. Information on how to provide feedback will be added to the Accessible City website.

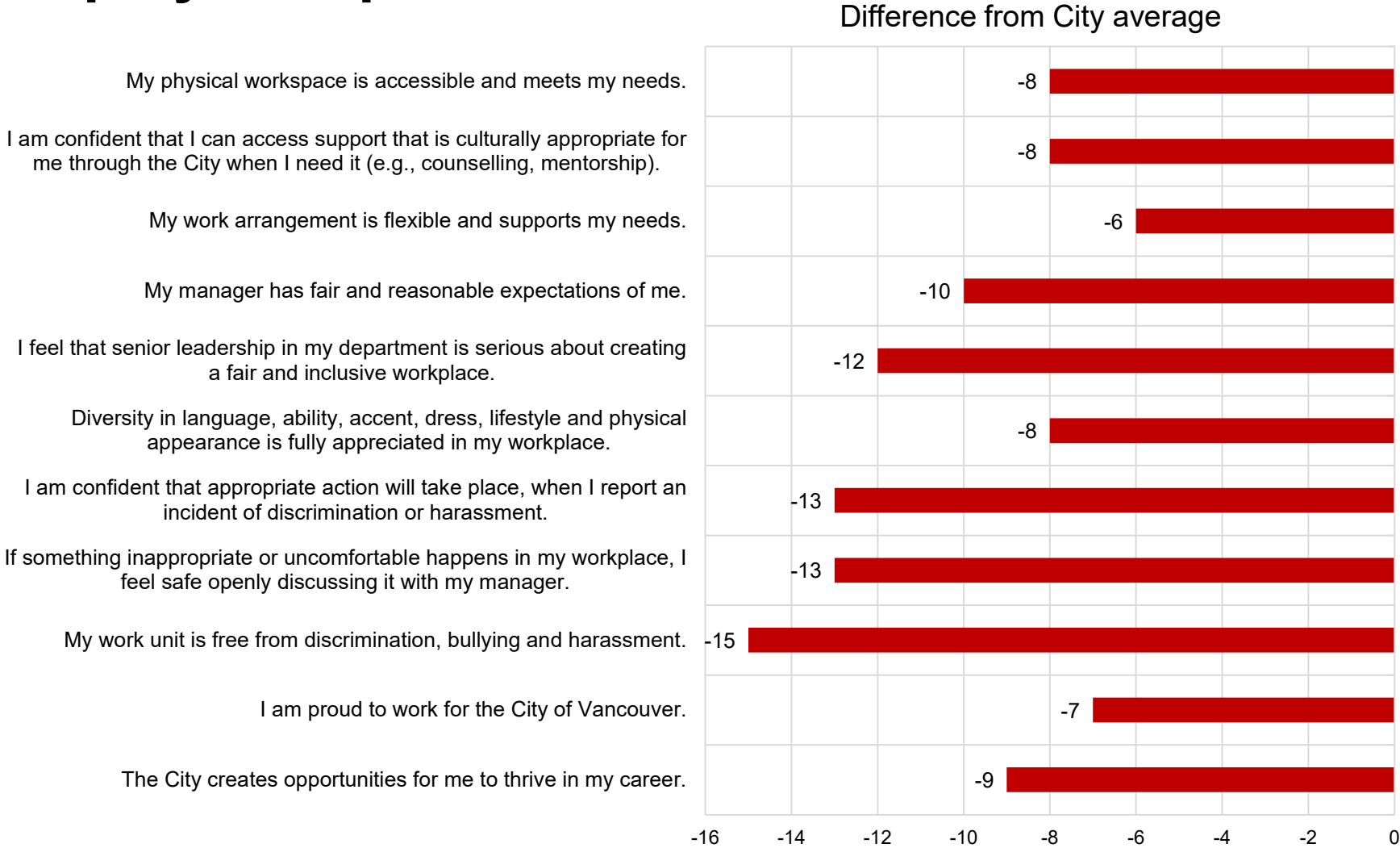
Workforce Profile

- The City conducted an Employee Benchmark Survey in 2021 to create a demographic snapshot of employees. 55% of City staff participated
- Roughly 9% of survey respondents identified as having a disability
 - Higher representation among auxiliary staff (12%), part-time staff (20%) and among CUPE 1004 (outside) workers (15%)
 - Representation decreases with organizational rank: only 4% of senior exempt staff identify as having a disability
- Intersectional analysis was limited by data suppression due to need to preserve respondent confidentiality

Workforce Profile

- The City is currently falling short of attracting and hiring people with disabilities representation rate in the labour market (14% in Metro Vancouver)
- In 2022, only 3.8% of applicants to the City self-identified as having a disability
- Only 3.6% of applicants were ultimately hired into City jobs, as compared to 4.5% of all applicants
- Trends from 2017 to 2022 suggest that there has been some increase in representation of people with disabilities at most stages of the application process

Employee experiences



Barriers in employment practices

- **Stigma and Lack of Education:** makes it a challenge for staff to disclose needs and access support
- **Recruitment:** processes are not accessible to all applicants
- **Onboarding:** processes for supporting staff with disabilities when hired are insufficient
- **Built Environment:** worksites do not consider accessibility in safety plans; some worksites are physically inaccessible

Barriers in employment practices

- **Accommodations:** process for requesting and receiving accommodations is unclear
- **Growth and Retention:** small number of positions with flexible status (e.g. part time, job sharing) limits opportunities for growth
- **Off boarding:** processes are nonspecific, although many staff with disabilities have different needs when leaving or retiring

Work Underway or Planned (1/2)

- Develop and roll out disability awareness training for staff, senior leaders and Council
- Conduct an equity review of the City's recruitment processes to identify and address any systemic barriers or bias that may exist
- Partner with external organizations focused on supporting employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Work Underway or Planned (2/2)

- Document and communicate the City's medical accommodation process
- Improve the City's onboarding process for new staff which includes updated tools and resources for managers
- Work to create a part-time exempt employment status that departments can use to create greater flexibility for staff with disabilities (and others)

Procedure By-law Updates

- City Clerk will bring forward an update on Council's direction to amend the procedure bylaw to allow for additional speaking time for Persons with Disabilities at Council in Q2, 2023.
- To better accommodate people with disabilities in Council meetings
 - purchased a new monitor and camera to support ASL interpretation in Council Chambers,
 - finalizing mechanisms for providing closed captioning and ASL interpretation options.

Accessibility audits completed for City of Vancouver Civic Buildings in the 2019-2022 Capital Plan:

- Vancouver City Hall
- Four theatres facilities
- Eight community centres
- Central Library and 17 library branches.
- Mountain View Cemetery.

Additional studies completed in the 2019-2022 Capital Plan:

- Vancouver's works yards washrooms, change rooms and locker rooms were reviewed for accessibility with a focus on gender inclusivity.
- Park Board staff reviewed all standalone park washrooms (approximately 100 buildings) for deficiencies in accessibility.
- Accessibility audits planned for City of Vancouver Civic Buildings in the 2023-2026 Capital Plan for approximately 25 facilities including remaining community centres, rinks, and pools.

Accessibility upgrades completed in last Capital Plan (2019-2022) include:

- Gathering Place washrooms and shower room accessibility upgrades.
- West End Community Centre accessibility upgrades to fitness centre washrooms and change rooms, and installation of adaptive and accessible fitness equipment.
- City Hall washrooms accessibility upgrades.
- Minor upgrades to Park Washroom facilities by operational staff (grab bars, etc.)

Planned projects for this Capital Plan (2023-2026) include:

- Carnegie washroom accessibility upgrades.
- City Hall main entrance accessibility upgrades.
- Training 13 staff to the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification™ funded through the RHFAC 2023 tuition grants program.
- Target Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certified Gold for new civic City buildings, starting with Marpole Community Centre and for renovations of City buildings, starting with the renovation of the West Point Grey Library Branch.
- Continued minor upgrades to Park Washroom facilities by operational staff (grab bars, etc.)

Patios and surrounding public realm:

- A key objective of the current Patio Program Review is to improve accessibility of patios and surrounding public realm. As part of this work, an accessibility consultant will draft design guidelines and policy.

City streets:

- There are 1400 km of roadway and 2200 km of sidewalk in the City
- Conditions of roadways and sidewalks regularly audited
- To further improve accessibility, staff plan to undertake an external accessibility review of the Engineering Design Manual (EDM) and other on-street programs that impact accessibility
 - Particular interest in wayfinding for persons with disabilities
 - Anticipated cost of approximately \$100,000 funded from (2023-2026 Capital Plan)

Challenges with on-street infrastructure:

- Infrastructure built out over decades using different standards, some not accessible
- Some infrastructure, such as curb ramps and sidewalks, never built
- Current capital funding will add 1.2 km/ year of the approximately 450 km of missing sidewalks
- Current maintenance funding is unlikely to be sufficient to improve the condition of infrastructure as it ages

Discussion & Questions

