



**2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board endorse the 2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan.

**BACKGROUND**

Further to the May 9, 2023 report advising the Board of new requirements under the *Accessible British Columbia Act* (the Act) and the process staff would undertake to support the RDN in responding to the Act (Attachment 1), the 2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan (the Plan) is attached to this staff report (Attachment 2). The Act required the RDN to establish an accessibility committee, an accessibility plan and a tool for receiving public feedback on accessibility.

The Plan was developed by the RDN Accessibility Committee (the Committee) with facilitation support and guidance from Meaningful Access Consulting. The Committee exceeds the composition requirements of the Act as it is comprised of over one-half persons with disabilities, parents/guardians of persons with disabilities or individuals from organizations who support persons with disabilities. It also includes more than one Indigenous person. The drafting process was also supported through a staff engagement exercise to identify accessibility barriers for persons engaging with the organization, and incorporated multiple rounds of feedback from departmental and senior leadership.

The Plan will guide the organization's accessibility and inclusion efforts over the next three years and beyond. It recommends 18 foundational actions (listed on pages 8 to 11 of Attachment 2) to address accessibility and inclusion barriers across four areas of focus: employer context, service delivery, communications and implementation. The RDN is committed to providing the highest level of public service to its residents and others, and will integrate accessibility and inclusion into its employer practices, service delivery, public communications and work planning. Over the long term, this proactive approach will involve the ongoing identification, removal and prevention of barriers encountered by persons with disabilities when interacting with the RDN.

Following the Board's receipt of the Plan for information on October 24, staff will publish the 2023-2026 Accessibility Plan to the RDN Accessibility Get Involved page to invite public feedback on the Plan. The RDN Accessibility Get Involved page was first published on August 31, 2023, and is the RDN's tool for receiving public feedback on accessibility in accordance with the Act.

The Act requires that accessibility plans be reviewed and updated every three years. The Plan formalizes RDN's journey of continuous improvement toward accessibility. The recommended audit work and associated public

engagement (page 8, recommendation 5, Attachment 2) and public feedback on the first Plan will be critical for supporting any Plan amendments and, importantly, development of the 2027-2030 RDN Accessibility Plan.

Consistent with the Act, the Committee will be a continuing body to receive and respond to public input on accessibility, to support the monitoring of Plan implementation and to act as an internal advisory resource for all RDN departments and/or the Board if desired. Other steps to support Plan implementation include, but are not limited to, development of an accessibility plan administration policy to identify roles and responsibilities related to accessibility.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

To implement and operationalize the 18 recommended actions within the 2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan, a \$50,000 expense for all staff training and a \$25,000 expense for a third-party review of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility within the RDN employment context are recommended to be requisitioned in 2024 within the 2024-2028 Financial Plan. To operationalize the recommended actions related to accessibility, service delivery, spaces and facilities, a \$170,000 expense is recommended for 2025 within the 2024-2028 Financial Plan to undertake the audit work (including public engagement) for Transit Services, Regional and Community Utilities, Recreation and Parks, Development and Emergency Services and Corporate Services. This expense, through the audit work and the associated recommendations to address gaps, will naturally support development of the 2027-2030 RDN Accessibility Plan. Other 2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan recommended actions are addressed within existing operating budgets, and/or will be supported through any successful grant applications.

The Provincial Accessibility Committee established by the Act is currently developing and recommending provincial accessibility standards, which the RDN may need to respond to in the future. The need for continuing staff capacity within the human resources and safety department to manage the accessibility and inclusion program at the RDN is anticipated.

## **REVIEWED BY:**

- S. Nixon, Chief Human Resources Officer
- T. Moore, Chief Financial Officer
- L. Grant, General Manager, Development and Emergency Services
- C. Crabtree, General Manager, Corporate Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

## **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Attachment 1 - Accessible British Columbia Act Requirements (May 9, 2023 Board Report)
2. Attachment 2 - 2023-2026 RDN Accessibility Plan