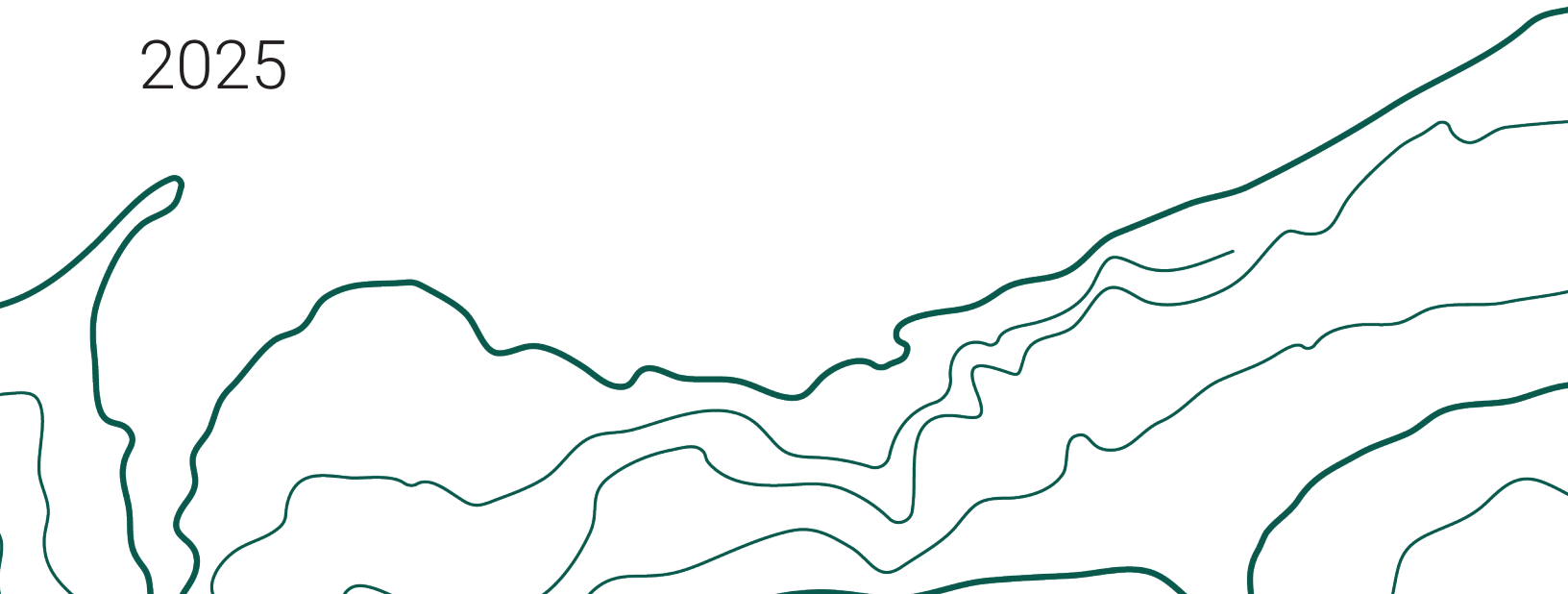
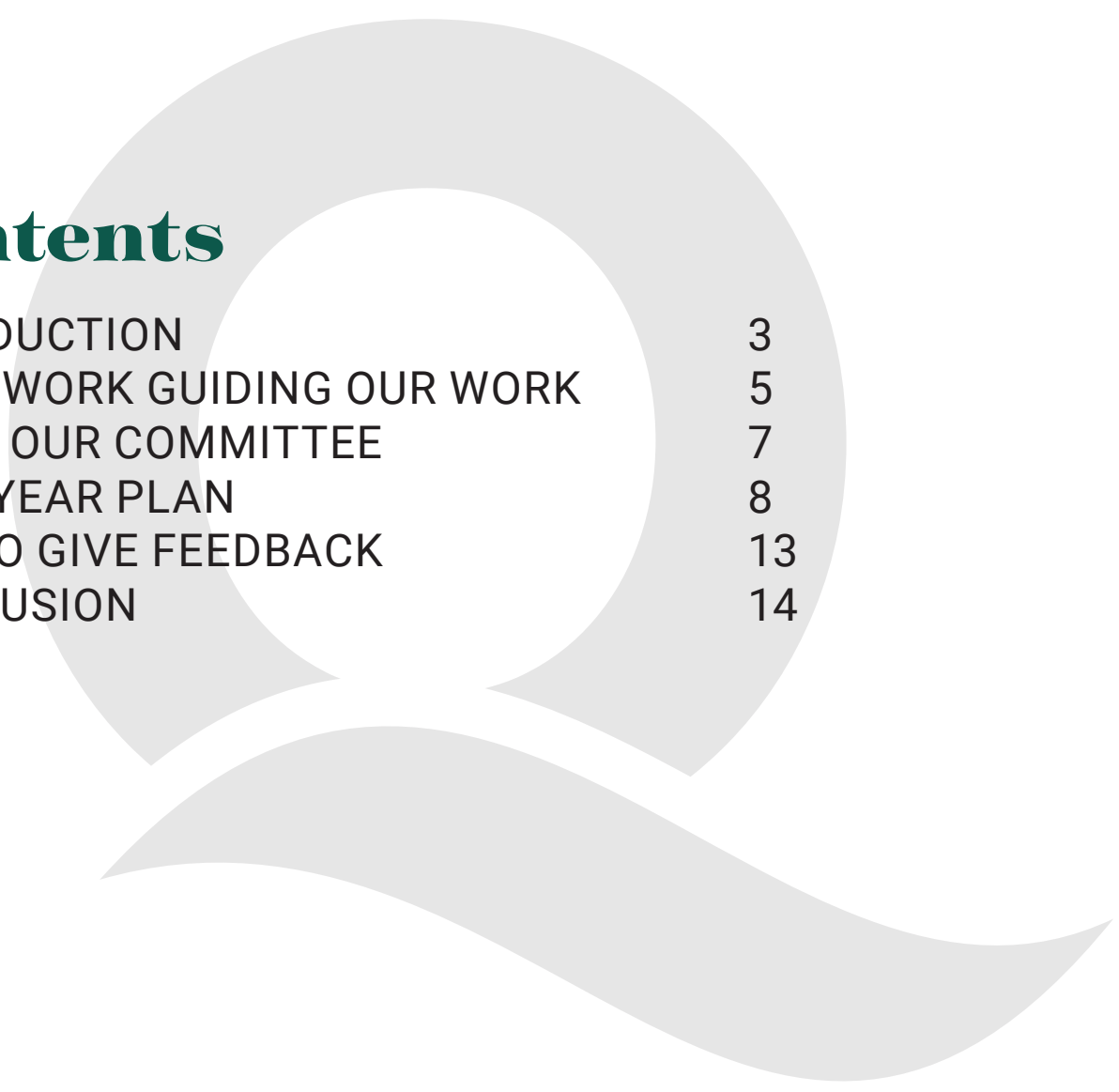




Quesnel Accessibility Action Plan

2025





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TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Quesnel is located in the central interior of British Columbia, where we recognize and honour the long-standing and ongoing connection of the Southern Dakelh and Tsilhqot'in Peoples to this region; the territory of the Lhtako Dene, Nazko, Lhoosk'uz Dené, and ʔEsdilagh Nations.

DEFINITIONS

ABCA: Accessible British Columbia Act

Disability: An inability to participate fully and equally in society as a result of the interaction of an impairment or a barrier.

Impairment: A physical, sensory, mental, intellectual or cognitive impairment, whether permanent, temporary, episodic, seen or unseen.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the City of Quesnel Accessibility Action Plan is to examine opportunities and provide actions that identify, remove, and prevent barriers for Quesnel residents and visitors of all abilities from interacting with the City of Quesnel.

These actions further the City's efforts to make its workplace, services, and built environment accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. This plan also enables the City to meet or exceed the requirements of the ABCA, which came into effect for municipalities in B.C. on September 1, 2022.

The ABCA requires municipalities to implement the following:

1. an accessibility committee,
2. an accessibility plan, and
3. an accessibility feedback tool.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of British Columbia is working towards improving accessibility throughout the province. According to Census information, in 2017 one in five people in Canada aged 15 years and over had at least one disability, and 2021 data showed more than 926,000 people in BC with a disability. These numbers are anticipated to increase with future growth in populations and changes in demographics (i.e. age).

This plan reflects input received from City of Quesnel staff, the Accessibility Committee, community residents and Council. It combines the opinions, ideas, comments, and suggestions received on how the City of Quesnel, as an organization and a society as a whole, can increase accessibility and decrease barriers for people living with disabilities in our community.

Adoption of this plan also enables the City of Quesnel to meet its requirements under the Accessible British Columbia Act (the Act). The plan provides a framework to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility, and is an important step in making Quesnel, and British Columbia, more accessible. As the plan is implemented, the City of Quesnel will continue to look to the Accessibility Committee, persons with disabilities and community partners to ensure it evolves to meet the changing needs of our community.

ABOUT THE CITY OF QUESNEL

10,000 people call Quesnel home and another 13,000 live in the surrounding area. With affordable housing costs, accessible amenities, and short commutes, the community is able to get out and enjoy the nature that surrounds us. Quesnel is a community that values our heritage, while embracing innovative ideas and opportunities to thrive. It's in our nature to work hard and play harder, to help our neighbours, to challenge ourselves, and to celebrate our successes.



GOVERNANCE AND LEGISLATION

Accessible British Columbia Act

In June 2021 the Province of British Columbia passed the Accessible BC Act which requires the establishment of an accessibility committee, development of an accessibility plan, and provision of an accessibility feedback tool for prescribed organizations.

Accessibility Committee

Under the Act, an accessibility committee is a requirement of prescribed organizations, and must be developed by September 2023. Accessibility committees are intended to help organizations identify barriers to individuals in or interacting with the organization, and to advise the organizations on how to remove and prevent these barriers. The City of Quesnel Accessibility Committee serves as a primer for this important work by identifying previously completed work, work currently underway, planned work, and potential opportunities.

To the extent possible, the Accessibility Committee should:

- Have at least half of their members be persons with disabilities or individuals who represent a disability-serving organization.
- Have a membership which reflects the diversity of persons with disabilities or other barriers to accessing public spaces and services in B.C.
- Have at least one member who is an indigenous person.

The Accessibility Committee is structured as an internal committee of Quesnel City Council, staff, and community members. The City put out several calls for member applications for the committee and an initial membership was established. It is recognized that achieving the recommended committee composition may be challenging. Committee members are not required to share if and why they identify as a person with a disability and are encouraged to only share as much as they are comfortable with.

Framework Guiding Our Work

The City of Quesnel's Accessibility Plan is a result of legislation (law) introduced in 2021, called the Accessible British Columbia Act. This law helps guide organizations and municipalities to identify, remove, and prevent barriers that make it difficult for people living with disabilities in our province. The goal of this new law is to make British Columbia more accessible for everyone.



ACCESSIBLE BC ACT - PRINCIPLES

The plan must follow these principles:

- **Inclusion** – All British Columbians, including persons with disabilities, should be able to participate fully and equally in their communities.
- **Adaptability** – Accessibility plans should reflect that disability and accessibility are evolving concepts that change as services, technology and attitudes change.
- **Diversity** – People with disabilities are individuals with varied backgrounds. Accessibility plans should acknowledge the principle of intersectionality and the diversity within the disability community.
- **Collaboration** – Promoting an accessible community is a shared responsibility and all have a role to play. Accessibility plans should create opportunities for organizations and communities to work together to promote access and inclusion.
- **Self-determination** – Accessibility plans should seek to empower people with disabilities to make their own choices and pursue the lives they wish to live.
- **Universal design** - The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design defines Universal Design as “the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.” An accessibility plan should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to interact with the Organization.

OTHER LEGISLATION

BC Human Rights Code

Physical and mental disabilities are protected under the BC Human Rights Code. Persons with physical or mental disabilities may not be discriminated against in the areas of:

- publications
- accommodation, service, and facility
- purchase of property
- tenancy premises
- employment advertisements
- wages
- employment
- unions and associations

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

National legislation exists that protects persons with mental and/or physical disabilities.

Equality Rights

Equality before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law

15 (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Affirmative Action Programs

15 (2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged.

Existing Policies and Plans

In 2018, the City of Quesnel published the Age-Friendly Assessment and Action Plan. This document has helped guide the City and community to continue its growth as an age-friendly community that support older adults to age-in place.

About Our Committee

RECRUITMENT

Several open invitations for member applications for the Accessibility Committee were put out by the City in the Fall of 2023. All applicants were invited to a committee information session to better understand the purpose and process of the committee. A list of those who confirmed their interest to sit on the committee was brought to council and an initial membership was established.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair: Martin Runge
Quesnel City Councillor

Shelby Coppin
Dengerry Professional Services Ltd.

Colleen Gauthier
North Cariboo Seniors' Council

Lana Johnson
Quesnel Community Living Association

Susan MacNeil
Seniors Advocacy Service

Christine McCann
Northern Health

Heather Walker
Northern Health

Jacqueline Weldon
Citizen Member

Laureen Witzke
Citizen Member

**Representatives from Lhtako Dene, Nazko,
Lhoosk'uz Dené, and ʔEsdilagh Nations**

Our 3-Year Plan

CONSULTATION CONDUCTED

Consultations to Date

Community Accessibility Survey – May 2024, and 2025.

- A survey open to the community has been made available for ongoing feedback on the current accessibility efforts within the City of Quesnel

Feedback Mechanism

The City of Quesnel is committed to creating meaningful opportunities for the public to participate in shaping decisions. Let's Connect is an online community engagement space. It will include project plans and updates, enable interaction and feedback, and send you notification emails when you sign up. Shape projects that impact you by registering and contributing ideas and questions. The Accessibility Committee will listen, take feedback into account, and report back on how community input contributes to City projects.

The City has included the ongoing efforts towards accessibility improvements on the Accessible Quesnel page on the City of Quesnel website. Persons with disabilities are encouraged to continue to share their lived experience here to aid in identifying barriers, suggested actions plan items and further input.

ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN

Summary

Disabled persons may experience barriers in participating in local government activities when information is provided in an inaccessible format or without appropriate communication supports. This makes it difficult for them to access services, access information, attend events, and join discussions.

Goal

To enhance community members' access to services, programs, communications, and engagement opportunities.

Action Plan

The action plan is set in three priority areas for accessible public information and communication. Each of these areas is detailed with observed barriers, actions, accountable departments at the City, and prioritization.

- a. Accessible Content
- b. Accessibility for Public Communication and Engagement
- c. Further Efforts/Meetings to Identify Areas of Need, Priorities, and Actions.

Priority Area #1: Accessible Content

Action	Details	Timeline
Public-facing delivery of information Potential issues with the level of accessibility (visual, auditory, intellectual) of public information being disseminated and delivered, including online, print, customer service information, and signage.	• Provide training in best practices (specific to this focus area) and tools for delivering accessible information to City staff responsible for producing, procuring, or delivering public information and communications. • Investigate and offer training across identified areas of need. • Apply for funding to support capacity through SPARC and other funders as appropriate • Assessment of key municipal documents (OCP)	Ongoing
Internal written documents (procedures, policies, and general information) Layout of content, clarity of language, and modes (methods) of communication are inconsistent and at reading levels that may be difficult for all to access.	• Review key City of Quesnel documents through an accessibility lens. • Review key departmental documents through an accessibility lens. • Assess readability of key internal-facing documents to ensure we are following best practices for reading levels. • Investigate best practices and offer staff training across identified areas of need. • Apply for funding to support capacity through SPARC and other funders as appropriate.	Long Term

Front desk and customer service Physical barriers may impede communication across counters. Clarity (tone, volume, speed, etc.) of staff to public may be challenging for persons with varied levels of ability to understand.	• Best practices review • Provide in person or online staff training.	Ongoing
Signage posted to communicate public information may not be accessible.	• Develop guidelines for accessible signage. • Review existing for content, visual, and other access. • Add signage identifying accessible options for building entry and navigation. • Utilize Accessibility Committee for consistent materials development, posting, and distribution.	Long term
Accessibility-relevant information for posting on City bulletin boards/sites (upcoming events, awareness content, etc.) is not always well laid out and/or up to date.	• Working with interested members of the Accessibility Committee to generate content and review content for visual and other access for posting at all City display spaces. • Utilize Accessibility committee for consistent materials development, posting, and distribution.	Ongoing

Priority Area #2: Accessibility for Public Communication and Engagement

Action	Details	Timeline
Public meeting/space accessibility Public meetings/space and engagement efforts may not be reachable or available to all citizens due to accessibility challenges.	• Create public meeting accessibility through establishing a checklist of accessibility needs for City-sponsored/ provided public meetings. • Where identified as a priority, increase access to public buildings/space (i.e., Quesnel Public Library). • Seek funding through SPARC for increasing access to public buildings/spaces. • Make Council meetings more accessible through: • Closed captioning. • Train staff and Council members on best practices for clear speaking. • Consider additional formats/platforms. • Utilize Engage Quesnel as a feedback mechanism. • Generate additional feedback options for more fulsome and accessible engagement.	Short term

Priority Area #3: Further Efforts/Meetings to Identify Additional Areas of Need, Priorities, and Actions

Action	Details	Timeline
City communications and engagement may not be adequately capturing community feedback on needs and opportunities to address them.	• Ensure staff is aware of and follow posts on barriers, needs, and solutions. • Generate additional options for gathering community feedback. • Accessibility Services Canada Training.	Ongoing
Additional areas of focus, barriers, and solutions need to be identified over the upcoming two years to ensure that the CoQ Accessibility Plan continues to address accessibility needs within the jurisdiction of the City of Quesnel.	• Continued meetings and discussion with internal accessibility planning team of CoQ and Accessibility Committee to identify additional opportunities for improving accessibility.	Ongoing
Financial capacity to implement options for reducing and preventing barriers to accessibility is limited.	• Seek opportunities for access to funding to implement actions of the CoQ Accessibility Plan.	Ongoing

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

The City of Quesnel Accessibility Plan is overseen by Council and implemented by City staff. The City Manager holds responsibility for the overall direction of staff in accordance with the Accessibility Plan and will operate at the direction of Council with input from the Accessibility Committee. At their discretion, the City Manager may assign the responsibility for implementing various aspects of the Accessibility Plan to specific staff members.

Evaluating

The City of Quesnel Accessibility Plan will be reviewed and updated at least once every three years in accordance with the Accessible British Columbia Act. Updates will be informed by input from the Accessibility Committee, the public through the Let's Connect Quesnel engagement platform, and other means of public engagement as they are developed as part of the City's Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Plan will be a standing item on the Accessibility Committee agenda. Updates on the Accessibility Plan will be provided to the public via the City of Quesnel's online assets and via Council through reports submitted by the Accessibility Committee as appropriate. The frequency of these reports will be annual or as deemed appropriate by the Accessibility Committee and Council.

How to Give Feedback

To provide feedback to help improve accessibility within the City of Quesnel please use the following methods:

Active engagement activities will be posted on the Accessible Quesnel page on the City of Quesnel website www.quesnel.ca/accessiblequesnel. To stay up to date on these engagement activities, subscribe to Let's Connect Quesnel www.letsconnectquesnel.ca.

Email: cityhall@quesnel.ca

In person at Quesnel City Hall – 410 Kinchant St, Quesnel

Mail to:
Accessibility Committee
City of Quesnel
410 Kinchant St
Quesnel, BC
V2J 7J5

To request an alternative method to provide feedback, please contact the City by email, mail, or call 250-992-2111 and we will work with you to accommodate your preferred method of providing feedback.



Conclusion

With new provincial accessibility legislation, British Columbia is in the midst of a culture change that is bringing the importance of advancing accessibility and inclusion to the forefront. The Accessible British Columbia Act establishes the role and responsibility of public-sector agencies, including municipalities, to remove barriers and make spaces more accessible and inclusive for all community members.

The Quesnel Accessibility Plan is a framework that represents the City's commitment to furthering accessibility and inclusion in Quesnel. The Plan will guide the organization

in identifying, removing and preventing barriers throughout the community, as well as fostering ongoing dialogue with people with disabilities and those who support them. The City of Quesnel is committed to continue to develop momentum towards making steps forward in accessibility each year.

Advancing accessibility benefits everyone. When people with disabilities are empowered to be active contributors in the community through increased independence, choice and participation, their diverse perspectives, knowledge and experiences can help shape a city that is livable and appealing for everyone.



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