



An Accessible Community



Over the past decade Quesnel has become a more inclusive and accessible community. This is primarily due to the efforts of a host of advocates who have raised the awareness of decision-makers and citizens alike to both the benefits of embracing diversity and to the needs of people with disability and mobility challenges. We owe these advocates a debt of gratitude, as they are making our community a better place for everyone to live, play, and work together in.

Thanks to the efforts of the City's accessibility focus group, Council has incorporated accessibility needs into our capital budget and our planning and communication initiatives. The City's curb cutting program is steadily making our sidewalks more user-friendly for people who use mobility devices (wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, etc.) and we are also looking for ways to improve the overall accessibility of our entire trail network. Council also included capital funding in the City's 2016 budget to improve the front entrance to City Hall; while the current configuration is technically "accessible" it is not user-friendly and is only accessible from one side of the building.

In order to develop a comprehensive five-year plan, Council, with funding assistance from Northern Development Trust, will be undertaking a full accessibility appraisal of our civic properties (including parks, playgrounds, and recycling facilities) with the assistance of experts in this field. We are hoping to engage our business community in this initiative as well, in an effort to make Quesnel one of the most accessible communities in the province.

This spring, thanks to the efforts of Sandy Meidlinger and her volunteer team, Quesnel will have a new, fully accessible playground at the Arts and Recreation Center, funded in part by the North Cariboo Joint Planning Committee (NCJPC) as part of its sub-regional recreation budget. Sandy's efforts to make this playground a reality raised Council's awareness of the need to incorporate accessibility features into all our City playgrounds as we reinvest in these important community amenities over the next few years.

During the concept design phase of the NCJPC's arena replacement project, the City's accessibility group provided advice and suggestions on how to make this new amenity as accessible as possible too. The new arena will have an elevator, an accessible indoor walking track, and accessible seating spread throughout the complex. Complementing our taxpayer supported accessibility initiatives there is a potential development project in South Quesnel that would see the community gain a new, fully accessible, bowling alley and indoor miniature golf facility.

Along with these capital and amenity improvements, Council is also making efforts to improve the City's accessible parking with better signage and increased fines for those who use these designated areas without a permit. This month's highlighted bylaw is our new "Comprehensive Street Traffic and Parking Bylaw" which includes a \$150 fine for parking illegally in designated disabled parking spots on public property. You can do your part to help us improve accessibility in our community by simply not parking in these designated spots.

If you have ideas and suggestions for further accessibility improvements please do not hesitate to contact any Councillor or our City's planning staff.

Mayor Bob Simpson
bsimpson@quesnel.ca