



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT
REGIONAL DISTRICT



CITY OF
PORT ALBERNI

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ACRD and City adopt Accessibility Plans

ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT – The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) and the City of Port Alberni (CPA) worked together to create Accessibility Plans for each organization. This week, the ACRD Board of Directors and CPA Council adopted their respective Accessibility Plan, allowing both organizations to begin to implement its recommendations.

In June 2021, the *Accessible BC Act* was passed into law with the goal of removing barriers to accessibility for British Columbians with disabilities. This *Act* applies to public sector organizations, including municipalities and regional districts. In accordance with this *Act*, the ACRD and CPA formed an Accessibility Committee in fall of 2023 to support the organizations on their path to developing an Accessibility Plan and to outline actions and strategies to identify, remove, and prevent barriers faced by people with disabilities.

“With the support of our diverse Accessibility Committee, the ACRD now has a plan in place that addresses the things that may hinder people with diverse abilities from enjoying full and equal participation in our communities,” explains John Jack, chair of the ACRD Board of Directors. “This plan will help us break down these identified barriers to make our communities more accessible and welcoming to everyone who lives or visits.”

“Too often we see examples of accessibility challenges in communities that prevent people with disabilities from living their full potential. We want our City to be welcoming, inclusive and accessible where everyone can participate and contribute,” said Mayor of City of Port Alberni, Sharie Minions. “This starts with identifying barriers and setting out a plan to address them. We welcome the recommendations from the Accessibility Committee and are committed to making changes that will lead to a healthier, more inclusive society.”

After gathering input from the committee and online feedback from the public (email, conversations, public survey, website feedback), the Accessibility Plans were drafted. The Plans offer recommendations on how to reduce or eliminate barriers and to advance inclusion in our communities. The ACRD’s report has 34 recommendations and the City’s report reflecting 48 recommendations. These recommendations cover general ACRD/CPA services, employment, emergency planning, information/communication, transportation, buildings, infrastructure, public spaces, procurement, public education, and improving awareness.

“Our vision is a community where everybody belongs,” said Vice-Chair of the Accessibility Committee Nicole Uzelman. “Identifying barriers and creating safe spaces where everyone can participate is the goal of the Accessibility Committee which is why it is so important to gather feedback from community members on how we can make improvements. By making improvements in our physical environment, as



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well as challenging our own biases and preconceptions, we can create a more welcoming environment that celebrates diversity and promotes equality for all. I'd like to thank everyone who provided their feedback and participated in the survey."

The Accessibility Plan will be reviewed every three years to ensure it continues to address the accessibility needs of the community. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.acrd.bc.ca/accessibility>

<https://www.portalberni.ca/accessibility>

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