

June 12, 2013

To: Members,  
Accessibility Advisory Committee

Re: 2013 Accessibility Forum Report

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### RECOMMENDATION

That this report be considered by the Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACC) during the development of its annual work plan.

### CONCLUSION

The 2013 Accessibility Advisory Forum, 'Leisure without Limits,' was an opportunity to increase overall awareness of accessible and diverse leisure opportunities for citizens of Regina, as well as to provide an opportunity to solicit public input on needs and expectations related to recreation and other city services. Feedback was gathered through face to face interviews, paper surveys, and online surveys. The information that was gathered will assist the City of Regina and its partners to increase the overall accessibility and inclusivity of leisure opportunities in Regina.

### BACKGROUND

In 2011, the ACC hosted its first Accessibility Forum with the purpose of offering an opportunity for persons with disabilities to raise issues and concerns that will ultimately help Regina in its goal to becoming Canada's most vibrant, inclusive, attractive, sustainable community, where people live in harmony and thrive in opportunity. The 2013 forum was designed to build upon the 2011 start. It was held at the City of Regina's Sportplex, with a focus on educating individuals on accessible and diverse leisure opportunities in the city of Regina. The 4 main objectives for the day, as developed by the ACC, were:

1. To increase overall leisure education as it relates to community integration.
2. To create the opportunity to network and learn about agencies promoting accessible leisure programs.
3. To create the opportunity to actively participate in a number of accessible recreation and leisure sampler sessions.
4. To offer individuals the opportunity to provide feedback on current and future accessible leisure opportunities in the City of Regina.

### DISCUSSION

In planning the theme for the 2013 Accessibility Forum, the importance of accessible leisure opportunities was discussed. What was more important, however, was recognizing how diverse leisure can, and should be. Leisure, of course, varies from person to person, and may encompass a wide range of activities and interests. Leisure may be as simple as accessing a taxi cab to meet a friend for coffee, or it may be joining a community tennis club. The bottom line however, is that leisure is personal; it has no limits, and is created by an individual's own sense of what is important to them. With this in mind, 'Leisure without Limits' was created.

Keeping in mind that leisure is so broad, and encompasses an unlimited amount of options; the committee began inviting all agencies, organizations, community associations and sport groups that had any relevance to accessible leisure options, and opportunities in the city. The ACC was looking to create a limitless environment, which offered options for individuals of all abilities to network, and educate themselves on accessible, inclusive, and diverse leisure opportunities. The committee also recognized the importance of empowering these individuals, and further creating the opportunity for individuals to provide feedback on current and future leisure opportunities.

The following are highlights of how the objectives were achieved:

*Objectives #1 and #2 - To increase overall leisure education as it relates to community integration; to create the opportunity to network and learn about agencies promoting accessible leisure programs*

Barriers to physical activity, leisure, recreation, and cultural opportunities are far too common to individuals with a disability. One barrier is the lack of education and awareness of these opportunities. To meet objectives 1 and 2, the ACC created an event which invited a wide variety of organizations and agencies to assist in educating the public. Twenty seven exhibitors, which are listed in Appendix A participated in the Forum.

Throughout the day, exhibitors interacted with approximately 160 members of the public, where they offered education on their programs and services. Exhibits such as the City of Regina Transit, offered education on how to access current City of Regina Transit, as well offered the opportunity to physically transfer, and ride the bus. The goal of this exhibit was to offer further education on their current services, but also to provide a sense of comfort to individuals who have never accessed City Transit as a means to community integration.

Further to the education of the public, the forum also offered the opportunity for agencies and organizations to network with other exhibitors, which in turn created the opportunity for additional education, professional development, and the potential for future partnerships amongst agencies with common goals and objectives.

*Objective #3 - To create the opportunity to actively participate in a number of accessible recreation and leisure sampler sessions*

In addition to the 27 exhibitors which attended Leisure without Limits, six interactive sport and leisure demonstrations were offered throughout the afternoon. Individuals attending the event were able to see demonstrations in wheelchair basketball, wheelchair rugby, wheelchair racing/track, and wheelchair tennis. The Canadian Paraplegic Association also facilitated a wheelchair skills demonstration, which encouraged the public to be involved. Further to this, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind facilitated a session which encouraged individuals to experience a moment of visual impairment. Specialized glasses were used to create a moment of visual impairment, while a walking path was created for individuals to follow.

The public had the opportunity to watch sport demonstrations, facilitated by a number of former and current Paralympic athletes. The athletes encouraged public participation, as the opportunity to try a variety of the equipment was provided throughout the day. Opportunities such as this gave individuals with disabilities the opportunity to try a specific sport that they may be interested in, while doing this in a safe and inclusive environment. On the other hand, these opportunities also gave able bodied individuals the opportunity to physically experience a wide variety of adapted sport options.

*Objective #4 - To offer individuals the chance to provide feedback on current and future accessible leisure opportunities in the City of Regina*

In order to proactively adapt to changing needs and interests, the ACC developed a survey to offer the opportunity for individuals to provide feedback on current and future accessible leisure programs in the City of Regina. More specifically, the survey was used to gain insight into possible gaps in programming, but also highlight what is being done well. The survey was also used to gauge the interest level of the Leisure without Limits forum, as well offer the opportunity to provide feedback on what could be done to improve future forums. Thirty five individuals responded to the survey questions. The following is a summary of responses:

Did you enjoy Leisure without Limits? Almost all individuals that filled out the survey answered 'yes' to this question. Two individuals answered "no" and indicated that there needed to be more advertisement and marketing in preparation for the forum.

Did you find the information provided at the Leisure without Limits forum useful? If no what information can we provide at future forums? The general consensus was that individuals attending the forum found the information provided to be useful. There was no further feedback provided.

Are there enough leisure opportunities in Regina for those with accessibility challenges? Out of the 35 people who filled out the survey, 23 individuals responded to this question. Fourteen individuals selected yes as their answer, indicating that Regina does offer enough leisure opportunities. However, nine individuals indicated that Regina does not offer enough accessible leisure programs.

What accessible programs or leisure opportunities would you like to see offered or expanded?

The responses for this question varied significantly. Of the 35 people who filled out the survey, 14 individuals responded to this question. The following are some general themes that were seen in the responses to this question:

- Broad scale consultation with the disability community
- Increased partnerships with non-profits and associations to increase programming (share resources)
- Increase in adapted fitness classes
- Paratransit orientations
- More programs for individuals with a visual impairment
- More integrated leisure/sport/recreation activities
- Increased seniors programming
- Private/one-on-one swimming options for children with disabilities
- Increase leisure education for community
- Equal opportunities to access programming

The information gathered will be analyzed, with particular emphasis on similar themes that can be seen. The information will then be shared within the Administration and with the ACC, to be considered in program planning.

## RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

There are no financial implications related to the content of this report. Any costs associated with improvements to the existing accessibility of leisure programming will be absorbed within existing budgets. New programs will be required to go through the annual budget process.

### Environmental Implications

There are no environmental issues related to the content of this report.

### Policy and/or Strategic Implications

The information, ideas, and feedback that were gained by holding the Leisure without Limits forum will further assist the ACC and City of Regina in its goal of becoming an inclusive community. Increased education of accessible and diverse leisure opportunities for all citizens of Regina is essential to increasing inclusive participation, as well as overall quality of life.

### Other Implications

There are no other implications in this report.

### Accessibility Implications

The information and ideas gathered from the Leisure without Limits forum will assist the City of Regina in the assessment of current inclusive leisure opportunities, as well as the development of potential future programs.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Information collected through the survey will be shared with organizations who participated in the forum upon request and will be shared directly with staff involved in leisure programming.

## DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Accessibility Advisory Committee has the authority to consider the content of this report. Work plans of the committee must be approved by City Council.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Manager  
Community Development

Respectfully submitted,



Chris Holden, Director  
Community Development, Recreation & Parks