



# **Community Wellness Committee**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2021  
9:00 AM**

**Henry Baker Hall, Main Floor, City Hall**



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## OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

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### **Public Agenda Community Wellness Committee Wednesday, September 15, 2021**

#### **Approval of Public Agenda**

#### **Minutes Approval**

Minutes of the meeting held on May 12, 2021

#### **Administration Report**

CWC21-10 Adapted Recreation Plan - Preliminary Report

#### **Recommendation**

The Community Wellness Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve \$375,000 in ongoing funding be brought forward in the 2022 budget process for final discussion for the following:
  - \$145,000 for an Inclusion Support Program that will provide one-on-one support to people with disabilities and their families who are accessing City-run recreation and leisure opportunities
  - \$200,000 to maintain the Adapted Sport and Recreation funding stream of the Community Investment Grants Program that was launched in 2021
  - \$30,000 through the 2022 budget process toward training for all existing recreation staff in disability and inclusion.
2. Delegate authority to the City Manager to adjudicate, approve and administer the Adapted Sport and Recreation Funding stream of the Community Investment Grants Program.
3. Delegate authority to the City Manager to approve a funding agreement with the Government of Canada should the City's application to the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund be successful.
4. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on September 29, 2021.

#### **Adjournment**

AT REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 2021

AT A MEETING OF COMMUNITY WELLNESS COMMITTEE  
HELD IN PUBLIC SESSION

AT 9:00 AM

**These are considered a draft rendering of the official minutes. Official minutes can be obtained through the Office of the City Clerk once approved.**

Present: Councillor Andrew Stevens, in the Chair  
Councillor John Findura (Videoconference)  
Councillor Dan LeBlanc (Videoconference)  
Councillor Cheryl Stadnichuk (Videoconference)

Regrets: Councillor Terina Shaw

Also in Attendance: Council Officer, Tracy Brezinski  
City Solicitor, Byron Werry (Videoconference)  
Executive Director, City Planning & Community Development, Diana Hawryluk  
Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, Laurie Shalley  
Manager, City Projects, Dave Slater (Videoconference)  
Manager, Planning & Partnerships, Janine Daradich (Videoconference)

(The meeting commenced in the absence of Councillor Stadnichuk.)

APPROVAL OF PUBLIC AGENDA

**Councillor John Findura moved, AND IT WAS RESOLVED, that the agenda for this meeting be approved, as submitted.**

MINUTES APPROVAL

**Councillor Dan LeBlanc moved, AND IT WAS RESOLVED, that the minutes for the meeting held on April 14, 2021 be adopted, as circulated.**

COMMUNICATION

CWC21-9 Community Investment Grants Program

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**Recommendation**

That the Community Wellness Committee receive and file this communication.

(Councillor Stadnichuk joined the meeting.)

The Committee recessed at 9:08 a.m.

The Committee reconvened at 9:12 a.m.

Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services and Dave Slater, Manager, City Projects made a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

**Councillor Dan LeBlanc moved, AND IT WAS RESOLVED, that this communication be received and filed.**

ADJOURNMENT

**Councillor Cheryl Stadnichuk moved, AND IT WAS RESOLVED, that the meeting adjourn.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:44 a.m.

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Chairperson

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Secretary



## Adapted Recreation Plan - Preliminary Report

<b>Date</b>	September 15, 2021
<b>To</b>	Community Wellness Committee
<b>From</b>	City Planning & Community Development
<b>Service Area</b>	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
<b>Item No.</b>	CWC21-10

### RECOMMENDATION

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The Community Wellness Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve \$375,000 in ongoing funding be brought forward in the 2022 budget process for final discussion for the following:
  - \$145,000 for an Inclusion Support Program that will provide one-on-one support to people with disabilities and their families who are accessing City-run recreation and leisure opportunities
  - \$200,000 to maintain the Adapted Sport and Recreation funding stream of the Community Investment Grants Program that was launched in 2021
  - \$30,000 through the 2022 budget process toward training for all existing recreation staff in disability and inclusion.
2. Delegate authority to the City Manager to adjudicate, approve and administer the Adapted Sport and Recreation Funding stream of the Community Investment Grants Program.
3. Delegate authority to the City Manager to approve a funding agreement with the Government of Canada should the City's application to the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund be successful.
4. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on September 29, 2021.

### ISSUE

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In April 2021, City Council brought forward a motion to "Increase Recreation and Leisure Activities for People with Disability" (MN21-2, Appendix A), directing Administration to conduct consultations

toward the development of an Adapted Recreation Plan. The motion requested that Administration return to Council in Q3 of 2021 with a preliminary report, and in Q1 of 2022 with a final report.

MN21-2 directs a broad-based consultation with the general public, people with disabilities, care providers of children with disabilities, the recreation and leisure sector, and the provincial and federal governments in order to identify barriers and opportunities for improving the accessibility of local recreation and leisure activities. It also requests Administration to do a cost analysis for expanded programming and include budget recommendations with both the preliminary and final reports.

This report outlines the consultation and engagement work completed to date, related budget recommendations, and the plan for completion of the remainder of the work.

## **IMPACTS**

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### **Accessibility Impacts**

The content of this report was presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee on September 7, 2021. The Committee expressed general support for the recommendations, and highlighted:

- The strong link between access to transportation and recreation, and the need for additional investment in both ParaTransit and general Transit, to help people access recreation opportunities
- A suggestion to strengthen relationships with local cab companies to support with transportation needs
- The importance of ensuring consistency and choice within the Inclusion Support program, and exploring options for subsidizing residents to bring their own support staff as well as providing City-employed Inclusion Support Workers
- The importance of not requiring all people with disabilities to utilize the Inclusion Support Program, and continuing to support other forms of access
- Several specific suggestions for staff training the City can explore
- Several suggestions for outreach related to the public survey in the fall

These recommendations are expected to enhance the accessibility of City of Regina (City) programs and services for people with a wide variety of barriers to participation. One-on-one support allows for the City to provide person-centred service and to respond to the specific needs of each individual or family who is accessing the Inclusion Support Program.

Additional staff training in disability and inclusion is expected to make all City recreation and leisure programs safer and more welcoming to people with a wide variety of abilities, whether they are accessing the Inclusion Support Program or not.

Grant funding for community-based organizations will help to spur community-driven accessibility

upgrades to their facilities and programs, thereby widening the variety of programs and services that are accessible to people with disabilities throughout our city.

### **Financial Impacts**

The total value of the recommendations is \$375,000 for the 2022 budget.

This is a starting point based on our initial consultation and outreach, and current staff capacity. We expect additional funding requests for the 2023 and 2024 budgets based on the final results of our consultations. An overview of the results and options for multi-year funding will be presented to Council in Q1 of 2022 for approval.

### **Policy Impacts**

*Design Regina: The Official Community Plan Bylaw No 2013-48 (OCP)* prioritizes access to a variety of recreation programs and services for all Regina residents. These Sections ask the City to minimize barriers to the use of municipal facilities, programs or services and to consider the needs of the most vulnerable populations when planning recreation opportunities. It explicitly asks the City to support seniors and people with disabilities by using principles of barrier-free and universal design, and by coordinating accessibility actions and initiatives across City departments. These recommendations will support the above strategic outcomes as outlined in Sections: D7 – Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces; D8 – Culture; and D11 – Social Inclusion.

The *Recreation Master Plan* recognizes accessibility to recreation as an important catalyst in developing more connected and welcoming communities. It promotes equitable provision of recreation opportunities, reducing barriers to access, and fostering cultures of inclusion throughout the recreation delivery system.

## **OTHER OPTIONS**

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### **1. Status Quo:**

- No immediate investment in expanded disability-related services
- Existing staff would continue to do their best to support people with disabilities
- Disability awareness training for recreation staff would be delivered from existing training budgets, possibly at the expense of other training
- No continuation of the Adapted Sport & Recreation grant program started in 2021
- Future investment could be triggered and guided by the Accessibility Plan to be discussed in Q2 of 2022, giving the City a more comprehensive understanding of accessibility priorities broadly
- This option is not recommended because consultations conducted through this Motion have identified a clear need for the recommendations within this report, and taking immediate action will support the City's work in building trust with residents with disabilities

### **2. Additional capital investment of \$400,000:**

- Everything in Recommendation, plus:
  - \$400,000 in annual capital funding to address findings of accessibility audit
- This option represents a total cost of \$775,000.
- Administration has an existing budget of \$150,000 annually for program and accessibility upgrades to facilities; this would be in addition to that funding.
- Administration is conducting an Accessibility Audit of all public-facing City of Regina facilities over the next 3 years. The Audit will outline priorities and cost estimates for future work to make City facilities more accessible. It is anticipated that significant capital will be required to respond to the recommendations of the Audit.
- This Option would enable Administration to begin making immediate progress on the accessibility of City facilities, based on early results of the Audit, while programs and services for people with disabilities are being expanded.
- If this option is not selected, Administration will bring forth capital requests related to accessibility through future budget cycles, upon the completion of the accessibility audits, and through additional work on a corporate accessibility plan

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

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A communications plan is being developed to support awareness and distribution of the public survey as well as the promotion of funding opportunities and other ways for the broader community to be involved.

## **DISCUSSION**

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### **Breakdown of Current and Future Work**

Administration has completed the following work between April and August 2021, the results of which are outlined below and inform the recommendations in this report:

- Focus groups with people with disabilities and their care providers
- Engagement with the federal and provincial governments

The following work will be completed between now and December 2021, the results of which will be included in the final report presented to Council in Q1 of 2022, with additional budget requests:

- Engagement with the recreation and leisure sector
- Development of an inventory of existing recreation and leisure activities for people with disabilities
- Public survey

### **Focus Groups with People with Disabilities and their Care Providers**

Administration contracted consultants John Loeppky and Traci Foster from Listen to Dis' Community Arts Organization. Listen to Dis' is a Regina-based, disability-led arts organization with a strong history of cultural and recreational programming, disability audits, and consultation work around inclusion and access. John and Traci are both disabled artists themselves, and each has been



personally and professionally engaged in arts, culture, sport and/or recreation for many years. Their full preliminary report is attached (Appendix B).

Listen to Dis' facilitated 20 focus groups with a total of 50 participants throughout the month of July. Participants included a range of perspectives, including 34 who identified as having lived experience of disability, and the remainder as support systems and/or people who work in the recreation and leisure sector.

The Consultants' recommendations include:

- That the City explore and implement changes to communication strategies that reflect the barriers to entry disabled people are currently facing
- Additional funding to Paratransit to have more busses at more times, and to decrease the window of expected pickup, which was identified as a major barrier to accessing recreation and leisure opportunities
- That the City explore new programming options for the upcoming period that balance integrated and specialized programming
- That the City hire additional disabled staff and program providers, including funding for care and support staff of the participant's choosing
- That Council fund training for current staff and community to better meet the needs of those listed in the original motion

## **Engagement with Provincial and Federal Governments**

Administration has met with the Government of Saskatchewan's Office of Disability Issues. They are aware of this and other accessibility-related work being conducted by the City. Administration is awaiting the release of the Province's forthcoming Accessibility Legislation. They do not currently have any funding opportunities related to recreation and leisure for people with disabilities.

Administration submitted an application to the Federal government's Enabling Accessibility Fund for \$1M toward accessibility-related upgrades to three of our neighbourhood centres and one leisure centre. Administration continues to explore other federal funding opportunities for future capital upgrades that will improve accessibility.

## **Recommendation Details**

If the recommendations contained in this report are approved, the City will deliver new or expanded services for people with disabilities as follows:

Inclusion Support Program: \$145,000

- Inclusive Recreation Specialist (FTE) to provide one-on-one support to people with disabilities and their families to advise on recreation options and connect with programs and Inclusion Support Workers as needed. The addition of this expertise and labour would support the rollout of additional measures in future years.

- Adapted Program Specialist (0.5 FTE; top-up of existing 0.5 Adapted Recreation Specialist) to lead adaptations to existing programs and development of new programs according to the Adapted Recreation Plan.
- Inclusion Support Team – training and development of a team of Inclusion Support Workers who can act as attendants to people with disabilities in order to facilitate access to recreation and leisure activities
- In all of the above positions, Administration plans to respond to the Consultant recommendations around improving disability leadership within the City by prioritizing hiring people with lived experience of disability

Grants to community-based organizations: \$200,000 (annually)

- To continue the Adapted Sport & Recreation funding established in 2021, and support community-driven improvements to accessibility

Training for all existing recreation staff in disability and inclusion: \$30,000 (annually)

- To equip all recreation workers with the basic knowledge and tools to provide respectful, appropriate services to people with disabilities
- Including both practical training such as how to use accessible equipment and behavioral training such as communication and active listening

Application to the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund

- Administration submitted this application in July, but will require Council approval in order to enter into an agreement if the funding is approved, as funding agreements of \$500,000 or more require approval from City Council
- The application is for a total of \$1,000,000 toward accessibility-related upgrades to entrances, washrooms and wayfinding at:
  - Cathedral Neighbourhood Centre
  - Core Ritchie Neighbourhood Centre
  - Glencairn Neighbourhood Centre
  - Sandra Schmirler Leisure Centre
- This project would greatly improve the physical accessibility of City facilities, employment opportunities, and both City and community programming that takes place in these facilities

## **Conclusion**

These recommendations focus on what the City can do in 2022 to begin to make recreation and leisure more accessible in our city.

Pending 2022 budget approval, hiring several new positions to specifically focus on inclusive recreation will provide a necessary base of expertise and labour within the City to be able to guide and build additional accessibility measure in future years.

An immediate investment in training for recreation staff, pending 2022 budget approval, will ensure staff are better prepared to offer a safe and inclusive environment as the City works to expand programming options.

Investing in ongoing Adapted Sport and Recreation funding for community-based organizations acknowledges that the City is not the only local provider of recreation and leisure, and ensures the City is supporting improvements in accessibility across our community.

Consultations are ongoing and have already identified priorities that are not included in this report. Through ongoing engagement with the recreation and leisure sector, and the public survey, Administration anticipates additional recommendations and accompanying budget requests in the Final Report in Q1 of 2022.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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On April 14, 2021, City Council directed Administration to conduct consultations and develop a plan to increase recreation and leisure activities for people with disabilities (MN21-2, Appendix A).

Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

9/8/2021



Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning & Community Dev.

9/9/2021

Prepared by: Shayna Stock, Coordinator, Community Well-Being & Inclusion

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Appendix A - Council Motion April 21

Appendix B - Consultant Report

## Appendix A

April 14, 2021 – City Council Motion MN 21-2

### **Recommendation**

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Regina City Council direct Administration to:

1. Conduct a consultation with the general public, people with disabilities, care providers of children with disabilities, recreation and leisure sector (community associations, non-profit and private organizations) on the following:
  - a. What types of inclusive recreation and activities are needed; and
  - b. Identify barriers and enablers to providing additional recreation and leisure programs;
2. Create an inventory of current recreation programs and activities provided by the City of Regina and other private and non-profit organizations, including a cost analysis for the expanded level of programming that may be needed;
3. Research options for expanding availability of accessibility grants with the Community Investments Grants program for both non-profit and private organizations to encourage inclusive and specialized recreation and activities;
4. Promotes grant funding for inclusive and specialized programming for people with disability; and
5. Engage both the Federal and Provincial government for funding local business and or sponsorship opportunities for financial support.
6. Report back to City Council on these directives with budget recommendations in Q3 of 2021 with a final report in Q1 of 2022.



## City of Regina Accessible Leisure and Recreation Preliminary Report

A note on language: Listen to Dis (LTD') uses both identity-first language (i.e., disabled person) and person-first language (person with a disability) throughout this report. While LTD' acknowledges that many administrative systems prefer wording such as persons experiencing disability, or people with varied abilities; it is in line with a disability-led process such as this to acknowledge and reflect the language used in community.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Listen to Dis' brings forward the following recommendations after consulting with the participants in the initial focus group process:

1. That the City of Regina explore and implement changes to communication strategies that reflect the barriers to entry currently being faced. Communication concerns related to accessibility were brought forward by disabled people, their support systems, and the sport and leisure sector members who are delivering accessible services, the details of which are outlined in this report.
2. That the Council provide additional funding to increase transport services via Paratransit
3. That the City of Regina explore new programming options for the upcoming period that balance integrated and specialized programming while addressing the communication barriers presented by systems that are vital to the achievement of this goal, such as the City's website.
4. That the Council provide funding to hire additional disabled staff and program providers, including funding for care and support staff of the participant's choosing.
5. That the Council provide additional funding for current staff and community training to better meet the needs of those listed in the original motion.

### ISSUE

The issue initially highlighted by City Council was the lack of access to recreational leisure opportunities for the disabled citizens of Regina, their support systems, and service providers. This report describes the findings of the focus group process and provides qualitative information in order for the relevant department(s) of the City of Regina to make recommendations for a funding ask across multiple budget lines. This report also informs the upcoming survey release (October, 2021) and the 2022 Q1 final report. On April 14, 2021, Regina City Council passed a motion that read, in part:

"BE IT RESOLVED that Regina City Council direct Administration to:

1. Conduct a consultation with the general public, people with disabilities, care providers of children with disabilities, recreation and leisure sector (community associations, non-profit and private organizations) on the following:



- a. What types of inclusive recreation and activities are needed; and
- b. Identify barriers and enablers to providing additional recreation and leisure programs;”

By mid-June, Listen to Dis' Community Arts Organization was selected as the consultant for this process and entered into an agreement with the City of Regina on June 22, 2021. Planning began immediately and 20 focus groups were facilitated between July 6 and July 30. There were 50 total participants and approximately 13 more submitted interest in attending and then were unable to do so. ASL interpretation was held for one session, facilitated by Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and auto captioning was provided for each session. Individual sessions were made available on request to meet the access needs of both the participants and the facilitators. Of those who attended, 34 were provided honorariums in recognition for their lived experience with disability. Members of the public were asked three questions as part of the focus groups:

1. What types of inclusive recreation and activities are needed?
2. What are the barriers you or those you support face when accessing recreation or leisure programs in the City of Regina?
3. What supports would better enable you or those you support to access recreation or leisure programs in the City of Regina?

What followed were hour and a half to two hour sharing sessions. As part of the process, participants were briefed on the history of Listen to Dis', the approach taken by being disability-led and informed by disability culture, as well as the expectations of the sharing of data compiled. From there, lead facilitator John Loeppky compiled the notes taken during the process and refined their presentation into this report. LTD' has aimed to be as representative as possible without presenting an unwieldy document. The key here is to facilitate action, to listen, to learn, and to support.

## IMPACTS

### Accessibility Impacts

The foundation of this report is asking: how can accessibility and inclusion to and within sport and leisure programming in the City of Regina be obtained, maintained, and improved? The core of this process, led by one of Saskatchewan's only disability-led organizations and facilitated by two disabled professional arts administrators with a combined 31 years of experience in the sector (lead facilitator John Loeppky and secondary facilitator Traci Foster) are acknowledgements that the City of Regina considers people with disabilities integral to community participation, care, and leadership.

### Financial Impacts

This report's financial implications are related to how the Council chooses to tackle the myriad of concerns that are described in this report. Put plainly, in order to bring the City of Regina in line with its stated mission to be accessible, significant funding will be required. Major areas for additional funding include:

- Staffing



- Communications development — such as website accessibility consultations and redesign
- Training
- Transit (Specifically, paratransit)
- Increased programming options
- Additional accessible equipment

### Policy Impacts

This report ties directly to the policy considerations within accessibility that are to be put in motion next year. The findings of this report, when it comes to policy, are largely internal matters — such as training procedures — rather than large scale areas of discussion for Council.

## OTHER OPTIONS

### Status Quo

The focus group process has highlighted that, while there are positive aspects to the current City of Regina approach, citizens feel that the status quo needs to be interrupted for the betterment of accessibility and inclusion. If the status quo is maintained, the process as outlined by the original motion will continue, but there will have been missed opportunities to act upon the recommendations provided by constituents.

### Initial fixes

While the motion and original process continues, City staff would have the resources to begin to address structural issues when it comes to accessibility. A hiring process for additional disabled staff could be undertaken, communications plans that reflect the needs of disabled participants could be implemented, and costs of additional accessible equipment and training could be identified.

### Long-term solutions

Recommendations from this report are integrated at an accessible and maintainable pace, leading as seamlessly as possible into the Accessible Regina report due next year.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The additional communication resources needed are related to the upcoming survey and final report.

## DISCUSSION

“I don’t want to wonder if I’m welcome, I want to know that I’m welcome.”

Those are the words of one of the 63 participants who signed up to be a part of the Listen to Dis’ facilitated focus group as part of this process. The final number of focus participants was 50. The experiences of those involved run the gamut, with the majority being disabled people, and the rest evenly split between members of support systems (parents, guardians, support workers) and those who work in the recreation and leisure sector. A number of participants also could be characterized as belonging to more than one group, which only deepened the level of knowledge being shared.



We believe that the wider data availability that will come from the survey will help broaden the scope of the conclusions found here for the Q1 2022 report, but that the majority of concerns have been identified — in-line with industry norms. We view the focus groups as part of being a continual process of learning and engagement, rather than purely being used to inform the survey.

Firstly, it is important to understand that any movement forward in accessible leisure and recreation, in the eyes of participants, must acknowledge the other systems a person with a disability has to intersect with in order to access programming. While this report draws some arbitrary distinctions for the purposes of clarity, a number of the systems outside of the City of Regina's full control are:

Provincial Social Work Programs (including CLSD — Community Living Service Delivery)

Medical and care networks (family physicians, rehabilitation facilities, physical therapists, Homecare etc.)

Transport systems (particularly the lack of accessible intercity transit)

Funding and equipment programs (such as SAIL — Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living — and SAID — Saskatchewan Assured Income for Disability)

One of the main conclusions Listen to Dis' takes from this project is that each City of Regina programming decision must acknowledge how it intersects with these and other outside systems.

It's also vital to understand that many participants are wary of engaging in City programs, some choosing to actively not attend, because of previous negative experiences where a minimal level of accountability or access occurred. In the words of one participant, "You get burned enough times, you stop going near the fire." There is lengthy and important work that needs to be done to repair relationships with disabled citizens in Regina who feel they have been consistently spoken for instead of spoken with. That work, in LTD's view, has to happen on an individual and human level in order to restore trust. We, as facilitators, are thankful for the personal stories told within the focus groups, for the labour that that entails, and for the trust placed in us by participants. This gratitude is equally extended to those who are part of support networks and the leisure sector and gave their time and expertise to this portion of the project. As consultants, we acknowledge that this report contains a lengthy number of suggestions, areas of concerns, and future paths forward.

Participants' responses fit broadly within 7 categories:

- Communications
- Access & Availability
- Transit
- Cost
- Program Suggestions
- Training
- Safety

Following is a point-by-point breakdown of what was brought forward. While this list is not exhaustive,



there were many thousands of notes taken, we have worked to condense the material shared into digestible and actionable information.

## Communication

Broadly speaking, participants felt that either they did not know of the programs available, or that what was available to them was not accessible. There was a heavy sense that, paraphrasing a participant, people are tired of being spoken for instead of spoken with. Within that are a multitude of suggestions, starting with the main tools that the City of Regina uses to communicate with its citizens in promoting leisure programs. To be clear, it is apparent that there is an intense desire to access the programs the City of Regina is already offering, and the value they hold, but that there are also linked barriers to that engagement.

One major area of concern is the accessibility of the website for all users. A number of participants suggested that the website have a dedicated area for accessibility in programming, including accessibility details for each strand of COR programming and that future redesigns take blind and visually impaired users further into account. This was echoed by staffers in the recreation and leisure sector who spoke to a constant need for connection to other partners in the space that the current system does not provide. The use of an ASL interpreted video component within the website was also discussed. Participants regularly were educating each other about programs within the focus groups and, while this does speak to the collaborative nature of the community, that the vast majority had barriers to knowing about these programs speaks to a significant communications gap.

Many participants shared that they felt that there is both an over reliance on the leisure guide and a lack of accessibility information available within it. While participants acknowledged that digital is a key way to engage with the public, some felt printed leisure guides are still important, and that the guide needs to be clearer and address a deeper description of accessibility than whether the program meets the most basic of criteria. This was identified as a particular area of concern for seniors.

Specific examples of the types of information that were discussed as needs are:

- Detailed instructions on how to sign up, including any accessibility provisions required. Specifically, what steps will need to be taken once you get to the location of the event. A key concern here is how accessibility is considered during the sign-up process.
- A note on the physical requirements of a program (for example, is there access to a sensory space that will allow participants to emotionally and physically reregulate, or whether physical transferring is required for access to the program)
- More information about COVID protocols and safe spaces
- Notes on the accessibility of the space that goes beyond saying a space is accessible. For example, is a swimming program in a space where a lift is available in the changing area.

The positive aspects of sharing on social media were shared repeatedly, but conversations frequently returned to how connections to community organizations, citizens, and support systems



could be leaned into in order to facilitate further engagement.

What kept coming through, particularly from disabled participants, was that they want to hear more information from disabled people and their support systems who have previously used the program and that said people with disabilities are paid to help support that programming. The specifics, at this stage, are obviously unclear but there is a clear want for more disabled leadership and knowledge within City of Regina programs. It was repeatedly expressed that inquiring about a program and then choosing to attend is about trust. Trust that participants will be listened to and, crucially, not misled. A number of participants said that they felt that those administering programs sometimes say yes to questions about accessibility because of their belief in equality or their fear of saying something wrong, without a deep understanding of what that accessibility means for a particular person in the context of a specific program. This led to a number of shared instances where participants struggled to access programming or attended and then immediately left once they identified that the barriers present were too difficult to navigate. The point was repeatedly made that, in order for disabled people and their support systems to attend programs, they must know as many details as possible. The burden of that research when it is not readily available appears to be a key determinant when it comes to selecting whether to attend. This breakdown in communication leads to negative experiences and participants choosing not to attend again.

One major theme in terms of suggested remedies is to better connect with community organizations and support systems. These focus groups confirmed that many participants are learning of programs from word of mouth and/or medical and social system professionals. There was a heavy recommendation that the City of Regina dedicate more resources to connect with educational staff, particularly when it comes to youth, as well as making an effort to connect with programs like provincial social workers to ensure a higher level of community knowledge when it comes to what is available. Social media is a key area for many, but the inaccessibility of technology, particularly for those on exceedingly low incomes, or seniors, means that there is a desire for technology to not be thought of as the only solution. From Listen to Dis' perspective, there are a number of ways to address this during the next stage of the project, including ensuring there are large print versions of the survey at main City of Regina programming centres.

Another suggestion made, this time about physical access, is that if the City of Regina is unable to provide care support for an event — a key ask for many — that there be a list on hand of possible service providers that the City would financially support and connect a participant with, in order to engage in a program. Participants feel that sign up opportunities for City of Regina programs are rushed, in many cases leaving just a few hours before spots fill, and that this prevents both access and participation. Some members of support systems shared that they would choose not to sign up for a particular program because of time barriers and the lack of clarity they have as to whether the program will meet somebody's needs when there is such a level of labour to ensure that transport, food, medical, and other supports are available for the selected time. Suggestions for the City like virtual tours of each recreation space available, as well as open houses before programs begin so that participants can meet the instructor and assess the space, are also rooted in this need for clarity



and security.

Communication barriers in the community that were shared during this project go beyond knowing about and choosing to attend programs. A recurring theme was that they appreciated the disability-led aspect of this project and that they want more opportunities to engage in feedback that provides continued opportunities for individual and collective follow up. This isn't to say that committees weren't deemed important, they were, just that focus groups appear to be a way to incorporate better qualitative data moving forward as the city progresses through this and other directives in a similar vein. A number of participants also shared that they would like to see a clear and repeated follow up procedure for both accessibility concerns and feedback once a program has been completed.

### **Access & Availability**

It is important to say at the outset that access has many definitions, and that this report's approach is to speak about access from a philosophical point of view as well as a practical one. There are physical considerations, such as service dog handlers expressing a want for dedicated safe spaces in facilities for their dog to be in when attending programming, as well as dedicated bathroom areas for these animals; but also procedural ones. Paraphrasing a number of participants' responses, one key concern in the community is the City of Regina's definition of access. Paraphrasing the participants, the root of the feedback in this area was: Just because something can be made doable doesn't mean it's accessible. Focus group members shared that they are consistently adapting to the limitations of the space rather than being asked what they need. Part of providing access, such as showing an ASL video loop at programming stations and allowing flexibility when it comes to the completion of documents, appears to be as much about procedure as it is about particular tools.

Much of the discussion around access during this project centred on how physical access cannot be the only consideration and that true access requires the City of Regina to consider its design methodology to be about community. Some examples given include mandating specific forms of access when a leisure event from an outside organization requires City of Regina approval or when building codes are in play. The assumptions about what provincial building codes mean versus what citizens need in practice, was a sticking point that was regularly discussed. As mentioned in the previous section, many focus group participants felt that the burden of research and determining whether a City of Regina program would work for them continues to fall on their shoulders. Some gave examples of scouting out a location before attending, putting additional time, physical, and financial pressure on them before choosing to attend. The aforementioned digital tours are one way to help alleviate this concern.

Spray pads and pools were brought up repeatedly as areas where access needs require more consideration, but also as a situation where high levels of inclusion have been achieved for some families. For example, while the new Maple Leaf Pool was largely lauded for its accessibility features when compared to other areas, waiting times, winding pathways, and the lack of a process for access for neurodivergent participants who find it inaccessible to stand in line for a significant amount



of time, were listed as areas of concern. This complaint serves as a reminder that accessibility and inclusion building are a continual process, and more resources need to be dedicated to its regular improvement. The needs of neurodivergent people — including but not limited to autistics/people with autism — were a key takeaway from the focus groups.

Another key area of access is the attitudinal barriers for both citizens and staff when it comes to what access looks like. As described by those who attended the focus groups, there is often an assumption — particularly when it comes to those with physical disabilities — that someone will attend alongside them in order to participate. This assumption was identified as faulty during the focus group process and leads into conversations about the financial and social barriers that are introduced when the burden of adaptation is squarely placed on the participant's shoulders.

One large-scale area of concern, not just in Regina but internationally, is the lack of washroom access. Participants shared that there were no fully accessible washrooms in any of the community centres or rinks and that this significantly hampers participation. Leisure sector focus group participants, particularly in the disability non-profit area, also shared that this was a key concern when using city facilities for their programming. Fully accessible in this context meaning that a lift is installed, along with a bed or plinth to help with medical routines. A smaller version of equipment-based inaccessibility shared was that many accessible door openers either do not stay open long enough or are not turned on at all.

Sidewalks and a lack of maintenance were also identified as a significant barrier, particularly in outside programming where some felt that the assumption is that a wheelchair, and its user, are inherently indestructible, i.e., gravel sidewalks in many city parks. Only two rinks were described by participants as accessible down to ice level, for example, and supporters and disabled participants also mentioned concern when it comes to a heavy reliance on climbing in newer playground designs and how close these playgrounds are to busy roads. These issues are only heightened when it comes to access to high traffic programming like swimming.

Lastly, access needs were reflected in many of the discussions in terms of barriers to entry and exit. If a program requires the purchase of equipment, or it turns out that it's not a good fit, there was concern among many participants about navigating the social and procedural structures when exiting. This tension between a want to participate and a want to know that participants can safely exit is an area that requires further development. As many disabled participants share, it's difficult to plan — even if transport and cost barriers are alleviated — for a person's worst symptom day. The takeaway here is that planning for access shouldn't, in the eyes of the focus groups, envision a perfect scenario. Instead, the messiness of access needs to be acknowledged and trained for.

Which brings us to availability. Focus group participants reiterated throughout the sessions that they needed more time in order to assess which programs they would want to attend, and which ones are possible to integrate into their lives. The lack of choice, and the time crunch created in some areas of programming, leads to disabled participants choosing not to engage. Another aspect of this lack of



engagement appears to come from a fear of what will and will not be accessible. Participants from all three facets of this project routinely asked for more options to try programming before they commit, such as a program dedicated to sampling different City of Regina options so that, the next time registration opens, people have knowledge of which programs will and won't work for them. Availability being heavily focused during the workday, particularly close to the end of the workday, was of particular concern to parents/guardians. Recreation and leisure workers expressed frustration at the inability for their organizations to book facilities within times that would work in order to accommodate transportation and/or medical needs. Many participants in these programs have a hard deadline on when they need to be home in order to maintain their quality of life. These booking issues appear to be particularly evident when it comes to swimming pool and track availability — two programs with high levels of engagement and interest within those who attended the focus groups

While we will touch on this further in the programming section, availability struck a chord as a topic of discussion for those who see leisure as being outside of the traditional bounds of physical activity. There were multiple inquiries about what hybrid or digital programming can look like for those with disabilities, even after a return to in-person programming is deemed appropriate. Availability is also important to highlight when it comes to support staff that come from outside of the City of Regina's framework, such as ASL interpreters.

## **Safety**

An integral part of access in disabled communities is safety, particularly when it comes to physical and sensory safety. Multiple participants shared that a consideration for an area to retreat and re-regulate that allows for re-entry into programming would be a significant improvement on current offerings and lead to more engagement. The aforementioned lack of clarity on accessibility was identified as a key marker for safety by many of the focus group participants.

Support system members shared that the lack of places to lock belongings in the family changing rooms in City of Regina facilities led to some safety concerns, particularly when it came to participants who may need the enclosed space offered by these areas. Sidewalk cleaning, particularly when it comes to snow clearing, was a key safety concern as well. There was an interest in additional signage and flotation devices at City of Regina facilities. Much of the safety concerns offered during the focus group process were tied to transport and training, our next two areas of exploration. Visual alarms for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing were also brought forward repeatedly as a want in programming spaces, alongside more training in terms of program delivery that ensures that Deaf and Hard of Hearing members of the community are aware of all rules and procedures in shared space. An over reliance on auditory information was identified as a key issue throughout the focus groups when it comes to physical space.

## **Transport**

The majority of discussion around transport centred on Paratransit. The overwhelming response from those who use the service acknowledged the barriers presented in administering the program but,





broadly speaking, identified its current resources and implementation as not fit for purpose, including one person who labeled the system “abhorrent”. Most users who shared their experience highlighted the length of the “window,” the time before and after the expected pickup, as a major barrier when it comes to participating in leisure programming. This was expressed in a number of ways: firstly, it makes planning exceedingly difficult and does not allow for any instinctual or time sensitive decisions. Second, the length of the time increases anxiety levels for those using paratransit and reduces the motivation and enjoyment levels people feel when working to attend these programs. Some participants shared as long as a two-hour transit process in order to attend an hour program. Once they added on their access need, that reflected approximately 45 minutes of active participation.

There were also safety issues identified. The window means that program participants face the risk of being left outside or missing a program when the space is not open beforehand. The timing afterwards is also an area of concern that was identified for program development. Leisure sector workers shared that some programming times are changed because Paratransit may be able to deliver their participants to a location, but are unable to pick them up, particularly on weekday evenings.

In terms of scheduling and program delivery, the key ask from participants was more buses at more times, with the option to book on short notice. Participants shared that there is a lack of consistency when it comes to drop offs, pickup locations, and procedures, and that this repeatedly leads to safety risks and/or missed buses. These barriers appear to mean that disabled program participants are having to choose programming based on transit options rather than the opposite. It was repeatedly expressed that programming decisions by the City of Regina need to take into account when other programs are happening. For example, if there is a heavy usage rate for events on a Wednesday evening, not to schedule dedicated programming for disabled people during that period.

Focus group members repeatedly identified space concerns on the bus, including the inability to bring additional equipment that could be needed for a program. It’s important to note that these concerns were not just related to Paratransit buses, but also the wider transit system. It is unclear to participants, and the facilitators, how many accessible cab licenses are currently in use, and the aforementioned access barriers surrounding snow clearing also affect the standard bus system. Beyond the ask for additional resources to be dedicated to Paratransit, a reform of the current procedure was also suggested. Specifically, that a phone call to the user be placed prior to a bus driver leaving in order to minimize the chances that a user is left without transit or placed in an unsafe position. Focus group participants were quick to acknowledge the challenges that come with delivering a system such as Paratransit, but that their frustrations have been longstanding.

Outside of the public transit system, participants voiced a want to know more about parking programs and parking accessibility. This links back into the communication barriers described earlier, with the patchwork of parking programs at play in this country, it was evident to the facilitators that this is an unclear area of knowledge for members of the community. Free fare transit was a common topic of discussion as well, which leads us to our next area of debrief: cost



## **Cost**

Much of the conversation around cost during the focus group process was focused on just how much of a sacrifice is made by participants in order to attend any kind of programming that has a cost. Multiple participants shared that they, or those they support, are choosing between food, housing and leisure, and that they can only pick two with any regularity. When we are speaking about the sheer amount of disabled people who live in poverty, we are not just speaking about income as it appears on government documents. The hidden costs of disability add up, and it was abundantly clear to the facilitators that this was especially true within Regina.

Many participants asked if it would be possible to lower the barrier of entry for the affordable access program, provide Pay What You Can options, and/or provide a disability membership option that acknowledges that while some in our community may make more than the minimum allowed by the current offerings, that that "surplus" is quickly eaten up by disability-related expenses. There also appears to be a need for additional clarity on what is and is not covered by the Affordable Access Program.

One additional area of cost that was identified by those who administrate leisure programs, is that many of the spaces available for programming are owned and operated by Wascana Rehabilitation Centre and the local school districts. While the rehabilitation facility is offered at no or reduced cost, schools often have high costs attached. This topic highlights, once again, the role COR appears to have within the public, private, non-profit, and educational sectors and that members of the public would like to see more options for funding and collaboration. This includes support for finding and funding a care worker, should a participant find that to be an access need. In addition, one area of concern when it comes to costs associated with programs is the perceived punishment that not attending entails. In other words, multiple participants shared that they will not try to attend a program with cost attached because they cannot have any certainty that they will be able to attend. With most private sector options being prohibitively expensive, it appears that cost and its relationship to community programming requires more exploration and thought.

## **Program Suggestions**

Before a list of possible programming options is shared, it is vital for the City of Regina to understand that there is a need and want for both integrated and specialized programs. That is, there was a consensus within the focus groups that there is a need for programs that prioritize disabled and non-disabled participation at the same time, as well as opportunities for disabled people and their support systems to build connections, relationships, and shared skills within a space that mandates a preference to their way of being in the world. Disabled people shared that they value leisure programs not just for the physical aspect, but also for the social nourishment that comes from participating with people of shared interests and experiences. Support system members expressed that they feel isolated without the support of those in similar situations, particularly when those they support are young children.



The main message from disabled people about program options is to offer what people want rather than what facilitators and community organizations assume they want. This is another example of disability-led leadership, even when the staff supervising City of Regina program decisions may or may not identify with disability.

Programming options suggested:

- Golfing
- Boccia
- Yoga
- Skiing
- Indoor minigolf
- Day-trip coordination outside of the city: such as skiing
- Additional reading programs
- Arts collaborations that are for more than keeping people busy
- Mix between fine and gross motor activities
- Drop in dance
- Drop in improv
- Paint nights
- Accessible cooking (previous program at māmawêyatitân centre was listed as a good example)
- More sports opportunities that partner with local organizations like Regina Minor football and hockey
- Skating
- More opportunities for people to love and care for their bodies and each other.
- Adaptive Kayak and Canoe
- Soccer — more opportunities to declare disabilities as part of traditional sport
- Walking and wheeling trails
- Accessible viewing at festivals mandated by the City of Regina
- Gyms with accessible equipment and facilitation
- Mental health activities
- More options at the field house for biking in the winter months
- Rowing
- Leisure activities like touring the Regina Flower Gardens
- Wakeboarding and waterskiing — rethinking limitations on Wascana when it comes to accessible programs
- Open mic nights
- Tai Chi
- At home workouts with items like bands

One key consideration brought forward in relation to programming suggestions was how decisions should follow a lifelong quality of life model. Many programs for those with disabilities, including funding options for disabled children, dwindle to almost nothing once you are an adult. One key point



brought forward is that programs need to be able to scale with both interests and age. In the eyes of the participants, disabled experiences cannot be seen as a monolith and, while the list provided is a strong starting point, the information gathered from the upcoming survey will broaden the types of programs suggested by the community.

One of the main programming suggestions not reflected in the above list is an increase of adapted equipment and, crucially, staff trained in how to use it. Much like participants highlighted that leisure activities are inseparable from medical systems like physio and occupational therapy, they also highlighted that regular fitness for the general public is usually centred in for-profit gyms that have minimal, if any accessible equipment. FES bikes, hand bikes, and machines that allow easy transfer for wheelchair users were all among the suggestions given during the focus group process. It was repeatedly highlighted by participants that part of the issue when it comes to regular physical fitness is that not only have many not been provided access to equipment, but they also did not gain education in how to use the equipment when their peers were learning.

Lastly, one of the key questions posed throughout this process, and in particular when it came to program delivery was: what could a standardized program for access support look like? A key facet of creating that level of access is training. This is an obvious area for more development and exploration.

## Training

Throughout the focus group process two main areas of training emerged: the practical — how to transfer a pool user, for example — as well as the behavioral training, I.E how to best communicate when it comes to access need and how to alleviate barriers through active listening and acknowledgement. Both appear to be of roughly equal importance for those who participated in the focus groups

When it comes to physical or practical training, participants shared that they want staff who facilitate physically intensive programs to have TLR (transfer, lifting, repositioning) training and, in some cases, exercise therapist designations (where appropriate). Practical training that was also discussed was UDL — Universal Design for Learning — and how those principles could be incorporated into every City of Regina offering. Another example of hands-on training was for program facilitators and support staff to be trained in how to prepare participants to board the bus in order to lessen the barriers once a program session is completed. Within the training suggested, much of the focus for support systems was in being able to step away and let the person they are supporting have an experience without them hovering behind.

Some examples of training that were discussed in terms of behavioural or social expectations included training staff around when it is appropriate to touch a person's wheelchair, as well as training related to when a person can and should be allowed to exit an experience without having to justify their need to leave. Within that experience, a couple of participants noted that staff need training to support their own learning when situations do occur rather than a beginning of employment training



that does not provide continual check-ins. One example of a conflict of this type that was given was a scenario where competing access needs render traditional training difficult to apply. This want for additional and continual training links to aspects of accountability that were brought forward through the process.

Training was also discussed in terms of community competency. That is, the baseline understanding that citizens accessing Regina leisure facilities and venues have when it comes to inclusion and accessibility. Some suggestions included posters advertising Deaf and disability culture, signage that highlights accessibility for service animals, and interactive activities that do not require a specific version of interaction. Much of the issue with access and inclusion training throughout the system was identified by focus group participants as stemming from fear. Fear from staff that they feel ill-prepared to support disabled participants and fear from participants that their needs will be go unmet or, worse, actively interfered with. There was also a heavy focus on how disabled workers could be given opportunities to have paid positions in the areas of program accessibility and delivery.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is important to note that the wealth of lived experience shared throughout this process is a testament to the sense of connectedness to each other that has been cultivated within the disability community in Regina. Listen to Dis' views this report as an important movement forward when it comes to leisure and recreation access within the city and looks forward to the next steps of the process that will further engage those who have chosen to give their time thus far.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "john loeppky". The signature is written in a cursive, lowercase style.

John Loeppky, Listen to Dis' Community Arts Organization Inc.