



Richmond Centre for Disability

ACCESS & AWARENESS FORUM

June 3rd, 2010, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. Richmond City Hall



INFORMATION SHEET

Background

In 2008 Rick Hansen, after conclusion of his Man in Motion World Tour on June 1 the previous year, requested to establish a National Access Awareness Week to promote better community access for people with disabilities. For the first ten years, a national committee coordinated planning for the Week in communities all over Canada. Some provinces afterward continued to celebrate the annual awareness week, and for some it evolved into an annual Disability Awareness Week.

The idea of the National Access Awareness Week is to bring together, in a spirit of partnership, people with disabilities, voluntary organizations, service providers, businesses and governments to affect meaningful changes in the daily living of people with disabilities.

The main focus is on the issues of Education, Transportation, Housing, Employment, and Recreation. National Access Awareness Week is intended to raise public awareness of the barriers, to encourage communities to assess the level of accessibility in their jurisdiction, and to plan for the removal of barriers. "Access" means more than just removing physical barriers; it means changes in attitudes and support that allows all people with visible or invisible disabilities to be part of community life.

Even before 1988, when the Rick Hansen - Man in Motion Tour generated the creation of this great week, the Richmond Centre for Disability (RCD) was dedicated, as they are today, to promote equal opportunity, independence and access for all people to participate in all aspects of community life. The vision is to build a user-friendly community for everyone.

It has been a long and committed initiative of the RCD Board to bring awareness to a variety of topics related to Accessibility, with a duty to review, advise and make comment and recommendations on Federal and Provincial Legislation and Municipal By-Laws of the City of Richmond in the interest of people with disabilities in our community.

RCD Mission Statement – The mission of RCD is to empower people with disabilities to participate in the community to the level of their desires and abilities by providing information, resources, support and by increasing community awareness and accessibility.

Their goals are to encourage and facilitate accessibility on behalf of all members of the community by:

1. Improving access to education, transportation, housing, employment and recreation, which are the qualities of a five star community;
2. Promoting public awareness;
3. Recognizing the importance of civic and government participation;
4. Encouraging cooperation among all services and interest groups to ensure a better community for everyone;
5. Improving communication among all levels of government and service agencies to make recommendations regarding policy and legislation

Celebrating National Access Awareness Week – May 30 to June 5, 2010

The National Access Awareness Week is a week for all of us to celebrate the achievements by and for people with disabilities and to think about how we can make every part of our communities more accessible to everyone. The tradition is to devote the last week in May to promoting better access for people with disabilities, and in 2010 it is from May 30 to June 5.

In order to recognize and celebrate the National Access Awareness Week, the RCD is hosting an **“Access & Awareness Forum” on June 3, 2010 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Richmond City Hall Council Chamber**. The purpose of the Forum is to showcase all we have done together and will do in the future to increase inclusion, accessibility and full participation. It is also a perfect opportunity to reflect on current accessibility issues and focus on what we can all do to ensure an inclusive and barrier-free community.

The National Access Awareness Week promotes access for people with all disabilities, who encounter barriers that prevent them from participating in day-to-day activities. Disability impacts many British Columbian and the number of people with disabilities is increasing. Today, 16 per cent of BC’s population has a disability and this number will grow as the population ages.

1. Better accessibility is good for BC's economy; people with disabilities have an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion annually across Canada.
2. Better accessibility will also help build a better society. BC is a diverse province, where people have diverse abilities. An accessible province will allow everyone to participate.
3. Regardless of ability, accessibility is good for everyone – from the athlete hauling a hockey bag to an arena, to the delivery person trying to find their destination on a sign, to a mom struggling to get her stroller on a bus. By making an accessible BC, we all benefit.