

MEASURE UP QUESNEL STRATEGIC PLAN



MAY 2008



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	8
Quesnel Measures Up	8
What is a Disability?	9
What is Accessibility and Inclusion?	9
Why Do We Need This?	10
What are the Strengths and Challenges?	11
What is the First Step?	11
Section 1	
Living in the Community	14
Housing	15
Business	17
Community Safety	18
Awareness	19
Government and Support Services	20
Section 2	
Getting Around in the Community	22
Transportation	23
Parking	26
Sidewalks	27
Section 3	
Working in the Community	29
Education	30
Employment	31
Childcare	32

TABLE OF CONTENTS con't.**Section 4**

Playing in the Community	34
Sports and Recreation	35
Arts and Culture	37
Green Spaces	38
Trails	38
Library	39
Museum and Visitors Centre	39

Section 5

Visiting the Community	41
Tourism	42
Accommodation	43
What Comes Next?	44
Conclusion	44

Appendix 1

Community Consultation Process	45
--------------------------------------	----

Appendix 2

Useful Resources	47
------------------------	----

Appendix 3

Terms of Reference	49
--------------------------	----

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus and the purpose of this Strategic Plan are to provide a starting off point for improving accessibility and inclusion in the community. With the financial support from 2010 Legacies Now and assistance and direction from Measure Up The North, the Measure Up Quesnel Committee has developed this Strategic Plan from the input received from the community stakeholders. Comments, suggestions, ideas, and concerns were received from seniors, people with various disabilities, organisations providing services, health care providers, management, school district staff, parents, young adults, family members, and representatives of the city. This is a community plan.

The vision of the Measure Up Quesnel Committee is to work towards Quesnel being known as

“The most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north”.

With the work already done to support inclusion and accessibility, the community already has a strong base on which to build. Many comments were made in appreciation of what is in place and the work already done to give citizens a quality of life that all can be proud of. The plans for implementing strategies will build on the strengths in the community.

Canada’s population is ageing. With ageing and retirement comes more time and opportunity for inclusion in the community. Age also comes with increasing challenges in every day life, which affects the quality of life for many seniors. Quesnel has so much to offer seniors that many have chosen to retire here, purchase a home, frequent local businesses, offer volunteer work, and contribute in a huge way to the community. It is an opportune time to explore, develop, and plan for the future of the community by improving accessibility for senior residents and visitors.

There are 300,000 people in this province living with disabilities. Many of those live in Quesnel. Whatever the disability, day to day life is not easy and, sometimes, can be a major challenge for people with disabilities. By improving accessibility and inclusion, the whole community gains from the life experiences and the contributions made by a significant group of residents.

This Strategic Plan encourages every citizen to look at things through the “disability lens”. What decision would be best for me if I was blind, or in a wheelchair, or unable to use stairs? With this in mind every segment of the community is responsible for striving towards the vision. Each section in the plan considers different areas of the community but all are interconnected and closely linked. They look at living in the community, moving around in the community, working in the community, playing in the community, and visiting the community. For ease of identifying challenges, each section is separated into relevant subjects. There are major goals and there are suggested strategies to strive towards those goals. The Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee will identify the priorities, consult appropriate community members in developing action, and offer guidance and support as needed. Action plans will be *relevant, viable, effective, and financially affordable*.

The Measure Up Quesnel Committee has three recommendations to make to City Council.

Recommendation #1

The City of Quesnel recognizes and supports the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee in its efforts to reach the vision of making Quesnel the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

Recommendation #2

The Strategic Plan developed by the Measure Up Quesnel Committee be included in the Official Community Plan of Quesnel.

Recommendation #3

The City of Quesnel will revise its vision and mission statements to include statements on accessibility, inclusion, and developing an age-friendly and disability-friendly community.

With joint responsibility for the Quesnel and District Arts and Recreation Centre and the Twin Arenas and sole responsibility for the library, the Cariboo Regional District also provides leadership in the community. The Measure Up Quesnel Committee makes these three recommendations to the Cariboo Regional District.

Recommendation #1

The Cariboo Regional District recognizes and supports the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee in its efforts to reach the vision of making Quesnel the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

Recommendation #2

The Strategic Plan developed by the Measure Up Quesnel Committee be included in the Quesnel Fringe Official Community Plan.

Recommendation #3

The Cariboo Regional District will revise its vision and mission statements to include statements on accessibility, inclusion, and developing an age-friendly and disability-friendly community.

In supporting these recommendations, both the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District will demonstrate support for the vision, leadership to the community in accessibility and inclusion, and a commitment to see through the “disability lens” in future decisions and plans.

Based on the input received during the community consultation, the following major goals were developed.

Section 1 Living in the Community

- 1 Increase the accessible housing inventory in private single family dwellings, multi-family units, and rental units in the community.
- 2 To support local business expand opportunities by improving accessibility and by understanding the needs of people with disabilities and senior customers or clients.
- 3 To ensure that all citizens and all visitors to Quesnel feel safe and supported in emergency situations.
- 4 Increase the understanding and knowledge of all citizens of Quesnel on the varied needs of people with disabilities.
- 5 Increase awareness of individual responsibility to improve accessibility and inclusion.
- 6 Communicate the scope of services available in the community that support those persons living with a disability and seniors.

Section 2 Getting Around in the Community

- 1 Increase use of the transit system with improved service to people with a disability, seniors, and the general public.
- 2 To reduce the number of unmet requests for Handy Dart service.
- 3 To have optional transportation for wheelchair users on evenings and weekends.
- 4 To increase the number of disabled parking spaces meeting at least the minimum standards in size, location, and access.
- 5 That all sidewalks will meet basic standards required by disabled residents.

Section 3 Working in the Community

- 1 Increase local educational opportunities for people with disabilities.
- 2 Increase employment for people with disabilities by 2010.
- 3 Increase the number of childcare spaces available for children with disabilities.

Section 4 Playing in the Community

- 1 To ensure that all sports, recreation, arts, and culture facilities and programs are easily accessible and are inclusive of seniors and people with disabilities.

Section 5 Visiting the Community

- 1 To attract seniors and people with disabilities to the community by promoting Quesnel as the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

Meeting these goals will move the city and the region closer to the disability-friendly and senior-friendly community envisioned for the future. It is the belief of the Measure Up Quesnel Committee that, in working on the strategies, different sectors of the community may take the lead. However, it will take the effort and support of the whole community to fulfil the vision.

INTRODUCTION

By its Mission Statement: *“The City of Quesnel will provide its residents with outstanding quality of life in a vibrant, prosperous, diversified community, achieved through a process of public consultation and trust”*, City leadership recognises the ongoing responsibility to assess and improve the quality of life for all residents. Quesnel has the potential to become known as

THE MOST DISABILITY-FRIENDLY AND SENIOR-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH

Residents of Quesnel have a reputation for being a caring community and demonstrate this in so many ways. When a crisis occurs the community circles the wagons, providing financial and emotional support. Volunteers work tirelessly in support of local charities and organisations. Fund raising events, which benefit the community, are well supported by residents and by local businesses.

Quesnel has many attractions that make this a great place to live and to visit. From the green spaces and trails, to the seasonal sports opportunities, to the many arts and cultural activities, and the support services already in place, this is a community which can become “the place to be” for seniors and for those living with disabilities.

QUESNEL MEASURES UP

Since the successful bid for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in 2000, many initiatives have been launched which will leave lasting and sustainable legacies for all British Columbians. 2010 Legacies Now is a non profit society committed to building stronger communities where people can easily live, work, play, and visit.

Measuring Up is one of the programs offered by 2010 Legacies Now, designed to improve accessibility and inclusion in local communities. By supporting and funding projects that improve the quality of life for those living with a disability and seniors throughout the province, British Columbia has the potential to become the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly province in Canada.

Measure Up The North is a partnership between the North Central Municipal Association, the BC Paraplegic Association, 2010 Legacies Now, and Healthy Communities and provides leadership, vision, and support to northern municipalities and regional districts. All communities in the north have the opportunity, through MUTN, to develop local initiatives, creating the best system of support for people of all ages with disabilities and special needs, for seniors, and for all community residents.

Through local partnerships on the Accessibility Committee already in place, Quesnel received funding from 2010 Legacies Now and has become one of the communities in northern BC committed to improving accessibility and inclusion. The Measure Up Quesnel Committee has embraced the vision, and the challenge, of being the most disability-friendly and most senior-friendly community in northern BC.

The Measure Up Quesnel committee chose to use part of the funding received to develop a Strategic Plan as a step towards reaching the vision. The committee membership provides wide representation of the community and includes many stakeholders. The committee has met regularly to develop goals and strategies for this Strategic Plan, following extensive consultation with the community.

In addition to the Measure Up Quesnel Committee, recognition goes to those community members who provided support and guidance to the Measure Up Co-ordinator, Liz Neave, in pulling this together. Diane Rogers, City of Quesnel Recreation Manager, and Kurt Pedersen, Executive Director of the Quesnel and District Child Development Centre, have spent many hours meeting, reading, and editing. Mary Sjostrom, City of Quesnel Councillor, has provided the contact with Measure Up the North and the North Central Municipal Association. Laurie Ringaert, Project Director for Measure Up the North, provided her expertise on the built environment and much encouragement throughout the project.

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to provide a place to start, with a “living document” which will guide the community towards the vision of being age friendly and disability friendly. As action takes place on the strategies and as goals are met, ongoing input and assessments will direct the development of new goals and strategies.

WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

There is a very wide variety of definitions of disability. Many people would not consider themselves “disabled” but can experience difficulties in some areas of daily life. Many with a disability see themselves as “differently abled” rather than “disabled”. Generally a disability is impairment affecting the ability to hear, see, speak, move around, learn, or cope with daily activities. Disabilities may be visible, invisible, short-term, long-term, or permanent and can be from a wide variety of causes.

The severity of the disability and the affect it can have on a person’s life is as individual as the personal characteristics all people have. A person with a disability is a person with individual abilities, hopes and dreams, challenges and successes with the right to expect the same dignity and respect offered to all people. By reaching out to people with a disability and including them in the community, their abilities will add an improved quality of life for all citizens of Quesnel.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION?

The majority of people have faced barriers to an activity at some point in their life. This winter we have coped with a considerable challenge with snow. A barrier to participating in a community activity may have been the large snow pile at the end of the driveway. To be included in the community activity the barrier of snow has to be removed one shovel at a time. There are many examples like this in the daily life of all people. For those coping with a disability, the barriers to inclusion and involvement in the community can be enormous, overwhelming, and not as easily resolved as a snow pile.

Accessibility is about identifying and removing the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in the opportunities and activities the community has to offer. Inclusion can be measured by the level to which people with disabilities feel they are full participating members of the community and have the opportunity to contribute to the fabric of Quesnel.

To be known as a disability-friendly and senior-friendly community requires all residents, businesses, and community leaders to commit to considering the accessibility and inclusion needs in all aspects of the community. To see everything through a “disability lens” will improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Quesnel already demonstrates a level of awareness of the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. The Recreation Centre, an accessible building, has been equipped with a lift system to ensure access to the pool for all people. City Hall has been designed with consideration for accessibility. School District #28 provides inclusive education for children with special educational needs. A new fully accessible assisted living complex has been constructed. A wide range of services is available to support the needs of people with disabilities of all ages. The base is in place for the vision to be realised.

“Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow man.” -Ghandi

WHY DO WE NEED THIS?

In the process of consulting the community, many strengths and challenges were identified. A wide range of stakeholders was given the opportunity to provide input. The most important source of information was seniors and those with disabilities. Hearing first-hand of the challenges faced every day by many of our citizens was an enlightening and humbling experience. For the sight impaired, for the hearing impaired, for those using wheelchairs, for many facing medical challenges affecting mobility, for those with developmental challenges, the ability to perform daily activities and function in the community can be a struggle.

In addition to the challenges which all people meet each day, a disability can lead to additional challenges. Getting around in the community is not as easy as just jumping into the car. Going to a movie or a restaurant has to be planned ahead. Finding employment may be a monumental task. Shopping can be a huge challenge in time and energy. Visiting friends may be impossible if the house has steps at the door. Some of the challenges faced daily become too much to cope with resulting in isolation, which can lead to discouragement or depression. A caring community will reach out by seeing things through the “disability lens” and making the changes needed to improve accessibility and inclusion in the community.

Canada has an aging population. Fifty years ago 1 in 14 Canadians was over the age of 65. In 2006, statistics show that 1 in 7 was over 65. With aging baby boomers accounting for almost one third of 32 million Canadians, that ratio is expected to change dramatically over the next 20 years. Improved access to health care results in an increased life expectancy. Seniors are more aware of the need to remain active and involved into retirement in order to maintain health and fitness as long as possible. Of approximately 4.2 million seniors in Canada, 40% over the age of 65 and 53% over the age of 75 identified themselves as having a disability. Figures are similar for British Columbia.

With the growing number of seniors in British Columbia, there will be an increasing demand for accessible housing, businesses, city services, infrastructure, leisure and recreational activities, and tourism. 2010 legacies Now offers an ideal opportunity, through the Measure Up Quesnel project, to assess what is needed in Quesnel to meet the demands for accessibility over the next 20 years.

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES?

In each of the five sections in the Strategic Plan, the community's strengths and challenges are identified. The Measure Up Quesnel Committee has set the goals in each section and developed specific action strategies. Although this Strategic Plan considers the input in separate sections, they are all closely linked and interdependent. Living in the community is dependent on getting around easily, on finding employment, on adequate housing, on a supportive education system, on access to health care, and on all the other aspects of community life. For the purpose of this Plan they have been considered in separate sections. Despite their interrelationship the goals and the strategies have been organized in different sections.

The greatest strength this community has is its people. All members of the community contribute in some way to this strength. By creating an age-friendly and disability-friendly community, the benefits will be experienced by every resident, whatever their age or ability.

WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP?

From the information received during the community consultation, the Measure Up Quesnel committee has developed goals. Strategies have been identified to work towards the goals. Some of the strategies are simple solutions, which can be easily implemented. Some will take time and planning to reach resolution. Others will be long-term strategies, which will be worked on one step at a time.

The responsibility for continued work on planning and implementing the strategies will be with Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee, mandated to plan, develop partnerships, and co-ordinate the implementation of strategies to improve accessibility and inclusion. With opportunity for residents of the community to provide ongoing input through the city web site and awareness opportunities, the goals and strategies will remain relevant to the current needs of the community.

The most important first step is for the whole community to embrace the vision. The vision will not be reached next month or even next year. However, it can be reached over time and, in the process, the quality of life for all residents in Quesnel will be improved.

With the commitment made by City Council to the Measure Up Quesnel initiative, the leadership of the community has taken the first step towards the vision. By embracing the vision of an age-friendly and disability-friendly community, City Council will add to the fabric of the community, providing ongoing leadership in accessibility and inclusion. The primary goal of this initiative is to improve accessibility and inclusion in Quesnel. The vision is to make Quesnel “the most age-friendly and disability-friendly community in the north” A revision of the current vision and mission statements of the City of Quesnel would change the focus of the city to see the community through the “disability lens”. It will provide a new direction for future decisions and plans, which, over time, will lead the community towards being disability and age friendly.

As part of the Strategic Plan presented in this document, the Measure Up Quesnel Committee makes the following three recommendations to City Council.

Recommendation #1

The City of Quesnel recognizes and supports the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee in its efforts to reach the vision of making Quesnel the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

Recommendation #2

The Strategic Plan developed by the Measure Up Quesnel committee be included in the Official Community Plan of Quesnel.

Recommendation #3

The City of Quesnel will revise its vision and mission statements to include statements on accessibility, inclusion, and developing an age-friendly and disability-friendly community.

In recognition of the responsibility of the Cariboo Regional District for the library and joint responsibility for the Quesnel and District Arts and Recreation Centre and the Twin Arenas, The Measure Up Quesnel Committee makes the following three recommendations to the Cariboo Regional District.

Recommendation #1

The Cariboo Regional District recognizes and supports the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee in its efforts to reach the vision of making Quesnel the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

Recommendation #2

The Strategic Plan developed by the Measure Up Quesnel committee be included in the Quesnel Fringe Official Community Plan.

Recommendation #3

The Cariboo Regional District will revise its vision and mission statements to include statements on accessibility, inclusion, and developing an age-friendly and disability-friendly community.

The Strategic Plan has been developed with goals identified and with strategies developed to work towards the goals and the vision. The word "community" means united in a common purpose. The Measure Up Quesnel committee believes the vision of creating the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north is a common purpose for this community of Quesnel.

SECTION 1

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY



HOUSING

BUSINESS AWARENESS

GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Quesnel is a good place to live. It has many assets, which would attract seniors and people with a disability. Housing continues to be more affordable. There are many activities for all ages and abilities in every season. Quesnel has many organizations providing support when needed. The volunteer sector is strong and active in the community. The business community works hard to improve Quesnel and provide local access to all that residents need. People feel safe and secure in their own homes and around the community.

Although the quality of life for seniors and people with disabilities is generally good, there are some areas that can be improved.

“We chose to retire to Quesnel.
It has so much to offer seniors.”

HOUSING

The ability to live in the community and enjoy all it has to offer is dependent on adequate housing. This is the biggest challenge facing people with a disability and the aging population, as accessibility becomes more of an issue.

Most of the input received around housing related to the lack of affordable accessible units, both private and rental. If the goal of being known as the age-friendly and disability-friendly community in the north is to be realised, there must be an emphasis on providing more accessible housing in the community. Awareness of the needs of seniors and people with disabilities will result in a change of focus for future development.

Private home building plans should include the concept of “visitable housing”. Homes which have a ground level no step entrance, a wider door, and a wheelchair accessible washroom on that floor will never be a barrier to anyone who has difficulty with stairs. An ageing population will increase the demand for visitable homes and thus increase the market value of houses built to be accessible. Anyone who has faced changed abilities from health issues, injury, or ageing knows of the challenges in retrofitting a home to make it accessible. A much wiser choice is to build it to be accessible in the first place.

Currently there is a demand for accessible rental units in the community. Not all multi-family housing developments are wheelchair accessible. One of the newer developments has two units designed for the use of people in wheelchairs. The new assisted living complex is an accessible purpose built development to meet the demands of a particular population.

In considering the need for more accessible housing in the community, the City is in a position to influence future developments to meet the increasing demands in the years to come. This is an ideal opportunity to review policies and plans on city development and on the requirements of development permits.

“I’m paraplegic, have hardly any money. This is a bad situation but I have no choice. I need to move but where?”

GOAL:

Increase the accessible housing inventory in private single family dwellings, multi-family units, and rental units in the community.

STRATEGIES:

1. Review current guidelines for development permits to include accessibility requirement for new multi-family developments.
2. Recommend the development of standards that require 10% of units, or at least one unit, be built wheelchair friendly and accessible.
3. Consider the inclusion of a requirement for wheelchair access in upgrade permits to existing buildings.
4. Explore and distribute information on financial incentives for development of low cost accessible housing.
5. Consider a tax incentive for rental owners to retrofit units for use by people with disabilities.
6. Include the City Planner as a liaison with the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee.
7. Encourage the construction of purpose built housing which is age and disabled friendly.
8. Develop awareness with home construction companies on the need and advantage of visitable housing construction.
9. Explore the possibility of providing training for local volunteers, or semi-volunteers, on ramp construction and other projects to improve access to homes for seniors and people with disabilities at low cost.
10. Develop and host a list of volunteers willing to be trained, assist with simple renovations, and to provide training.
11. Explore feasibility of making all senior housing complexes elevator wheelchair accessible.

“Steps are a mountain to me. All my friends have steps into their homes. I cannot visit them.”

“Businesses are very helpful if you tell them what you need. We need to take responsibility to let them know.”

BUSINESS

There is a strong case for improving access to business in the community. The ageing baby boomers represent an increasing proportion of the population. Added to the seniors already in the system, they present a big group with spending power. Canadian statistics show that people with disabilities represent around \$25 billion in annual spending power. While there is overlap in these two groups, the combined spending power, even on a local basis, provides a great opportunity for the local economy. If Quesnel can advertise the community as being disabled-friendly and senior-friendly, local business will have the opportunity to benefit from that spending power.

With many of the local businesses housed in older buildings, it may appear to be a daunting and expensive task to provide accessibility. However, if renovations and updates to the building are being considered, seeing things through the “disability lens” will give a different perspective and may provide innovative and cost effective solutions.

The input received from the community is very positive about local businesses. The majority of people with disabilities are treated with respect in the business community. The strategies recommended have come from the disabled and provide some “easy do” suggestions to help businesses become even more disabled friendly.

The Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee has developed strategies to support the local business community, in all parts of the city, to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by the vision of Measure Up Quesnel

“My business is not accessible. It is an older building and would be very expensive to provide a ramp and a better door. Find me some funding!”

GOAL:

To support local business expand opportunities by improving accessibility and by understanding the needs of people with disabilities and senior customers or clients.

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore funding opportunities to improve business accessibility.
2. Explore financial incentives for businesses to improve accessibility through the permit process for building upgrade.

3. Develop an ongoing dialogue between the Chamber of Commerce, business improvement areas, other business groups, and Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee to improve business accessibility in the community.
4. Plan awareness/information presentations to support businesses to become disability-friendly.
5. Develop criteria for a registry of disability-friendly businesses.
6. Encourage businesses to keep floors and aisles clear.
7. Encourage the development of additional accessible office space.
8. Explore opportunity to recognise a local senior-friendly and disability-friendly business with an annual award.
9. Conduct an assessment of the location of the button for automatic door openers in all buildings and businesses.
10. Develop a list of identified minor accessibility issues which can be communicated to businesses and be easily resolved.

“It’s hard to steer my chair around clutter on the floors of stores.”

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Since seniors and people with a disability can feel more vulnerable than other residents can, it is important to address safety concerns that may be unique to them. Safety was not identified as a major concern but was mentioned by several people with disabilities.

Every citizen has the right to feel safe and secure as they move around the community. Many seniors and people with disabilities rely on public transit to provide access to activities. With the lack of evening public transportation, safety is a concern for anyone wishing to attend an evening event, recreational activity, or employment. Some are not able to walk any distance and others are not comfortable walking at night.

Seniors and persons with disabilities can become isolated very quickly. When days get shorter leaving the home becomes more difficult. Snow and ice can prevent a wheelchair user from getting out for days on end. Inaccessible housing prevents opportunities to visit friends and family. In an emergency situation, such as fire or injury, most people can access support immediately from neighbours. For those who are isolated from their neighbours this is not always an easy option. As a community everyone needs to be aware of those in our neighbourhood who need extra attention, especially in an emergency situation.

GOAL:

To ensure that all citizens and all visitors to Quesnel feel safe and supported in emergency situations.

STRATEGIES:

1. Discuss the safety concerns of pedestrians with Community Policing and develop plan to address the identified concerns.
2. Identify public buildings which do not have visual alarms for emergency situations.
- 3.. Provide additional opportunities to increase awareness for emergency and disaster personnel of the particular needs of those in the community who have a disability.
4. Develop a registry people with a disability to register their home address.
5. Ensure the needs of people with disabilities are included in the emergency preparedness planning.

“I am deaf. I do not hear alarm bells. Deaf people need to know what is happening. We need patience in emergencies. “

AWARENESS

A person with a disability would like to be seen as a person with different abilities, not as a disabled person. Words such as “respectful”, “kind”, “helpful” were used frequently to describe Quesnel citizens, people with disabilities did ask for increased awareness and understanding of their needs. Not all disabilities are visible or obvious to everyone.

Someone with a hearing impairment needs patience in communication. Not all people with sight impairment use a white cane. People in wheelchairs are not deaf. These may appear to be obvious examples of misunderstanding but they have happened to our local citizens. Increased understanding and awareness will improve the quality of life for all residents with a disability.

“I am blind. I can hear and speak. Ask me what I would like. I will tell you myself. “

GOALS:

To increase the understanding and knowledge of all citizens of Quesnel on the varied needs of people with disabilities.

To increase awareness of individual responsibility to improve accessibility and inclusion.

STRATEGIES:

1. Development of a plan to continue to improve community awareness of accessibility and inclusion.
2. Develop a plan to increase public knowledge of the different needs of people living with disabilities.
3. Include people with disabilities and seniors in developing plans and strategies to increase public knowledge and information.

“I don’t think of myself as disabled.
We all have different abilities so I am
differently abled.”

GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES

With the number of support services in the community, seniors and people who have a disability feel well supported. Many are provided through non-profit organisations and are either partially or fully funded by government. Those fully funded by government include health care, education, and municipal services. Volunteer boards, fund raising activities, and countless hours of volunteer time support all non-profit organisations.

The major issue with the support services was with communication of information on what is available and how to access the support or the service. For many years, the Recreation Centre has produced a brochure providing information on local services, activities, clubs, service organisations, and many other contacts. As with all contact lists, it is a challenge to keep it up to date.

Access to specialised health care, especially for children with special needs, was identified as a concern. For many families coping with a child who has a developmental delay or complicated medical needs, the distance from specialised medical care can be a huge barrier to meeting the child’s needs. This has not been addressed in this Strategic Plan but should be noted as a community issue, which has been identified for many years.

“My child’s needs will only increase as he gets older. It’s a long way to Vancouver, to BC Children’s Hospital.”

GOAL:

Communicate the scope of services available in the community that support those persons living with a disability and seniors.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop and maintain a community inventory of services and agencies providing service to seniors and to people with a disability.
2. Develop a plan to improve communication of information on services provided by the city for seniors and the disabled.
3. Provide increased signage and information in Braille in government buildings and other public buildings in the city.
4. Provide information on access to a sign language interpreter for the deaf.
5. Explore strategies to support non-profit agencies providing services to seniors and the disabled.

SECTION 2

GETTING AROUND IN THE COMMUNITY



TRANSPORTATION

PARKING

SIDEWALKS

In any community the ease with which residents get around is a major determinant in quality of life. It affects the ability to get to employment, to do volunteer work, to access educational opportunities, to participate in recreational and cultural activities, and every other aspect of life in community.

Northern winters present additional barriers to getting around, especially for seniors and people with disabilities. Whether driving, walking, or using public transportation snow and ice can be a huge barrier to getting around.

The majority of local residents have access to a vehicle for transportation. For many people their only choice is public transit, walking, biking, private cab, or the help of friends and family. In order to improve accessibility and inclusion for those who do not have their own means of transportation, or are able to drive with a disability, improving the ability to get around the community will have a positive impact.

This section includes input received from community members on the subject of transportation, parking, and sidewalks. Although these were the areas of the greatest concerns, the community also identified many strengths.

“Compared to many places I have lived and visited, Quesnel is actually a fairly easy place to get around. Winters are tough anywhere in the north.”

TRANSPORTATION

Since many local residents who are seniors or have a disability rely on the public transportation system and have experience using the system, the comments received were very relevant to developing this strategic Plan.

Most people had very positive statements on the attitude of the drivers, which was described as friendly, sunny, smiling, helpful, and supportive. There were comments of thankfulness that Quesnel does have a system of transportation, especially in winter when walking is not always an option. There were also many suggestions offered on how the system could be improved to better meet the needs of the riders – and hopefully increase ridership. The input received has been separated into Transit and Handy Dart to clarify the challenges identified

Transit

The challenges identified in the Transit system affect every aspect of the activities of residents with a disability. Since its inception Transit has recorded an annual increase in user numbers. Most of the strategies identified in this section should continue to increase those numbers over the next few years.

The current Transit schedule is challenging to work around for those who rely on the system for employment and work experience that includes evening shifts. With no Transit system in the evening, seniors and people with disabilities have very limited access to entertainment and cultural events. Going out to a movie or for a meal in the evening may be dependent on getting a ride from a friend or family member.

The length of time it takes to get from West Quesnel to South Quesnel was identified as a barrier to accessing activities and employment opportunities. With the possibility of improved service with the provision of a low-rise bus, this is an ideal time to review the schedule to better meet the needs of the client base. The public transit system in northern communities is challenging to maintain financially and any strategy which result in an increase in user numbers should be considered.

GOAL:

To increase use of the transit system with improved service to people with a disability, seniors, and the general public.

STRATEGIES:

1. Support the City in pursuing funding for a low rise bus to easily accommodate mobility devices such as wheelchairs, power chairs, strollers etc.
2. Explore the possibility of a change in schedule to provide longer daily service, shorter rides in high use routes, and increased service in south Quesnel.
3. Ensure time is allowed in the schedules to facilitate access to the bus by persons using manual and power wheelchairs, other mobility devices, and strollers .
4. Review the location and usage of the current bus stops and shelters to ensure they meet the needs of transit users.
5. Propose a standard of service which ensures that bus stops are quickly cleared of snow and ice.
6. Explore the advantages and possibilities of a voucher system.

“I am very happy to have a bus system in Quesnel. I wouldn’t get out without it in winter.”

HandyDart

Quesnel has had a HandyDart system, or a similar system, for many years. It has become an integral part of the community, which many residents rely on to get to medical appointments, community events, and shopping. Currently Quesnel has two vans providing service Monday to Friday during the day only. Both are working to full capacity with a large number of requests for service turned down due to heavy demand for service. Users must register with HandyDart to have requests for service considered.

Since this is the only means of transportation for many people who use a wheelchair and are unable to use Transit or live outside the Transit area, there are many times HandyDart is not available to meet their needs. There is a possibility that an additional bus will be added to the service later in 2008 to meet the increasing demand for service.

There were many comments from HandyDart customers on the respect and helpfulness of the drivers. Seniors were particularly grateful that Quesnel does have a system to support those who have difficulty in getting around the community.

With the addition to the community of the Northern Health bus, which provides transportation for residents who have medical appointments out of town, there is a need to co-ordinate HandyDart with the Northern Health bus schedule.

“I have a client in a wheelchair that used the NHA bus to get to a medical appointment. Handy Dart does not run when the NHA bus returns to Quesnel.”

GOAL:

To reduce the number of unmet requests for HandyDart service.

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore and pursue options for meeting service demands within existing boundaries, meeting confirmed bookings, and meeting current service delivery expectations.
2. Consider and explore the development of a partnership with School District #28 for use of the accessible bus.
3. Explore a schedule adjustment to co-ordinate with Northern Health bus.
4. Explore possibility of funding for extending boundaries.

Taxis

Quesnel has two taxi companies. Both companies are happy to accommodate the needs of people with a disability and will assist in any way possible. For anyone who is able to transfer from a wheelchair into the taxi, the drivers will fold and stow the chair.

However, neither company has a taxi that will accommodate a wheelchair user who is unable to transfer from the chair into the taxi. There is a need in the community for a taxi equipped with a wheelchair lift and internal anchors for the wheelchair safety. This service would provide an option for those who require transportation in the evenings or weekends.

GOAL:

To have optional transportation for wheelchair users on evenings, weekends, and public holidays

STRATEGY:

1. Explore possible funding options for a wheelchair accessible taxi.

“My father is in Baker Lodge and can’t transfer out of his wheelchair into a car. How do I get him home for Christmas Day with the family? There is no HandyDart service and no cab that can take his chair with him in it.”

PARKING

There are many local residents who have the right to access parking spaces allocated for use by people with a disability. It may be either the driver or a passenger who has a disability. In all public parking lots, on the main streets, and in business parking lots there are spaces reserved for those entitled to use them.

The criteria determining if a person is entitled to a Disabled Parking permit is not widely distributed. There appears to be a lack of knowledge about eligibility, renewal, and how to apply for a permit.

As in all communities, Quesnel city bylaws require that a Disabled Parking decal be displayed in all vehicles using a parking space reserved for disabled parking. The Bylaw Enforcement Officer has the right to issue a parking violation on any city street. In business parking lots, misuse of the spaces is much more difficult to control. Continued strategies to increase awareness of the appropriate use of the spaces need to be planned.

With the onset of snow and winter conditions, it becomes more difficult for the general public to know the location of spaces reserved for disabled if ground painted signage is covered with snow and dirt. Adequate vertical signage solves this issue.

Standards are available for spaces assigned to disabled parking. Currently the city has no policies in place to meet the minimum standards in size and design. To meet future demand for parking for people with disabilities on city streets and parking lots, policies need to be developed.

Parking is one of the first things a visitor to the community notices. If that visitor is looking for a disabled parking space, it could be the one thing that leaves a lasting impression of Quesnel.

“People are usually good about not parking in those spaces. If I find a car without a decal in the space I have been known to wait in my wheelchair on the sidewalk until they return. It embarrasses them and works better than a ticket.”

GOAL:

To increase the number of disabled parking spaces meeting at least the minimum standards in size, location, and access.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop policy to meet at least minimum standards, as set by Canadian Standards Association, in size and design for disabled parking on city streets and parking lots.
2. Review parking requirements in zoning by-laws for building and businesses development.
3. Conduct an assessment of all current disabled parking on street, city lots, and business lots to recommend changes necessary to meet standards.
4. Review By-laws on disabled parking spaces in streets and city parking lots.
5. Develop a community awareness campaign on appropriate use of designated disabled parking spaces.
6. Recommend improved disabled parking at G R Baker Hospital.
7. Recommend development of adequate disabled parking at medical clinics.

“Most of the sidewalks in downtown are okay. I do have problems in other areas of town though.”

SIDEWALKS

Since the community consultation was done in winter months, there were many comments received on sidewalks. It is a great challenge for any community in the north to ensure that sidewalks are kept free of snow and ice. In comparison to our neighbours north and south, residents did comment that Quesnel does good work in keeping the roads and sidewalks clear of snow. It is an annual challenge faced by the city works department and they should be recognized for the good work they do.

The City does have plans in place for sidewalk renewal. An annual inspection of sidewalks takes place by the Director of Public works and a qualified technician. From the survey results, plans are made for repair or replacement of specific segments of sidewalk. In addition, major sidewalk reconstruction takes place as funding and the city budget allows.

Good sidewalks affect every resident of the city. Work has been done to ensure easy access to sidewalks for those persons using wheelchairs, for strollers, and for anyone with mobility challenges. In the down town core the sidewalks are generally in good condition for wheelchair users who feel every bump and unevenness on the pavement. Some areas of South Quesnel and West Quesnel were identified as needing attention.

“We need to remember we live in the north. Snow and ice is what we get. We can’t expect bare sidewalks all winter.”

GOAL:

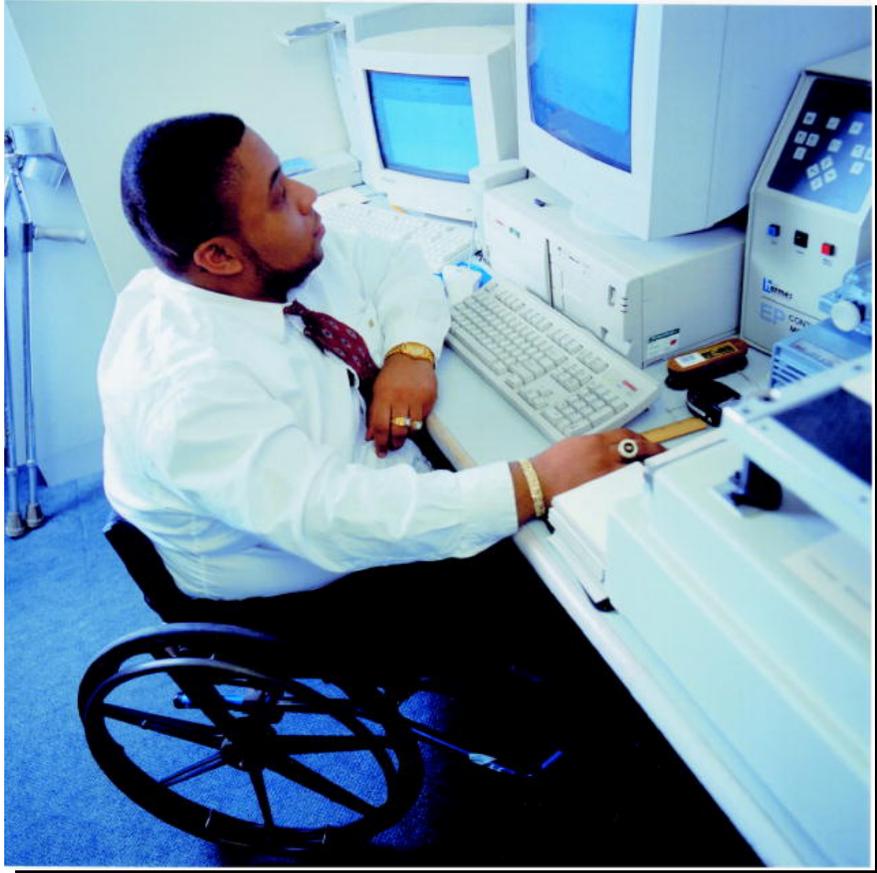
That all sidewalks will meet basic standards required by disabled residents.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop plans for the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee, including people who use a manual and a power wheelchair, to conduct an annual sidewalk inspection with a representative of the City’s Department of Public Works.
2. Review and recommend the development of city policy on meeting minimum standards for all sidewalks, including curb cut location and identification for the sight impaired.
3. Recommend the development of an ongoing five year city plan for sidewalk renewal and extension.
4. Review city requirements for businesses to clear snow and ice from sidewalks.
5. Promote the need for businesses with large parking lots to keep sidewalks clear of melting snow and ice.
6. Explore standards on the location of audible signal button and the walk timing for pedestrians at traffic lights.
7. Review and recommend policies for standards for efficient and timely snow clearing of sidewalks in all areas of town, particularly around power poles, bus stops, and curb access, and allowing adequate space for wheelchairs and power chairs.

SECTION 3

WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY



EDUCATION

EMPLOYMENT

CHILDCARE

Living, working, and getting around in the community are very closely linked to each other. If housing is an issue in a community, it will affect decisions to relocate for employment. If it is difficult to get around in a community, it will hold little attraction for seniors who may be looking for affordable places to retire. If a community does not have a good supportive education system, relocation to the community may not be a consideration for young families. Education, employment, and daycare have been included in this section since each is very relevant to working in the community.

“I really want to work and I am a good worker. If I need to use the bus to get to work it doesn’t always work out with the shifts. It’s hard to get it all to fit together.”

EDUCATION

If a family has a child with a disability, the opportunity to access a supportive education system may be the determining factor, above employment, in the choice of community to live. It is well known that education leads to a wider choice of careers and employment. For those with a disability, as with all people, education is the building block for their future. Accessibility and inclusion, at all levels of education, has developed acceptance of those with disabilities and a greater level of awareness in the community.

Education begins when a child is born. To support the early learning of children with special needs, support services are available through several agencies. They provide parental support, intervention, and transitional services into the school system. Inclusion is a well established practice in the community for pre-school aged children. A major challenge for many families is accessing special medical pediatric care, which is not available locally. In addition, some intervention services, such as Speech Language Pathology, are challenging to maintain in the community.

School District #28 has a strong commitment to inclusion and offers a very supportive educational experience for students with special needs. Within the restraints of provincial funding, the School District has maintained a focus on providing a special education program designed to meet the needs of individual students.

The recent budget cuts at the College of New Caledonia will have a detrimental affect on young adults transitioning into the community through the Job Education and Training (JET) program. This will reduce the job readiness and training opportunities available for this group of adults with disabilities. The loss of this program will affect the ability of youth and adults with special needs to access employment opportunities in the future. The cancellation of this education program will make it more difficult to increase the number of people with disabilities employed by 2010.

“Most people in the community recognise and fully support the principals of inclusion.”

GOAL:

Increase local educational opportunities for people with disabilities.

STRATEGIES:

1. Continue to support local partnerships in providing educational opportunities to meet the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities.
2. Explore opportunities for local residents with disabilities to increase awareness through presentations to school students and staff.
3. Support local efforts to reinstate post secondary educational opportunities for students with disabilities.
4. Develop a community plan to attract, recruit, and keep specialized support professionals in Quesnel.
5. Increase awareness of the need for volunteer work experiences for the people with disabilities.

“I would like to get a secure part time job because I like working with people and being involved in my community.”

EMPLOYMENT

For many adults with disabilities, employment is a key issue. With employment, the level of independence increases, self esteem rises, and new goals are developed. There are several programs in the community supporting the efforts of people with disabilities to acquire employment. Some are through non-profit organizations and some are through government agencies. All are working to increase employment opportunities for the disabled.

There are employers in the community regularly employing people with disabilities. In March 2008 a local group organized a Job Fair, giving employers the opportunity to talk with people with disabilities who are seeking employment. There have also been several newspaper articles about individuals with disabilities who are currently working in the community. All of these activities increase awareness of the abilities of those seeking employment opportunities.

With more than 300,000 working age people living with disabilities in British Columbia, the government has launched an initiative, the 10 By 10 Challenge. Communities are challenged to increase the number of people with disabilities working in the community by 10% by 2010. Currently the employment rate for people with a disability is only 44%. By improving accessibility and inclusion in the community, employment opportunities will increase. Quesnel has officially taken on the 10 By 10 Challenge with a target of seventy people with disabilities employed in this community by 2010.

Plans to improve the awareness of employers on all the advantages of employing a person with a disability need to be developed. Continued “success stories” will help to show that persons with disabilities can be very productive, reliable, and happy employees.

“We really need funding for job coaching which covers evenings and weekends.”

GOAL:

Increase employment for people with disabilities by 2010.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop plans for a facilitated community forum, leading to a community plan to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
2. Support local agencies in efforts to improve employment for the disabled.
3. Explore funding opportunities for job coaching.
4. Increase community and employer awareness through continued publication of success stories.
5. Develop a brochure or information package for employers.
6. Include union representation in the development of community plans.
7. Support or develop a co-ordinated volunteer work experience program.

CHILDCARE

The lack of childcare spaces in Quesnel, especially for severely disabled children, is critical. Children with even routine medical needs are being refused admittance to childcare spaces despite the fact that a support worker accompanies them. For a family with a child who has special needs accessing suitable childcare can be a monumental task. There are services available in the community to assist in the search. The provincial government funds the Supported Child Development program to support families and the care provider in ensuring that children with special needs are included in the full spectrum of activities offered in the childcare setting.

Programs such as the government’s StrongStart program, providing learning opportunities for children in the pre-school years are available in the community. However, these do not meet the childcare needs of working families or the after school care needed for older students with special needs.

Many of the childcare spaces, which do exist in the community, are located in private homes and are often inaccessible for wheelchairs. There are very few spaces for after school care for children with special needs over the age of twelve, who are unable to stay at home alone. These gaps in childcare place a tremendous burden on parents or guardians who are often stressed and exhausted from the day to day care for a child with a disability.

“My child’s needs are so great that day-care is a constant worry. We really can’t afford for one of us to stop working.”

GOAL:

Increase the number of day-care spaces available for children with disabilities.

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore options for increasing the number of accessible day-care spaces for special needs children.
2. Increase public awareness of the day-care needs of parents and families with special needs children.
3. Support efforts to increase the number of day-care spaces for all children in the community.

SECTION 4

PLAYING IN THE COMMUNITY



SPORTS AND RECREATION

ARTS AND CULTURE

GREEN SPACES

TRAILS

LIBRARY

MUSEUM AND VISITORS CENTRE

Quesnel has a wide range of activities and facilities available in the community for sports and recreation, for arts and culture, and for enjoying the outdoors. Both seniors and people with disabilities are happy with the inclusion in city programs. Although there are some changes that will improve access, there were no major areas of concern identified. The Measure Up Quesnel Committee has identified access to the Quesnel Curling Rink as being a priority. Wheelchair curling has become a popular activity with wheelchair users. Some of the funding received from 2010 Legacies Now will be used to provide automatic door openers to the curling rink and should be installed by fall of this year.

In the building of any new facilities it is important to ensure that the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee is involved in the planning process. Minimum standards are required by the building codes (Building Access Handbook 2007) but to have experienced wheelchairs users give their opinion on plans will ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are fully met. It is recommended that new construction consider the Accessible Construction for the Built Environment (B651-04) developed by the Canadian Standards Council.

There are two seniors' centres in the community. Both have many planned activities and events for the seniors in the community. Both centres are accessible to everyone and are used extensively by many community organizations.

GOAL:

To ensure that all sports, recreation, arts, and culture facilities and programs are easily accessible and are inclusive of seniors and people with disabilities.

STRATEGIES:

1. Ensure that the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee is involved in the planning for recreational, sports, or arts and cultural buildings in the community.
2. Explore the possibility of developing a policy statement supporting accessibility and inclusion in all recreational, sports, arts, and cultural activities provided the Cariboo Regional District and by the City of Quesnel.
3. Encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities in planning for community programs.
4. Explore the development of partnerships between local organisations to provide all year round programmes which include youth and young adults with disabilities.

SPORTS AND RECREATION

Many comments were received on the Arts and Recreation Centre. All were very appreciative of having such a great facility in the community. Both seniors and people with disabilities use the facility regularly and with ease. They feel welcomed, included, and happy to be there. There are many sports activities designed to support people with disabilities and

seniors. A pilot program to introduce people with disabilities to arts and craft activities has been met with great enthusiasm. It may prove to be a very popular program.

A recent community donation funded the installation of a lift system to provide full access to both pools and the hot tub for people with mobility challenges. This has been well-used addition, which provides people with disabilities the opportunity to participate in pool activities. The need for this equipment was identified by the Quesnel Accessibility Committee and the necessary funding provided by the two Rotary Clubs in Quesnel. Further contributions from School District #28 and from The Quesnel and District Child Development Centre has improved water safety for children with special needs.

The Arts and Recreation Centre has also conducted an assessment of the facility by a person in a wheelchair and are planning to do one by a person with sight impairment. This will result in some more changes being made to further improve accessibility.

Both arenas have accessibility challenges. Since arena #1 was constructed fifty years ago, accessibility has been improved from the original design but is far from adequate. Neither building has a designated washroom for the disabled. Stalls have been created in the washrooms but are not adequate for the comfortable use of a wheelchair or power chair.

A wheelchair viewing area has been created in Arena #1, the older building. This will be improved over the summer to make access easier and signs will be posted to ensure that people in wheelchairs are aware of the area. The area reserved for wheelchair users in Arena #2 will be extended to provide more viewing area.

With the hope that a new multi-use facility may be constructed in the next few years, it is important for the committee to be involved in the planning process to ensure a fully accessible facility in all areas of the building.

While the bowling alley is a privately owned facility, it is well used by people with disabilities and by seniors. Access to the bowling lanes is down a flight of stairs, which limits access to the activity.

Wheelchair curling is becoming more popular with a regular program begun in spring 2008. With easier access to the curling rink this community sport could become a model for the north.

“That new lift system at the Rec Centre means I can have a workout and swim in the pool any time I want to.”

“They’ve been really good at the arena. I let them know what was needed and now I can watch my kids play hockey.”

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore the feasibility of creating designated wheelchair accessible washrooms at both arenas.
2. Ensure follow up of identified changes recommended at the Arts and Recreation Centre.
3. Follow up on plans to make both arenas more accessible for spectators in wheelchairs.
4. Explore opportunities to assist in making privately owned recreational facilities accessible.

“Could we get some disabled parking close to the theatre in Correlieu School? It’s really hard to find a place close to the entrance when it is busy for a concert.”

ARTS AND CULTURE

There are many varied arts and cultural activities available in the community. Most are held in accessible buildings and are inclusive of people with disabilities. Since many events occur in the evening, transportation may be a barrier to attending for some residents. This has been considered in Section 2 “Getting Around In The Community”.

The local movie theatre, a privately owned business, has taken the initiative to create access to the facility by providing a portable ramp when requested. While some people with disabilities may not be comfortable requesting assistance, this has been an innovative solution to an accessibility challenge facing a business.

Many events are held at the Chuck Mobley Theatre in Correlieu School. Parking for those with mobility challenges is an issue as there is no designated disabled parking close to the theatre entrance. There has also been a request for event organizers to provide designated space for wheelchair users in the theatre.

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore funding opportunities to provide additional inclusive arts programs through the Arts and Recreation Centre.
2. Consult with School District #28 on a process to develop disabled parking spaces for theatre attendees.
3. Explore possibility of requiring event organisers to provide wheelchair spaces in Chuck Mobley Theatre for public events.

GREEN SPACES

Quesnel has created many green spaces and parks within the city boundaries. They bring peace and tranquillity to residents and are enjoyed by all residents including people with disabilities and seniors. Using a wheelchair over grass is not impossible but can be physically demanding. Improving access for wheelchair users to grassy areas of parks would support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop a plan to improve access to the green spaces and picnic areas for wheelchair users.
2. Explore possibility of improved accessibility for wheelchair users in West Fraser Timber Park.
3. Explore feasibility of providing more designated washrooms in park areas for people with disabilities.

“I love to go to the park for picnics in summer but it is hard with this wheelchair.”

“My power chair is hard to fit into some of the stalls. We really need more separate designated washrooms in the town.”

TRAILS

Quesnel has a trail system that is a big attraction for visitors and residents alike. The River Front Trail East and West sections are well used by walkers, runners, cyclists, wheelchair users, parents with strollers, and many people with disabilities. While there are short sections that are too steep for a person in a manual wheelchair to safely navigate unassisted, access is easy and there are long sections that are level, if the slopes are considered too steep. It is well maintained in winter and can be used all year round.

Work is currently being done on the development of an extended trail system beyond the Bryce Road connector towards Dragon Lake. Plans are being developed to ensure that all of this will be accessible for everyone and will include a pedestrian underpass on the highway.

In the community consultation, everyone who mentioned the trail system felt it was a great asset to the community and a big attraction for visitors. The need to have the painted line visible for the sight impaired and the gradient on some of the slopes were the only two concerns identified.

STRATEGIES:

1. Explore the safety issues for wheelchair and stroller users on the River Front Trail East and West sections and consider posting warning signs of steep slopes.
2. Research the trail systems and promote those areas recommended for general wheelchair use.
3. Encourage inclusion of the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee in the development of plans for expansion of the trail system.
4. Research the possibility of providing accessibility for people with disabilities to the trails in West Fraser Timber Park.

LIBRARY

Construction of the new library is currently taking place. In the development phase, a resident who uses a wheelchair was consulted on the proposed plans. The plans meet all requirements of the BC Building Code and will be accessible to all residents of the community. Having a totally accessible library in the community will be a big asset for the residents and a major attraction for possible future residents.

The Cariboo Regional District has responsibility for the library and the services it provides the community. As it moves into the new facility, the improved accessibility of the library will make it even more attractive for seniors and for people with disabilities, supporting the vision of being a senior-friendly and disability-friendly community.

STRATEGY:

1. Consult with the Librarian to promote special services provided by the library for people with disabilities.

“I am a senior and I use the library a lot. I am looking forward to being able to use it for many many years to come.”

MUSEUM AND VISITORS CENTRE

The Quesnel Museum and Visitors Centre attract many visitors every year. Records show that over 17500 guests registered at the Visitors Centre in 2007. Both businesses are open all year and are used by schools for educational tours. Since these are often the first stop for people coming to the community, it is important that a positive first impression is created. For people with disabilities, the accessibility of the Centre may determine if the stay is longer or just passing through.

It has been suggested that the availability of disabled parking should be improved and vertical signage posted. The building is an older construction, which has been extended, and can accommodate a wheelchair through the doorways.

The aisles of the museum are wheelchair accessible. A wheelchair is provided by the museum for use by visitors. There is no washroom facility for visitors in the building other than the staff washroom, which visitors also use in the winter months.

Public washrooms, which are not open in winter, are available at the back of the building and have been adapted to accommodate wheelchair users. It may be possible to improve the washroom access year round.

Plans are being developed to extend and improve the building. Since this will be a major construction project funding is still being pursued. When the plans for the building are being developed the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee will be included to ensure the needs of people with disabilities and full accessibility is considered early in the planning phase.

STRATEGIES:

1. Recommend that a member of the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee be included on the building planning committee for the Museum and Visitors Centre.
2. Recommend a designated unisex disabled washroom facility is included in the building plans.
3. Support the museum in the promotion and expansion of programs and information in formats accessible to differing disabilities.
4. Develop plans to promote special services provided by the Museum for residents or visitors with a disability.

SECTION 5

VISITING THE COMMUNITY



TOURISM

ACCOMMODATION

With the increasing number of visitors coming to Quesnel each year, an increasing number of them will be seniors and people with disabilities. All visitors are important to the health of the local economy and it is hoped that all will leave with positive memories, a desire to return, and perhaps even to relocate Quesnel.

In striving to become the most age-friendly and disability-friendly community in the north, Quesnel will become even more attractive to seniors and to people with disabilities. It is important to do everything possible to attract a wide range of visitors year round to our community.

In any effort to improve this sector of the community, local businesses must be included in any discussion on improving accessibility and inclusion for visitors. The Chamber of Commerce and the Business Improvement Areas may take the lead in developing action plans in this section.

GOAL:

To attract seniors and people with disabilities to the community by promoting Quesnel as the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in the north.

TOURISM

Quesnel already has many attractions for tourists in the city and in the surrounding areas. Accessible tourism is a business opportunity with great potential still to be developed. With the considerable spending power of seniors and people with disabilities, this could be an area of important future economic development for this community.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop dialogue with local business sector to explore accessible tourism opportunities.
2. Develop information sessions for tourism industry personnel to increase knowledge of disabilities and the needs of people with disabilities.
3. Develop plans to distribute information on the accessibility of the community and surrounding area.
4. Distribute and publicize information on local businesses which are accessible and disability friendly.

ACCOMMODATION

If the accessible tourism opportunity is to be of benefit to the community, there must be ample accommodation to meet the increased demands. Currently there are a limited number of rooms in the community that are wheelchair accessible and set up for the use of a person with a disability.

Local businesses already provide accommodation designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities, are encouraged to include this in their advertising. People with disabilities are more inclined to use businesses if they know, without enquiring, that rooms will meet their needs.

Strategies:

1. Develop an inventory of disability-friendly hotel/motel rooms in the community
2. Work with local tourism specialists to develop plans to increase and promote the accessible accommodation available in the community.
3. Develop and distribute information to increase knowledge and awareness of the needs of people with a disability to the local accommodation businesses.
4. Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Areas, and Economic Development to explore opportunities and develop plans for accessible tourism opportunities.
5. Explore feasibility and need for increased RV parking in the city.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

This Strategic Plan has been developed as a starting point to reach the vision of being the most disability-friendly community in the north. It will not happen in a year or even five years. It will happen gradually as the whole community starts to see things through the disability lens. Over time our reputation will grow and spread as being an open, accepting, and accommodating community for people with disabilities and for seniors.

With the leadership of the City of Quesnel and the Cariboo Regional District, the community is already well on its way towards the vision. This community has come a long way in the last twenty years to improve the quality of life for seniors and for our residents who have disabilities. As plans are made for the future, it is also wise to reflect on how far the community has come, how much has been accomplished, and how much can be built on to reach the vision. There is no expectation that any of the strategies will be starting from the ground up. All of them will build on what is already in place, enhancing and supporting the work already done. They have all been developed as a result of the input received during the community consultation process.

The responsibility for implementing the Strategic Plan will be with the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee. A mandate and Terms of Reference for this committee will be developed, based on the work done by the Measure Up Quesnel Committee. As the committee meets to discuss the strategies, priorities will be identified. The strategies will require the involvement, expertise, and consultation of many sectors of the community such as the City of Quesnel, the Cariboo Regional District, School District #28, post secondary education institutes, support service organisations, business sector, and others. With the involvement of others, action plans on the strategies can be developed in a realistic, relevant, and viable way for all concerned. While the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee will provide direction, it will take the effort of the whole community to reach the vision.

CONCLUSION

It's not just about striving towards a vision. It's about making life better for seniors and people living with disabilities. It's about becoming a more caring and more understanding community. It's about respecting what our seniors need to make life more comfortable. It's about being aware of the struggles faced by people with disabilities on a daily basis.

With the support the province of British Columbia and 2010 Legacies Now, the entire province has an opportunity to make life easier for many citizens. Quesnel has the opportunity to catch the vision of not only making life easier, but of making this community

***THE MOST DISABILITY-FRIENDLY AND MOST SENIOR-FRIENDLY
COMMUNITY IN THE NORTH.***

MEASURE UP QUESNEL

STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX 1

Community Consultation Process

To develop a Strategic Plan that is relevant and appropriate for the community, consultation with stakeholders was identified by the Measure Up Quesnel Committee as key to the success of the project. This plan reflects the input received from many sectors of the community over four months from December 2007 to March 2008. All of the strategies have been developed from the community comments and suggestions received in that time.

Several group sessions were held with various sectors of the community, seniors, people with disabilities, and service providers. These sessions identified both the strengths and the challenges in being a senior or living with a disability in Quesnel and the surrounding areas.

Individuals were contacted by the Measure Up Quesnel Co-ordinator or referred by committee members. As information about the project was distributed around the community, calls were received from citizens who had personal experience with disability or had a family member with a disability.

Through the co-operation of School District #28, a survey form was distributed to schools to give Resource Teachers and Student Support Workers an opportunity to provide comments. These are the people who provide the support for students with special needs to be included in the school system and have valuable insight into the challenges faced by their students in the community.

This list identifies the various sectors of the community consulted so far. Through the link provided on the City of Quesnel web site, ongoing opportunity to provide comments and suggestions will be available. The responses to the survey will be reviewed regularly by the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee and included for action as appropriate.

Group sessions:

Measure Up Quesnel Committee	8
Quesnel Community Living Association (clients and staff)	12
Child Development Centre (service providers)	5
Dengarry Professional Services (service providers)	4
North Cariboo Aboriginal Family Program Society (service providers)	10
Axis Family Resources (service providers)	2
Quesnel and District Seniors Centre (seniors)	40
Golden Centre (seniors)	19

STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX 1 con't

Community Consultation Process con't.

School District #28 survey responses:

School team responses.....	8
Individual responses (parents and staff)	4

Individual contacts:

Wheelchair or power chair users	6
Sight impaired	2
Hearing impaired	2
Family members (parent, spouse etc)	5
Interested citizens	3
Service providers/managers	15

As the Quesnel Accessibility Advisory Committee sets priorities and works through the strategies in the plan, consultation will continue. Most of the strategies will require that different sectors of the community be consulted, included, and closely involved with planning action on the strategies.

MEASURE UP QUESNEL

STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX 2

Useful Resources

2010 Legacies Now www.2010legaciesnow.com

Spirit of BC Community Committees www.spiritofbc.com

Union of BC Municipalities www.civicnet.bc.ca

Measure Up the North www.measureupthenorth.com

North Central Municipal Association www.ncma.enorthernbc.com

City of Quesnel www.city.quesnel.bc.ca

Cariboo Regional District www.cariboord.bc.ca

BC Paraplegic Association www.bcpara.org

BC Healthy Communities www.bchealthycommunities.ca

Statistical Resources:

Canadian statistics www.statcan.ca

Provincial statistics www.bcstats.gov.ca

Other Resources:

Visitable housing www.concretechange.org

BC Housing www.bchousing.org

Canadian Co-housing Network (Home Adaptation for Seniors Independence)
www.cohousing.ca

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca

Minister's Council on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program) www.eia.gov.bc.ca/epwd

STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX 2 con't

Useful Resources con't.

10 By 10 Challenge www.workablesolutionsbc.ca

Human Resources Canada www.hrsdc.gc.ca

Accessible Design for the Built Environment B651-04 (Produced by the Canadian Standards Association) www.csa.ca

Community Living BC www.communityliving.ca

Community Resources

Leisure Guide – produced twice a year by the Quesnel and District Arts and Recreation Centre, offers current contact information for many clubs, organizations, services, activities, and community events.

Quesnel Child Youth and Family Network – a network of many of the service providers in the community. Web site provides contacts in the social services, education, special needs, and senior sector of the community. www.quesnelnetwork.com

MEASURE UP QUESNEL
STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDIX 3
QUESNEL ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(Draft document for discussion purposes only)

VISION

Quesnel will be the most disability-friendly and senior-friendly community in northern British Columbia.

MISSION

To identify and remove social and physical barriers to the full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life by promoting accessibility and inclusion in the community.

RESPONSIBILITIES

To provide advice to the community on matters related to accessibility and inclusion.

To guide and support the implementation of the Strategic Plan developed through Measure Up Quesnel.

To work co-operatively with all sectors of the community in improving accessibility and inclusion.

To increase public awareness of the needs and abilities of people with disabilities.

To provide opportunity for community input in the identification of existing or potential barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

To include people with disabilities in the work of this committee.