



Accessibility Advisory Committee

**Wednesday, October 22, 2025
5:30 p.m.**

**Committee Room G, Basement & Zoom
New Westminster City Hall, 511 Royal Avenue**

Present: Councillor Jaimie McEvoy, Chair
Paul Backman
Karen Basran
Anne Belanger
Hilary Benoit
Hazel Fitzpatrick*
Vic Leach
Katie Marshall
Gary Steeves
Leonor Vlug*

Absent: Karen Morgan
Colleen Vogler

**Attendance by electronic means*

1. CALL TO ORDER & LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsundered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. It was acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. It was recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Agenda of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on October 22, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

3. MINUTES

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on June 25, 2025 be adopted as amended.

CARRIED

4. PRESENTATIONS & REPORTS

4.1 Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Anu Garcha, Adaptation and Resilience Specialist, and Laura Sampliner, Manager, Climate Action, presented the Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CCARP). They noted that this will be the City's first climate-adaptation focused plan to ensure New Westminster is prepared for a changing climate by proposing solutions that address the needs of a diverse community, allocating resources where they are most needed, and promoting a safer, healthier city for all residents. A. Garcha further noted that the Climate Action Team is engaging with different populations and gathering information on residents' lived experience of climate change to inform the development of the plan.

A. Garcha highlighted the following aspects of the CCARP:

- Plan development began in May 2025, is currently in the community engagement phase, and will be brought before Council for consideration in September 2026;
- the Plan will ensure the community, infrastructure, and environment are prepared for climate change and capable of responding to extreme weather events, such as extreme heat and atmospheric rivers;
- it will be equitable, ensuring all community members – particularly vulnerable populations – have access to the supports and resources to stay safe and recover from climate events;
- it will be adaptable, allowing actions to evolve as conditions and information change;
- anticipated climate events for New Westminster include sea level rise, hotter and drier summers, reduced summer rainfall, more frequent and intense fall and winter rain events, warmer winter temperatures, and a reduced snow pack in the North Shore mountains; and
- expected community impacts include increased heat-related illnesses, fewer outdoor activity days, cancellation of outdoor events, climate anxiety, challenges with water availability, changes to native plant species, impacts on river health, and damage to buildings and infrastructure.

Discussion ensued regarding concerns, needs, values, and priorities related to climate change adaptation. In response to staff's request for feedback from Committee members on lived experiences of climate change, gaps in existing programs, and impacts on services, the following comments were noted:

- mitigate extreme hot and cold weather impacts on vulnerable populations such as homeless people and those without home air conditioning;
- develop accessible communication systems to ensure all residents, including deaf and blind individuals, receive vital information in ways that meet their needs;
- provide assistance for people with mobility challenges during power outages and extreme weather events, and ensure sidewalks are cleared of snow;
- recognize that climate impacts are heightened for people with mental health challenges and autoimmune conditions;
- explore Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility (Vancouver) as a potential model for inclusive communication;
- support residents, especially high-risk populations, in adapting living spaces to prevent smoke infiltration during wildfire season;
- provide accessible water during heat waves (e.g., at festivals and public spaces) and re-establish water fountains;
- increase tree cover, establish cooling stations, extend spray park hours, and improve bus shelter design for weather protection;
- plant tree species that both provide shade and can withstand extreme heat, and ensure adequate maintenance resources are available;
- encourage installation of cooling systems in apartment buildings and designate shared cool areas for buildings without air conditioning;
- expand rain gardens and implement additional stormwater management solutions to mitigate the effect of atmospheric rivers;
- strengthen outreach to residents who are not fluent in English to ensure they are aware of available supports during climate events;
- note that during the heat dome, the City's Human Resource's Department experienced increased demands, including staff assisting at cooling stations, extended shifts, and heightened interdepartmental coordination with non-profits, fire and police services;
- recognize that climate emergencies represent polycrises that expose inequalities and require multi-faceted solutions;
- encourage neighbourhood connection and support, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities, during climate events;
- promote sharing of information and creation of support systems within condominiums and apartment buildings;

- develop climate change messaging that resonates with the public on a deeper, more personal level;
- prioritize public transportation during climate emergencies as some individuals may not be able to drive in extreme heat or snow;
- provide assistance programs for low-income residents to obtain air conditioning; and
- explore systems for contacting landlords and residents, such as a voluntary registration system, for individuals seeking assistance during climate emergencies.

Staff advised that the next steps in the Plan’s development include completing the community engagement phase and preparing a “What We Heard” report, along with a climate-informed hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessment. Subsequently, Plan development will focus on identifying solutions, actions and objectives, followed by a second round of community engagement in spring 2026.

5. NEW BUSINESS

None.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the meeting adjourn (6:35 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting held on October 22, 2025.

Councillor Jaime McEvoy
CHAIR

Maureen Latta
COMMITTEE CLERK