



**Victoria
Event
Centre**

Accessibility Update

**Victoria Event Centre
1415 Broad St, Victoria BC, V8W 2B2**

March 2019

Dear VEC community and guests,

This is an update on some of the work that has been happening to make the VEC a more accessible venue. You can read our previous update from August 2018 [here](#).

Since our last update, we've made some progress toward increasing accessibility at the VEC. Further down in this update we've included details on what we've done so far, and other changes that still need to happen. This work has been slow due to funding timelines and because we're learning how to do this work.

As discussed in the previous update, our elevator was permanently shut down last year, and the stairs are one of the biggest barriers to accessing the VEC. The biggest piece of news that we want to share in this update is that we've secured a few grants to support accessibility improvements, and **we are confident that we will be able to move forward with two major accessibility renovations: building an elevator or vertical platform lift, and renovating the stage-side washroom to make it mobility-device-accessible.** This will be a huge milestone in making the VEC more accessible to folks for whom the stairs have been a barrier. Some of the funders require us to complete this project by the end of 2019, so we need to move quickly, but we also want to make sure we do this right, in conversation with the communities who use the VEC now, and those who might use the VEC once it's more accessible. We also want to keep moving forward with other accessibility improvements.

With all that in mind, we are seeking input from folks in a number of ways:

- 1) We will be reaching out to disability communities and advocacy organizations in the next six weeks. If you know of people who you think would like to provide input, please share this with them.
- 2) Please consider filling out [this survey](#) on accessibility at the VEC. This includes questions about whether you'd like to receive ongoing updates, and whether you'd consider participating in consultations about accessibility. The survey takes 2-10 minutes to complete, and is available here:
<https://goo.gl/forms/rwffUdQ3ThOKz0Sc2>
- 3) We will be organizing a series of consultations with folks who want to help shape accessibility changes at the VEC (more info below). We want to prioritize participation by folks for whom the stairs are a barrier, or folks who are involved in related accessibility advocacy work, either personally or professionally. We are prioritizing consultations on washroom and elevator accessibility because of our funders' deadlines; however, we also plan to hold further consultations on other elements of accessibility (including other physical infrastructure, signage, audio-visual equipment, as well as economic, environmental, and cultural accessibility). We will have a clearer timeline for these consultations in the next update.
- 4) We are seeking to hire someone on contract to facilitate these consultations. A qualified candidate would have experience with group facilitation as well as accessibility, ideally specifically related to mobility access. This contract would be for 35 hours at [\$20.50/hr], which has been identified as a "living wage" by the City, and is commensurate with other VEC wages.
- 5) If you have questions or concerns about this process, you'd like to give us feedback, or you want to participate in the consultations but can't complete the online survey, please get in touch with us at access@victoriaeventscentre.ca
- 6) For the next phase of this project we are committed to sending regular updates and we'll check in with another update by the end of April.

Further details about community consultations on washroom and elevator renovations:

- We have created an online survey as one way for folks to give feedback on the project, and it is open to anyone to fill out. The survey will be one way for folks to let us know if they're interested in participating in further consultations
- We intend to contract a facilitator for three community consultations at various stages of the project. These will be hosted at an accessible downtown location, and in the survey we'll have more questions about folks' access needs for these events:
 - **Stage 1:** once the construction management company has given us some options, we want to share them with the community and get feedback on which option is best, and what else should be considered or included
 - **Stage 2:** once the architect has drawn up plans for the new washroom and entrance, we want to share these drawings and talk about what's missing and what might need to change

- **Stage 3:** once the renovations have been completed, we'll invite folks for a third consultation (inside the VEC this time!) so that wheelchair and mobility device users can provide feedback on the new renovations and further accessibility improvements we could be working on

These changes are completed or underway:

- Replaced fluorescent lights in green room hallway
- Begun researching and implementing scent-reduced cleaning products
- Begun researching and creating better protocols and communication for events, including resources for event organizers
- Worked to more clearly identify staff and volunteer supporters during events

Wheelchair accessibility

Here is what we've been up to around wheelchair accessibility specifically:

- Begun consultations with various accessibility and elevator companies to determine options
- Procured quotes from construction and elevator companies to construct and install an elevator or vertical platform lift, renovate back entrance, and renovate stage-side washroom for accessibility
- Completed an additional accessibility audit with the Rick Hansen foundation, which will help us identify further barriers and apply for additional funding
- Applied for several grants and solicited donations from institutions and governments to fund these infrastructure upgrades.

Further changes in the future

This is our list of changes we want to make in the future. We'll be adding to this list as we go, and we welcome input at access@victoriaeventcentre.ca

- Complete installation of vertical elevator or platform lift, backdoor and bathroom renovations
- Fundraise for and implement staff education and training about accessibility so that we are better aware of barriers and best practices
- Support more events without alcohol (this is something we've been doing, and we anticipate expanding this in the future, especially with more daytime events and programming)
- Create a detailed guide with resources and support for event organizers around accessibility
- Provide trainings for renters on how to produce more inclusive events.
- In the long term, we aim to support the formation of a working group or network that includes folks who face a wide range of barriers. Ideally, this group would support the VEC in determining infrastructural and operational changes, while also reaching beyond the VEC to support accessibility in other venues and spaces. If this is an initiative you'd like to support or be a part of, please get in touch at access@victoriaeventcentre.ca