



Memo to: Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee
 From: S. Jones, Corporate Officer, Town of View Royal and CWAA Committee Member
 Date: April 10, 2024
 Re: Overview of Accessibility Professional Network 2024 Annual Conference held March 27-28,2024

On March 27 and 28, 2024 I attended the Accessibility Professional Network 2024 annual conference provided by the Rick Hansen Foundation in Vancouver, BC.

The conference had keynote sessions to bookend the two-day event, four signature sessions that featured panel presentations on research projects and emerging trends, and two different concurrent session opportunities.

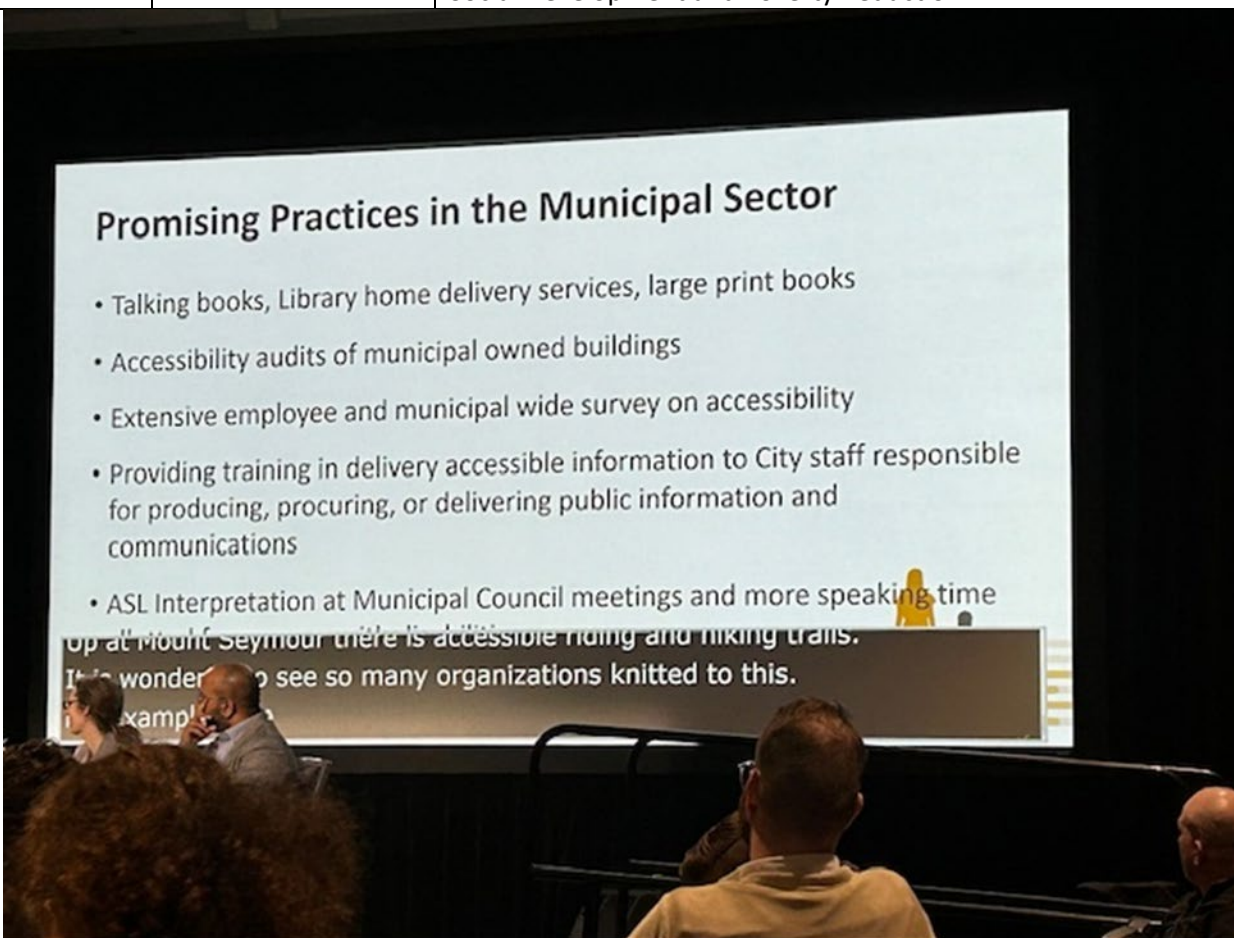
An overview of the event, excerpted from the conference program and with some photos I took inserted, is as follows:

Session	Title	Content Description & Session Chairs/Speakers
Keynote 1	Neurodiversity and the Built Environment	<p>Building codes and design standards have only recently begun to consider the impact of built environment features on the diverse perceptual, cognitive and emotional experiences of users. In this keynote from recognized international expert, Steven Maslin, attendees will learn about design considerations with the greatest impact for users who are neurodiverse, improving meaningful access for all.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Darryl Condon, Managing Principal, hcma Architecture + Design</p> <p><i>Speaker:</i> Steven Maslin, RIBA Chartered Architect and NRAC Registered Access Consultant from the UK</p>
Signature 1	Accessibility in ESG Planning	<p>By prioritizing accessibility, businesses demonstrated a commitment to inclusion that aligns with broader Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles of equitable access and long-term value creation. Learn more about how corporations and incorporating accessibility in their long-term planning and the implications for commercial spaces.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Anessa Powell, North & South America Account Manager, The Valuable 500</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Colleen Baldwin, VP, Head of Global Design Strategy & Transformation, Scotiabank; Jamie Gray-Donald, Sr. VP, Sustainability & Environmental, Health & Safety, QuadReal Property Group; Natasha Saltes, Director, Accessibility, Canada Post Corporation</p>

<p>Concurrent 1</p>	<p>Designing Inclusive Schools</p>	<p>Dive into what site operators, architects, and accessibility professionals need to know about the latest research data and business case for retrofitting existing schools and educational facilities for improved accessibility, including the strategies and outputs that can lead to both cost savings and success.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Lara Pinchbeck, Universal Design Evangelist, Founder + Principal of Lara Pinchbeck: Research + Design</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Mhairi Bennett, Director of Facilities, School District 62; Fiona Jones, Knowledge Manager, Inclusive Design, hcma Architecture + Design; Rance Mok, Director, Learning Environments hcma Architecture + Design</p>
<p>Concurrent 2</p>	<p>Heritage and Accessibility</p>	<p>Historic and heritage buildings and sites were built with no accessibility standards in mind and because of their historical importance, are not easily renovated to improve access. In this session, attendees will encounter new and emerging research aims to identify barriers to accessibility and identify potential solutions for these unique sites.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Murray Gallant, Principal, Murray Gallant Architecture</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Ernesto Morales, Associate Professor, Universite Laval; Alison Novak, Scientist, KITE Research Institute, University Health Network</p>



<p>Concurrent 3</p>	<p>Accelerating Access in Municipalities</p>	<p>Discover new insights helping municipalities of all sizes to improve use of space, inclusive design, and adaptive processes to improve accessibility for citizens. In this session, attendees will hear directly from researchers, innovators and municipalities about strategies with the potential to help every community.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Michelle Schouls, Director Facilities Planning and Development, City of Vancouver</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Susie Chant, Parliamentary Secretary for Accessibility, Provincial Government; Sunil Johal, VP, Public Policy, CSA Group; Sofie Poirier, Senior Manager, Corporate Innovation, MaRS Discovery District; Sue Talusan, Director, Climate and Cities, Innovation Ecosystems, MaRS Discovery District; Sam Turcott, Assistant Deputy Minister, Accessibility Directorate, ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction</p>
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<p>Concurrent 4</p>	<p>Outdoor Spaces</p>	<p>With unique features such as diverse terrain, varying surfaces, and exposure to extreme weather conditions, designing for accessibility in outdoor spaces has some unusual challenges. This session brings together researchers and experts to explore some of the challenges arising from different typologies and insights that can help make outdoor environments more accessible for all.</p>
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Signature 2	Understanding Access: How New Research is Informing Accessibility Standards	<p>As Canada strives for a unified experience of accessibility from coast to coast, new research is revealing the needs and preferences of diverse communities and using these insights to inform the development of accessibility standards that meet these needs. In this roundtable discussion, attendees will learn about the role research plays in guiding standards and take a deeper look at emerging research offering some fresh perspectives to improve the design and application of standards.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Christopher Sutton, CEO, Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Sarah-Anne Hrycenko, Supply Specialist, PSPC – Procurement Assistance Canada; Maureen Haan, President & CEO of the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work; Mikiko Terashima, Associate Professor, Dalhousie University; Anna Wren, Project Coordinator, Canadian Association of the Deaf</p>
Signature 3	The Accessible Housing Puzzle: Piece by Piece	<p>Canada’s housing supply is in crisis, and with limited housing stock, perceived hurdles to financing, and longstanding attitudinal barriers, no area of the sector has more demand than accessible housing. In this session, attendees will learn from accessible housing innovators from a variety of perspectives as they confront major market challenges – and identify solutions with the potential to fill the gap.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Julie Sawchuk, Principal, Sawchuk Accessible Solutions</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Tolu Enaibe, Director of Programs, Accessible Housing; Heela Omarkhail, VP, Social Impact, The Daniels Corporation; Kirstin Yuzwa, Research, St. John’s Rehab Research Program, Sunnybrook Research Institute</p>
Signature 4	Mind-Friendly Environments in Practice	<p>Building upon the Conference’s opening session, this session explores the challenges and realities of designing built environments for people living with such diverse neurological experiences as dementia, autism, and intellectual disabilities. This discussion will explore some of the key principles to meeting peoples’ preferences and tailoring environments to meet them and will provide valuable insights to support other users and typologies.</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Bushra Hshim, Accessibility & Neurodiversity Consultant, Included by Design</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i> Tara Connolly, Assistant Director, Research & Development, Accessibility Institute, Carleton University;</p>

		Barbara Everdene, Long Ragne Planner, City of Vernon; Elroy Jespersen, President, Friends of the Village Society; Steven Maslin, RIPBA Charter Architect and NRAC Registered Access Consultant from the UK; Coine Wattie, Project Manager, Age and Dementia Friendly Strategy, City of Vernon
Keynote 2	Accessibility Takes Flight at LaGuardia	<p>In 2015, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced a comprehensive plan to construct a new LaGuardia Airport with the express aim of creating a world-class passenger experience to meet the needs of all travelers. Once called “possibly the worst major airport in the world,” the new LaGuardia Airport, and its Terminal B, completed in 2023, recently became the first site in the U.S. to receive an RHFAC Gold rating. This story of transformation is a closing keynote you won’t want to miss!</p> <p><i>Chair:</i> Stanis Smith, Principal</p> <p><i>Speaker:</i> Suzette Noble, CEO, LaGuardia Gateway Partners</p>

As you can see, the content was diverse and attendees – both in-person and virtual – hopefully learned new information given the breadth of research presented. The field is growing; it is clear that there is a lot of work to be done, including implementation of national standards; and attendance at future years by others is encouraged. In closing, it was interesting to see accessibility in action as the conference had real-time transcription on the large screens, sign language speakers for each session (note person in grey sweater in image below), and conveniently located water bowls for assistance dogs.

