

Hamilton Mountain News – Accessibility Assessment – Recreation Centres

In and or about the halfway through I must express my gratitude to those who have supported me on this journey – Mark, Mike, Gord – thank you. Our journey began at the McNab Recreation Centre – greeted by friendly staff, who were made aware of what we were doing today. One of the major things that was top of mind as I entered the building and something that I am extremely conscious of is language. “Please wait behind plexiglass” rather than, please “stand”. The social distancing markers showing feet rather than saying “6 feet”. Is another imposition of language.

As our journey went through the building, I had the opportunity to assess changerooms in addition to washrooms. One of my pet peeves is when accessibility is compromised by being used as storage space. Entering the rooms there were mechanical door openers. The space between storage lockers and benches was a little tight, ideally having a space, for someone to sit in a chair or use a mobility device on their own and reach a locker was my recommendation. This was common throughout the day. One of the biggest opportunities in the changerooms that needs to be changed is the closing the locker and the mechanism. It’s a push up lever then pull. Fine motor skills may make this way of opening a door challenging. Lever doors are the simplest and most accessible. Travel wise and space was open concept which is ideal. I also noticed the spaces in the washroom was tight, we need to measure from the biggest depth perception and go from there. Also, factoring in whether we are left side dominant or right side dominant. The accessible shower set up needs work, plumbing, drainage, and bench set up, a pull-down shower handle with adjustability is ideal. As well as a bench that doesn’t fold into the wall. Ensuring we are proactive in thinking from that concept is of the utmost of importance. We tend to think for most, not for all. I had also mentioned to staff and they had availability in some aspects of different information available in different formats (large print, braille) etc.

We made our way to Sackville – automatic doors, wonderful open concept space where check in spaces were accessible for all. In addition to washrooms, we visited craft spaces and open spaces, many push button operators were missing, having only a birds-eye view because of programming going on in some activity spaces. The organization was spectacular and everything from my point of view seemed feasible. The washrooms and change rooms spaces were tight. Grab bar and L-shaped bars, in particular I am personally not a fan of, too much risk of injuries to hands and wrists. I would rather two separate bars and position everything accordingly to exceed standard. This was noticeable throughout. What is also needed is transition strips to note flooring changes and changes in slope. Different accessibility challenges require different accommodations, and these are meant so everyone can be included.

Hill Park – Requires massive changes. Getting to the building along a broken-down pathway was my first obstacle getting to only a push button door operator – poorly positioned. When I entered with information and markings in poor language. Space was very tight and transitioning to rooms with out markings will be a challenge to many. Many hangers and hooks were too high for people who use mobility devices. Washrooms were tight and also used for storage. Activity spaces were clear, with standard tables and accessories neatly tied away. However, in cooking and baking area and craft area, sink had no clearance for wheelchair. Washrooms were tight and cluttered as I only visited the men’s washroom and gender neutral throughout my travels. This space requires more people with lived experiences to take grasp of what changes need to be made to support access and inclusion. We simply require action to take place.

Lastly, we hit Huntington Park – the first thing clear was I couldn’t find the push button operator. It was there, just poorly placed. Excellent staff and customer service receptive to us and all throughout our journey. Entering the building the signage was similar to previous stops. Needs more embracing of inclusive language. Very tight spaces in washroom, poorly positioned showers for those with mobility devices and standard lockers with too much to open them, definitely requires more lever style openers. Unique to Huntington that I noticed was rubberized flooring, definitely a challenge for me to wheel on. There were a few ramps and surface changes that require transition strips. A few areas had motions sensor lights which is ideal, but to turn on lights was a challenge. Including many places throughout the days journey more motion lights were needed.

One of the things that would recommend is the use of a rectangular style push button operator as it has the most adjustability and flexibility for different needs within our community. The receptiveness to my observations has been great. Let’s see if this amounts to change. From Hamilton Mountain News 2022 - providing support

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