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**Date** November 9, 2023 **Report No.** 2023-679

**To** Chair and Members  
Brantford Accessibility Advisory Committee (BAAC)

**From** Maria Visocchi  
Director, Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

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## 1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item   
Item For Consideration

## 2.0 Topic **National Accessibility Awareness Week -2024** **[Financial Impact: \$13,000]**

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## 3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report No. 2023-679 regarding National Accessibility Awareness Week (NAAW) 2024 BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT staff be directed to detail the plan presented herein for the Committee's approval at the next BAAC meeting.

## 4.0 Background

At the September 7, 2023 BAAC meeting, the Committee endorsed relaunching the City's Accessibility Awards campaign, that recognizes individuals and congratulates organizations within our community that have shown a commitment to providing excellent accessibility initiatives to accommodate people with disabilities. While the campaign to nominate candidates will begin in March 2024, the recognition awards will be distributed to coincide with National Accessibility Awareness Week 2024 (NAAW).

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In addition to the Awards program, NAAW presents a significant opportunity for the City of Brantford to engage our community in a meaningful dialogue about accessibility and inclusion. In preparation for NAAW 2024, Communications and Community Engagement staff, in collaboration with Community Services and Social Development staff, and the City's Accessibility Coordinator, have been actively exploring the prospect of hosting a "Diversity and Inclusion" event during NAAW from May 26 – June 1, 2024. This event aims to empower citizens with a better understanding of the actions undertaken by the City to foster a more inclusive and barrier-free community. It is intended to emphasize the importance of creating an environment where all individuals can participate fully, regardless of their diverse abilities, ensuring they are not hindered by barriers.

#### **4.1 UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities**

In May 2022, Brantford City Council approved a staff recommendation to join the UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (CIC).

As a member of the CIC, the City of Brantford committed to working with community partners to develop an Inclusive Community Plan to celebrate, promote and support cultural values and diversity.

In June 2023, Brantford City Council unanimously adopted the Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026, which was endorsed by over 30 community organizations, and based on three guiding principles: 1) Learn from Each Other 2) Stand up for Each Other and 3) Celebrate Each Other (Report 2023-21, Inclusive Community Plan 2023-2026).

The event proposed for National Accessibility Awareness Week represents a unique opportunity to apply these guiding principles, and recognize efforts to support a welcoming and inclusive community.

## **5.0 Analysis**

As part of the proposed event, staff suggest adopting an "Event Fair" approach. This approach is designed to facilitate the engagement of numerous community agencies that specialize in providing services to different groups, contributing to an inclusive community. By inviting these agencies to participate, the event can create a platform where they can share valuable information about their services, fostering an atmosphere of mutual support and empowerment. This initiative aims to promote inclusivity and raise awareness about the resources available to diverse groups, ultimately reinforcing the City's commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

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Additionally, staff propose a unique and impactful component for the Diversity and Inclusion event, involving members of the City Council in the creation of a "lived experience" video. This video project intends to offer City Council members an opportunity to experience, firsthand, the daily challenges that individuals with disabilities encounter. The video will document a day in the life of several participants with disabilities, capturing the barriers and potential difficulties they face. The primary objective of this video is to vividly illustrate the obstacles faced by people with disabilities and educate the broader public on the positive impact of removing these barriers. The overarching message is that enhanced accessibility significantly improves the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

The proposal to host a "Diversity and Inclusion" event during National Accessibility Awareness Week in 2024 aligns with the City of Brantford's ongoing commitment to promoting accessibility and inclusion. By adopting a "Fair" approach, the event would not only raise awareness but also provide a platform for community agencies to connect with citizens. This aligns well with the principles of inclusion and highlights the importance of community collaboration.

Moreover, the idea of creating a "lived experience" video featuring members of the City Council is a powerful and innovative method to convey the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. This approach has the potential to resonate with a wide audience and inspire action. The video serves as a dynamic educational tool that can effectively illustrate the need for continuous efforts to remove barriers and enhance accessibility in our community.

National Accessibility Awareness Week serves as the perfect backdrop for this event. It provides a nationally recognized platform for the City of Brantford to showcase its dedication to creating an inclusive environment. Hosting such an event is not only an opportunity to highlight ongoing accessibility initiatives but also to inspire and engage residents, fostering a collective commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

The estimated budget to implement the recommendations in this report is \$13,000 including approximately \$5,000 to host the Diversity and Inclusion event, \$5,000 to produce the accessibility experiential video, and \$3,000 to promote the event and video. Budget is estimated only and may increase/decrease pending discussion with the Committee and consultation with Finance staff with respect to appropriate funding sources.

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## 7.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

There are no climate and environmental implications associated with this report.

## 8.0 Conclusion

The proposal to host a "Diversity and Inclusion" event during National Accessibility Awareness Week 2024, reflects the City of Brantford's unwavering commitment to promoting accessibility and inclusion. The "Fair" approach and the "lived experience" video component are innovative and impactful strategies that can engage and educate the community about the importance of accessibility.

By hosting such an event, the City of Brantford can showcase its dedication to creating an inclusive and barrier-free community, fostering collaboration between diverse agencies, and ensuring that accessibility is at the forefront of its agenda. We recommend that the Brantford Accessibility Awareness Committee endorse and support the planning and execution of this event, which has the potential to leave a lasting impact on our community's journey toward a more inclusive and accessible future.



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Director, Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

Prepared By:

Maria Visocchi, Director Communications, Community Engagement and Customer Service

Attachments (if applicable)

Copy to:

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required  yes  no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk  yes  no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council?  yes  no