



International  
Day of  
**Persons with  
Disabilities**

**3 DECEMBER**

**Free Webinar**

Disabilities  
ISSUES  
OFFICE  
Manitoba 

Thursday, December 3, 2020  
2 to 3:30 p.m. CDT.

MORE INFORMATION: [AccessibilityMB.ca](http://AccessibilityMB.ca)



## **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

December 3, 2020 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. CDT.

For more information, please visit: [www.accessibilitymb.ca](http://www.accessibilitymb.ca)

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### **Speakers:**

Erika Vas, Manitoba Accessibility Office (formerly Disabilities Issues Office)

Yutta Fricke, Manitoba Accessibility Office

Heather Stefanson, Minister of Families & Minister Responsible for  
Accessibility

John Wyndels, Manitoba Accessibility Office

Yvonne Peters, Human Rights Lawyer

Jen Cameron, Winnipeg Airports Authority

Narrator 1, Red Apple - Stonewall

Betty Alexander, Gateway Church

Narrator 2, Woodlands Pioneer Museum

Duane Nicol, City of Selkirk

Dan McDermid, City of Selkirk

Brady Clark, City of Selkirk

Narrator 3, RM of Victoria Beach

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## **YouTube Chapters**

01:30 Webinar program

02:52 Ministerial greeting & opening remarks

11:55 Keynote speaker, Yvonne Peters

47:00 Introduction to the Manitoba Accessibility Awards & winners

50:09 Large Business - Winnipeg Airports Authority

57:27 Small Business - Red Apple - Stonewall

1:03:16 Non-Profit Organization Urban - Gateway Church, Winnipeg

1:09:01 Non-Profit Organization Rural - Woodlands Pioneer Museum

1:14:54 Large Municipality - City of Selkirk

1:18:46 Small Municipality - RM of Victoria Beach

1:26:43 Closing Remarks

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**[Webinar Begins]**

**Erika Vas (00:00):** Welcome to the December 3<sup>rd</sup>, International Day of Persons' with Disabilities Webinar! *Aaniin, Boozhoo, Tansi, Wotziye, Ho/Han, Tanshi, Tuungasugitsil!* We would like to acknowledge that the IPD Webinar is located on Treaty 1 Territory, the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples and the homeland of the Metis Nation. We encourage you to reflect upon the history of the land that you are watching from.

**Erika Vas:** So, hi everyone! This is Erika Vas with the Disabilities Issues Office. For questions, comments, or technical assistance, please contact the Disabilities Issues Office at 204-945-7613 or toll free at 1-800-282-8069 ext. 7613 or by email [dio@gov.mb.ca](mailto:dio@gov.mb.ca) – please note that the accessibility services for today's webinar include captioning, ASL interpretation, and this is a recorded webinar, and the video will be available at [accessibility.mb.ca](http://accessibility.mb.ca) in the near future. So, without further ado, I'd like to, now welcome, Yutta Fricke.

**Yutta Fricke (01:30) :** I'm going to start by just wishing everybody a Happy International Day of Persons' with Disabilities, it's our chance to celebrate that in Manitoba, we're a part of a global community of people with disabilities and that is really our strength. Today we're celebrating the International Day of People with Disabilities with a webinar program that is largely pre-recorded. The program includes a pre-recorded Ministerial greeting from the honorable Heather Stephenson, a short update from the Disabilities Issues Office, I remain live whenever possible, and then today's keynote presentation is also pre-recorded, he is the Human Rights Lawyer, Yvonne Peters, in conversation with my colleague John Wyndels. I think many people are excited about our first ever Manitoba Accessibility Awards, and the announcement of this year's winners, which will be the main part of today's program. We'll close with some closing remarks and some suggestions for resources. Now it's my pleasure to introduce the honorable Heather Stephenson, the Minister of Families, who for 16 years has served as the MLA for Tuxedo. In 2020, the Manitoba government appointed Minister Stephenson as the first minister responsible for accessibility. Welcome, Minister Stephenson!

**Heather Stephenson (02:52):** Hello everyone, and a warm welcome to the many accessibility champions, including businesses, non-profit organizations, and members of Manitoba's disability community who are joining us today. Though we can't gather in person this year to mark this occasion together, please accept virtual greetings and hugs on behalf of the province of Manitoba and my colleagues here in the Manitoba Legislature. I'm honored to bring greetings today, on the International Day of Persons' with Disabilities, when Manitoba joins millions across the world in promoting the rights, dignity, and well-

being of persons with disabilities. The United Nations' theme for this year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities is: "Not all disabilities are visible". This is a reminder that we cannot assume the presence of a disability by the way a person looks.

**Heather Stephanson:** This theme is particularly relevant during this pandemic, where the priority is to reduce risk to individuals with underlying health conditions. The Manitoba Government shares the United Nations' concern about invisible disabilities with special consideration during an emergency. When it comes to emergencies, some employees who generally do not require workplace accommodations, may still need support, and that is why we introduce safety requirements under the Accessibility Standards Require for Employment. Beginning in May of this year, this regulation calls on *all* Manitoba employers, to reach out to their employees to ask whether or not they need assistance during this pandemic. When the standard was developed several years ago, we envisioned a workplace emergency scenario where an employee with a heart condition could not run down 10 flights of stairs to evacuate the building. During this pandemic, keeping vulnerable employees safe may mean avoiding the workplace altogether.

**Heather Stephanson:** Accessibility is crucially integral to the roll out to the Manitoba government's response to the pandemic. This can be seen, for example, ensuring American Sign Language interpretation during briefings, and offering an interactive voice response to access the COVID-19 screening tool. I know Manitobans participating in this webinar are aware of the severity of the pandemic in our province, and the tremendous sacrifices we've made on the frontlines of healthcare, social services, education, and the many services we rely on, and the impact particularly on individuals with disabilities. In these challenging times, it's important to also draw attention to the many heroes helping us fight the pandemic. The work that is taking place in the lab has two years to enhance universal access, and inclusion has helped ensure the additional challenges of the pandemic are more manageable for everyone. In 2020, Manitoba Accessibility Award winners demonstrate the leadership and innovation necessary to ensure all Manitobans benefit from public initiatives.

**Heather Stephanson:** My sincere congratulations to the following 6 Manitoba Accessibility Award Winners. In the category of *Large and Small Business*: Winnipeg Airports Authority and the Red Apple Store in Stonewall. In the category of *Urban and Rural Non-Profit Organizations*: Gateway Church in Winnipeg and Woodlands Pioneer Museum, in Woodlands, Manitoba. And finally, congratulations to the City of Selkirk and the RM of Victoria Beach, in the category of *Large and Small Municipalities*. I wish to note that, in a province where much attention is paid to its largest city: Winnipeg, the awards demonstrate the commitment to accessibility is province-wide, with outstanding leadership shown by the Interlake Region. I also wish to emphasize two common elements among the six accessibility award winners. Each of the nominations noted the

importance of collaborating with community partners, particularly with people who experience barriers to accessibility. For instance, the city of Selkirk worked with its age-friendly committee, and the Winnipeg Airports Authority reached out to disability organizations for advice and trial-runs. There are many valuable lessons to learn, both from the Manitoba 2020 Accessibility Award winners and the other organizations that were nominated.

**Heather Stephanson:** Today, you will learn more about the winning applications, but all nominations have been invited to share their stories and tips in the months to come. Accessibility is a long-term goal, with short-term priorities across the Manitoba government. I look forward to sharing details of our two-year accessibility plan affecting 2021 and 2022 and thank individuals who provided their feedback to engage Manitoba. Those of you who have been following our progress and implementing our Accessibility for Manitobans Act, may be familiar with the work of the Disabilities Issues Office. Including in coordinating today's event. Today I am pleased to announce that in future – this focus on accessibility will be reflected in the office's name. Beginning today, the Disabilities Issues Office – the new name for it, will be the Manitoba Accessibility Office. As you may be aware, today's event is taking place in the final month of Manitoba's 150<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations, like all other festivities during the pandemic, many of the governments' plans were postponed to a post-pandemic period. In light of Manitoba's 150<sup>th</sup>, I'm especially pleased that today's event will honor the contributions of Manitobans with disabilities to our province, the country, and the United Nations effort to secure Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Heather Stephanson:** Yvonne Peters, who is being featured today, is one of many Manitobans who have contributed to disability rights. Another leader is Jim Doerksen, who like Yvonne, served on the Accessibility Advisory Council. Manitobans also cherish the memory of Alan Simpson, who was a local and national hero behind the Global Independent Living Movement. Alan worked closely with Henry Enns, who was also instrumental in moving Canada's and the United Nation's perspective away from a medical model of disability and toward a social model, eventually leading to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Finally, I wish to thank Dave Martin, who made his mark in building and leading the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities and later, Ten-Ten Sinclair Housing Inc. Dave was also the second executive director of Manitoba's Disabilities Issues Office, before becoming a special advisor to the Minister of Families. Please join me in thanking Dave for his many years of service and wishing him well in his recent retirement.

**Heather Stephanson:** We are fortunate that Yvonne is with us today to share some of the stories that have become a part of Manitoba's history. By looking back, we can learn from these experiences, to plan a way forward, in closing – congratulations to the award

recipients, thank you to all those who worked hard to put this event together, and Happy International Day of Persons with Disabilities! I wish everyone continued good health as we enter this holiday season. Please stay safe! Thank you.

**Yutta Fricke:** Thank you Minister Stephanson. It is now my chance to also introduce you to our new logo! As Minister Stephanson noted, we are no longer the Disabilities Issues Office, in future, we are the Manitoba Accessibility Office, or the Bureau de l'Accessibilité de Manitoba. So, that is my brief update for the moment, because it's now time to welcome Yvonne Peters, who is our keynote speaker today. Yvonne is human rights lawyer, has been for over 30 years. She served as legal counsel and advisor in a number of quality test cases involving disability rights, and women's rights, and she continues her human rights work with a number of community organizations. Yvonne Peters is truly an accessibility champion. Please join Yvonne and my colleague Joh Wyndels in conversation.

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**John Wyndels (11:55):** As you mentioned earlier, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities, when Manitoba will join people across the world in promoting rights and well-being for persons with disabilities. In Manitoba, we've been very fortunate, we have a number of genuine trailblazers in the field, in the year in which we celebrate Manitoba's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, we've wanted to take this opportunity to speak to one of Manitoba's leaders in the disability rights field and hear the reflections on the considerable gains accomplished and the work left to be done. Yvonne Peters is a human rights lawyer, she has served as the former chairperson on the Human Rights Council, as well as the former chairperson of the Accessibility Advisory Council, which is the central body responsible for developing recommendations regarding accessibility standards in Manitoba. Hi, Yvonne!

**Yvonne Peters:** Hi! Thanks for having me, John, and may I just take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy International Day of Persons with Disabilities! I hope it's a day of celebration, hope, and renewed commitment to rights!

**John Wyndels:** Thank you very much! Most people listening probably recognize Yvonne Peters for the important roles you played in human rights and accessibility development, but they don't - they know little, if anything about your background. So, tell me a little bit about your beginnings and how you got started in the field of human rights?

**Yvonne Peters:** Well... thank you for asking! It's an interesting question for me to reflect on! I guess it was several influences throughout my life that came together and pushed me in this direction, but I'd say it goes back a lot way to when I was about 6 years old,

perhaps, I went to an integrated kindergarten and did just fine and thought, that was the way life was going to be, but when I was 6 I was told “No, you cannot go to school with your sisters, and your friends, you must get on a train to Saskatoon, travel for two days, and go to a residential school for the blind in Ontario!” and I spent 10 months of the year there away from my family, and I didn’t even have words to describe it then, but I thought, “Hmm... this isn’t fair! I don’t like this!” and when I was at the school, what I also discovered was that there was a difference in how females and male students were treated. Male students certainly had way more privileges than female students, we were under you know, quite a few heavy restrictions, so I thought “There’s some unfairness!” and of course I witnessed, you know, what I would call some brutal treatment of our Indigenous students and Inuit students in terms of how they were treated.

**Yvonne Peters:** So, all of this made me think, this doesn’t seem right! So fast forward to as I became a young woman, this was in the 70s and of course, then there were lots of activities going on with women’s rights, but I actually became a women’s rights activist *first*, because that seemed more important to me in my life, but as I you know, went through university and then graduated and started looking for jobs. I started encountering very weird experiences with employers who had a very negative attitudes about persons who were blind and who were worried about, how would we get to the washroom, how would I protect my safety, and what my colleagues would think of me, and they didn’t seem interested in what kinds of skills I had. And so, this began to you know, really gnaw at me and I thought well, you know, this is not right as well, and I’ll just conclude by saying, what *really* put the icing on the cake for me was, when I went to – well after my first degree, I went back to school and got my degree in social work. One of my projects involved looking at worker’s rights and I discovered that Human Rights’ Legislation, which was a real new concept to me, I was very excited about this, and then I discovered when I looked into the human rights legislation, which was really amazing because it protected people against discrimination, it’s something that I could relate to. But I discovered that people with disabilities did not have protection, so my experience is that I encountered with employers would *not* be covered under the Human Right Legislation.

**Yvonne Peters:** So that just ignited a fire in my soul I guess, and I reached out to what was then the voice of the handicapped and said, “Come on, folks! We’ve got to change this!” and I found very amazing, experienced, like-minded people and well there you go, the rest is history!

**John Wyndels:** I was actually injured in a car accident back in 1981, so I’ve been using wheelchair for the better part of, oh I don’t know, coming up on 40 years I suppose, and that was the first year that they introduced a curb cut in Manitoba, and it’s hard for me to believe all the changes that have happened as far as wheelchair technology and accessibility and everything, in my – in how I’ve been able to navigate my community.

You're blind and have been blind for your entire life, has accessibility improved considerably for persons with impaired vision over say 30 years? Or say 40 years?

**Yvonne Peters:** I'm going to say yes and no. Yes, I think you have to say yes, that things have improved, when I was looking for a job in the 70s, we didn't have the technology that we have today, which gets us much greater access to all kinds of things, including print information and various pieces of equipment and so on. And as I said, back in the 70s, there certainly wasn't any legal protection for our rights, and nor did we have the disability rights movement, which I think was really instrumental in pushing the government for social policy change, for law reform, back in the 70s you know, it was all – disability was all the – the guise of non-profit charitable organizations and really had no concept of rights, so I think just the fact that we've actually been able to crystallize and identify that people with disabilities, blind persons, have rights – has been very significant and important, and there have been some forward legal decisions that really articulate those rights, but the “no” part is ... you know, even though we have the technology there are still lots of... barriers when it comes to attitudes about blindness.

**Yvonne Peters:** It's one of the things that people with disabilities seem to fear the most, when surveyed – so that says to be that there is a misunderstanding about what it means to be blind. And certainly, you know, every day I encounter websites that are not accessible to me because they are designed with a visual people – you know, people who can see in mind, and so they use pictures and so on. So yes, we've come a long way, yes, we still have a way to go.

**John Wyndels:** Let's go back to the 1980s and the Canadian Charter of Rights. Since 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights is the highest law in the land. Section 15 guarantees the equality rights of individuals before the law. It guarantees that persons with disabilities are protected by and will receive the same benefits under the law as any other Canadian. Is that true, that people with disabilities did *not* make the first draft of that section?

**Yvonne Peters:** Yes, it is true, and let me just step back a little bit and say, in the late 70s that's when the Disability Rights Movement really got organized, especially on the national level, and so we've been pushing for inclusion of people with disabilities in all jurisdictions in terms of human rights legislation. Then Mr. Trudeau at the time, Pierre Trudeau at the time, came along and said that he wanted to bring our Constitution back from Britain, bring it to Canada, and he wanted to include a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which he did – and in that Charter was the equality guarantee Section 15. And so, he – there were lots of drafts put out, but the first draft went out and people with disabilities were omitted and women were not happy, and so then other drafts came out, which really were *good* drafts because they actually really expanded the notion of

equality, you know, equality before and under the law, equality protection, and equality benefit of the law. ng it to Canada,

**Yvonne Peters:** So those are really important phrases, but as the continual drafts came out, people with disabilities were relentlessly omitted. That did change at the very last minute for a whole range of reasons to speculate on, certainly because now the media was picking up on this issue, through the protests that we held and there were lots of rumors spreading around that people with disabilities taking over Parliament Hill. We certainly had insiders working for us in the political arena who were pushing for this inclusion and of course, we were coming onto the 1981 International Year of Persons with Disabilities. So, it would look pretty... mean-spirited you could say, of Canada, to leave people with disabilities out the Constitution during this important International Year. So, who knows what actually was the final spark that motivated Jean Chretien to say that they would amend the clause, but the important thing is that it *was* amended at the very last minute, and physical and mental disabilities was included in Section 15?

**John Wyndels:** So, tell me a little bit about what impact including disability has had in that section? Like, can you give me some examples?

**Yvonne Peters:** Sure! Sure, I mean, and I just - I want to say that one of the main reasons that we really wanted to ensure that people with disabilities were including in Section 15, is because we didn't want in Canada, for there to be a hierarchy of rights. So, if people with disabilities are in the human rights legislation, but not mentioned in The Charter, does that mean that they have less rights? That was our worry. So, that's why we really were just very vigorously insisting that we be included. Now, as you said, the Constitution – Canada's Constitution is the top law of the country, and what it means is that all laws – all government laws, policies, programs, procedures, *must* comply with the equality guarantee in Section 15 - and that includes people with disabilities! And just, two cases that I would like to talk about, which I think really illustrates why Section 15 is so important.

**Yvonne Peters:** The first case is the Andrew's Case, and it was the very first case to actually consider the guarantee of equality, under Section 15 by the Supreme Court of Canada, and the Council of Canadians with Disabilities and the Women's Legal Education National Fund – both equality groups intervened in the case to make sure that the court got it right. If you read this case, you'll see that we have a pretty significant influence all on the way that the court interpreted this Section 15. And so, what the court said was, "Equality isn't just about treating everyone the same, it is about ensuring everybody benefits equally." What the judge said was "the accommodation of difference is the true mark of equality" and so that was really important because if we just treat everyone the same, if you give me a printed book and you give my classmate a printed book, they can

say “Well you’re being treated the same, what’s your complaint?” but of course, I can’t benefit, because I’m blind, from a printed book.

**Yvonne Peters:** Now, another case where this was really played out and really well illustrated was the Eldritch Case, I’ll call it, which was also a Supreme Court of Canada Case, and also a case in which many equality seekers including the Council of Canadians with Disabilities intervened in. This case involved deaf people who were seeking healthcare in British Columbia, and they of course, may seek healthcare, but they were not provided a sign language interpretation so that they could really understand the nature of the healthcare they were receiving. And they complained and said, “This is not equality, we’re not benefitting the same way as others!” and they took the matter to court, and the lower courts said, “No, no, no – you *are* receiving equality, you are being treated the same as hearing people, you’re getting healthcare, what is your concern? You’re fine!” But they said, nope! And they appealed the case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, and at *that* court we got, probably one of the most defining disability rights, equality cases so far, in that, the judges clearly said that simply treating people the same, and these are the words they used, they said, “Bespokes a thin and impoverished view of equality,” and they went on to say that the accommodation of difference is the cornerstone of equality in that, in order for full equality to be in effect, people must also benefit from equality, not just be treated the same. But they must be able to enjoy the benefit of the program that is being offered.

**Yvonne Peters:** So, they not only get healthcare, they have to benefit from healthcare. So that was a very important distinction in terms of defining what we mean by disability from equality rights. And I will just say, in addition, and a kind of a part of that whole analysis that the court engaged in, it was the first time, as far as I know, that the Supreme Court actually acknowledged the social construct of disability – that disability is not just something that comes from the individual, that is imperative, disability is something that is exacerbated by the way our society is structured and arranged, and the court acknowledged, you know, the social implications of disability, and so that was very important. There’s lots of other cases, but those are two that I kind of – two cases that stand out for me.

**John Wyndels:** Well, you certainly followed – like that seemed to be those – that was a precursor to where you took your career, from there, where you served as the chairperson to the Manitoba Human Rights Commission for more than a decade I think, and although most of you think that the adjudications of a commission are resolved individual complaints, a number of decisions lead to systematic changes – what are some of the resolutions in Manitoba that affected persons with disabilities?

**Yvonne Peters:** Right, yes, I did serve on the Manitoba Board of Commissions for the Manitoba Human Rights Commission for many years, and I was I think, for 4 years I was the chair. I'd just like to say a slight correction, you know, during the time I was on the board, and I have no reason to think this is any different. Any complaint that the condition looks for, what is the systemic issue here? Is there a systemic issue? It's not just an individual, there's no sense in just resolving individual complaints if you're not really addressing the key problem, which might be the way a policy is being administered, or where there are barriers that need to be addressed, so I just wanted to make that point. But a couple of cases that I think are really illustrated of how systemic discrimination can be dealt with, that occurred during my time, the first one was a complaint filed by Dave Martin, who many of you know, and Amy Bridgeman, who I hope you will remember.

**Yvonne Peters:** They filed a couple of complaints saying that the light signals for traffic – the pedestrian light signals were not accessible to persons who can't push the buttons, and to persons who are blind who don't benefit from a visual cue. And I would say that this was a new issue for the commission to deal with, and uh... they put – the complainants put a lot of effort into explaining this issue to the staff at the commission and was very helpful to the board, when in fact, as a result of that complaint and negotiations with the City of Winnipeg, many – most corners now, many of them anyways, now are equipped with audible pedestrian signals, so that you can *hear* when the light has changed and when it is safe to cross. And I think that was a very important decision, it certainly made my life easier and every time I go walking I thank Dave and Amy for their efforts and, interestingly a few weeks ago I got a phone call from Senator – or sorry, Councillor Ross Eadie, who told me that there was a plan in place for the city to institute these various pedestrian signals, audible signals, and the plan was spanning many, many years, I don't remember if it was supposed to finish 2025, but the city *just* installed their final audible pedestrian signal as part of their plan, just a few months ago – so way ahead of schedule!

**Yvonne Peters:** So, you know, there was resistance at first, you know, lots of excuses and reasons as to why this would be a problem or why it would bother people, but in the end the city did come forward and we now have – it's much safer for blind people to be able to navigate their environment. The other case I'll mention, which didn't come about as a disabilities complaint per se, was actually Manitoba commissioned itself that took on this issue, and that was for anybody, for any of you that have been traveling on the public bus system, you will know that you can hear audible announcements telling you what stops you're at. So, they audibly announce the various stops, and the Commission went to the city and said, here's an issue for you to deal with, we know there have been complaints in other jurisdictions on this matter, they've been successful, why not – let's get this going without a complaint, why not think about doing it now. And again, the City of Winnipeg did step up, and they did agree to implement the call-all stops system, at first

the drivers were doing it, and then they instituted a more automatic system, and again interestingly there was resistance!

**Yvonne Peters:** People thought it was bothersome to be on the bus and hear these things, and the drivers were not happy with it, but it just shows you that over time, if you just keep pushing, suddenly it just becomes part of everyday occurrence. Now I get on the bus, nobody says anything, it's there, it makes my life just so much easier to note, and I'm getting off at the right stop! And now I can get across the street with an audible pedestrian signal and yeah! It makes my life so much easier!

**John Wyndels:** Absolutely!

**Yvonne Peters:** But that came out from the Human Rights Commission!

**John Wyndels:** You also served as the chairperson of the Manitoba Accessibility Advisory Council, and you know, and as chairperson, we were responsible for developing the recommendations to leading to accessibility standards and issues such as transportation and the design of public spaces, and customer service, and so on, and you've been involved in it for a long time – is accessibility legislation bringing about the changes needed, you know, to change the lives of persons with disabilities?

**Yvonne Peters:** Well, I'm going to answer in my personal capacity and not representing any particular institution. I would say that first of all, having accessibility legislation and the accompanying standards are extremely important, because I think it creates a commitment and an awareness that there are barriers out there that need to be addressed, and it sets out ways for addressing those barriers, and I think it's having some impact. I guess where I worry personally is... we have a lot of different instruments to this country, even in this province, to do the right thing, but we struggle to get that right thing done. And I find that accessibility in some cases, in Manitoba, is very good, and in some cases, very wanting. So, it's inconsistent, there are still lots of barriers out there, so why is that? I mean, I guess I'd say that it's all really fine to have the awareness and saying that we need to do these things, but you've got to enforce it. You've got to be able to have a system out there that ensures that these things are happening.

**Yvonne Peters:** People have lots of priorities, and if there isn't somebody knocking on their door saying, "This is a priority!" you know, other things get in the way, and right in this moment in Manitoba, we can see how enforcement is needed in terms of making people – getting people to understand and comply with the public health rules around the pandemic. So, I think that's the same thing in terms of accessibility. We need to have that kind of enforcement that ensures that people understand how important it is, but I – you know, I'm very glad that we have these standards, I just think that our next step is take it

up a notch! And let's make sure that it really gets integrated in how we do business, because we don't know somebody who says, "Oh you know, I don't think I'm going to institute those fire safety regulations because you know, we got other things to do!" we need to say the same thing about accessibility, it's just something that's right there and should be partly integrated into the design, and then there's not a second guessing or thinking about it – it just gets done.

**John Wyndels:** I want to touch on just something internationally – in the Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities, Canada signed on and ratified the convention in 2010, but it's also non-binding, meaning that it holds no legal status in Canada and there are no penalties assigned for failing to achieve any of the articles of the convention. What is the importance of the convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in your opinion?

**Yvonne Peters:** Well, yeah, I really think it's very important actually, and while it isn't on its own, you know, enforceable as you say, it is a very important interpretive tool and it can be used both in terms of you know, assessing equality claims that may go to court, it's also important in terms of the kinds of actions and initiatives that governments undertake. The reason I think it's important is that if you look at the convention itself, it sets out very, very specific steps that governments need to be taken – need to take, in terms of providing access, in terms of providing employment, in terms of ensuring in-house security, in terms of providing proper education, technical aides' education, it's very, very specific. And so, you know, I think it provides a blueprint, if you will, in terms of what governments need to be doing. So, if we combine the convention with existing domestic tools, like the Charter, like Human Rights' Legislation, like social policy government programming, if we use that as our foundation, I think it can provide just excellent, excellent guidance.

**Yvonne Peters:** I think, if I could just say you know, we've spent a lot of time in this country thinking about the convention and what does it mean and how do we – and consulting with people, and how do we commit to them, and I think it's all important – but it's also 10 years later, we shouldn't still be at the drawing board stage. So personally again, I'm a little frustrated, like let's just get on with it, and maybe, maybe that's what we're going to see with the new Accessible Canada Act that's on the drawing board right now.

**John Wyndels:** [Laughs] which kind of leads me to, you know, my last question which is, you know, in the last couple of decades, there's been any number of binding and non-binding international agreements and legislative initiatives to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, but despite these achievements, measured against almost any established social criteria, persons with disabilities are amongst the most disadvantaged. They generally have a high unemployment rate, low levels of post-secondary education,

lower levels of housing, and higher cases of social isolation. What has to be done, knowing all that *has* been accomplished and all the things that have been in place to make these improvements, what has to be done to take the next step? To make the person or persons with disabilities, you know, achieve a higher lot in life?

**Yvonne Peters:** [Laughs] yeah, that's the huge million-dollar question. We, I think have to recognize that we have a lot of tools in our basket, I'm not saying that there can't be more tools, but we spent a lot of time crafting these tools. Now, we need to buckle down and make the work, and I think the time – you know, we need to say, how do we enforce all these good things that we have on paper? And you know, it comes down to political will. Well, how do we garner political good will? I mean, we lobby, and I mean I think you know; we absolutely need to support and provide resources to our advocacy groups and keep governments honest and hold their feet to the fire, we need that.

**Yvonne Peters:** We need to use the courts! I don't think we're using it as much as we could! And there are, I know it takes resources, but I know there are resources out there, and we need to use the courts to enforce our rights, and you know, I think we need to just double down and work really hard and you know, do what other minority groups are doing you know, in terms of making their views known and through various social action and – maybe we need to get back to the 60s, and 70s, and 80s, when we expressed our views on the street and - I don't want to be suggesting that it's all about protests, but I think we need to get our views known out there. It's got to be political pressure, and you know, that can happen from the outside, but it can also happen from the inside.

**Yvonne Peters:** So, I think we also need to be sure that we get people who are at those boardroom tables, who are at the Cabinet table – we do have some people with disabilities there *now*, I think who are working hard, but we need to be on the inside, and we need to be on the outside, you know, doing and making our best efforts to realize that in many of the rights that we've set out in our wonderful documents that we've signed on to. But I just want to say in addition to that, and this something that we maybe haven't done as well on, accessibility and removing barriers is key, it's *very* important, but we also need to look at the social disadvantage that many people with disabilities experience in terms of income and uh, poverty. And I don't think we've done enough that we - of course we have various jurisdictions and matters of income for people with disabilities are handled quite differently. I think we need a strategy that lifts people with disabilities out – up and out of poverty. It's amazing how many barriers you can start to address with these resources. So, you know, I say, keep on doing what we're doing, but do it *more*, and I think we really now have to focus our attention on the issue of income insecurity for people with disabilities. I think that's where our priority has to be over the next several years.

**John Wyndels:** Thank you so much, Yvonne!

**Yvonne Peters:** Thank you [inaudible]

**John Wyndels:** No, it's been great, I think that you know, we really appreciate your generosity and speaking with us and you know, sharing your insights.

**Yvonne Peters:** It's my passion! [Laughs]

**John Wyndels:** And your passion! On this very important day, thank you, Yvonne!

**Yvonne Peters:** Thank you! Thank you so much!

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**Yutta Fricke (47:00):** Thank you, Yvonne and John for that wonderful conversation, and Yvonne, for your insights and ongoing commitments to disability rights. As noted by Minister Stephanson, as we celebrate Manitoba 150, we can all take pride in the exceptional leadership of Manitobans with disabilities, as demonstrated by that conversation. Now... I think some of you may have been waiting for the inaugural introduction about the Manitoba Accessibility Awards! So, about our Manitoba Accessibility Awards, this is the first time that we're celebrating Manitoba organizations and businesses that have shown leadership and innovation in accessibility. Being the first year, I really have to thank the Manitoba Accessibility Awards Committee that also functioned as the selection committee, as worked out the process for the awards and how we would carry them out this year – the year of the pandemic in which we could not meet in person.

**Yutta Fricke:** So many thanks to the organizations that helped us: Manitoba Possible, Reaching Equality for Employment, Community Futures, SEE LifeWorks, March of Dimes, and the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities. They were all involved in our awards event. We also want to thank the nominators for their recommendations, and we want to recognize the following nominees that were all short-listed in this process. So, on the next slide you will see a number of these nominees listed, included are: City of Selkirk, City of Winnipeg, Community Futures Heartland, E-Quality Communications Centre of Excellence, Gateway Church, Herman Prior, Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba, Pelican Yacht Club, Red Apple Store – Stonewall, RM of Victoria Beach, Southwest Community Options, Unit 204 Productions, Winnipeg Airports Authority, Woodlands Pioneer Museum, and World Trade Centre – Winnipeg.

**Yutta Fricke:** So, thank you to everyone, even though not everyone was able to win the awards, everyone showed fantastic examples of accessibility and inclusion that we hope to highlight in various materials in the year to come. We were so impressed, along with

the selection committee, that we actually created an extra two categories. So, the categories for this year's Manitoba Accessibility Awards included: Business – Large and Small, Non-Profit Organizations - Urban/Rural, and Large and Small Municipalities. So, without further ado, here are this year's award winners!

**Yutta Fricke (50:09):** In the category of “Large Business” I’m pleased to announce this year’s award winner is: The Winnipeg Airports Authority! We are fortunate that they were able to share a video with us of all the exciting things they have been doing at the airports. So, we will share their video at this time.

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**Video description:** Jen Cameron of the mYWG Accessibility Committee responds to questions on accessibility.

**Jen Cameron:** What does accessibility mean to you and how is accessibility enhanced by your award-winning initiative?

**Jen Cameron:** For Winnipeg Airports Authority, accessibility means working together with our partners on an ongoing basis to ensure the service and facilities offered at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport reflect the diverse needs of our community. It's always been WAA's goal for every traveller coming through the airport to be able to anticipate an excellent travel experience. To accomplish this, we are working with a number of partners to reduce barriers and further offer accessibility services, to ensure every can feel comfortable and supported when they visit the airport.

**Video description:** A man with a white cane uses AIRA on his mobile device to check in for a flight at a self-serve kiosk

**Jen Cameron:** In the past year, Winnipeg Richardson International Airport was one of the first airports in Canada to launch AIRA, an assistive technology service that helps travellers who are blind or have low vision gain access to their immediate surroundings.

**Video description:** A WHILL autonomous mobility device moves by itself through the airport.

**Jen Cameron:** WAA also explored an exciting partnership with WHILL to trial an autonomous personal mobility device for future use at the airport.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron.

**Jen Cameron:** Apart from technology, WAA leads an accessibility committee, which is composed of community and airport partners alike, all working together to steer informed decisions to enhance accessibility at the airport. An example of this work is the launch of the Passenger Rehearsal Program.

**Video description:** An airport employee, a man with a guide dog, along with a woman and a sighted guide walk through the check-in area of the airport.

**Jen Cameron:** This program invites individuals with disabilities, or who require additional support-

**Video description:** Two women place their luggage on the baggage handling system.

**Jen Cameron:** -to sign up to receive a personalized, guided tour of the airport before their next trip.

**Video description:** A woman and a sighted guide have their bags checked by a CATSA Screening Officer.

**Jen Cameron:** This service helps to alleviate anxiety and build traveller confidence prior to catching a flight out of Winnipeg.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron

**Jen Cameron:** WAA also hosted a special one-day event to expand upon the program by inviting sixteen guests with different individual needs to move through a mock travel experience to identify barriers and provide firsthand feedback. All of these initiatives combined are contributing to help build a more inclusive and accessible airport environment at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport.

**Jen Cameron:** What was the significance of community collaboration?

**Jen Cameron:** Community collaboration is an integral component of the ongoing work happening at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport under the umbrella of accessibility.

**Video description:** A man talks with an Air Canada agent as his guide dog sits nearby.

**Jen Cameron:** By working together with individual and community organizations, WAA's been able to gain valuable feedback to incorporate different perspectives and more voices into future planning at the airport.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron.

**Jen Cameron:** This insight is greatly valued by our team as we work to ensure airport facilities and services open the door for more people to be able to experience the joys of travel. Community-based partnerships have also assisted in raising awareness of the different accessibility services and programs we offer at the airport.

**Video description:** A WHILL autonomous mobility device passes by Skylights Lounge in the Departures area of the airport.

**Jen Cameron:** Some of these services may be the difference between someone deciding the travel or not based on their level of comfort, and it is extremely valuable to have these partners sharing our information to reach different audience and resonate with more people.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron.

**Jen Cameron:** We look forward to following upon the conversations we've started with our community and have plans to work together on new initiatives in the near future.

**Jen Cameron:** What advice do you have for other organizations that wish to improve their accessibility?

**Jen Cameron:** It's been extremely beneficial for Winnipeg Airports Authority to leverage the expertise and advice of select community organizations who work with persons with disabilities on a daily basis to implement meaningful change in the area of equal access.

**Video description:** A man and his guide dog are assisted through the check-in area of the airport by an Air Canada agent.

**Jen Cameron:** We also further looked to our community to gain firsthand feedback from individuals with disabilities.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron.

**Jen Cameron:** Or who require additional support at the airport to consider and incorporate many different perspectives.

**Video description:** Kirk Goodlet, Chair of the mYWG Accessibility Committee, speaks to a group of seated individuals taking part in the Passenger Rehearsal Program.

**Jen Cameron:** It is important to communicate the work you are doing as a company to generate momentum.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron.

**Jen Cameron:** With each new program, service, or feature we introduce at the airport, more team members are continuing to deepen their understanding of accessibility and view processes and practices from an inclusive lens. This continues to lead to increased engagement, new ideas, and company-wide collaboration to shape a more inclusive airport to serve our community.

**Jen Cameron:** What does winning this award mean to you?

**Jen Cameron:** Winnipeg Airports Authority is extremely honoured to receive this prestigious recognition on behalf of the Manitoba Accessibility Awards Selection Committee. This award is affirmation our continued efforts to provide an accessible airport environment is creating a positive impact within our community and also further supports our vision to be leaders in transportation innovation and growth.

**Video description:** An airport employee assists a passenger who is deaf.

**Jen Cameron:** As an airport, we are required to meet specific accessibility regulations, but our team is always finding ways to go above and beyond and exceed those expectations to benefit everyone who visits the airport.

**Video description:** A woman uses a WHILL autonomous mobility device to navigate the departure area of the airport as another woman walks beside her.

**Jen Cameron:** It's great to see those actions and efforts acknowledged, and at the same time it really proves the point that when we work together, we can make a greater impact.

**Video description:** Screen goes back to Jen Cameron

**Jen Cameron:** This award recognizes programs and initiatives that wouldn't have been possible without the support of a number of organizations, partners, and team members all working together.

**Video description:** A man has his boarding pass scanned at the gate by an Air Canada Agent.

**Jen Cameron:** As an example, the Passenger Rehearsal Program involved lobbying Transport Canada to allow for a security exemption, and now, other airports across Canada are able to introduce a similar program for persons with disabilities.

**Video description:** A woman and a sighted guide walk past gate 9 in the departures area of the airport, right natural light fills the terminal from the floor-to-ceiling windows behind them.

**Jen Cameron:** Thank you for selecting Winnipeg Airports Authority for this award and it is a token that will further inspire our team to continue to make travel accessible and enjoyable for all at Winnipeg Richardson International Airport.

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**Yutta Fricke (57:27) :** And thank you for that excellent video, you can bet we'll be wanting to use that video for other training in the next year, including the great example of descriptive video, where all the different images are shared with people who are blind. That brings us next to the category of "Small Business" you will note that there were several questions addressed by Jen Cameron, we asked the same questions of our various winners, only about 3-4 weeks ago, and in that time, some were able to create videos and, in some cases, we helped create a video with the images they supplied, and that is the case in the category of "Small Business". This year's winner is: Red Apple – Stonewall, Manitoba! And here is our short video to talk about the features of that store.

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**Narrator 1:** Red Apple Stonewall. The tile page features four red balls representing the four questions, connected by four black lines displayed across the screen. Ball 1, Question 1: What does accessibility mean to you and how is accessibility enhanced by your award-winning initiative?

**Narrator 1:** To us, accessibility means being accepting and accommodating everyone who comes to our store. Our goal every day is to "GIFT" our customers by providing excellent customer service. We greet them with a smile. Inform them of our incoming store specials and upcoming promotions, exude friendliness when speaking and helping customers, and we thank them for shopping with us! We believe that our GIFT method enhances our definition of accessibility because we want customers to feel comfortable and respected during their shopping experience by our associates going above and beyond their expectations throughout their visit.

**Narrator 1:** A photo of one of the store's accessibility features – wide aisles have been implemented in the clothing department to increase accessibility; racks of clothing are pictured on either side of the aisle. A photo of one of the store's accessibility features –

the height of shelving units is adjusted to allow customers to easily reach for projects, various household appliances are pictured on a lower shelf.

**Narrator 1:** Ball 2, Question 2 – what was the significance of community collaboration?

**Narrator 1:** Community collaboration is very important to us. One of our company's core values is to connect with our community, in which we take great pride in serving and being a part of The Town of Stonewall in everything we do. Every year, we support our local food bank and local Christmas Cheer Board by holding our annual Food Drive and Toy Drive. We donate silent auction prizes to community events, and for the past two years, we have volunteered and donated outfits to Community Living Interlake's Fall Fashion Show, which raises money to purchase equipment and support people with disabilities living in the community. Community collaboration is important because it shows our customers that we are committed to getting involved and that we are understanding and support those in need in our community.

**Narrator 1:** Photo of a box filled with food and the message "Help Support Our Food Drive". Photo of a house with the message "Something Beautiful", which is one of Community Living Interlake's initiative. Photo of text that reads "Community Living Interlake".

**Narrator 1:** Ball 3, Question 3 – What advice do you have for other organizations that wish to improve their accessibility?

**Narrator 1:** Our advice would be to do their research; talk to organizations in their area about meeting accessibility needs, create a survey to get feedback, find resources and tools to train those in your organization about the Accessibility Act, get involved in the community and talk to people about what your organization can do to best improve accessibility.

**Narrator 1:** Photo of a hand placing paper in a feedback box. Photo of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act text.

**Narrator 1:** Ball 4, Question 4: What does winning this award mean to you?

**Narrator 1:** Winning this award means that we are taking the right steps in accommodating and providing a welcoming atmosphere for people with disabilities. It also means that we are standing by our Customer Service Policy Statement, which states that our company is committed to excellence in giving people with disabilities the same opportunities and benefits to our goods and services.

**Narrator 1:** Photo of a person wearing personal protective mask, located behind a table of food items with a sign that reads “Food Drive”. Photo of text that reads “Together We Care” with a heart and stick people.

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**Yutta Fricke (1:03:16):** Thank you Red Apple, for providing those thorough responses to our questions and I love the store statement that it committed to providing equal access to goods and services to Manitobans with disabilities, it’s wonderful! That moves us to the next category, which is “Non-Profit Organizations” beginning with “Urban Non-Profit Organizations”, the Manitoba Accessibility Award Winner in 2020 is: congratulations – Gateway Church! And thank you for providing us the following video.

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**Betty Alexander:** Good afternoon, my name is Betty Alexander and I'm with Gateway Church in Winnipeg. It's my pleasure to speak with you today and on behalf of Gateway I wish to express our gratitude to the awards committee for including us in the esteemed list of recipients for this Accessibility Award. Thank you very much! I'd like to share a couple thoughts with you today about accessibility. To me, “Accessibility” is an evolving term you know when I was a little girl, we didn't have things like curb cuts, ramps, or automatic door openers, but as the term began to pop up in our cultural conversation, it was synonymous with physical access. But from there it has now come to mean the identification and removal of barriers for all kinds of disabilities, so that everyone can engage in community life. As for us at Gateway, I'm most enthused and proud of the 150 people who have completed the Accessible Customer Service Training, 85% of which are unpaid volunteers. Our vision statement is this: “Gateway Church exists to spread the passion for the glory of God through Jesus Christ to every nation and every generation.” So, I'm not surprised that the people of Gateway are interested in engaged in creating a more inclusive and accessible church environment.

**Betty Alexander.** Collaboration is essential if you want to improve your accessibility, and for us it meant reaching out to the people in our congregation who are living with the effects of a disability. They are the experts in the field, and they were able to provide us with insights and information that helped guide the changes and improvements that we've been able to make. The Disabilities Office is also a great resource community – a great resource, the staff there are passionate informed and really want to help! Also, for us, we reached out to Ontario – they have created a guide for accessibility in places of worship. They kindly sent us several copies, which was full of great information for our sector, which we found really helpful for advice. I think the best piece of advice I could give would be to appoint an Accessibility Coordinator who will research and keep management, staff, and volunteers, informed on updates and legislation and on what's happening with accessibility in the province. The coordinator will manage and track all training and will

participate in the creation of any needed policies. I'd also recommend writing an Annual Accessibility Report. This will keep Accessibility vibrant and at the forefront of your organization, and that's important because we really are at the beginning of this journey.

**Betty Alexander:** Gateway is a church, a place of worship, and if ever there's a place where someone regardless of ability should be able to come and feel welcome, accepted, valued, and be able to fully engage – it's at their place of worship. So, winning this award means to us that it assures us that we are working in the right direction, and that we are in fact moving forward, which is really encouraging to us! We also hope to be an inspiration to other places of worship to begin or to continue on their own journey to improve accessibility. Accessibility isn't just important because it's the right thing to do, it's important because it promotes inclusion, and inclusion is the only way to create and sustain true community, and an inclusive society is indeed a noble goal. Thank you all for your kind attention, and thanks again to the awards committee - we really do feel honored! I wish you all the very best as we continue this journey to a fully accessible Manitoba. Thank you!

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**Yutta Fricke (1:09:01):** Thank you to Gateway Church for that excellent video and as someone who works in public awareness on accessibility, it is so heartening how the various messages presented today, complement one another and how important it is to all the winners to have spoken to experts with disabilities in their congregation, among their customers, among people flying in Manitoba, I think that is one thing that all applicants had in common, is that they talked to people that faced barriers to find out what should be the priorities in removing those barriers. So, thank you very much, and congratulations to Gateway! The next category of winners, which is in the rural area, “Non-Profit Organization Rural” 2020 Manitoba Accessibility Award winner, this year is: Woodlands Pioneer Museum!

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**Narrator 2:** Woodlands Pioneer Museum – the title page contains 4 questions located in boxes with a photo of a path and accessibility ramp, on the Woodlands Pioneer Museum property.

**Narrator 2:** Box 1, Question 1: What does accessibility mean to you and how is accessibility enhanced by your award-winning initiative?

**Narrator 2:** Accessibility, as identified in the statement of commitment to our plan, means working to ensure that all people, regardless of abilities, have equal access, participation and inclusion at the Woodlands Pioneer Museum. It means treating all people in ways which foster the maintenance of their dignity, safety, and independence. Winning this award underlines the seriousness of our intent, not only in achieving our goals related to

accessibility, but sharing the message that it is both necessary and possible. Examples of how we have enhanced accessibility includes such interventions as planning/policy development diligent training of staff and volunteers, the construction of accessible parking, walkways, ramps, and handrails, virtual tours of areas where mobility may limit access and meeting all the expectations of the Manitoba Accessibility for Customer Service. We also have met the objectives identified thus far in the Employment Standard.

**Narrator 2:** Photo of an accessible parking spot outside of the Woodlands Pioneer Museum Building in the background.

**Narrator 2:** Box 2, Question 2: What was the significance of community collaboration?

**Narrator 2:** We had the support of the Rural Municipality of Woodlands staff and their policies. Grant requests for goals related to accessibility were prioritized. We were successful in obtaining grant funds, locally as well as federally for several of our projects. We have a broad base of volunteers from a small community and our Board of Directors is large, as members stay for subsequent terms due to a strong belief in our mission. It is this group that has collaborated on our Accessibility Plan, volunteered to assist with the completion of projects and now celebrates our success in achieving our goals and recognition through this award.

**Narrator 2:** Photo of a newspaper clipping with the title “Virtual Access to Museum” that features two smiling staff members of the Woodlands Pioneer Museum.

**Narrator 2:** Box 3, Question 3 - What advice do you have for other organizations that wish to improve their accessibility?

**Narrator 2:** Make accessibility a household word in organization discussions and planning. The Woodlands Pioneer Museum is a small, not for profit organization completely managed by volunteers, the majority of whom are seniors. Do not view making your organization accessible as an insurmountable task for start by candidly identifying barriers. You will have taken the most important step. Removing one barrier at a time is absolutely achievable. Many funding bodies prioritize projects enhancing accessibility, search them out. Get your community on board and seek involvement and feedback from community members who will most benefit from your accessibility features. The Disability Issues Office has very valuable resource and was very helpful.

**Narrator 2:** Photo of a binder that reads “Woodlands Pioneer Museum Accessibility Plan” featuring various subsections pertaining to accessibility.

**Narrator 2:** Box 4, Question 4 – What does winning this award mean to you?

**Narrator 2:** The highlight of this award was receiving the nomination support letter from a community senior who identified benefits to her from our work. She spoke of the significance of being treated with respect. If the nomination process ended at this point, we would have already won. The recognition of winning the award is very much appreciated, but the achievement of our goals is a reward as well. Winning the awards adds to the credibility of our statement of commitment to our accessibility plan.

**Narrator 2:** Photo of a large newspaper article with the title “Woodlands museum introduces accessible pathways”, and feature two smiling staff members in front of the Woodlands Museum.

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**Yutta Fricke (1:14:54):** Thank you to Woodlands for that excellent example and I should do a little marketing for Woodlands because this Pioneer Museum is all of 15 minutes outside of Winnipeg on Highway 6, and I went with my mother, and one thing not mentioned there that we were pleased about was the accessible kings’ washroom, that attention to detail, even for accessible pads, even for a small rural museum, I think is an excellent, excellent symbol of the commitment of Manitobans to accessibility. Our next award category, the final award category is “Municipalities” beginning with “Large Municipalities” and the 2020 Manitoba Accessibility Award winner is: The City of Selkirk! They have provided us a beautiful video of all their accessibility features, so enjoy!

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**Duane Nicol:** Thank you to the Manitoba Accessibility Awards Selection Committee for choosing the city of Selkirk as the 2020 Accessible Awards Winner in the large and small municipality category. I also want to thank Edie Henrikson, our Director of Corporate Services, who has led the development of our accessibility plan and continues to be an accessibility champion. The city of Selkirk’s community strategic plan is in large part a road map to building a more inclusive community, the operative part of our mission statement, is to enhance the quality of life for *all* citizens. For Manitobans facing accessibility challenges, that means 25% of our citizens face barriers to making full use and benefit to the services and amenities that we offer. It also means that as a community, we risk on missing out on getting the full benefit of the ideas, skills, and passions, and engagement of a quarter of our people.

**Dan McDermid:** It’s very important to make buildings accessible so that all people with all needs can use those facilities to the best of their abilities. By adding accessible doors, every public facing door can be accessible to everybody that uses it, making those little differences can make a big impact on people that need those kinds of resources when they are using those facilities.

**Duane Nicol:** We don't see improving accessibility as just a moral imperative, we also see it as a strategic opportunity. Using our award-winning and innovative asset management program, we are renewing infrastructure, and as we do that, we are making accessibility and equity are top of the line.

**Dan McDermid:** When we do a sewer project or a water project, we're also looking at the sidewalk infrastructure, so that when we repair, we can repair in such a way that makes it more accessible to our citizens, to our proper grade, when we're doing those kinds of projects.

**Duane Nicol:** We are also keeping accessibility in mind when we develop our services and our online infrastructure. Our citizen support program is a one-stop shop for accessing city services, our citizen city support representatives offer a human touch and will work with citizens in navigating our systems and access the services they need. We've adopted the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 for our website and continue to develop and offer more self-serve options online that add flexibility and can better meet the needs of our citizens. It means educating and raising the awareness of our staff by incorporating accessibility training into the orientation program that every new employee in the city goes through. It means changing and creating policies and considering equity as an intended outcome of the work that we do, and prioritizing projects that enhance the accessibility. It means establishing feedback loops, like our age-friendly committee, to ensure that council and administration are hearing about the needs directly from those who are impacted.

**Brady Clark:** I thought it was important to get another perspective and got to be more inclusive of the groups that could serve better, some of the groups we could solve their recreation strategy, it was engagement friendly, it was a program implementation for the future, and one of the current projects we have is our Selkirk Trails Concept Plan – and so we've enlisted the help of an expert in trail concept planning and design. If we can make our trails accessible and how does that work for us going forward, and how can we make that happen?

**Duane Nicol:** There's a lot more to do, but we are moving forward on our accessibility training and intention and holding the firm belief that a more accessible Selkirk is a stronger Selkirk.

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**Yutta Fricke (1:18:46):** Thank you to the City of Selkirk for that excellent example. Our final category is our "Rural Municipality" 2020 Accessibility Award winner, which this year is: The RM of Victoria Beach! Congratulations! And using the images off-season, so snow-covered, we have a brief video about Victoria Beach's accessibility features.

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**Narrator 3:** Victoria Beach, the title page features a sea and a sailboat moving through the water, a trail of four Lily pads and several aquatic flowers behind it. Each Lily pad represents a different question. Please note that all photos featured in this presentation were taken after a recent snowfall, the buildings pictured are closed for the season.

**Narrator 3:** Lily pad 1, question 1: What does accessibility mean to you and how is accessibility enhanced by your award-winning initiative?

**Narrator 3:** Accessibility means improving the ability of all persons with disabilities to achieve their best and to participate in and enjoy their surroundings in a safe and respectful manner. An accessible community takes all responsible steps to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in and take advantage of the infrastructure, assets, and supports that are available to residents and visitors. Investing in and contributing to accessibility in our community brings tremendous benefits and rewards to our residents and visitors with disabilities and also enriches the entire fabric of the municipality. Our municipality supports the ongoing improvements to accessibility in our community and winning this award will provide us with a positive message to further inform and educate our community about accessibility.

**Narrator 3:** Photo of a ramp walkway and large green recycling bins on the right. The recycling area in VB has a platform that can be accessed by a ramp and/or stairs to allow people to drop off their commingled recycling into a large bin. VB is making further modifications to the recycling area to ensure that all residents have easy access to the bins. Photo of a small yellow building with a window and doors, with a sign above the door that reads "Information Office". There is a window on either side of the information office for obtaining information on foot or in a video. The door is situated so that if you reach for a mobility device, it will alert an attendant to come out to assist an individual.

**Narrator 3:** Lily pad 2, question 2: what was the significance of community collaboration?

**Narrator 3:** The RM of Victoria Beach is very fortunate to have an engaged, experienced and thoughtful group of community members who form our Community Accessibility Committee. The majority of this group have been together for the better part of 5 years and have worked with the municipal council to ensure accessibility standards are met or exceeded, within the municipality. Our community Accessibility Group has a wealth of knowledge and experiences to draw from and their input is invaluable in the planning and provision of meeting the goals of the Provincial Accessibility Standards.

**Narrator 3:** Photo of an outdoor accessibility button, an automatic door was installed at the Victoria Beach General Store during the summer of 2020. Photo of a series of protected electrical outlets for electrical wheelchairs and other mobility devices located

under a wooden railing. The covered charge area for mobility devices is attached to the summer taxi building. There is room for approximately 10 mobility devices to be under the cover charging. The RM VB offers four mobility scooters to charge during the summer months.

**Narrator 3:** Lilypad 3, question 3: What advice do you have for other organizations that wish to improve their accessibility?

**Narrator 3:** Engage with your community members, form a Community Accessibility Committee or advisory group to ensure, as much as possible, that the needs of all persons with disabilities are considered in the planning process. We are all only one step or one moment away from living with a disability and we all need to consider the impacts of not only our infrastructure but our comments, action and inaction that could impact the well-being and support of persons with disabilities.

**Narrator 3:** Photo of a side of Einfield's Bakery, also known as the VB Bakery. The photo features a wooden bungalow-style building with an accessibility ramp and stairs. The stairs are painted with yellow strips. An automatic door, larger entrance platform and door transition strips are planned for 2021. Photo of the entrance to a wooden building with the sign above a door that reads "Einfield's Bakery" to the side, an accessibility ramp is featured. The bakery was modified during summer 2020 to allow easier maneuverability of mobile devices on the corner section. VB is planning to add an automatic door, better transition strips, and larger landings outside the front door.

**Narrator 3:** Lilypad 4, question 4: What does winning this award mean to you?

**Narrator 3:** The RM of Victoria Beach Council is humbled to have been nominated by our Accessibility Committee and we are honored to be recognized as a leader in improvements to accessibility that are being made in our community. As the Mayor of the Municipality, and as someone who has been involved in our Community Accessibility Committee since its inception, I am very proud of our accomplishments to date, and proud of the support and direction of our committee. Our Committee Chair Rod Bollman continues to guide our Committee forward and he deserves our thanks for that leadership and direction. The RM of Victoria Beach recognizes that we have some accomplishments to be proud of, but we also recognize that we need to continue to promote and plan for ongoing accessibility improvements in our municipality.

**Narrator 3:** Photo of stairs located outside a building, the stairs of the VB general store feature painted yellow strips and an easy grip handrail. Photo of an accessibility ramp located outside a building, the ramp was widened, and smaller railings were attached on both sides.

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**Yutta Fricke (1:26:43):** So, congratulations, to all our winners! And on that last video, thank you also to Thomas Stir, who provided our voiceover. The winners will all be receiving a trophy as well as the use of our 2020 Manitoba Accessibility Award winner logo, which you can see on the left of the screen, and stay tuned for this weekend's Winnipeg Free Press, in which we will be celebrating the award winners for 2020! So, that concludes our awards celebration, and I just want to add a number of people mentioned resources at the Disabilities Issues Office – nowadays, the Manitoba Accessibility Office, and a few of them are on your screen right now, so... we recently held webinars for Disability Employment Awareness Month, Manitoba Access Awareness Week, and those can be found online and in the near future, you will also find today's award ceremony online at [accessibilityMB.ca](http://accessibilityMB.ca) and I want to point out that we have a new webpage, focused on COVID-19. So, the featured content includes the impact of COVID-19 on Manitobans with disabilities, there is a long list of resources, and as you will see on the right, there is a social media toolkit, so that all our champions of accessibility can help spread the word that during COVID-19, as we all take precautions to stay safe, that we still maintain accessibility. The example here of offering flexible customer service to customers and clients with disabilities. There are a number of tips like this one for businesses and for non-profit organizations, so please see that resource and look for tips for accessible service during COVID-19 and how to keep employees safe.

**Yutta Fricke:** That concludes our event today! So, a special thanks goes to Erika Vas, who is sitting behind me today, and Rocco Scarcella, who is providing support from home, it is their tech-knowledge that brought us the event today, I know that I wouldn't have been able to do it. There are others in our small office of 6 people who are also all involved today: Colleen Waters helped coordinate the awards committee, thank you for that support, as well, John Wyndels, you saw on the screen, and Tracy MacMillan, who is our Office Manager, you heard her voicing over two of the awards today. So, this is an incredible office I belong to – a small 6-person office and I'm so proud to be celebrating International Day of Persons with Disabilities with this group! So, in closing, I also want to thank Yvonne Peters as well as all the other video participants and award winners that were featured today, they were all a part of bringing you excellent explanations about how accessibility can be achieved. So, to close: I just want to send a message of resilience and patience! Manitobans with disabilities know all about that, the rest of us are trying to learn quickly. As we close 2020, we wish you all the best over the holiday season! Know that we have a better 2021 coming to us with a vaccine we can all anticipate and then to come together once more. We look forward to seeing you in 2021! Thank you for staying in tuned today!

*[End of Video]*