



## 5 Minutes for Business

May 9, 2019

# AccessAbility - the \$16.8 Billion GDP Boost Canadians Need

## Boosting Business

Accessibility in Canada is inadequately addressing the barriers nearly four million Canadians face. Within the next 20 years, that number is expected to soar to over nine million, but by creating a more accessible Canada, there is a potential to unlock \$16.8 billion in GDP by increasing our economy's productive capacity by 2030, according to [the Conference Board of Canada](#).

Ultimately, improving accessibility not only better the quality of life for persons with disabilities, but would also dramatically increase their labour force participation and consumer spending. Our members have vocalized finding and retaining skilled staff among their top issues, yet there is an entire pool of educated and qualified Canadians with disabilities who are waiting to be hired. With job retention rates 72% higher among people with disabilities, it makes good cents sense to invest in creating an accessible work environment.

## Assessing Accessibility

With one in seven Canadian adults currently living with a mobility, vision or hearing disability, tangible improvements in the built environment are needed to improve accessibility and to promote equality and inclusion for Canadians with disabilities.

At our annual general meeting and convention, held last fall, more than 300 local chambers of commerce voted in support of a policy resolution to make Canada truly accessible and inclusive by recommending the federal government adopt the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification Program as a voluntary complement to the accessibility requirements of the National Building Code. The program provides the roadmap for the adoption of universal principles and a way for all levels of governments to work together to improve the built environment.

But, the responsibility for the built environment can't fall solely on the government. Businesses must lead the way in improving accessibility in their workplaces. From contrasting floor and wall colours to adjustable desk heights, there are a number of measures businesses can implement.

## Including Inclusiveness

Acknowledging the value that inclusion can bring to an organization and the positive impact it can have on the Canadian economy, we built our headquarters to respect the design priorities reflected in the Rick Hansen Foundation's Accessibility Certification Program and achieved certification this past September. The program measures the level of meaningful access beyond



building code, and is based upon the holistic user experience of people with varying disabilities affecting their mobility, vision and hearing.

It is time to access the ability of all Canadians, which is why we are encouraging businesses across Canada to be early adopters of this program and to be leaders in helping build a more accessible nation. [Click here](#) for more information on the Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility Certification program.

**For more information, please contact:**

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