

**A guide for accessibility
advocates and allies in the**

Climate Movement



**City for All Women Initiative
Initiative: une ville pour toutes les femmes**

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With over six million Canadians identifying as disabled or as having a disability, being accessible is essential for the climate movement. It is also essential to ensure that people with a range of abilities and accessibility needs are welcomed and included at decision making tables to ensure that the solutions and policies being proposed reflect the perspectives of all Canadians.

We know that the climate movement has had challenges with inclusion in the past. From the debate over single use plastics to discussions of vehicle-free zones, the movement has been accused of ableism and of not being accessible for everyone. As a result, some people do not feel that the climate movement is a welcoming, safe place for them. You can help to solve this problem by encouraging accessible climate advocacy.

Whether or not you personally have accessibility needs, you can be an ally and advocate for improved accessibility. Remember that being able-bodied is a temporary state. Better accessibility benefits everyone, and may be important for you or someone you love now or in the future.

If you are interested in learning more about climate accessibility, you can also consult the guide for organizations.

Stand up for Inclusion

Looking at who is participating in climate activities.

Who is around the table?

Who is missing?

When we see spaces that include only able-bodied people, or only persons with disabilities who are easily accommodated, advocates need to question why that is the case, and what can be done to invite a broader range of disabled individuals into the conversation. This may be a slow process, but it is one that is important in hearing a variety of voices.

Encourage organizations that you work with or which are organizing events that you take part in to broaden their reach and specifically extend invitations to disabled individuals and organizations focused on accessibility. While not everyone will want to take part in every event or initiative, being invited to the table and specifically included is essential to get more people talking about climate change and climate issues.

Think about Language

Think carefully about the language that you use when talking about disability. As an ally, it is important to use language that is inoffensive and which does not create stigma, shame or embarrassment. You should also note that some people prefer different ways of talking about disability.

Person-first language uses phrasing such as “person with a disability” whereas **Identity-first language** would use the phrase “disabled person.” Both can be used, but many people will prefer one or the other. If you are in doubt, ask the person or people you are advocating with and for. This document uses both person-first and identity-first language.

Questions to Ask

Where do you start as an advocate?

Asking some simple questions of organizations can help to shed light on their strengths and ways they can improve.

What accommodations exist?

Are meetings accessible? While there is no single list of criteria for accessibility, some things to ask and consider:

- If meetings are online, is closed captioning available?
- Does the meeting have a timed agenda so that people can come as they are able?
- Are meeting materials written in plain language?
- Does the agenda invite open discussion, or are the ways that people can participate clear?

Are gatherings accessible?

- Who is the accessibility point-person? How can you contact them? It is important to have a knowledgeable, single point of contact for everyone who needs accessibility accommodations, and for that person to be easy to contact by phone and email.
- Are there accommodation plans in place? Are these plans communicated beforehand?
- Are there accommodation plans that consider physical accessibility, sensory processing, vision, hearing and mental health (anxiety, PTSD, etc.)?

Is the group/organization sharing information in an inclusive way?

Climate science can be highly technical but many people with various abilities want to learn more and should be invited to do so. Remember that people learn in a variety of ways and that people may come with different amounts of background knowledge.

- Is the organization's website/social media easily to use for people who use screen readers or who need to enlarge text? Are alt text descriptions available for graphics and photos?
- Does the organization offer plain language information that is available to a wide audience?
- Are a variety of resources in different formats (e.g., videos, articles, podcasts) available for different audiences, either directly produced or linked from elsewhere?
- Can more accessible information be added?

Is advocacy inclusive?

Think about what is being advocated, and how those messages are communicated.

- Does the advocacy specifically offer space for people with mobility challenges, activity limitations, mental health issues, sensory processing challenges or other accessibility needs, or does it presume that the reader is able-bodied?
- Is there space for nuance and discussion, or does it advocate "one size fits all" behaviour?

Have messages been formed in collaboration with the disability community?

- Ask who helped to craft the messages. Were accessibility advocates consulted and included?
- If not, how can more diverse voices be included going forward?

Do calls to action include disabled individuals?

- Does the call to action offer ways to participate for people living on low incomes?
- Does the call to action reflect ranges of ability and offer different methods of participation (e.g., attending events, letter writing, direct action, community education)?
- What complementary participation methods could be added to include more people?

If you are unsure if a practice or program is inclusive, ask yourself:

1. Who is missing from this conversation?
2. What barriers might be excluding them from participating?
3. What can be done differently to invite people to participate?

With these questions in mind, think about how the organization or organizations that you work with can improve their practices and be more inclusive.

Remember, accommodations vary and you won't always know what accommodations someone needs or the nature of their disability, so it is essential to encourage organizations to become more open to listening to the disability community and being ready to meet their needs.

Being an accessibility advocate starts with asking questions about who is included and how they are accommodated. Once the conversation is started, you can help to broaden the conversation and ensure that the disability community is not only included, but invited and welcomed into climate spaces.

**Fighting climate change is everyone's
business and including more people at the
table benefits us all.**



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