

2011 – 2012 City of Greater Sudbury Accessibility Plan

An accessible environment, while particularly relevant for people with disabilities, has benefits for a broader range of people. For example, curb cuts (ramps) assist parents pushing baby strollers. Information in plain language helps those with less education or speakers of a second language. Announcements of each stop on public transit may aid travellers unfamiliar with the route as well as those with visual impairments. Moreover, the benefits for many people can help generate widespread support for making changes.

Source: World Report on Disability

INTRODUCTION

The City of Greater Sudbury is a community of communities that respects the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and endeavours to facilitate inclusive access to municipal programs, services and facilities.

According to Statistics Canada and the Persons and Activity Limitation Survey (PALS), 16.6% of Canadian adults and 3.7% of children have a disability and some persons with disabilities have more than one type of activity limitation. The disability rate in Ontario is even higher than the national average. Among adults aged 15 to 64 in Ontario, the rate of disability is 12.6%. Among those aged 65-74, the Ontario disability rate is 36.7% and among those aged 75 and older, the Ontario disability rate is 60.1%.

Based on the demographics of Greater Sudbury, it is estimated that there are between 24,000 and 26,000 citizens who have disabilities living in our community. Of these, approximately 1,000 are children under the age of 15 and 1,000 are teens and young adults. However, the most significant age group for persons with disabilities is seniors. In the City of Greater Sudbury, there are approximately 11,000 adults over the age of 65 who have a disability.

As described in the World Health Organization's recently released "World Report on Disability",

Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life, and those who survive to old age will experience increasing difficulties in functioning. . .The number of people with disabilities is growing. There is a higher risk of disability at older ages, and national populations are growing older at unprecedented rates. There is also a global increase in chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental disorders, which will influence the nature and prevalence of disability.

Greater Sudbury has seen a significant shift in the percentage of the population who are seniors. In the 30 year period between 1976 and 2006 the population of persons over age of 65 has increased 184% from 8,275 to 23,475 people. As this trend continues, there will be more demand for accessible programs, facilities and services.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA) include requirements for accessibility planning and barrier removal. The Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001 requires that municipalities have an Accessibility Advisory Panel and that a majority of the members of that Panel be persons with disabilities. The Accessibility Advisory Panel's mandate is to provide advice to Council on matters relating to accessibility of municipal programs, services and facilities, including preparation of the municipality's accessibility plan and assisting Council in coming into compliance with the new accessibility standards.

The members of the Accessibility Advisory Panel for the term 2011 – 2014 are:

Linda Whiteside, Chair	Lionel Courtemanche, Vice-Chair
E.J. Craig Ticalo, Vice-Chair	Councillor Claude Berthiaume
Councillor Joscelyne Landry-Altman	Bob Bannister
Earl Black	Norma Fitzgerald
Linda Mende	Andrew Olivier

Accessibility Planning:

The ODA specifies five requirements for the content of all annual accessibility plans, which requirements provide the framework for the City of Greater Sudbury's 2011-2012 Accessibility Plan.

ONE: Report on the measures the organization has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

As described in the World Disability Report one of the “prerequisites for progress in accessibility” is the “culture of accessibility”. The City of Greater Sudbury has made progress in the past few years of creating organizational awareness around accessibility and it is now becoming part of our culture for staff to consider accessibility when planning everything from events, to new buildings.

For the period 2010-2011 there are a number of examples of how the City of Greater Sudbury has worked to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

The City of Greater Sudbury had a twelve part plan to ensure compliance with Regulation 429/07, the Accessibility Standard for Customer Service. Policies were amended to ensure that persons with disabilities may use support persons, personal assistive devices and service animals when accessing municipal programs, services and facilities. The largest component of that compliance plan was training of CGS employees and to date more than 3,000 Employees have received Accessible Customer Services information, with the degree of detail tailored to the employee's workplace role and how frequently they interact with citizens.

The recently opened Grace Hartman Amphitheatre was planned with accessibility in mind and the Accessibility Advisory Panel was consulted at the design stage of the building. It was most gratifying, at the first official concert held in the new amphitheatre, to see the diversity of the audience in this inclusive, community space. Similarly, the new Countryside Arena which will be completed this fall has had a second elevator added to the building, to accommodate the larger wheelchairs and scooters for which the existing elevator is not suitable. The Accessibility Advisory Panel has also provided input into the new South Branch Library Building which will soon be under construction.

Other building improvements for 2011 which benefit persons with disabilities include the renewal of the entrance vestibule and doors at the Farmer's Market, door replacement at some satellite Police stations and washroom upgrades at Beaver Lake Community Centre. At Pioneer Manor, projects such as a resident gym and a therapeutic garden are part of the ongoing capital funding program.

In 2011, the City of Greater Sudbury made three applications through the Enabling Accessibility Fund. Those applications were to assist in improving access to three venues: the Sudbury Community Arena; Council Chambers; and public washrooms in 199 Larch Street.

The Transit Stop Announcement System is another example of a measure taken to facilitate access. By the end of 2011, all conventional transit buses will be fully accessible and an awareness campaign is being developed to promote the use of conventional transit by all citizens.

Voter Assist Terminals were available at Advanced Poll Locations during the 2010 Municipal Election and all election staff received accessibility awareness training as part of their election preparedness.

Three fully accessible play structures were installed at the Howard Armstrong Recreation Centre, at the James Jerome Sports Complex and at Ridgecrest Park and officially opened during 2010. Also at the James Jerome Sports Complex, new accessible walkways were built and construction of accessible washrooms is underway. Ridgecrest Playground secured an Enabling Accessibility grant which was used to renovate the fieldhouse for accessibility and to create a hard surface rink area, for multi-season use by all playground users.

Pedestrian access and sidewalks in particular are raised most years, by the public, as important to improving mobility for persons with disabilities. As roads are repaired and rebuilt across the community, sidewalks with appropriate curb cuts are also renewed. In addition \$700,000 is budgeted annually for sidewalk and curb repairs and \$300,000 is budgeted for street lighting improvements. The City continues to expand the use of audible pedestrian signals at specific intersections which are difficult to cross.

TWO: Describe the measures in place to ensure that the organization assesses its Acts/by-laws, regulations, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their effect on accessibility for people with disabilities.

Responsibility for overseeing the municipality's accessibility responsibilities is assigned to the Executive Director, Administrative Services who sits on the City's Senior Management Team. This ensures that accessibility is noted as senior staff discuss and debate any items which may impact on accessibility. Members of the management group work on accessibility issues in their areas of responsibility and frequently consult with their peers and with Administrative Services in this regard.

Each year, the Accessibility Advisory Panel hosts a public meeting to receive input from the community as to how to remove barriers and improve accessibility. At the 2011 meeting, a presentation was made encouraging the City to be an employer of confidence for persons with disabilities. Citizens in attendance spoke about the importance of accessible transit, and made some very specific suggestions in that regard. The importance of sidewalks with appropriate curb cuts and access points was noted.

The City's Active Customer Response system, which is used to track calls to the City's 3-1-1 Call Centre has a code for Accessibility, and any calls received with this tag are directed both to the operating department responsible and to the Administrative Services section which provides oversight on issues related to accessibility.

The City of Greater Sudbury has four key strategic plans all of which have been approved by Council and which are the framework for much of the work of the organization. Those plans are the:

- Official Plan
- Healthy Sustainable Community Strategy
- Coming of Age in the 21st Century Digging Deeper
- Towards Tomorrow: Long Term Financial Plan

These plans are supported by a framework of more specific plans which include all the background studies to the Official Plan, as well as plans developed related to specific programs, departments and services delivered by the City of Greater Sudbury.

It is important to note that within these strategic and operational plans are a number of elements that relate directly, or indirectly to accessibility. For example, the Official Plan contains seventeen specific sections which reference accessibility as applied to services as diverse as supported housing, transportation, built infrastructure, parks, recreation and employment. The Active Living/Healthy Lifestyle pillar of the Healthy Community Strategy speaks to encouraging individuals to take ownership of their health and well-being, supports individual and family wellness and safety programs and assigns appropriate resources to build capacity and equitable access for all. Similarly, the Long Term Financial Plan reflects on the importance of meeting social equity objectives through specific programs including financial support for the Healthy Community strategy and for actions that promote social and environmental well-being. Coming of Age in the 21st Century has, as one of its engines, the regional centre for health services expertise in Northeastern Ontario, which includes recognition of the community's aging population and the opportunities that exist to tailor health services expertise to seniors, many of whom have some form of disability.

Accessibility has become part of the organizational culture at the City of Greater Sudbury and is considered in developing policies and programs. For example, work is underway to renew the City of Greater Sudbury's Purchasing By-Law and there have been consultations between staff as to how best to reflect our requirements relating to accessibility and compliance with the AODA and ODA in that by-law. Where appropriate, tenders and RFP's issued by the City include a specific requirement regarding accessibility.

THREE: List the policies, programs, practices and services that the organization will review in the coming year to identify barriers to people with disabilities.

AND

FOUR: Describe the measures the organization intends to take in the coming year to identify, remove and prevent barriers to people with disabilities.

The primary role for the Accessibility Advisory Panel in the next year, as described in the Panel's mandate, will be to assist in advising staff on the implementation of the Ontario Regulation 191/11 the Integrated Access Standard which came into force on July 1, 2011 and which combines accessibility standards in three areas: information and communication; employment; and transportation.

This regulation will impact on the City of Greater Sudbury as an organization, in many ways. There is a requirement that the City develop a multi-year accessibility plan which identifies barriers to access and provides plans to remove those barriers so as to achieve accessibility. The City will be required to ensure that all communications to both employees and citizens are available in a variety of alternate formats to accommodate persons with disabilities. There is a whole section on recruitment practices as they relate to provision of accommodations during that recruitment process as well as accommodation plans for individual employees who have disabilities, which is something already in place. As with the previous customer service standard, there are requirements for education and training of employees and development of policies in support of accessibility. The regulation also contains provisions that will impact on specific departments or services, as for example provisions specific to web-based communications, purchasing of goods and services, emergency planning, public libraries and transit.

This fall, staff resources will be assigned to develop an implementation plan for compliance with the new regulation for January 1, 2013. This compliance will include preparation of our first multi-year accessibility plan. In accordance with the regulation, that plan will be developed with extensive consultations with operating departments and oversight from the Accessibility Advisory Panel.

Based on the experience in coming into compliance with the customer service requirements, it is anticipated that considerable thought and much planning will go into implementation of each component of the new standard and that there will be a need to share resources and ideas within and outside our community.

The World Disabilities Report notes that “a strategic plan with priorities and a series of increasing goals can make the most of limited resources” and will be a framework for meeting that compliance. A compliance plan will be developed this fall and presented to the Panel for their input.

FIVE: Make the accessibility plan available to the public.

Each year, the Greater Sudbury Accessibility Plan is presented to the Council of the City of Greater Sudbury for approval and is subsequently made available on the City of Greater Sudbury Website. Copies of the Plan are also provided to individuals and organizations upon request.