

**The City of Thunder Bay**  
**2019 – 2024**  
**Multi-Year Accessibility Plan**

Adopted by City Council: Date



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# 1 Definitions

The following definitions apply to this Plan:

**Accessibility** — The term accessibility means giving people of all abilities opportunities to participate fully in everyday life. It is used to describe how widely a service, product, device, or environment is available to as many people as possible. Accessibility can be seen as the ability to access and benefit from a system, service, product or environment.

**Barrier** — A barrier is anything that prevents a person with a disability from fully participating in all aspects of society because of their disability.

Disabilities themselves are not considered barriers. Most barriers are not intentional. Barriers usually occur because the needs of people with disabilities are not considered from the beginning, when creating a policy or procedure, when providing a service, or when designing a product or facility.

**Types of barriers** – Barriers may be visible or invisible. There are many different types of barriers:

Attitudinal barriers may result in people with disabilities being treated differently than people without disabilities.

Informational and communication barriers arise when a person with a disability cannot easily receive or understand information that is available to others.

Systemic barriers in policies, practices and procedures result in people with disabilities being treated differently than others or sometimes excluded altogether.

Physical and architectural barriers occur in the environment and prevent access for people with disabilities.

Technological barriers occur when technology or the way it is used does not meet the needs of people with disabilities.

## 2 Introduction

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) was enacted to develop, implement, and enforce Accessibility Standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures, premises and transportation throughout Ontario by the year 2025. Accessibility Standards include the Accessible Customer Service Standard (O. Reg. 429/07), the Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) – including the Information & Communication, Transportation, Employment and the Design of Public Spaces Standards. In 2016, the IASR was updated to include the Customer Service Standard.

Under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), the City of Thunder Bay (the City) is required to establish, implement, maintain and document a multi-year accessibility plan. This plan outlines the City of Thunder Bay's strategy to identify, prevent and remove accessibility barriers, and meet its requirements under the IASR.

The Integrated Accessibility Standard Regulation (O. Reg. 191/11) consists of 6 parts:

- I. General Requirements
- II. Information and Communications Standards
- III. Employment Standards
- IV. Transportation Standards
- V. Design of Public Spaces Standards (Accessibility Standards For The Built Environment)
- VI. Customer Service Standard
- VII. Compliance

In accordance with the requirements set out in the IASR, the City of Thunder Bay will:

- Post the accessibility plan on its website ([www.thunderbay.ca](http://www.thunderbay.ca));
- Provide the plan in an accessible format upon request;
- Review and update the accessibility plan at least once every five years;
- Establish, review and update the accessibility plan in consultation with persons with disabilities and the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee;
- Prepare an annual status report and post it on the City of Thunder Bay website.

### **3 Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee**

In 2001, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA), required that all municipalities with a population over 10,000 must have an Accessibility Advisory Committee. This requirement is echoed in the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005. The municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) is a sub-committee of City Council's Committee of the Whole. The mandate is to provide guidance on accessibility issues affecting municipal operations. The Committee meets a minimum of eight (8) times annually; all meetings are open to the public.

The Committee makes recommendations to City Council on Municipal Accessibility Plans, provides feedback to the City on Site Plan Controls, new builds and renovations of facilities, and advises on a range of other issues affecting persons with disabilities in the City of Thunder Bay.

A representative of the Accessibility Advisory Committee participates in corporate initiatives including the Active Transportation Committee, Walkability Sub-committee and the Public Art Committee.

The Committee is made up of the following members:

- a person with a physical and mobility disability;
- a senior with a disability;
- a representative from the culturally deaf community;
- a person with a mental health and addiction disability;
- a member of City Council;
- a representative from a service agency with a mandate for persons with disabilities;
- a person who is hard of hearing and/or late deafened;
- a citizen at large;
- a person who is visually impaired or blind;
- a person with a developmental disability;
- a person with a brain injury;
- a person who is deaf-blind;
- a parent or guardian of a child or youth with a disability;
- a caregiver to a person with a disability;
- a person with a learning disability;
- a person with a speech impairment.

## **4 Message from the Chair of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee**

Since the previous 2013-2018 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan was approved, the municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) has kept very busy working on issues regarding accessibility in the City of Thunder Bay.

The Committee meets regularly with City departments to raise awareness of access issues and to provide recommendations for greater inclusion. Over the past sixteen years, the Committee has advised, both through our built environment subcommittee and through the Committee as a whole, on a range of City projects. We raise awareness about accessibility related to sidewalk ramps and hazards, municipal elections, polling stations and voting procedures, public washrooms and automatic door openers.

The Committee has been identified as an accessibility champion in the City and has been invited by the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Thunder Bay Art Gallery and Norwest Community Health Services to review accessibility of their programs, services and facilities.

The Committee holds yearly open houses to advise and consult with the public about accessibility issues. The Committee collects feedback throughout the year and shares as required with City Council and the City departments involved.

Committee members serve on a number of municipal and community-based committees, including the City's Active Transportation and Public Art Committee, the Thunder Bay District Health Unit's Walkability Committee, and the CNIB's Accessible Pedestrian Signal Committee. Through these committees, we provide representation of the disabled community and make committee members aware of access challenges they might not otherwise recognize, hopefully identifying problems before they develop rather than needing to correct them after infrastructure or policy is in place.

The 2019-2024 Plan highlights achievements of the ACC and City departments over the past five years. The Committee participated in the development of the strategies and actions included in section 7.3 of the plan and are confident that the implementation of those strategies will improve access to City programs, services and facilities for all residents.

Sincerely,

Kai Crites  
Chair – Accessibility Advisory Committee  
2019-2020

## 5 Statement of Commitment to Accessibility

The City of Thunder Bay is committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. We believe in inclusion and equal access to opportunities and will identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility. The City of Thunder Bay is committed to meeting accessibility requirements and guidelines under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, and other accessibility legislation applicable to the City of Thunder Bay.

## 6 Accessibility Policy

The City of Thunder Bay Accessibility Policy has been updated to include the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation requirements and an organizational statement of commitment to meet the accessibility needs of persons with disabilities in a timely manner. The policy is included as Appendix A of this plan. The policy is consistent with:

- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 11 \(AODA\)](#)
- [Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards \(IASR\)](#)
- [Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 32 \(ODA\)](#)
- [Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.1](#)

## 7 Accessibility Plan

In 2019, the City of Thunder Bay began the mandatory 5-year review and update of the Multi-year Accessibility Plan. The City engaged an external consultant with expertise in the AODA to review compliance and achievements and conduct a facility audit of sixteen (16) city-owned facilities.

The City of Thunder Bay has an internal Administrative Accessibility Working Group that meets regularly to review progress in meeting the requirements of the AODA and to monitor progress on implementing the annual accessibility plans and to determine that barrier-removal and barrier-prevention strategies are implemented effectively.

The Office of the City Clerk provides oversight of the implementation of the Accessibility Plan. It employs a Municipal Accessibility Specialist responsible for liaising with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Administrative Accessibility Working Group and the community in supporting and guiding The City of Thunder Bay in the implementation of the Plan.

## **7.1 Customer Service**

The City of Thunder Bay has mandatory training for all members of Council, employees and volunteers on the Customer Service Standard and Ontario Human Rights Code, which includes policies and procedures on providing goods and services to people with disabilities in the areas of:

- An Accessibility Policy incorporating dignity, independence integration, and equity;
- Use of service animals and support persons;
- Notice of temporary service disruptions;
- Provision of a feedback process for the public to submit concerns about accessibility; and
- Use of assistive devices.

## **7.2 2019 Facility Audit**

In 2019, a facility audit was completed for sixteen (16) facilities owned and operated by the City. The audit has provided prioritized high-level observations and recommendations of deficiencies of those facilities with current legislated barrier-free design standards. The City is committed to using the audit when planning infrastructure improvements and is committed to a bi-annual review of the facility audit and will include all accessibility updates in the annual compliance reporting. The Executive Summary of the audit is included in Appendix B of this plan.

## **7.3 Strategies and Actions for Barrier Identification and Removal**

- a) Continue to remove barriers – attitudinal, informational, communication, systematic, physical, architectural, and technological – from city programs and services.
- b) Integrate AODA requirements into corporate policies and procedures.
- c) The City and the Accessibility Advisory Committee will host annual public engagement events in the community to share information, promote the Committee’s roles and accomplishments and gain feedback about accessibility in the City of Thunder Bay.
- d) Continue to remove barriers from existing facilities and infrastructure as identified in the City of Thunder Bay’s 2019 facility audit.
- e) All Members of Council, employees, volunteers, and contractors must take general accessibility, accessible customer service and Ontario Human Rights Code training.

- f) Provide accessible public engagement opportunities.
- g) Continue to ensure that all City of Thunder Bay print and web-based publications and promotional materials are accessible.
- h) Develop resources to assist staff to determine all necessary accessibility criteria that should be included in procurement documents, including evaluation tools.
- i) Continue to upgrade transit stops to meet the Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidelines developed in 2013.
- j) Continue Accessibility Sidewalk Ramping Program to upgrade or install new sidewalk ramps at intersections where a barrier to access exists. The Roads Division will work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and other groups and individuals who identify areas of concern. All new ramps are marked with a tactile surface to alert those with visual impairments that they are at an intersection.
- k) Continue Lift and Level Program and Trip edge removal program to remove trip hazards and barriers to accessibility caused by heaved and sunken sidewalk slabs, which provide a safer and more uniform walking surface to all citizens of Thunder Bay.
- l) Continue program to install audible crossing signals at pedestrian crossings at signalized intersections. Engineering Division staff consults with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the CNIB and other groups and individuals to determine where this technology should be strategically placed to maximize its effectiveness for people with visual impairments.

## **7.4 Compliance Timeline**

The City of Thunder Bay is compliant with all standards in the AODA up to December 31, 2018. By January 1, 2021, all internet websites and web content contained on those sites must meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA requirements, excluding closed captioning for live streaming.

## **8 Measuring Results**

### **8.1 Compliance Reporting**

The City of Thunder Bay is committed to filing accessibility compliance reports to the Province of Ontario based on the stated deadlines in the AODA: December 31, 2019, 2021, 2023, and 2025. Reports will be posted on the City's website and presented as required to City Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

## **8.2 Annual Barrier Removal Reporting**

The Municipal Accessibility Specialist is committed to preparing annual status updates describing what has been done to achieve AODA compliance requirements and other City of Thunder Bay accessibility goals described in this plan. Reports will be posted on the City's website and presented as required to City Council and the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

## **8.3 Reviewing Feedback**

We will also monitor and evaluate any feedback we have received throughout the year related to accessibility. This information may be integrated into our accessibility reports. Any comments on our accomplishments and plans are welcome and will be considered in our ongoing accessibility planning.

## **8.4 Revisions to the Multi-year Accessibility Plan**

The Multi-year Accessibility Plan is a living document. The City of Thunder Bay is committed to reviewing and updating the Plan at minimum every five (5) years. Revisions will be available on our website, and will be provided in alternate formats upon request.

## 9 Accessibility Feedback

We welcome inquiries and feedback about accessibility and the City of Thunder Bay's efforts at meeting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation.

In Person/Mail:            Accessibility Feedback  
                                 Office of the City Clerk  
                                 500 Donald Street East  
                                 Thunder Bay ON P7E 5V3

Telephone:                (807) 625-2230  
Fax:                        (807) 625-2233  
TTY:                        (807) 622-2225  
Email:                      [accessibility@thunderbay.ca](mailto:accessibility@thunderbay.ca)

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.

## **10 City of Thunder Bay Accessibility Achievements 2013-2020**

### **10.1 Accessibility Advisory Committee**

- The Committee is a leader for accessibility in the community. Its members have been invited to consult on the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre's Accessibility Plan and the Norwest Community Health Centre facility design.
- The Committee has provided recommendations to Council for improvements to traffic signals, City Hall Transit Hub, and support for federal grants such as the EnAbling Change Accessibility Fund.
- The Committee has built relationships and accessibility champions in all City departments. These champions regularly attend AAC meetings and promote the importance of accessibility in all city services.

### **10.2 Corporate-Wide**

- The AAC reviews project plans and provides feedback regarding accessibility features. Projects have included: proposed new walking trails; intersection audible message format and content; transportation licensing requirements related to accessibility; forward facing wheelchair seating on conventional buses; accessible evacuation requirements; parking lot design; and improved snow clearing for greater accessibility.
- The City buys goods, services or facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities – where possible accessibility design, criteria and features are included in bid requirement documents and other methods of purchasing new goods, services or facilities for the City of Thunder Bay.
- Accessibility features are incorporated when purchasing or designing self-service kiosks – including any interactive electronic terminals that people use to pay parking fees, validate tickets, renew licenses, or access information.
- Procedures for notifying the public of known disruptions of service are implemented in a timely and accessible manner on the City website and social media.

### **10.3 City Manager's Office**

- Employment practices are accessible, including how the City of Thunder Bay hires, retains, and provides career development opportunities.
- A Psychological Health & Safety Committee has been established and meets quarterly to discuss methods for implementing the National Standard for Psychological Health and

Safety in the Workplace, and Committee members serve as champions for mental health in the workplace.

- Provides information and training on mental health resources to all new City hires during corporate orientation.
- Guidelines have been produced and shared with City staff to improve the process of creating accessible documents.
- Staffing, Development & Support Services distributed a 2017 Voluntary Employment Equity Survey, using results to develop an Employment Outreach and Retention Plan, with the goal of increasing outreach to and retention of applicants and employees with disabilities.
- Employees are made aware of the option to request and collaborate in developing individual accommodation plans and individualized emergency protocols. These plans and protocols are reviewed on an annual basis.
- Improved printed material for the respect. campaign by using colours with greater contrast.
- As part of the Public Engagement Framework, resources have been created to ensure that internal and public meetings are accessible, including documents, promotion, and locations.

## **10.4 Community Services**

- Recreation & Culture staff continue to establish connections and collaborations with various community organizations to ensure promotion and awareness of programs and services to the broader community and people with disabilities by expanding mailing and contact lists.
- Portable Pool Lifts were added at the Canada Games Complex, Volunteer Pool and Sir Winston Churchill Pool.
- An accessible washroom and change area were added at the Volunteer Pool, as well as the inclusion of visual fire alarms and contrasting colours around doorways.
- The Thunder Bay 55 Plus Centre increased the number of accessible parking spaces and improved signage and wayfinding to ensure ease of access to the parking spaces. The Canada Games Complex now uses similar accessible signage.
- New power door operators were installed at the Tennis Centre along with a new wood framed deck with barrier free ramp access to accommodate wheelchair tennis.
- Asset Management Division continues to incorporate accessible counters, power door operators, assisted listening systems, accessible washrooms, ramps and more when completing interior renovations at all City facilities.
- Transit staff were invited by the Province of Ontario to be a member of the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario (ADO) Transportation Standards Development Committee.

- Transit collaborates with Thunder Bay community groups to ensure adequate accessible transportation is available for participation of people with disabilities in local programs and services.
- Transit works to ensure transit stops are accessible for people with mobility, visual, and other disabilities by implementing the Accessible Bus Stop Design Guidelines. As of 2019, more than 60% of City stops are accessible, with plans to prioritize designated transit stops for future accessibility-related renovations.
- An accessible transit shelter design was introduced in 2013 with 49 installed at high ridership stops.
- Accessible service training is provided to all operators including wheelchair securement and processes for un-accommodated passengers.
- Improved scheduling technology for Lift+ Specialized Transit Service enables resources to be realigned to meet a same-day requirement for specialized transit bookings and allowances for registrant eligibility timelines.
- Transit Services developed a 2015-2025 Accessibility Plan to communicate the AODA compliance and accessibility improvements within both Thunder Bay Transit and Lift+ Specialized Transit Services.
- Transit hosts an Annual Public Forum on Accessible Transit.
- On-board and pre-boarding announcements of route and stop information is active on all conventional buses.

## **10.5 Corporate Services and Long-term Care**

- Corporate Information Technology is committed to ensuring that new technology projects keep accessibility at the forefront, by adding accessibility requirements to existing checklists or approval processes.
- Prior to the implementation of the new website in 2019, Corporate Information Technology improved readability of the website for screen reading software and improved visibility of cursor and tab movement.
- Corporate Information Technology provides training for city staff to create accessible documents.
- Supply Management is working to ensure that all bid documents include specific requirements or guidelines on incorporating AODA standards and other accessibility and inclusion guidelines.

## **10.6 Development and Emergency Services**

- Improved access at the customer service counter for staff and general public.

- An accessibility review is included in the evaluation of all site plan applications.
- Accessibility components and standards have been incorporated into the Urban Design Guidelines and Official Plan.
- Introduced a new Vehicle-for-hire By-law with consultation from the AAC.

## **10.7 Infrastructure and Operations**

- Parks & Open Spaces added a lift to the Marina Park main stage.
- Parks & Open Spaces completed an accessibility upgrade and rehabilitation of Minnesota Park and North End Splash Pad with a goal to provide accessibility renovations to approximately two City playgrounds annually.
- Engineering researched and identified, in consultation with the AAC, priority intersections for sidewalk rehabilitation alternatives, to add tactile plates at intersections, and upgrade or install new sidewalk ramps at intersections. Seventeen ramps were completed in 2018.
- Engineering continued the Lift & Level and Trip edge removal program along sidewalks to remove trip hazards and barriers to accessibility. In 2018, 2100 square metres of sidewalk were levelled.
- Engineering continued with its plan to install audible crossing signals at signalized intersections throughout the City, following consultation with the AAC to identify 31 priority intersections for maximum benefit and impact for people with visual impairments.
- Engineering ensured that available pedestrian crossing speeds at all signalized intersections are programmed to meet the Transportation Association of Canada and AODA standards.
- Engineering participated in consultations with the AAC regarding pedestrian wayfinding and signage, which resulted in improved documented plans for accessibility.