

# **The City of Portage la Prairie**

## **2016 -2018**

### **Accessibility Plan**



## Statement of Commitment

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The City of Portage la Prairie is committed to providing equal service to all citizens and visitors regardless of their abilities. We strive to remove and prevent barriers to accessibility and to meet the requirements of the “Accessibility for Manitobans Act”.

## Accessibility Legislation

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The Accessibility of Manitobans Act (AMA) was passed December 5, 2013. Its goal is to enable the implementation of the measures, policies, practices and other requirements necessary to make significant progress towards achieving accessibility in Manitoba by 2023. Municipalities with populations greater than 10,000 must have an accessibility plan in place in 2016. The legislation requires accessibility standards to be developed over the next several years. The standards will address barriers and set out requirements in five key areas of daily living. These standards are:

1. Customer service
2. Information and communication
3. Transportation
4. Employment
5. Built environment

The Customer service standard was adopted in 2015 and the City of Portage la Prairie is required to be compliant in 2017. The standard requires organizations to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to customer service. Where this is not possible they must provide equivalent customer service. To provide accessible customer service, organizations need to:

- review physical barriers that prevent customers receiving service
- consider the communication needs of clients
- allow service animals
- allow assistive devices such as wheelchairs, walkers and oxygen tanks
- let customers know your accessibility policies and procedures
- let customers know when accessible services aren't available
- Invite customers to provide feedback
- Understand The Human Rights Code (Manitoba) and provide reasonable accommodations
- train staff on accessible customer service

## Accessibility Committee

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The Portage la Prairie Accessibility Committee was established in August of 2015 to facilitate the development of the Municipal Accessibility Plan.

The Accessibility Committee is a working group comprised of staff representing various City Departments. The primary role of the committee is to demonstrate leadership in recommending innovative approaches and progressive solutions to make city services, programs, by-laws, policies, and practices more accessible to employees and residents of Portage la Prairie.

## Consultation Activities

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A public open house was held on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to seek feedback on the accessibility of city services as well as to present draft plans. This event was advertised on the city website, through social media, and through local media. Local organizations that advocate for, or provide services to, persons with disabilities were invited to take part. The results of this open house were used to identify areas of concern and to help prioritize actions. The city will continue to invite feedback from individuals with disabilities and organizations in the city that serve persons with disabilities.

## Multi-Year Action Plan

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This section outlines the policies and actions the City of Portage la Prairie will put in place over the next two (2) years to improve opportunities for persons with disabilities, in compliance with the AMA accessibility standards. Our goal is to remove accessibility barriers and prevent further barriers.

### Planned Accessibility Action Items:

General Requirements of the Accessibility for Manitobans Act (C.C.S.M. c A1.7)				
Action	Working Timeline			Responsibility
	2016	2017	2018	
Create/Update Accessibility Plan	x		x	Accessibility committee
Consultation with persons disabled by barriers, open house, online survey, etc.	x	x	x	Accessibility committee
Post the Plan on the City Website, update at least every 2 years	x		x	Accessibility Committee, Communications Coordinator
Develop Accessibility Policies, starting with customer service	x	x	x	Accessibility committee, Administration

**Planned Accessibility Action Items Continued:**

<b>Customer Service Standard Regulation 171/2015</b>				
Action	Working Timeline			Responsibility
	2016	2017	2018	
Create accessibility customer feedback process and invite users to provide feedback	x	x		Administration, Communications Coordinator
Identify and compile all city publications and ensure that they can be converted to an accessible format in a timely manner	x	x	x	All Departments
Include an "active offer" on all city documents informing that they are available in an accessible format on request	x	x	x	All Departments, Communications Coordinator
Develop a training plan to ensure all employees and volunteers who deal with the public are trained in accessible customer service.	x	x		Accessibility Committee, Human Resources, Management
Update website and provide mobile app to allow some services to be accessed easily online regardless of location.		x		Accessibility Committee, IT
Explore alternate methods of providing customer service where physical barriers exist. Determine costs and feasibility and find an alternate method of service delivery if required.	x	x		Accessibility Committee, Management
Ensure that public events are accessible. Develop an accessible events checklist.		x	x	All Departments/Accessibility Committee
Create a web page on the City's web site dedicated to accessibility. Update regularly.	x	x	x	IT, Accessibility Committee, Communications Coordinator

**Future Planned Accessibility Action Items**

There are no current requirements set out by AMA with a compliance date after January 1, 2018. This section will be updated as new projects or information is made available.

## Methodologies

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### **Review of Current Activities to Identify Barriers**

A review of current activities to identify barriers is ongoing with the goal of creating policies and procedures to prevent future barriers from being created and viewing the identified ones as opportunities for improvement. Barriers will be addressed on an ongoing basis.

### **Monitoring Progress and Audit Function**

As a status report of this Plan is required every two years, reviews by the Accessibility Policy Review Committee will occur prior to the budget preparation cycle each year. The purpose of an annual review of the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan is to evaluate whether or not targets are being met and to adopt a plan to meet current expectations. The Accessibility Policy Review Committee will meet quarterly. A bi-annual public meeting shall be held involving persons with disabilities to review and collect feedback on this plan.

### **Communication of Plan**

The availability of the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan is announced publicly by way of an announcement at a City Council meeting. Additionally, the plan is posted on the City's website. As annual Status Reports of the Plan as well as technical guidelines are developed, they too will be placed on the website.

## Conclusion

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The City of Portage la Prairie is committed to continuously addressing past and present accessibility barriers and to being progressive in developing innovative solutions to accessibility matters. We believe in integration and equal opportunity and are committed to treating all people in a way that allows them to maintain their dignity and independence. The City recommends that the Province co-ordinate the preparation of uniform Municipal Accessibility Guidelines so that the guidelines can be implemented in a consistent manner and that the Province provides Accessibility Funding to assist municipalities in the implementation of barrier-free services and facilities.

## Further Information

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For more information on the Multi-Year Municipal Accessibility Plan for the City of Portage la Prairie, please contact Jocelyn Lequier-Jobin chair of the Accessibility Committee

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